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How Working in Local TV News Affects Journalists' Personal Lives

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**HOW WORKING IN LOCAL TV NEWS
AFFECTS JOURNALISTS' PERSONAL LIVES**

by

Danielle Stobb

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

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AFFECTS JOURNALISTS' PERSONAL LIVES

by

Danielle Stobb

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2017
Under the Supervision of Professor David Pritchard

This study uses participant observation and interviews to determine how working in local television news affects journalists' personal lives. Twenty-eight journalists from a top 50 Midwestern station were interviewed. The inductive research data is organized into three themes: 1) Schedules 2) Family, friends and relationships 3) Moving. A personal narrative of the researcher's experience working part-time ties each theme together.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I want to be two things in life: a journalist and a mom.

I grew up in a loving, two-parent home. My dad was a blue-collar workaholic, averaging 50-hour work weeks for as long as I can remember. I wouldn't say my mom had it any easier; she worked part-time and looked after my older sister and me.

As busy as my parents were, they made sure to attend my after-school activities and concerts. Yes, minor work conflicts happened from time to time, but not habitually. I can't pinpoint the moment I realized I wanted to be a mom; my parents' love and support made it easy.

It was just as easy to pick a career. During my undergraduate studies, I fell in love with broadcast journalism. I took a series of television news classes and latched on immediately. Although I found the requirements and deadlines of television news challenging, I couldn't get enough.

In the summer of 2014 I interned in the newsroom of a television station in northern Wisconsin. I spent three months shadowing all journalistic positions at the station. My observations of anchors, reporters, producers and photographers suggested that they shared one thing in common – stress. I noticed how their behavior changed over the course of the day. The early meeting was a lighthearted discussion about current events among the executive producer and reporters. Later in the evening, however, the conference room turned sour. I could sense the journalists were stressed from their quick-approaching deadlines. They kept their conversations short, and glanced at the clock every minute or two. It seemed that the producers were especially anxious to get back to their desks to finish writing scripts.

One weeknight anchor, I'll call her Elizabeth, was married to a photographer at the station. I'll call him Mike. Because my internship shift was rather long (1 p.m. to 10 p.m.) I

became familiar with several staff members' work schedules, including Elizabeth's and Mike's. Most days, Elizabeth and Mike were at the station before I arrived. Similarly, they were there when I left. I concluded that they both worked (at least) 10-hour days. When I found out Elizabeth and Mike had three children, I wondered how they balanced work and family. I didn't have the courage to ask them such a personal question, however.

I thought back to my childhood, the only way of "doing family" that I knew. I pictured my parents sitting in the bleachers at my volleyball games, cheering before my every serve attempt. I remembered the annoying times, too, like our arguments at the dinner table and remote-snatching during nighttime television. Did Elizabeth and Mike experience these moments with their children? Although my parents missed out from time to time, they usually worked regular hours. In contrast, Elizabeth and Mike chose a career with hours that prohibited family dinners and tucking their children into bed every weeknight. I came up with a question that has remained in my mind since: If I pursue a career television news, will I be able to balance it with a family of my own?

I still want to be a journalist and a mom, but perhaps being both might not be easy. My research was my attempt to search for some answers – and free advice – regarding the balance of my future goals. This thesis is a multi-method study that uses personal observation and interviews to learn how working in local television news affects journalists' personal lives. The topic has allowed me to ask the personal questions I've held inside since meeting Elizabeth and Mike.

The next chapter provides background on local television news, journalists' work-life balance and stress, societal gender expectations, and technology. Chapter 3 includes my research method and research questions. Chapter 4 organizes my findings by three main themes:

scheduling, relationships and moving. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of my research, its limitations, and recommendations for future inquiry.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

Few, if any, scholars have done research on how working in local television news affects journalists' personal lives. For that reason, my review of research will focus on these related areas: journalists and work-life balance, journalists' stress, gender and work-life balance, and technology and disconnecting. Before discussing prior research, I want to emphasize that my thesis is not a study either of how local television stations produce news or of journalists' professional values. Among the many studies of local television news, Dan Berkowitz's content analysis of the gatekeeping process (1990) and case study of journalists' news judgments (1991) is a good place to start. In addition, Weaver et al. (1986, 1996, 2009, 2014) have produced a major study of journalists' professional values in each of the past four decades.

Local Television News

Hours and Coverage

Despite its gradual decline in viewership and revenue, local television news remained the leading news sector of local audiences in 2016 (Matsa, 2016). Adults reportedly chose to consume more news from local television than radio, newspapers, or network television news (Matsa, 2016). However, a survey of 154 local newscasts found that since the early 2000s, journalists were placing more emphasis on traffic, weather and sports as they reduced the number and length of edited package news stories (Olmstead, 2013). From 2005 to 2012, the average amount of weekday local television news programming grew by about an hour and a half. The shift in focus and addition of newscasts could mean there was less in-depth journalism being produced in local television news (Olmstead, 2013), as stations are working to do more with a similar amount of staff. In fact, some news organizations reported eliminating original content production, and staff, to save money (Mitchell, 2014).

Television journalists can be divided into two categories: on-air and off-air. In this thesis, on-air journalists include the anchors, reporters and meteorologists who report news, weather, and sports live on television. Off-air journalists include the producers, associate producers, and photographers who work to shoot, edit, arrange, and write the stories in each newscast. Off-air journalists are not seen by the public on television.

This thesis is a study of how working in local television news affects journalists’ personal lives. To protect journalists’ identities, the station will be called “KNEW-TV,” which is located in “Midwest City.” Local newscasts on Midwest City’s four network-affiliate stations start as early as 4:30 a.m. Many local stations have a noon newscast, and some have early evening news beginning at 4 p.m. Each station has early evening news at 5 p.m. or 6 p.m., and late evening news at 9 p.m., 10 p.m., or both. To get an idea of journalists’ work schedules for these newscasts, refer to the tables below.

Table 1.1

Morning News Schedules:

Producers	10 p.m. to 7 a.m.
Anchors	3 a.m. to noon
Meteorologists	3 a.m. to noon
Reporters	4 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Photographers	4 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Associate Producers	4 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Table 2.1

Early and Late Evening News Schedules:

Early Producers	9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Early Reporters	9 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Meteorologists	2 p.m. to 11 p.m.
Anchors	2 p.m. to 11 p.m.
Photographers	2 p.m. to 11 p.m.
Late Producers	2 p.m. to 11 p.m.
Late Reporters	2 p.m. to 11 p.m.
Associate Producers	3 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Advertising and Ratings

Local television stations are a profit center. Stations earn advertising revenue generated during news programming. Because advertising rates are set according to viewership ratings, local television stations want to attract more viewers. Ratings periods, called sweeps, occur during the months of February, May, July and November. During sweeps months, journalists are required to spend more time both on and off air to create appealing news stories (Ehrlich, 2009) to attract more viewers. In addition, journalists are often not allowed to take vacation days during these months.

Designated Market Areas and Contracts

Ratings are measured according to geographic areas called Designated Market Areas. The Nielsen DMA Ranking lists markets by size on a scale of 1 to 210. Thanks to the Nielsen DMA Ranking, journalists have adopted the phrase “moving up markets.” When journalists say this, it means they want to work at a television news station in a larger DMA.

Moving up markets can be challenging for journalists because of their contracts. Most full-time television journalists are required to sign contracts created by the television station they work for. Contracts indicate how long a journalist is obliged to work for the station. In order to move up markets, a journalist must complete his or her contract at one station before beginning a contract at another station.

Prior Research

Journalists and Work-Life Balance

Work is the central focus of life for many Americans in the 21st century. When two people meet, they often ask one another, “What do you do?” Research about work-life balance

suggests that the concept could be more accurately described as research on the conflict between one's job and one's personal life.

Work-family conflict refers to the extent to which individuals feel that the demands of the paid work domain interfere with their ability to meet demands in the family domain (Nomaguchi, 2012). Workers might place their organization's demands over their personal life demands because the employer provides the workers' salary, which is used to care for themselves and their family (Richardson, Traavik & Burke, 2016).

Brigid Schulte was a journalist for The Washington Post. She wrote about her struggle with balancing work and raising children: "I have held what I hope were professional-sounding interviews sitting on the floor outside my kids' dentist's office, in the teacher's bathroom at school functions, in the car outside various lessons, and on the grass, quickly muting the phone after each question to keep the whooping of a noisy soccer practice to a minimum" (Schulte, 2015, 5).

Work-family conflict contributes to journalists' feelings of stress, yet other components in life outside of family might also create stress for journalists.

Journalists' Stress

In a 2005 survey of 750 journalists, respondents repeatedly noted long hours, pressure to do more, missed vacation and staff cutbacks as sources of work-related stress (Geisler, 2005). Stress is an emotion characterized by feeling overworked, overwhelmed and anxious. Stress is a serious issue in work life, both for individuals and the organizations they work for (Richardson, Traavik & Burke, 2016).

Working long, odd hours can also impede the time journalists spend with their families. Women have been found most likely to quit working in journalism to care for their families

(Geisler, 2005); women were among those most likely to be caregivers for family, yet least likely to receive time off (Geisler, 2005).

If stressed journalists choose to continue working, they are at risk of feeling burnout, too. Symptoms of burnout include a lack of concern about work, emotional exhaustion and low levels of job satisfaction and personal accomplishment (Cook & Banks, 1993). A 2013 study of 82 television journalists revealed that their feelings of burnout come from a lack of organizational support and higher workload pressure (Reinardy, 2013).

Work-related stress and burnout is common in all careers, but the stress of journalists is worth paying attention to. Journalists work to inform the public about current events; if their feelings of stress or burnout affect their work, journalists are also affecting the public's access to quality information.

Gender and Work-Life Balance

Because journalists live in a patriarchal society, some stress that they experience is rooted in societal gender expectations. According to gender role investment theory, men are socialized to believe that their primary family obligation is to be the breadwinner, while women believe that their primary obligation is to be the caretaker (Eddleston & Powell, 2012). Employers value workers who put their careers first, while workers who choose their families first are often overlooked, disbelieved, or accused of unprofessionalism (Slaughter, 2012).

Although men are socially expected (and accepted) to be breadwinners, research shows that men are not necessarily happier than breadwinning women. A study found that male breadwinners reported lower physical and mental health than female breadwinners. Researchers said women were perhaps more inclined than men to step into high-pressure, better-paying roles than men as a way to push back at a previous social taboo (Paquette, 2016).

It's hard to break tradition. Journalism was once a male-dominated profession, but a large number of women began earning college degrees and entering the news workforce during the 1970s. Yet many of these women, armed with an education, said they watched their male counterparts pursue careers while women became the primary family caretakers (Everbach, 2009). Here, the storyline is far from the idea that educated women choose to leave their careers to stay home and care for their children – it's that women are pushed out by the “maternal wall” bias (Williams, Manvell & Bornstein, 2006), or discrimination against working mothers.

It's unfair to say that all women and men take on, or believe in, these societal gender roles. Young men are more likely than older men to have been raised by full-time working mothers. For that reason, men in 2017 may be more likely to understand that supporting their family means more than earning money (Slaughter, 2012).

Men are often excluded from work-family balance studies. Researchers have not studied male journalists' abilities to balance their work, personal life and family. New York Times blogger Ken Gordon suggests that working moms earn societal approval – a badge of honor – for their ability to multitask work and family obligations. However, working dads are often left out of the picture. Gordon asks, why can't dads receive the title “working dads?” (Gordon, 2012). The focus on working women who raise children implies that the work-family conflict is simply a women's issue, when it's not.

