

University of Missouri

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Master's Professional Project

Christianity & Journalism

Perspectives from Photojournalists of Color

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Committee

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Chapter One: Introduction

When I began my study at the University of Missouri, I came in as a broadcast journalism major. I was unsure which concentration to choose because I enjoyed participating in different areas of journalism. The summer before I began my official course work, I took a convergence course entitled *Advanced Global Converged News J7810*. This class combined the different formats of journalism in one newsroom environment including text, multimedia, and broadcast. This class was interesting, however working in the newsroom, I often found how stories were framed and published did not fall in line with my values. When viewing how the newsroom team compiled text and published broadcast content, I felt that many of the stories and the subjects themselves were misrepresented and even sensationalized. There were instances when I felt that the content written or produced, negatively affected the reputation of the subjects involved. This factor did not sit right with my conscience. I am grateful for having taken this class the summer before I began my official course work because it helped me to decide that broadcast journalism was not for me. It also helped me to determine photojournalism would be my area of concentration.

With photojournalism, I feel that I am able to let my subjects tell their own story rather than interjecting my own analysis of their lives. With the advancement of technology and the speed at which media moves today, I understand that photos also can be manipulated or made in a manner that misrepresents the subjects. However, in my personal experience with a documentary photojournalism approach, I found that the

subjects themselves had more of an opportunity to voice and express themselves with authenticity. Photography and multimedia gave me opportunity to tell the truth. I choose photojournalism because I believe it was the closest to first hand journalism and truth telling in comparison to the other concentration areas available. It was my conviction in Christian values that led me to this decision.

My personal interest in completing my professional project on Christianity and journalism stems from the ever-present desire for me to know and understand God. I was raised in a traditional Indian Catholic home. In our household, my grandmother, a very religious woman, would call our family to pray the Rosary every evening. As the daughter of Indian Catholic immigrants, belief in Jesus Christ was as simple as the existence of our lives- a regular practice, much like eating and sleeping. It was not until high school however that I began to question my faith.

- *Was Christianity the faith for me?*
- *Why Jesus?*
- *Aren't we all just human?*
- *Why does religion matter?*

These were some of the questions I pondered and often still ponder when understanding my faith and growing in God.

In the summer of 2004, when I was a sophomore in high school, I traveled to