In a 2011 speech, Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg said, “The most important career decision you're going to make is whether or not you have a life partner and who that is” (Slaughter, 2012). Brigid Schulte unknowingly wrote to that advice. She said she felt pressured to “do it all” as a wife, mom and journalist. She wrote, “Why did I feel (my husband) has a career while I tried not to get fired? When we started out, he and I promised we'd be equal

partners, and yet somehow we both automatically assumed I was the parent who should take the kids to the doctors' appointments, go on field trips, volunteer at the school book fair, and stay home when they were sick" (Schulte, 2015, 19).

The American work culture reinforces relentless competition to work harder, stay later and pull more all-nighters (Slaughter, 2012). In fact, Americans commonly use their professions to define success, saying a successful person is one who can climb a professional ladder the farthest in the shortest amount of time. Journalists have reported feeling no choice but to work long hours, even when the hours created conflict in their social relationships and disrupted their vision of having children (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009). Specifically, female journalists felt the need to work harder to compensate for the way they thought their co-workers, supervisors and sources perceived them (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009).

Anne-Marie Slaughter, a foreign policy analyst who studies work-life balance, says if women are ever to achieve real equality, then workplaces must stop accepting male behavior and male choices as the default and ideal. And when that happens, everyone can stop talking about women "having it all" and can focus on Americans having healthy, happy, productive lives (Slaughter, 2012).

Work-life balance is a human rights issue, rather than a women's issue: "Work-life balance was never a mommy's issue. It's a father's issue. A children's issue. A workplace issue. A household issue. A family issue...It's an issue for society, especially one that purports to value families so highly" (Schulte, 2015).

Technology and Other Responsibilities

With the prevalence of mobile and web, television journalists have other avenues to share news updates, rather than breaking into local programming to broadcast live. In a 2017 survey,

television news directors repeatedly said journalists were using Facebook Live to break news on bad weather and sports specials, and share about major events behind-the-scenes (Papper, 2017). Journalists can update social media and web content whether they are in the station, out in the field, or even at home.

In addition to an increased presence on social media, some journalists' responsibilities have increased. Several television stations use multi-media journalists, or those who work by themselves to report, write, shoot and edit stories for television, web and mobile devices (Massey & Elmore, 2011) – responsibilities that once belonged to a multitude of people working in television news. For that reason, multi-media journalists often refer to their work as an act of “one-man-banding.” Because multi-media journalists must learn and perform a variety of skills, they're more likely to become jacks-of-all trades but masters of none (Stone, 2002).

Inductive vs. Deductive Research

This thesis uses an inductive, rather than deductive, research model. Inductive research is when general principles are developed from specific observations; it begins with the “whether” to find the “why” (Babbie, 2010). Deductive research is when specific expectations of hypotheses are developed on the basis of general principles; it begins with the “why” and moves to the “whether” (Babbie, 2010).

Because there has been little research, if any, on my thesis topic, I didn't know why working in television news affects journalists' personal lives. Instead, I used an inductive research model to gather data and look for general patterns to form the basis of a theory. I wanted to know whether, or how, working in television news affects journalists' personal lives. That lead me to develop the following five research questions:

Research Questions

RQ1: How does working odd hours affect the work-life balance of television journalists?

RQ2: How do television journalists balance their relationships and families with their work responsibilities?

RQ3: How does moving up markets affect television journalists?

RQ4: To what extent can television journalists detach from their work?

RQ5: To what extent do male and female journalists experience RQ1-RQ4 phenomena differently?

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

At the time I conducted this research, I was working at KNEW-TV as a part-time associate producer. I did not take the job at KNEW-TV with any intentions of studying my co-workers; I simply wanted an opportunity to get my foot in the door – to gain experience in a career I hoped to someday work full time. In the end, I decided to study journalists at the station I worked at because they were accessible to me and were more likely to trust me.

This thesis is a case study of how working in local television news affects journalists' personal lives. KNEW-TV was in one of the 50 largest DMA markets in the United States. My data came from participant observation and interviews with 28 journalists from that station.

Participant observation is a naturalistic data gathering technique; it extends ordinary activity into a formal analysis of patterns (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). My participation at KNEW-TV helped me to better understand local television news. My observation and interaction with journalists' work lives helped me prepare interview questions about journalists' personal lives. Although my job at KNEW-TV might sound like a research advantage, it may have also served as a disadvantage. Its possible journalists felt pressured to respond to my interview questions in a particular manner. For example, a journalist may have revealed too much or too little because of their trust in me, a co-worker, serving as a researcher.

Data can be generalized when the place a researcher chooses to study is “not so atypical as to be unique” (Feeley, 1979). In this thesis, KNEW-TV can be regarded as a *typical* network-affiliate station. Although KNEW-TV may operate differently from other local television stations in the United States, television journalists everywhere are trying to balance work with their personal lives. For that reason, data in this thesis can help explain how working in local television news may affect all journalists' personal lives.

Participant Observation

The more I worked as an associate producer, the more I noticed pieces of journalists' personal lives in the newsroom. These were more obvious on anchors' desks – photographs of their children and nephews posted alongside press passes to major political events and exquisite galas. Evidence of producers' personal lives was less apparent, perhaps because producers rotate desks depending on which show they're assigned to produce. Every couple of weeks a fundraiser sheet would pop up in the break room with a cute photo of someone's child and a small note asking workers to purchase cookies or wrapping paper in support of a school field trip or something. For the most part, my participant-observation was more heavily focused on the participatory side, for when I stepped into the newsroom or studio I was on the clock as an employee.

Often when I arrived to work, I'd quickly take a seat at the producer pod. The desks were arranged side-by-side. Although I sat elbow-to-elbow with producers three or four days a week, I didn't get to know them as closely as one might think. Once I sat down, I immediately got to work. I sifted through newscast rundowns looking for stories that still needed to be written, or video that needed to be ordered. I usually worked late afternoons and evenings, or what I like to call our newscast crunch time. Working to reach our deadlines didn't allow for much personal chatter among producers and reporters in the newsroom, especially when breaking news occurred.

I remember hearing about journalists' personal lives in the studio instead. Part of my duties as an associate producer was to help producers write the show in the newsroom, then leave the producer pod and head out into the studio to run the teleprompter for every newscast. These were my half hour blocks in which I could interact with and observe the anchors, meteorologists

and reporters. On-air journalists typically used commercial breaks to read the next set of scripts, or to check Twitter for breaking news updates. Sometimes these journalists used commercial breaks to share personal stories.

I noticed that the station's younger on-air journalists talked more openly during commercial breaks than the older on-air journalists. Younger journalists tended to work early mornings, like 3 a.m. to noon, or on weekends. These folks talked about recent travels, visits with friends, or openly read viewers' comments on social media – good or bad. Older journalists, who typically worked weeknights, were more likely to speak quietly about their partners and family life.

Interviews

My observations helped me to start to prepare for my interviews. But before I talked to anyone, I set up a one-on-one meeting with the station's news director. We met in his office one afternoon and I took a seat in one of his brown leather chairs. I was more nervous than I was on my first day on the job. I wanted to ask for his permission to speak to my co-workers.

I can't remember exactly how I blurted everything out, but I know mentioned that I was interested in studying anchors, reporters, producers and photographers as people, not professionals. I said I wanted to learn about their experiences balancing work with their personal lives. I promised to keep the identity of every journalist, and the station, confidential as best as I could. Once I got all of that out, I felt a lump in my throat. I had one last, and what I thought, big, request. Finally, I added, "And I don't want any restrictions on who I talk to, or what I ask them." To my surprise, the news director gave me the green light.

Response Rate

I conducted 23 interviews from January 24 through February 6, 2017. I took a few weeks off to begin transcribing, then went back and spoke with five more journalists from March 29 through April 5, 2017. That brought me to 28 journalists total:

5 anchors,

3 anchor/reporters,

6 reporters,

2 sports anchor/reporters,

3 executive producers,

4 producers,

3 meteorologists and

2 photographers.

I emailed 39 journalists initially: 28 journalists met for an interview; six journalists ignored my emails; two journalists turned down my interview request (one producer didn't want to speak about her personal life, one photographer was preparing for a family event); three journalists agreed to an interview, but failed to set up a time to meet. My final response rate is 84.6% and interview completion rate is 71.7%. There were approximately 50 full-time journalists at KNEW-TV.

I chose to gather my data through interviews instead of a survey for a few reasons. First, interviews better provide context and clarity to how working in television news affects journalists' personal lives. Surveys provide breadth, in that I could have reached more journalists, but surveys would not have allowed me to tailor questions for each participant. Interviews provide depth to my study. My qualitative approach let me use personal stories as rich

examples to help answer my research questions, thus reflecting my wish to recognize a journalist as a person, not a statistic. An analysis of survey data would have left my study feeling stiff and distant. I didn't want journalists' voices and experiences to get lost in the numbers.

Ethics of Human Subjects

Prior to conducting any research, I completed a human subjects research training program on the interaction with, observation of, and data collection from human subjects. I met with a member of my university's Institutional Review Board to discuss three ethical principles: providing confidentiality, receiving informed consent, and obliging to not harm research subjects.

To set up the interviews with journalists, I sent individual emails to every anchor, reporter, producer and meteorologist. I emailed only a select handful of photographers – those with whom I'd had conversations before. In my email, I explained my background and my interest in studying how working in television news can affect journalists' personal lives.

If the journalist agreed to meet me for an interview, I sent a follow-up email with a link to an online event calendar called Sign-Up Genius. The page allowed journalists to pick a time and location to meet, based on my availability. The page also automatically sent reminder emails of our interview appointment.

In addition to using participant observation to prepare for my interviews, I also printed every journalist's bio from the KNEW-TV website. I read the bios and took notes of journalists' professional backgrounds, such as where they studied and worked prior to KNEW-TV, as well as any mention of their families or personal hobbies.

I met most of my co-workers at coffee shops near the station or their homes. I offered to buy them coffee or a treat for their time. A few journalists simply asked to meet at the station

during their work hours. I never interviewed anyone during my work hours; I set up every interview to take place on my time off.

To begin each interview, I asked for a journalist's informed consent. I told every journalist that my thesis was part of my graduation requirement. I said that I wouldn't use their real names or the name of the station we worked at. I reminded them that they didn't have to answer every question. Once the journalist gave me their consent, I began the interview.

I asked open-ended questions so each journalist could choose to respond any way he or she felt most comfortable. Open-ended questions allowed a journalist to elaborate upon an answer, disagree with a question, or raise a new issue; this approach then allowed me to make up new questions and follow new insights (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Most interviews ranged from 20 minutes to about an hour. During that time, I recorded audio and took backup notes on my laptop. I shared the files only with my thesis advisor to help determine my results.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The results revealed in this chapter are based on themes that emerged from the interview data. I perceived three ways in which working in television news affects journalists' personal lives: scheduling, relationships and moving.

1. Scheduling

One cold February night, I left work at 11 p.m. and walked outside to clear my snow-covered car parked in KNEW-TV's gated lot. I remember being in a hurry because I was scheduled to be back at work by 4 a.m.

Suddenly I was trapped. I had managed to turn on my car and start the heat, but had accidentally locked myself out of the car as I cleared off the snow. Along with my keys in the ignition, my cell phone and building entry card were stuck inside the locked car. I had no way of getting back into the newsroom or out of the parking lot.

After I took a big I-can't-believe-this deep breath, I ran up to a co-worker clearing snow off of his car and explained my situation. Thankfully, he agreed to drive me to my home – 20 minutes away – so I could retrieve my extra set of car keys. He then drove me back to my already-running car parked in the gated lot. After all was said and done, I managed to get two hours of sleep that night.

I had terrible luck with my car, but even worse luck with my work schedule. While full-time journalists had consistent schedules, my hours as a part-time associate producer rotated depending on the availability of other part-time associate producers. (Tables of anchors', reporters', producers' and photographers' common shifts can be found on page 5.) I accepted the crazy, fluctuating hours because I wanted to prove I belonged – that I could be a producer.

The more I worked, the more I learned. Soon my boss gave me an opportunity for additional producer training. The only catch: training was during the weekend morning show. Producers for that show worked a ten-hour overnight shift from 11 p.m. to 9 a.m. For some reason, the thought of working those hours really worried me. I knew it would be hard to balance that shift with school and my personal life. It was. I showed up to school on Monday mornings feeling groggy, and I took afternoon naps throughout the week to catch up on the sleep I missed during the weekend. Before I knew it, Friday had arrived and it was time to flip my sleep schedule again. I drank a lot of coffee to get through those few weeks of training.

Shortly after that, I began producing evening newscasts when a full-time producer called in sick or took a vacation day. I worked from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. or 2 p.m. to 11 p.m., depending on the show I was assigned. Those shifts are called dayside and nightside, respectively.

One component of a journalist's work-life balance is his or her work schedule. Because television news stations operate on a 24-hour news cycle, someone is always in the newsroom. One of the first questions I asked journalists during my interviews is what they thought of their schedules. Marcus, an executive producer, said that there's actually a newscast hierarchy:

I'd say for the most part, mornings are looked at as almost a, not a training ground, but lower level... It's like mornings are the lowest, then nightside, then the most important is the 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. (dayside). Which is funny of course, because (mornings) are very difficult and just the lifestyle arguably is difficult.

After speaking to more journalists, I found that the lifestyle difficulties Marcus mentioned, which came with working morning news, fall into three categories: sleep, health, and making plans. The biggest challenge, one I definitely experienced working overnights, was figuring out a decent sleep schedule.

Rosalie was a morning producer who previously had worked nightside in a smaller market. When she jumped to Midwest City, she quickly flipped to working overnight from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.

I transitioned from second to third shift in the span of three days. I left my job on a Friday, I moved on Saturday, and then I started working on Monday. It was hell, for lack of a better term. I felt like a zombie. No amount of coffee could ever help.

In 2017, Rosalie had been working at KNEW-TV for one year.

It's a lot better now than it was when I was training and transitioning. I guess what's made it better is the adrenaline rush. Like when there's late-breaking news, you're constantly working so you have your mind off of (what time it is). And you're working with other people who have the same schedule, you kind of like commiserate with them. I think the hardest part is you feel like you're missing out on a lot of things because it's a really weird shift. I don't think a lot of people understand it.

Ty was also a producer. She had experience producing morning news at the station for one year before she switched to working dayside. She said working overnights was unbearable, and explained why she thought others might not understand the difficulty in sleeping during the day and working at night, especially for producers.

(Mornings) just turns your whole life... your body and health is completely affected by working that shift. It's one thing if you work like an anchor schedule for mornings, it starts at 3 or something. That's an early morning. But when you're working overnight consistently, it's just so hard on your health, and you never really get on a good sleep schedule. At least I never did. I would end up sleeping a couple hours and then waking up for a couple hours. That's the difference too between starting at 3 and starting at 10. Like when you're actually spending the night, overnight like from one day to another, it just sucks.

Did you feel like you were always working?

Oh yeah. Because you work all night, and then when you're done everyone else is going to work. So then you sleep all day. Let's say you wake up at 5 p.m., and theoretically sure you can go hang out with people and do stuff, but like, if

anybody is going out for dinner and drinks, you can't drink obviously. It never worked for me. It was awful. I hated it (laughs). Honestly.

Morning producers were not the only journalists who referenced their sleep schedule.

Aaron was a morning anchor. He arrived at work at 3 a.m. to prep for the morning newscast. He started his day reviewing news scripts, then read them live on air at 4:30 a.m. He said waking up is the hardest part.

You never get used to waking up at 2 o'clock in the morning or going to sleep at 7, but your body adjusts a little bit more. You just don't sleep as much... If you want to do anything outside of work, it's usually going to be when other people, normal people, are off work. Which is usually 6 or 7 o'clock when you're trying to sleep. I was in a volleyball league last summer, and we played Thursdays anywhere from 6 o'clock to 8 o'clock at night. So, Friday mornings I just kind of, I got used to the fact that I was going to be tired.

Aside from getting enough sleep, some journalists said working mornings ruined their ambition to exercise. Rosalie, for example, said:

I used to like to run, but I don't run anymore. I still like running a 5k. I used to run like a 5k every couple of weeks in the summer. Like I was a runner. I used to love running. But now I haven't had the energy... That's one of the hardest things. I have no energy working this shift. I have no motivation to go run after a nine-hour third shift.

Instead of running to keep in shape, Rosalie adjusted her diet. She said she tried to eat healthier when she worked overnight from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.

I guess what's important to me is to eat healthy. A lot of people who work third shift like really unhealthy foods. They'll bring in Jimmy Johns, or Chipotle, or McDonald's because that's the stuff that's open late at night. But like, I bring in oatmeal and get made fun of all the time. But like, it's little things like that where I feel better if I'm eating that kind of thing.

Ty also explained how her health was affected when she worked third shift. She said got carpal tunnel from the amount of typing she did as a morning producer.

Can you explain why there's more writing for a morning producer?

In the morning show, the pace is a lot faster. You have a lot shorter stories, but that's a lot more for you to write because you're not relying on all of the sound bites from other people and reporters' stories. So a lot of that writing falls on (morning producers).

Ty compared dayside producers' writing load to that of the morning producers.

She said dayside producers get a lot of their content from reporters, whereas morning producers have to generate that content on their own.

Ty's carpal tunnel led management to switch her work schedule to a less writing-intensive newscast. She began producing early evening shows instead of morning shows.

How did you make the switch to working dayside?

I had surgery. And I mean, what it ended up being was in the morning show I typed so much. I had carpal tunnel in both of my hands and so I had to have surgery. I was out of work for like three months. That break kind of created some shifts in scheduling. Essentially I came back and I told them like, I'll stay on mornings, but you have to understand this isn't good for me. The carpal tunnel could come back; the symptoms could come back. So they ended up moving me to dayside producing. And then all of my symptoms went away, because it's not so much typing. It was kind of an unconventional promotion, in a way.

I asked an executive producer how producers are normally assigned to newscasts. She replied:

I think for the most part (newscast assignments are) based on skill and where people are needed most. There's a balancing act because some shifts have more than one person, so you don't want to have all of your starting lineup on one (newscast shift).

It's hard for journalists to make predictions about what their schedule might be for this reason. Similarly, if a journalist leaves, news directors may move another journalist into the open spot. Routine schedule shakeups can disrupt the life of a journalist. Ty explained what happened to her when a producer left KNEW-TV.

The problem with TV news in general, is that your schedule is at complete control of your boss. Like, I feel like with more than a lot of other jobs, (television news) bosses dictate your life. Like when they decided to move me to mornings.

How did that happen?

I was working the dayside shift, going along as happy as can be. Then they had someone leave mornings, so I had to fill-in produce mornings for like four months until they found someone. It's just like your whole life can flip upside down without any warning, and they're just like yep your schedule changed for next week and it's going to be changed until we find someone.

Your contract doesn't indicate a time you work?

Right. So the contract does not indicate what time, what schedule, or what show at all. It just says producer. And now that's happening to other people at the station, like, their days off are completely switching. People who have been Monday through Friday are now all of a sudden working on Saturdays and Sundays. I feel bad. The decision is coming from above. But it's like, people with 20 plus years of experience that are getting shoved back to weekends. It speaks to the fact that your life is not totally in your hands, as far as your schedule.

Like Ty's schedule, Kelly's schedule also changed. Kelly had produced at KNEW-TV for almost 14 years. At the time I interviewed Kelly, she told me she was going to leave once her contract expired. She said changes to her schedule were one reason she had started to look for a new career.

It sounds like you've been flipping between different hours, different shows. What's that like?

Horrible (laughs). You know, 13 and a half years ago it was fine because I was 22. I was brand new. Any experience is good experience. I used to sleep at the station once a week before starting at 2 in the morning. When people called in sick I was the first to volunteer, so I'd just sleep at the station for a couple hours and then work. So I'd work like two shifts. I'd do the morning, sleep for like three hours, and then work again. It was all for the experience.

And now?

Being older it's just really hard. Because you're set in your ways, almost. I got used to second shift. I got used to doing things before work, either if I was working out or going to lunch with a friend or family member. When my

schedule gets changed, plans get canceled, doctor appointments have to be moved, things like that. It messes with your sleep.

So when you started your career you were flip flopping for experience, now you're doing it...

I'm forced. I mean I guess at this point I've paid my dues. I'm fine filling in once in awhile. I guess to be put back (on nightside and weekends) was a slap in the face. I've been there, done that... I said well listen, I'm not (switching my schedule) until after the Super Bowl. I said I've worked Super Bowl Sunday before, I'm not going to. You know, I said consider myself out of town, I'm not doing it.

Why was the Super Bowl important?

Just because for years I've missed the Super Bowl. For years and years and years working third shift, I'd have to sleep during the Super Bowl so I could go to work that night. Do I care about any team? No (laughs). It's just an experience that the rest of the world gets to have, and I feel like I should enjoy it too.

A weird sleep schedule and the fear of missing out were common responses to questions about working for the early morning news shows. One journalist I spoke to earlier, however, preferred an overnight schedule for personal reasons. Marcus was a 30-year-old executive producer who attended college in Midwest City. He started working at KNEW-TV as an intern for two semesters. Once he graduated, he took a part-time associate producer position. He said that six or seven months later, he started training to fill-in produce the weekend morning show. Eventually, he worked his way up to the morning executive producer. He's stuck with the overnight schedule, working midnight to 9 a.m., for years.

Is your family (mom and younger brother) pretty understanding of your schedule?

They are, yeah. They don't fault me anymore. You know, like when there are family events going on Sunday afternoon that I'll just skip because I need to be sleeping, or at least I'm about to go to sleep at that point. In fact, I think they've actually adjusted. They're more likely now to have stuff on Saturday afternoons. Which I'm pretty sure they know it's really inconvenient for me to do it Sunday afternoon.

Have you ever thought about switching schedules?

It's come up. I've never asked, because even though it's challenging it has a lot of perks. Again, even though it meant I'd be getting less sleep, I was still... Bigger picture, I'm very close with my younger brother who's not so young anymore. He's 15 now. My mom is handicapped, so I have a lot of responsibilities that I've had a long time with them. I'd say this third shift lifestyle has been a little challenging in that regard, just because my brother and I are so close. Not so much anymore, he doesn't want anything to do with me.

(laughs) Those teenage years.

Right. A few years ago it was challenging because there's very limited time to spend with them. It's a little challenging with my mom who has her health issues because I'd like to take her to appointments, doctor appointments and stuff like that. But again, unless those appointments are say before noon or 1 p.m., then that really doesn't work well for me. Sometimes I do have to take her, which just means less sleep, which is unfortunate. When I try explaining it to people, because I don't think people always quite get it, I'd say that would be asking you to take me to an appointment at like 2 in the morning or something.

Journalists who are scheduled to work during the day and evening find challenges, too. A sports reporter, Dean, said away game coverage makes his work days especially long.

It's a grind. It's a grind that not a lot of people understand as they see the end result of what we do, and that is you sit in a press box, or you stand next to (football player). How cool is that? And don't get me wrong, that's why I got into this industry is to cover games, to be around sports all the time, but they don't see the sixty plus hour weeks during the season. I work sixteen or seventeen hour days when I'm on the road, especially on game days, because every show wants to have your face in it. So you're required to do that much more work.

Dean wasn't the only one who experienced long days. Before to coming to KNEW-TV, James worked as a national news correspondent in a western city. He travelled across the country to follow breaking and trending news. James said back-timing became his number one skill – counting back from when he had to be live on air to when he needed to catch a flight. In between, he needed enough time to gather information, conduct interviews and shoot video. He

compared his prior schedule as a national news correspondent to his schedule in local television news.

You were kind of always on the clock. The company tried to respect the fact that you were on for, you know, eight hours usually, but it never really was eight. It was usually ten, twelve, sometimes sixteen hours. You know, it's just the nature of traveling. Even in local news you have traveling groups for (sports teams). You're looking at, you know, a twelve to sixteen-hour day. I think even the inauguration showed that a lot of local crews... they didn't have the luxury of bringing multiple people (to cover) these events. So they have to serve morning shows and night shows, so those are long days. My role as a national reporter was not an exception. You know, you're out there until you get it done.

Sometimes journalists' schedules can change in other ways that don't impact where or what hours they work. Station contracts have fine print that indicates a news director may choose to change the role of a journalist at the station, different from what he or she was hired to do. Kris, an anchor/reporter at KNEW-TV, told me how at a previous station he was switched to split his time between reporting and producing.

The news director wanted to do a little shakeup, and he's like, I'm going to have you produce two days a week and report three days a week. And it wasn't what I had envisioned or what I had wanted.

Initially you were hired as a full-time reporter?

Yes. It was super frustrating. This happened around the recession, and I was in my early 20s and didn't feel like I could speak up. At the same time, I was frustrated and miffed by it, but I took it in stride and I tried to be dignified and graceful about it. It's funny because (the news director) was so discouraging and just nasty in his demeanor, but at the same time I was nearing the end of my contract. I was getting calls from bigger markets. I was just like okay, whatever.

What was it like switching from reporting to producing?

I believe everything happens for a reason. For me it was great, because I think it helped me be a better reporter and now a better anchor, because I know what goes into someone else's job. I know how stressed out the producer is because there's so much going on in that half hour show. I kind of always look at things like as a learning experience. It helped me down the road.

Section Summary:

Journalists noted advantages and disadvantages to working each shift, but it seemed that journalists preferred working dayside rather than nightside, and nightside rather than overnight.

The more prevalent disadvantages came from journalists who worked overnight, 11 p.m. to 7 a.m., to produce early-morning news. They said working for morning news led to difficulty sleeping and making plans, and also negatively affected their health. One journalist said she has no motivation to exercise, another said the increased amount of typing for morning news caused her to get carpal tunnel.

Despite the disadvantages that come with working morning news, an executive producer chose to stay with the overnight schedule for several years because it worked best with his personal life. He helped care for his handicapped mother and teenage brother. Working overnight allowed him to take his mother to doctor appointments during the day.

A sports reporter, who typically worked dayside, said traveling is what made his job tiring. He credited long hours on game days and the football season to his feeling of exhaustion.

Overall, journalists' work schedules are not set in stone because television station management can shift a journalist's schedule, and role, at any time.

2. Family, Friends and Relationships

When I started working in television news, I knew I would be working on holidays. In fact, during my first year I worked every holiday except one – Thanksgiving.

I requested to have off Thanksgiving and the day after, which was my birthday. My family and I usually celebrate Thanksgiving and my birthday together, so planning my two-hour road trip home to see everyone would have worked out nicely.

The week of Thanksgiving came, and as I was sitting at the producer pod, my boss wheeled her chair over to my desk and sat next to me. I knew something was up. She asked if I could work the morning shift on my birthday. She needed someone to run the teleprompter for our new weekend anchor. Normally, weekend anchors run their own teleprompter with a handheld remote or foot pedal. I would have felt guilty if our new anchor had had to figure that out on his first day, so I said yes. So much for my one holiday off – accepting that shift cut short my trip home.

Although I was at the bottom of KNEW-TV's food chain, so to speak, plenty of other journalists miss holidays and other important family events each year.

The previous chapter showed how television journalists' schedules can create some challenges in their personal health and well-being. This section will look more deeply into how journalists balance work among their family, friends and relationships.

Turner had worked in television news for more than 20 years. He started as a photographer in a small market. Within a few months, Turner got the opportunity to shoot, report, write and edit his own stories. Eventually, Turner became a full-time reporter. A few years later, Turner moved to a different market to become a full-time anchor. In those years of jumping from one position to the next, Turner was never able to make it back to his home state

for Thanksgiving. In part, Turner blamed his ambition to change positions in the industry for keeping him, and his young children, from visiting his parents' home. He said he understood missing the holiday because it falls during a sweeps period, but the older he got the more it bothered him.

I accept it's the career that we choose, but yeah, I think when I was younger it didn't necessarily bother me because it was my chance to have an opportunity to sit on the anchor desk, or go out and report a certain story, but now I think, especially with my kids, I think about...I've been in this business for a while and personally haven't been back home to see (extended) family at Thanksgiving in 20 years, just because that is one of the holidays that falls during sweeps. That means my wife and kids haven't been (in eastern state) for Thanksgiving, either.

Kelly also mentioned Thanksgiving. She had produced the morning show for nine years and although she had daytime hours off, it was hard for her to celebrate holidays with family because of her sleep schedule. She said her parents helped adapt their Thanksgiving traditions to fit her needs.

My parents have been extremely understanding. They've, like for Thanksgiving, always adjusted to my schedule. So they'd have like a noon Thanksgiving dinner for me or earlier if I needed to go to bed.

Feeling that family understands your work schedule is one thing, but Kelly also pointed out how great it feels to have an understanding partner during the holidays. Kelly's partner is on disability and stays home when Kelly is at work.

If my partner was not understanding, she would have left a long time ago to be honest. I also have to be gracious, like, I have to thank her because I've worked all the holidays. The little fun holidays, like the 4th of July, Memorial Day and Labor Day. I feel bad because she didn't sign up for this. I always understood that I had to work holidays, but she's home alone on the 4th of July doing nothing while I'm at work. But she's always been very understanding.

Just as Kelly's partner was understanding on holidays, Dominick said he tried to be understanding of his weather team on holidays, too. Dominick was the chief meteorologist at KNEW-TV. One of the perks of the job was that he gets to create the weather team's schedule. However, Dominick told me he tried to work a number of holidays each year to even things out among his four-member staff. In other words, he and his weather team each worked a similar amount of holidays throughout the year.

Dominick and his wife had three school-age children. At first, he said his wife wasn't OK with him working during holidays, but over time he said she's come to understand the demands of the television news and unpredictability of weather.

Initially I think my wife really struggled with the fact that I was working a lot of holidays. My hours weren't fun and we didn't get to see each other all that often. She was working a normal shift and I was working second shift. But as time went on, she got used to it. You get used to the fact that we'll be at something, and if there's some kind of severe weather, I have to (go to work). That's what I do. And that took awhile, but now it's just what we do.

Holidays aren't the only important moments that a journalist might miss. Kris was an anchor/reporter at KNEW-TV. He lived in four cities within ten years to work his way from production assistant to anchor/reporter. In those years, Kris said he missed some important family celebrations. He said his "tunnel vision" of building his career didn't allow him to take time off.

My parents celebrated a milestone anniversary when I was working in (an eastern city), and I couldn't get time off to go home for that. So I missed that. I've missed a ton of weddings and other family events. It's been really hard being away from home, but I've been so focused on the job that I kind of put it aside. Now I'm reevaluating.

Still focused on building his career, Kris went on to say that he was debating the idea of trying to become a national news correspondent. However, he said he felt the position is "all or

nothing” and wasn’t sure how much more he wanted to sacrifice his personal life. He wasn’t counting it out of his future plans, though.

I wasn’t sure if Kris had talked to James, the former national news correspondent who worked at KNEW-TV as an anchor/reporter. James said his previous experience traveling around the country to report the news wasn’t great for his dating life.

Dating was extremely difficult when you’re on the road. I think I can count on one hand the number of dates I went on when I was working (as a national news correspondent). The problem was always well, I’ll see you when I see you.

I asked James if he had gone on more dates since working at KNEW-TV. He was hesitant in his response, perhaps because he doesn’t like his 3 a.m. to noon work schedule. Instead, James told me he respects other journalists who make family time possible.

I’d like to meet someone, you know, but the hours are tricky. Happy hour for me is at noon now. But yeah, it’s tough. I look at my colleagues who are married with children in this business, doing really odd hours and working holidays and missing birthdays, I often wonder if I’ll have the same kind of dedication and intestinal fortitude to not only respect my family and be a part of their lives, but also respect this journey as a journalist. I think it’s no easy feat.

James wasn’t the only journalist who had a hard time dating because of his work schedule. A 24-year-old photographer, Brent, was willing to discuss his dating life. He usually worked from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Do you think it’s hard to date with this job?

God, yes. It’s so hard to date. I was dating someone who worked a regular teaching job and we rarely got to see each other. Then I was dating someone else who had a morning job, and we rarely got to see each other. And before that I was dating a pilot, and we rarely got to see each other. In general, it sucks because I’m scheduled from say 2 until 10 and it’s 9:50 and something happens, I have to work, which automatically means I’m staying late for an hour. And when I have plans, then I have to kill those plans. Like I had two

dates, separate nights where I had to be like oh sorry about that I can't make it tonight. It was very unfortunate, but at least I got overtime.

Perhaps it's because of a journalist's schedule, or because journalists are so invested in their work, but I found that it was common for journalists to date or marry someone they met through work. Michael, a reporter and former anchor, told me about when he first met the woman he married. She was a student and had asked to shadow a journalist at a local television station. The station assigned her to shadow Michael.

I got this call from the front desk receptionist that there was a student there to talk to me... I went to go meet her. We had big glass doors. I noticed right away this young woman was very attractive (laughs). We ended up hitting it off a lot as I was telling her about television news. Lo and behold we ended up falling in love and got married, all within a year's time.

John, a photographer, also met someone special through work. He met his future wife when he was out on an assignment.

I was working at a competing station at the time, and I was sent to an elementary school for a Dr. Seuss green eggs and ham breakfast. They were serving a bunch of green eggs and ham to a bunch of elementary school kids. My wife was actually the teacher that was reading the story to the kids while they ate breakfast. So I had a chance to meet her and strike up a conversation, and well, the rest is history I guess.

Aaron didn't have to get sent on an assignment to meet the woman who became his girlfriend. When Aaron was a morning anchor in a smaller market, he dated a fellow journalist who he met in the newsroom. He said her companionship and understanding helped him deal with the stress of the job.

We lived together for two years. Living with somebody when you're doing this job is a huge, huge help. It's someone who understands your schedule. It's a good support system too, because you do have days when you're just so tired, so beaten down by whatever happened on the job, that you need somebody who

understands it to talk about it.

Understanding is a trait that drew Emma to her future husband, who was working at a competing television station when they met. At first, Emma didn't think dating someone in television news was a good idea.

I had always said I would never date someone who's in TV. I just thought it was way too difficult. You know, both people have contracts, meaning you are traveling, your career takes up a lot of time, you work holidays. And it just kind of happened that way. He worked at a different station, doing a different job, which I think helped a lot. He was doing web. We weren't doing the same thing. We weren't seeing each other on stories, which I would not have liked.

Why wouldn't you like that?

It would just be strange, awkward. Especially if you were competing to get interviews. You know, that's weird.

Emma's husband no longer works in television news. After she relocated to work at KNEW-TV, mutual friends helped her husband get a job in business. Emma said she's thankful she ended up marrying someone who understands her job.

It worked out. It's nice to have someone who understands what I'm doing. He doesn't get mad that I have to work a crazy schedule. He doesn't think it's weird I have to work holidays. He gets it, but he's not doing it, which is nice.

Aniya is an African American anchor. Like Emma, she didn't originally like the idea of dating someone in television news. In fact, Aniya listed several types of men she didn't care to date. Eventually, Aniya abandoned her list and married a co-worker from her former station.

We actually met at work. The funny thing is, before (my husband) and I started dating, I was like I'm done dating people who are my friends, white guys, anyone who was in the military, anyone who was younger than me, and a co-worker. He failed four of those five things. He wasn't in the military (laughs).

Once journalists met that someone special, they often began to reevaluate the work portion of their lives. Kelly explained how her priorities shifted from working and partying to spending time in a committed relationship.

For several years, and part of it is hard because it could just be my 20s, but I drank a lot (laughs). So, me and some other people who worked third shift, we'd get done with work and we would go out. We found a bar that would open early and we would just drink right after work for several hours. And that's basically all we did. We would work and drink, work and drink, work and drink. That was probably it for several years. It wasn't until I started a relationship that it totally changed. I think that's really right when my priorities started to change. I started to dislike media a little more because I wanted to spend time with this person.

Dean's priorities also shifted. He said didn't think he had time to date someone because of his work ethic, but found his approach to work changed once he met his girlfriend.

I'm actually surprised at how much I'm able to see her. Maybe it's because my focus has changed. I'm still the hardworking person I am, but now I value my time away from work that much more. I'm not just lingering around to help others when I don't need to, or getting in early to be overly ambitious. I'm valuing my time away from work, which I think has created a much healthier balance in my life. I don't feel like I'm working all the time.

Dean, a sports reporter, added that his girlfriend is also a sports fan. She understands how his work as a sports reporter can spill into the personal time they share together.

She's at all the games and you know, we bond over the (sports team). She's a huge sports fan, so that helps. Like she understands why I have to be watching games and tweeting about games. She sometimes thinks I do it too much, but she understands that's part of what I'm doing. I'm trying to build a brand of "here's who I am, here's what I do, here's why you should follow me."

Several other journalists also said that a partner or spouse who's "understanding" is a quality they look for and appreciate. Margaret was a morning reporter. At the time I interviewed

her, she and her husband were raising a toddler and a newborn. She remembered some advice she had gotten years ago about being a married journalist.

One of the best pieces of advice I ever got was from an anchor. This was when I was in college. She said "it is so important to have an understanding spouse in this line of work." And I was like yeah, OK, I get it. But no I mean, it still isn't easy, but at the end of the day he's understanding and flexible. I mean he's always had normal hours. He says he would never work my hours. He would get a different job. But obviously there's something I'm so passionate about and drawn to that I continue to torture myself with no sleep.

Anne is another journalist who found an understanding spouse. I was surprised to find that her husband adapted his sleep schedule to fit hers. Anne worked as a morning meteorologist at her previous station. She told me how hard her 3 a.m. - noon work schedule was to balance with her husband's more traditional 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. work schedule. After he flipped his sleep schedule to match Anne's, he spent time with his hobby of fixing cars before work instead of after.

I would see (my husband) before I went to bed for a little bit, and then he would stay up. It worked for a while. It was good, but then he decided to flip his shift. I was like, "OK you're going to get up at two in the morning with me?" He's like "yeah, then I'll go to bed with you." He likes to work on cars in the garage at home, so he'd be making all of this noise and I'd be waking up, you know, I couldn't sleep. So he decided to get up with me. I would go to work and he would work on the car at three in the morning.

It's nice you've arranged a schedule that works.

I feel kind of bad. I've told him on more than one occasion if it was the other way around I could not imagine me being the one to get up, willingly. I would get a serious case of like, it's early and I'm just going to sit on the couch and not do anything. I could see that happening.

At KNEW-TV, Anne worked weekend evenings. She said she and her husband were trying to switch sleep schedules again to accommodate for her new work hours: 2 p.m. to 11 p.m. So far, Anne and her husband didn't like the switch.

It's been a real struggle, because (my husband) is still getting up at three in the morning because he can't shake the schedule... I just prefer mornings. I love going to work early, and my husband likes it that way and I can get stuff done. No one is at the grocery store. No one is at the gym.

Not all couples can balance work and a relationship. Gerald started his sports reporting career in radio, then added a television job to the mix. He eventually worked his way to become the sports director at KNEW-TV. Gerald told me that he was married at one point. He said part of the reason his marriage didn't last was his ambition to keep building his career.

I think it's really healthy to keep a balance between family and work, and I never had that healthy balance. I can honestly say part of my divorce was because I was so, trying to build this. And I know that's happened to a lot of other people too. If you go into it treating it as a job, it's 40 hours a week God I can't wait till I can get off of work, you're not going to succeed. It's just the way this business goes. So it doesn't lead to a healthy balance for most people.

Having an understanding partner or spouse might lead to a healthier work-life balance, but what about an understanding extended family? Kelly didn't seem to think she had that. She said she had missed celebrating a lot of her brother's children's birthday parties.

My family struggles to understand. I have a brother who has two daughters and a son. So my two nieces and nephew, and (my brother) continues to want to do birthday parties on a Wednesday at 5 p.m. It's hard not to be mad at him because he knows my schedule and should know better. But he's got his life, so that's when he plans it.

Journalists with children of their own also said they felt like they missed out. Dominick told me about how his three children loved to play sports. His oldest child was a runner, his middle child played lacrosse, and his youngest child was a gymnast. He credited his wife for staying on top of their children's sports schedules.

Do you feel like with your job you're missing out on some of those moments?

I miss a lot. It's the worst part of the job for me, is missing some of my kids' stuff. My wife is a saint. She's just, all she does in the evening is she's a driver, and is just constantly having to take the kids places. With them being in different sports, they're always in different places. And now we have two kids on traveling teams. It makes it more interesting when we have weekend events. I mean the nice thing is that when it's a weekend event I'm there to see it. Usually.

Do you think your kids are pretty understanding?

They are. They've grown up with it so they don't know anything but. They know that dad isn't always going to be there for whatever they have going on. And that's never really caused any kind of problem, yet (laughs). I think I do everything in my power to try to be a part of their lives as much as I can. It's not as much as I'd like to be, but it's what you choose. And that's the thing. This occupation isn't the only one where people have a hard time with commitments and trying to do all the different things.

But not every journalist can imagine a life with children. Anne told me why she and her husband have decided not to have children, and how that decision fits with her career as a television meteorologist and his career as a mechanic.

Can I ask, have you and your husband talked about having children?

Yes.

How do you see that working with your job?

The funny thing is that we don't want any. We're not having any. We don't want any. I know that's kind of weird, most people do. We never, I think like when we first got married we contemplated it. And then after working, I don't know, I can't imagine trying to figure it out. I mean, being on call all the time and weird sleeping schedules. I mean, I'm sure if it happened we would figure it out. It sounds kind of selfish, but I don't know. We've been married almost nine years. I like our life the way it is, know what I mean? I want to be able to travel with him.

Like Anne, Heather said she thought about how hard it would be to balance raising children with her job. Heather had worked her way from intern to executive producer in a number of years at KNEW-TV. Along the way, she married her husband, an engineer. Together

they had three children. Heather said having a role model in television news, a female manager with children, helped her feel confident in raising children without sacrificing her career. I'm not sure if Heather's role model helped her decide to have kids, or just assured Heather that having children was all right. She simply said her role model showed her that "it can be done." However, Heather said she and her husband still struggled with feeling guilty about placing their children in daycare.

Emma also wondered whether she could balance children with her career as an anchor/reporter. Emma worked 2 p.m. to 11 p.m., including weekends. She said she felt uneasy thinking about children.

It's definitely daunting to think about. I think it's intimidating and scary.

How come?

Because it does take up a lot of time. Especially the schedules. There's really no good anchoring schedule in TV news for a family. Obviously there's an exception (refers to anchor with a mid-day, part-time schedule). But most people who are anchoring either anchor mornings or nightside. So either way, you'll be missing a lot at those times with your family.

But at the same time, I see a lot of people we work with who seem to be really good parents, and you know, sacrifice what they can on work for kids so they can do a great job with both. So I think that makes me realize OK, if they can do it, I can do it. My mom was a stay-at-home mom so it's really hard for me to wrap my head around how I would balance. I think these days so many more women do it, but it's tough. Daycare is expensive.

Do you see yourself ever leaving your career for a while to take care of your (future) kids?

I don't know. That's something I've thought about. I know people who we work with who have done that, and have made it work. But I think that's a luxury that not many people have. And whenever you leave, you really take the risk of not being able to come back. And only certain people I think can do that – people who have built up a name for themselves in the market.

Julia was an anchor who built up a name for herself. She started her career working in smaller markets all over the country, and worked her way to being a full-time anchor at one of KNEW-TV's competitors in Midwest City. It wasn't until she and her husband had three children that she decided the schedule was really weighing on her.

I worked full-time during my children's births. After (my youngest) was six months old, I remember going to my general manager and saying, "I can't do this anymore." And what I meant by that was, when (my two older daughters) were little, it was fine because I was working nights. The timing was different. I started at 1:30 and went until 10:30 p.m. I had the mornings with the girls. I would arrange them to be in afternoon kindergarten so that I could take them to school. And then my caregiver would pick them up, and the caregiver was with them from until my husband came home. So I didn't feel like they were with someone else for most of the day.

But then they got older, and were in school for most of the day. So I would get up with them, I would make their lunches, and I would get them to school. By the time they came home it was three in the afternoon and I was at work. Then when I got home they were asleep. I was like OK, this is not working, I'm missing out on so much, because then the after-school activities kicked in, you know the soccer games and the dance lessons and all that. That's when, after (my youngest) was born, I said I really can't do this anymore, what can we explore as far as part-time?

KNEW-TV's competitor would not offer Julia a schedule that worked with her personal life, so she began to debate leaving her job to take care of her children. Julia said she was fortunate to have the choice to leave work to raise children, thanks to her husband's healthy income. But first, she needed some help to make the decision to leave work.

I sought counsel from my parish priest. I said, "I worked so hard to get to this point and I don't know if when I leave, I'll be welcome back." You know, once the girls are off to school doing their own things, you know and in college, will anyone have me back? And he all he said was, "any decision motivated with love can't be wrong." So I said let's do this thing.

Julia ultimately decided to leave her job as an anchor at the competing station. The next day, she said she got the biggest bouquet of roses she had ever gotten in her life from KNEW-TV. Attached was a note, congratulating her on her career. It also said, “When you want to talk, let’s talk.” One year later, Julia ended up accepting the family-friendly schedule she once desired at KNEW-TV. She joined the news team after she fulfilled an agreement with her previous station, saying she would not work at a competing station for one year if she chose to leave.

Julia said she believed viewers from her previous station followed her to KNEW-TV. Her next comment went back to what Emma said about a building a good reputation within a market – Julia said the viewers made the transition a positive experience.

I’ve got to tell you one thing though, because this was huge for me. You gotta understand that when you get in the market, and you know you can be a really great reporter and work so hard and be a great employee, but if the viewers don’t like you, especially in a visible anchor-type position, you’re done. You’re done after your first three years. And I’ve been very fortunate that there is a connection that people do like me.

Aniya is another anchor who had to make a big career decision to fit her personal life. She asked management for a more family-friendly schedule after she had what she called a meltdown. At the time, Aniya had two children and was working from about 2 to 11 p.m. each day. When she got home, she stored and cleaned her nursing supplies for the next day. She said she would be lucky if she got to bed by midnight. By 6 a.m., her infant would wake up and need to be fed. That routine of work and little sleep led Aniya to her breaking point.

My meltdown came on pajama day at school. My (oldest) daughter was three at the time. It was pajama day at her preschool. My husband dropped her off and called me and said, ‘I’m really sorry, I’ve got to get to work but it’s

pajama day and (our oldest daughter) doesn't have pajamas on.' So I was like OK. So here I am, in pajamas at home with (my youngest daughter). She couldn't have been more than five, six months maybe. I put her in her car seat. She was crying the whole way. I had pajamas in my hand to change (my oldest daughter) out of her regular clothes into pajamas. I was also crying the whole way there, and had to pull it together because it just, it became evident I couldn't keep working at that pace.

It's a lot. And it's a lot when you're the mom, because society, it's just different responsibilities, or (moms are) held to a different responsibility I should say... It wasn't long after the pajama meltdown that I went in. I was nearing the end of my contract and the news director wanted to meet to re-discuss signing. I basically said here's the deal, I can't be full-time anymore. Not this shift. I was like, I can't keep this pace anymore. I stink at work, I stink at home, I stink as a wife, I stink as a mom, I stink as a friend. I'm like I can't. It's too much. It was too much.

Management agreed to switch Aniya's work schedule to part-time. She worked from 2 to 6 p.m. each day instead. The new schedule allowed her time with her two children in the morning before they went to school, and again at night. Aniya didn't tell me how much money her husband made, but did say he worked full-time in business. Because he commuted about an hour to work his 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. job, they also had a nanny to help with the kids during the day.

So now you're working part-time?

Yes. My lawyer calls it the family-friendly schedule. We don't call it part-time... I do have to say what I love about having gone to this schedule, what I absolutely love is not just the time I get to spend with my kids, and my husband, being able to put them to bed or read stories and help with homework. Once they're older it'll be playing sports, or theater or band and choir. But being in this midday schedule, I can (also) be there in the morning. I can volunteer at school.

Other journalists told me how they make their full-time schedules work with their spouses and kids. Maria was a nightside reporter who worked 2 p.m. to 11 p.m. Her husband worked in sales and together they had a daughter.

I think she has the best of both worlds. She has me in the morning all to herself, and then Dad all to herself at night. And then we're all together on the weekends. But for (my husband) and I, I mean it's hard. He takes care of her five nights a week by himself. He's an amazing father. He's so good with her, but he was a little nervous about it, just because, you know how guys are. You know he was like, "I have to take care of her all by myself?" But he really grew into the role and now he's like, "this is easy, bring on another one." But it's hard, not being there at night to help with dinner, and bed, and I miss that. On weekends I give him a break and I do all of that. I feel bad sometimes because it's a lot of work for him. She's in daycare for a couple hours, so that's nice. She's not there all day, but she does good with other little kids and I've noticed a huge difference in her development and social skills being there. We just make it work because it's the best for her.

A photographer and his wife said their opposite work schedules worked in their children's favor. John worked 4 a.m. to noon and his wife worked more traditional hours as an elementary school teacher.

I'll be honest with you, her schedule coupled with summers and extended break-time off, honestly has been a perfect balance with this job. I don't know how two people in this line of work can balance a family. I mean I think her having the traditional Monday through Friday, you know, 8 to 4 with weekends and holidays off and extended breaks. I think it's a nice balance and it really helps out at home.

Do you mean if two people working within television news are married it would be complicated?

You know, I've never been in that situation, but I just look at myself with these unorthodox hours, these unorthodox days off, you know you can be called in early or asked to stay late, you can be called in on your day off if something big happens. This job is very demanding. The news never stops.

John then offered me some advice.

Marry someone who has a Monday through Friday (job) with weekends and holidays off. That's my advice to you.

John seemed comfortable talking and offering advice during our interview. I found that over time, many journalists admit that they thought of their fellow co-workers as extended

family members. Unfortunately, some journalists had to turn to their work-family during tough personal times.

Ellen was a morning meteorologist at KNEW-TV. When she got pregnant with her first child, she decided to keep the baby a secret from her co-workers. At that time, she heard rumors that the station was planning to add a morning newscast. Ellen said she was afraid to mention her pregnancy because she wasn't sure how the managers would take it, and wanted to be considered for the morning position. She did get the morning meteorologist position – and another child. Fast forward many years later, Ellen was balancing more than work and two teenage children. Her son was addicted to opioids.

There were a lot of times that I had to leave (work) fast because there was a disaster at home my husband and I had to manage, or maybe a bed opened up at rehab. We might have had to drive (our son) to (another state) because if we don't take him that day the bed might go to someone else because the epidemic is so terrible. We never kept any of that a secret.

In 2014, Ellen's son died of a heroin overdose. She said the love and support she received from work was incredible.

When my son died, we did his funeral in the late afternoon. It was the only time we could do it. (KNEW-TV) did a very thin 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. newscast. One anchor anchored both of them. I mean, this place turned out for me. They knew, you know. Actually, a couple of people from other (local) TV stations said we'll run your live trucks, (Ellen) just had a death in the family. And that was just from other stations. So I mean (cries). After my son died, the support and love I had around here. It was incredible (continues crying). I was loved so well.

Ellen explained how she felt that she owed it to her work family to return after her personal family's tragedy.

I stayed home for a while. I was home for a week and I started thinking, people are going to think I'm crazy if I go back to work. But I was like no, I need to

get back with that part of my family. Because they're so much a part of my family (cries). And so, you know, I called the news director and said "I think I'd like to come in. The first day or so I don't want to be on air, but I'd still like to come in for my shift." I knew it was going to be hard, you know, for my co-workers to see me. That happens. I wanted us all to break the ice again, even though people had been coming to the house. (Reporter) was over every afternoon (laughs). He showed up with pizza and just came in the back door. I was loved so well and they really do become family. I'm moved to tears not because of my son, but because of how wonderful they were.

Michael also experienced an extremely tough loss while working in TV news. He told me the story of his wife, the woman he'd met as his intern years before. The rest of their story together truly is one of love – for each other, their careers, and their children.

Michael's wife had also worked as a television reporter. At one point, they were reporting side-by-side at the same station. He said the highlight of their careers was when they worked together to break a national news story; they found out the name of a high-profile serial killer.

In their personal life, Michael and his wife were struggling with infertility. Over time, Michael and his wife adopted two children. It was just after the second adoption that his wife started to feel sick, but this time it was happy news. She found out she was pregnant with their third child.

Years later, his late wife wasn't feeling well again. It wasn't good.

How did you find out she got sick?

I would come out (to the living room) after I would get up, and I would see her laying on the sofa just being very tired. And we didn't really think anything of it. We were both getting in our 40s. We just thought well, we're getting older and it's getting harder to work and be parents. But then she started to have arm pain. The doctors at first thought she had a pulled muscle or had torn something, so she when to physical therapy. Fast forward to, I was actually out at night covering a political event, and I got a call from her saying she had slipped and fallen going to one of our daughter's musical concerts... We discovered on an x-ray that she had a large tumor in her left arm. And that immediately sent us into crisis mode. By that afternoon we were getting CT scans of her abdominal region and we discovered she had multiple tumors in

her liver. One very large tumor. That was all horrible. It was horrible. It was about two weeks before Christmas...By New Year's Eve she was having tumor removal and major reconstruction on her arm with a titanium rod because the tumor had broken through bone wall and was rapidly growing. They had to reconstruct her arm after they took the tumor out.

We went from a period of about two weeks being this sort of normal, hardworking mom and dad to being given a diagnosis that she may have anywhere from a few months to live to as long as maybe two years. She was going to die. There was no cure for it.

Throughout his wife's sickness, Michael continued working in television news. He took a seat at the news desk, anchoring the evening news.

Was it difficult to sit there and read the news knowing your wife was in the hospital?

Yeah it was difficult. You have to be able to turn off your personal life, you know, 30 minutes at a time. When you're on the set or out on a story you can't take personal calls. You can't. So really as a television reporter you're used to doing that anyway. It was very difficult.

I had to use a lot of sick days to be with her for surgeries and treatment. We would try to schedule things so I could take her in the morning before work. But there were times when I was about to go out and anchor a newscast and I would get a call saying she's got to go to the emergency room right away. They would ask me if I wanted to leave, two or three times, and I would say "no I'll stay. I'll do the newscast and then go meet her in the hospital."

Michael continued to raise his three children and work as a television journalist. He said he felt "wonderfully rewarded" from his work and enjoyed being a vital part of his community. Years later he remarried.

Section Summary:

Television journalists take extraordinary measures to balance work with their family, friends and relationships, such as asking for workplace accommodations. While scheduling can be the root of imbalance, journalists' desires to build their careers in television news also create

strain in their personal life. Journalists said they missed holidays and family events because they were so focused on their careers; they accepted bad schedules because of their ambition. One journalist even said his obsession with work led to his divorce. Some journalists said an understanding spouse, partner or family helped bring balance to their work-life.

Journalists with children said they felt they missed out on important family moments – their odd schedules and long hours were to blame. A female role model, or manager with children, helped one executive producer decide that raising children was possible with her career. Another journalist decided against having children because the demands of work were too great to fit with the demands of raising a child.

Journalists who had the easiest time raising children and working in television news had money and prestige. These two traits were usually present with on-air journalists. One anchor was able to leave television news temporarily to raise children; her husband made enough money to support their family. When she rejoined the business, her prestige and reputation with local viewers led her to snatching a family-friendly work schedule at a competing station. Another anchor with prestige, and a husband with a well-paying job, allowed her to demand a part-time schedule. Asking for schedule accommodations for family reasons was not mentioned by off-air journalists.

3. Moving Up and Moving On

Typically, television journalists jump from market to market for a number of reasons. I found that journalists wanted to move to bigger markets for three main reasons: more pay, more prestige, and more professionalism. In this section, I'll share stories of journalists' journeys as they moved from city to city to build their careers, and some memorable moments they experienced along the way.

Getting a job in television news can be a challenge. When Rosalie graduated college, the economy wasn't good. She struggled to find her first producing job.

I was really having a hard time getting a job. I even tried for reporting jobs. I tried for a producing job and they just kept saying "oh you need more experience." I'm like OK. This wasn't like I was trying to get into market size 10.

Rosalie ended up working as a Starbucks barista for a year as she continued her job search. Finally, she landed her first television job as a production assistant in a mid-sized market. She enjoyed cueing the anchors to read and move around the set, but that's not why she took the job. She took the job so she could stay late and work one-on-one with a producer. The writing experience Rosalie gained helped her transition to work as a producer in that same mid-size market. She eventually broke into an even bigger market when she came to KNEW-TV.

Margaret had an easier time getting her first job than Rosalie did. She started working as an anchor in a small market.

You're just so thankful to get your first job on-air. You're not good. You make so many mistakes, but I really did learn a lot. I was just like a sponge, learning everything that I could.

Like Rosalie and Margaret, other journalists treated their first jobs as a stepping stone, too. Gerald was a sports director at KNEW-TV. He explained why journalists getting their foot in the door is so crucial – the odds are against everybody trying to get in and move up because so many people want to do it. Gerald said that having connections in television news is what really helps a journalist move up.

I think every job I've gotten after the first one was knowing somebody. There was some connection. I've gotten jobs I wasn't the most qualified for it, but I was easily plugged in.

Other journalists told me their first jobs were in cities where they didn't know anyone. Dean, a sports reporter, found his first job halfway across the country from his home state. The market was so isolated, he said the closest big city was seven hours away by car.

Living in (northern state) was really hard. I spent a year of my life (alone) after the four best years of my life in college with great friends. I had a job opportunity to work in PR and I turned it down because I wanted to be on air. I realized that to make it on air, I needed to get on air and get reps. There are a lot of lonely times when you move to a new place and you don't know anybody.

Like Dean, Aaron started his career in a city where he didn't know anyone. He described how he made new friends.

You meet people kind of by going out at that age. I (worked in) a college town, so there was a lot of people my age. I worked weekends, but I was able to go out afterward. It sounds kind of juvenile, talking like "oh I wish I could go out on Friday and Saturday nights," but it really is how you meet people.

Emma was interested in meeting new people too, but was hesitant. She told me what she thought would happen if she met someone and fell in love early in her anchoring career.

It's funny because one of the things they always told us in journalism school... This is bad (laughs). They said don't go to your first job and fall in love with a

police officer who's never going to want to move. Then you'll be stuck in a middle-of-nowhere market and that'll be your life.

These middle-of-nowhere markets, or smaller markets, often come with bigger workloads. Maria was a reporter at KNEW-TV. Her first reporting job in a much smaller market was more of a one-man-band gig, in that she didn't have a photographer or an editor to help her create stories.

I had a big camera – it was so heavy – and a huge tripod. Then you have your bag, and you try to look half-decent because you're on air and you've got to be carrying all of this stuff around. I had no idea what I was doing. I really didn't sign up to be a photographer. I mean, I'd come back sometimes with (bad) video, and the news director would be like, "how did this happen?" But, it was a learning experience. I mean, I hated it at first. I wasn't good at it, but you gotta do it yourself. So either do it and get your story, or you don't.

I asked Maria to compare her experience one-man-banding to her straight reporting job at KNEW-TV.

(One-man-banding) just gave me so much more to worry about. Not only was I trying to, you know, (talk) with a person I was about to interview and make them feel comfortable, plus kind of think about my questions, I had to worry about "is my sound okay? Is the lighting good?" It was just another level of concern and multitasking.

In addition to smaller markets requiring more work from journalists, smaller markets pay journalists less than larger markets. Camille was an anchor at KNEW-TV for several decades. She compared her first job to the job of Mary Tyler Moore's 1970s television character Mary Richards. Richards played a television news producer. In one of the show's episodes, Richards asked her boss for pay equal to her male co-workers (Burns, Brooks & Cooper, 1972). Camille told me how she once sneakily asked for more pay – it was 1976 and she was working at a small station in the Midwest.

(It wasn't until) Mary Tyler Moore died (Jan. 25, 2017) that I recognized how close that sort of experience was to what I'd had. I wasn't sure that I was being paid less than the person before me, but I thought I was being paid ridiculously. I was making \$7,600 a year. And so you divide that by 52 (weeks in a year) and you go "whoa."

I was at city hall and I saw a food stamp application. I picked up the food stamp application, looked at it and realized, "oh my, I could probably get food stamps." And so I come walking in, and my boss would always ask me, "what did you get at city hall?" And I said "oh a couple of things, and I picked up one of these." And he goes "what is that?" And I go "this is a food stamp application; It seems I'm eligible for food stamps." And he just like, "oh that's ridiculous." I go "no no, and a matter of fact," like this is a joke I'm playing on him, I said "it says here that if you have a full time job and you're eligible for food stamps your boss has to sign off on your food stamp application." And he looks at me and goes, "well what do I have to pay you to not have to do that?" I just said "ten grand." And he goes, "okay you're going to make ten grand."

Camille said she hadn't worried about compensation in years. What did worry some journalists however, was the growing workload. Even in a market as large as Midwest City, Dean said he's still shooting, writing and editing his own sports stories.

(One-man-banding) is where the industry is headed. More and more younger talent is being required to shoot their own stuff. It's really a funding issue is what it comes down to. I've made myself too valuable, I think. I've proven that I can do it. I can go to a (football team's) locker room and one-man-band and pull out the same product that would air if I had a photographer, and they pay one person instead of two.

Henry, a news reporter at KNEW-TV, didn't mention one-man-banding when he was a sports reporter. Instead, he explained why the change from sports to news helped him move up in television news.

The pay is terrible in small markets. It's no secret in television that you're not getting rich right away. So I was like, "how can I jump markets and how can I move up in television?" About a year and a half into (my career) I applied to be a morning news anchor. News usually opens up more avenues (than sports). As a white male, there's a lot of white males in sports. So it's hard to

differentiate yourself; it's just how the industry is. So then I did news for a year and a half, and was like I really need to (move up markets).

Once Henry built up some experience in news, his next career move was more strategic. I found that over time, journalists often choose to work closer to their family.

My girlfriend at the time was like, "why don't you apply to KNEW-TV? It's still in the Midwest. You could stay close to family." I applied and I got the job. I was able to jump 100 markets. For people who know television, it was a good thing to do.

Being closer to family was also a reason Emma took a job at KNEW-TV. She said it took her a few years working in another market before she could make the leap.

I always wanted to be closer to (my family). I think one of the really tough things about journalism is a lot of times you have to move to move up. Which is tough, because you have a contract.

Most full-time television journalists are required to sign contracts created by the television station they work for. Contracts bind a journalist to a station for a specific time period (generally two or three years), which limits the journalist's freedom to move to another market. Emma said she hated the contract process.

Honestly, going through my last contract negotiation was one of the most stressful times in my entire life. It was just very up in the air. It's funny, because a lot of journalists are Type-A people, but that's not us to have everything up in the air.

She said working under a contract is why she was hesitant to settle in her last apartment.

When you're in journalism you're kind of always in a temporary-feeling mode of: will I be moving; will I be staying? I never wanted to buy a lot of things to decorate my apartment because I kept thinking, that's a waste, I don't know when I'll be leaving.

And when a job does become available, it can mean a quick turnaround for a journalist.

Anne, the meteorologist, said that a new job for her meant pulling her husband from a really great job as a mechanic.

The dealership (he was working at) is probably the best one in the country, I'm not going to lie. It's a great dealership and a great company, and I had to tear him away from that.

Anne said her husband wasn't upset because he understood that moving was a wildcard in Anne's career that could come up at any point.

I also found that journalists might work their way up to a large market, or even network news, only to decide it wasn't the right direction to go. James told me about why he switched back to working in local news after a year as a national news correspondent.

One of the driving factors (of leaving national news) was I felt like I was parachuting into different places, different events, and I wasn't really making a huge difference. I was offering the bare bones, nuts and bolts information. I wasn't getting the context as to what was going on, because it was on to the next one, on to the next one. Parachute in, and then you leave. Part of me felt like the power of local news is that you are embedded with a group of people that have a stake in the community. You report on the people around you, your neighbors, your family, the people you love. The issues that you cover directly affect you as a citizen of that community. And that is the true power of local news.

It can be difficult for a journalist to report on neighbors, family and the people they love when the news is tragic. KNEW-TV reporters said some stories have left a lasting impression, like the time Emma reported on a massacre.

We saw these families just devastated. That was horrible, and that's probably the worst part of the job. The schedule is bad, other things are bad, but the worst part to me is trying to talk to people on the worst day of their life. That's definitely the hardest part. Knocking on someone's door who you know won't want to see you, but then there's that chance that maybe they do want to get the story out. So you have to try, and it's horrible.

Henry told me about the time he was out gathering information during a riot. He said that story led him to think about his personal safety even before thinking about his job as a reporter.

That night was probably the most stressful, dangerous night of my broadcast career. I understand the television side of it – trying to get the story, or capture the moment – but I think at the same time you’ve got to look out for your livelihood. You can’t get a story if you’re dead.

Henry broke down what happened when he and two photographers were caught in the middle of the riot:

A guy had a gun in the middle of the street. He started firing it off and kept firing when he went by me and two photographers. (Management) thought that numbers would make us safer, even though it was complete chaos. We just ducked and started praying we wouldn’t get hit. I mean, talk about a traumatic experience. Being that close to something that could be so terrible, really you think about life before work at that point. I told (people back at the station) that I didn’t like having to do a phone interview on the way back (to the station). We just had bullets flying near us.

While Henry was out gathering information, anchors were live in the KNEW-TV studio, relaying information about the riot back to viewers at home. Henry explained his frustration in doing a phone interview with the anchors live on air.

I mean, I didn’t tell them I didn’t want to do it. I saw the importance of it, because it was firsthand information. Maybe something I would say would keep other people from going out there. We were the only ones who could share that story. I mean, no one else had the angle, the inside look. It was like, wow, they have a compelling story to tell; They were caught up in the middle of this. But, at the same point you’re like, we could have died back there. To relive it, to put it on television within 45 minutes, that was a quick turnaround.

I asked Henry how he got through such a scary moment.

It’s part of the adrenaline I think. That’s how you get through the day in television sometimes. It’s just pure adrenaline, and afterwards is when you can decompress and let it go.

Moving on from a traumatic story is one thing, but Maria said she also had a hard time moving on from story subjects. She told me she had reconnected with people she interviewed days or weeks after a story aired – people who went through some awful events in their lives.

There are some stories that really affect me that I think about a lot. I will reach out to the families to see how they're doing. (These were stories where) I had to be the grief counselor for like an hour before I even started my story, because it was just the right thing to do. These people are devastated, and for me to come in and just turn on the camera and be like "let's go" – you can't do that. You need to be a human being first.

Traumatic events aside, some journalists found it hard to detach from work completely. Some told me they spent their personal time before work scrolling through Twitter news feeds to prepare for their day. Others said they watched competing stations' newscasts in their free time, mainly to compare their work at KNEW-TV to the work of other journalists in Midwest City. Overall, I found that older journalists were more likely than younger journalists to keep work separate from their personal life.

Alan said he tried not to spend much time reading or watching news when he wasn't at work. He had worked as a reporter for a few decades.

The older I get, the longer I've been doing this, the more I find myself wanting or willing to kind of tune (news) out when I'm away from the newsroom. But at the same time, with the increased prevalence of social media, the fact that I have a 24-hour news cycle constantly at my fingertips, makes that more tempting. I'd be much more willing to block things out, but it's becoming more difficult to do so. It makes for a tough balance.

Ty found a digital compromise to help her find balance between work and her personal life.

I've gone back and forth with having the work email app on my phone or not. What I've settled on is that I have it, but I won't get notifications. When I want to check email, I'll check email.

Maria said she couldn't keep herself away from breaking news.

When I see breaking news on the national networks I get excited. I wonder what's going on, and how they're covering this. I always say (journalism) is a lifestyle, not a career, because it demands so much of your time and it can be so crazy at times that you have to love doing this.

You have to love doing this – that's what journalists who saw themselves staying in the career long-term told me. Emma said she was committed to her career.

I think a job that takes this much commitment – you have to love it. Even on my bad days, I still love it. I want to keep doing it. But for someone who doesn't love it, it's not worth the stress.

Julia explained why journalists might enjoy their career.

My work is something I'd be interested in anyway. We love news. We've got to know what's happening. So, for us it's kind of fun. Because when we check it, it's like I'm going to need to know this for later anyway.

Some journalists were less candid than others when I asked about their future careers in television news. Although Kris said he enjoyed his time working in four markets in ten years, he said he had been thinking about leaving his career.

It's crossed my mind a lot. A lot. I don't think people realize... It's a tough business across the board. The deadlines are tough. The landscape of the business is changing and that's tough. People are sometimes difficult, like people inside the newsroom and people outside the newsroom. It's just a lot coming at you at different times, and it's a lot to carry. It's just the lifestyle of the job. It's crossed my mind to find something a little more normal, or traditional.

Susan told me what kind of “normal” or “traditional” job she would like to have if she were to leave her job as a producer.

My fallback is always (public relations), but I know people that have done that have told me I would be totally bored. That it's totally slow paced. They said working in the real world is totally different than working here.

I wanted to know why Susan had a fallback plan. I found out it's because she felt underappreciated by her colleagues.

Do you find validation in what you do?

No (laughs), doesn't that sound terrible? I guess I just never feel like it's appreciated. It's always been about the (late evening newscast). And I've produced that show. And when I did, it was all about (early evening newscast). I feel like I've always been producing the show that's just been taken for granted.

Feeling underappreciated was common among producers. Kelly said she had to work harder than on-air journalists for less money and less recognition. Ultimately, these were the reasons Kelly decided to leave her career as a television news producer altogether.

I was told in college and I was told in my internship, producers are criticized the most and (on-air journalists) are praised. And they said you'd just have to get used to it. And I was fine with that. I actually was fine with it for several years. It made receiving compliments even nicer, because I knew they were genuine. After several years, like, it really bothers me now. And I look at people differently and I've started to sort of resent the on-air people for the praise they get and whatever.

I asked Kelly what made her resent on-air journalists.

Just the more you see the anchors and the money they have. You hear their stories and their trips to France and Hawaii first class, their nannies and housekeepers, and they complain about it. It kind of starts to wear on me. Like I watch (an executive producer) who has three boys. Her and her husband work full-time. She was working second shift for the longest time, so she barely got to see her kids sometimes. And there's like no attention, no sympathy. She still has to come to work and do her job. You have, you know (an anchor) who has two girls, but also has a nanny and expects sympathy when her nanny is sick. It's kind of one of those like, how is this fair? Like you work four hours a day, you have a nanny, you have a rich husband, you're rich. Like, I think the more and more I listen to that it bothers me. And to see how the behind the

scenes people are being affected, it just didn't seem fair anymore.

The fact that management paid more attention to on-air journalists annoyed Kelly.

We had an anchor who's no longer with us, but his mom died and (the general manager) wanted to send flowers to the funeral. But yet, when one of the (off-air journalists) loses their dad, it's not the same. I think when I saw stuff like that it just became heartbreaking. It just piled on.

Kelly ended up leaving television news a few months after I interviewed her. She took a job in public relations.

Section Summary:

Most journalists' first jobs were in smaller markets. Working in a smaller market often meant journalists moved away from family and friends, took on more work one-man-banding, and earned less money.

Moving from market to market was stressful for some journalists, because it meant uprooting their spouses. It also was stressful because journalists had to complete their contracts at one station before moving to a new station. One journalist said her desire to move markets gave her the feeling of impermanence.

Journalists told me how detaching from work during their free time can be difficult. Technology played a huge role journalists' inability to detach, because news and work email is available 24 hours a day on journalists' smartphones.

Ultimately, the difference between on-air and off-air journalists was hard to ignore. Off-air journalists felt unappreciated because they got less praise and recognition than on-air journalists. These were some reasons one journalist decided to leave television news altogether.

Other off-air journalists perhaps ignored feelings of resentment, because they said they loved news and couldn't see themselves doing anything else professionally.

In my literature review, I said work-life balance is not an issue for women; it's an issue for human beings. For the most part, that statement holds true. Gender didn't seem to matter in a journalist's work-life balance unless children were involved.

Female journalists with children were more likely to express their work-life balance concerns with management than male journalists with children. Similarly, those same female journalists with children who requested schedule accommodations were anchors, earning the most of the journalists I interviewed. They were also married to husbands with the financial means to support a stay-at-home wife, children, and sometimes a nanny. Consequently, having money and prestige often led to a more balanced work and personal life for television journalists.

I'm not saying male journalists don't act as family caretakers, too. An executive producer continued to work at the "bottom of the newscast hierarchy" because that schedule worked best with his responsibility to care for his handicapped mother and teenage brother. However, he did not ask for a more accommodating schedule like the female anchors – he simply asked to stay on the schedule he had always worked. Because we live in a patriarchal society, men may be more likely than women to suppress their opportunities to ask for help.

Rather than allowing a journalist's gender to determine who's more likely to request an accommodation for family, a journalist's role plays a part too. A journalist working on a producer's salary doesn't have the luxury of raising children in the same manner as an anchor. Unless a producer is married to a rich spouse, he or she is unlikely to request a part-time schedule. Producers are also less likely to be able to afford a nanny to help care for their

children.

4. Answers to Research Questions

Although my inductive study was guided by five areas of interest, my interview questions were even more open-ended. In return, journalists' responses led me to find unexpected patterns in my data. Those unexpected patterns were incorporated with my earlier results sections. To clean up my findings, here are the main ideas that best answer my research questions:

RQ1: How does working odd hours affect the work-life balance of television journalists?

Journalists whose shifts began at 10 p.m. or 3 a.m. said they had trouble with sleeping, exercising, and making plans with family and friends. Journalists who worked for morning news also said they were responsible for writing more content than journalists who worked other shifts, which in one case led to additional health problems. Journalists with children who worked 2 to 11 p.m. said they missed out on family activities.

RQ2: How do television journalists balance their relationships and families with their work responsibilities?

Journalists often put their work ambitions before their personal life obligations. For that reason, many journalists missed holidays and important family events. Similarly, journalists admitted to changing their work-life priorities once they met a love interest or had children – spending more time with their partner or children before adding extra work responsibilities.

Journalists with children said they felt like they missed out on spending time together; one journalist even found the demands of their job too great to have children.

Journalists with more money and prestige often received special family accommodations from television management – accommodations that apparently were not available to off-air journalists.

RQ3: How does moving up markets affect television journalists?

Moving from market to market was stressful for some journalists because it meant they moved away from their family and friends. At a later point in their careers, moving could have also meant uprooting a spouse.

RQ4: To what extent can television journalists detach from their work?

Journalists said it was difficult to detach themselves from their work because of their smartphones. They said they often checked social media during their personal time to keep with current events as a way to prepare for work. One journalist said she had her work email on her phone, but decided not to get direct notifications in an effort to keep work from interrupting her personal time.

RQ5: To what extent do male and female journalists experience RQ1-RQ4 phenomena differently?

Gender didn't play a role in these phenomena unless a journalist had children. While journalists with more money and prestige often received special family accommodations from television management (in this thesis it was two female anchors), all journalists with children said they missed out on important family events. Male and female journalists without children said they often wondered how having children and a job in television news could work.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study focused on journalists as people rather than as professionals. It is not a study of the production of news, journalists' values and behaviors, or the reasons why journalists left the profession.

All 28 journalists that I interviewed said they felt that working in local television news negatively affected their personal life in some way. Similarly, all journalists found something positive to say about their work experience. Forty percent of journalists (1 reporter, 4 producers, 1 anchor, and 1 photographer) said they could not see themselves working in local television news long-term.

Leaving work due to unhappiness is a widespread phenomenon nonexclusive to local television journalists. As people begin to think of their lives as narratives, they shift their focus to include what *should* happen in their careers (Sennett, 2007). The idea of having a traditional career that progresses step by step in a single institution is vanishing as young Americans with at least two years of college can expect to change jobs at least 11 times in their lifetimes (Sennett, 2011).

Recommendations

A career in television news could be more enjoyable – and manageable – for journalists whose personal lives are understood. Some of the things journalists mentioned that affected their personal lives are not amendable to change, such as their schedules; however, I've come up with three workplace recommendations that management can implement at minimal cost without disrupting the news-making process:

1. Television management should be equally attentive to journalists' personal lives. One journalist said that management didn't share similar condolences when an anchor's

- parent died as when a producer's parent died. On-air journalists and off-air journalists should experience similar attention from management, regardless of their positions.
2. Television management should be equally accommodating of journalists' caretaking responsibilities. One off-air journalist said moving to a more desired schedule wasn't an option because of his caretaking responsibilities. However, on-air journalists received work accommodations to fit their caregiving responsibilities. Management should offer on-air journalists and off-air journalist similar accommodations regardless of journalists' positions.
 3. Television management should implement a rotating holiday schedule. Similar to how the chief meteorologist managed the weather team's schedule, all other journalists should self-select holiday(s) they prefer to work. Journalists with the most seniority will pick first, and journalists with the least seniority will pick last. When the next calendar year starts, journalists must re-select a different holiday than the previous year. Similarly, journalists cannot work the same holiday they did the previous year to keep a fresh, fair rotation. For example, a rotating holiday schedule wouldn't allow the same journalist to work on Christmas every year.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was using data only from journalists and not members of television news management. Experts who study workplace policies say work-life balance within media is an important business strategy for retention, loyalty and productivity (Ruiz, 2017).

Another limitation is that I didn't speak with the human relations department at KNEW-TV. I wondered if the department has implemented, or is attempting to implement, any procedures that attempt to better journalists' personal lives, such as standard schedule

accommodations.

Future Research

More work-life research should be done at television stations in bigger and smaller markets. The work load differences in these markets could affect a journalist's work-life balance satisfaction. Additionally, research should include journalists working in different mediums to compare which media profession allows a better work-life balance.

Journalists are not the only people who work high-pressure, odd-hour jobs. More work-life research could study firefighters, police officers, pilots, doctors and nurses to compare how their careers affect their personal lives, and determine which careers have higher levels of stress and burnout.

Translation of Research

This research can be used to address television news journalists' legitimate need to have lives outside of work. Journalists (single, married, with and without children) should join together to discuss what new policies are needed at work to better their lives at home.

CHAPTER 6: REFLECTION

What did I get myself into...

At least, that's what I was thinking as I sat listening to journalists tell me about their not-so-great work experiences. Yet, I can't ignore the positive moments I learned about as well. Hearing both sides makes it difficult to imagine what my future in television news could be like, but my research has given me some well-rounded insight and a long list of expectations.

I learned that a career in television news is unpredictable. As a producer, I'm going to work long, odd hours and I can expect to miss some important moments with my family and friends. I learned that I might begin to resent that I chose to be a producer, rather than a higher-earning anchor or reporter; it's perhaps easier to be a mom with the salary and schedule accommodations that I found were given to on-air journalists. I might also resent my decision to produce on days when I feel underappreciated and overworked by management.

There's no doubt I could experience similar challenges in a career other than local television news. What's unique to television news is my passion. I love it. As other journalists I interviewed questioned, *what else would I do?* I feel the same way.

In my introduction I said I wanted to be two things in life: a journalist and a mom. I wanted to use my research to figure out if I could someday manage both roles comfortably. Right now, I'm not sure if I have an easy answer. I learned that balancing a family with a career in television news coincides with having an understanding partner, but more importantly, it depends on my willingness to make both roles work together. That could mean I ask for schedule accommodations, or work my way to a position with more traditional hours.

Before completing this thesis, I accepted a full-time producing job at a competing station in Midwest City. There, I will work overnights (11:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m.) to produce the morning

news. I'm anxiously anticipating some trouble with my sleep schedule and have concerns with making time for family and friends. Yet, I'm excited to keep moving up in a career I love. Here I go!

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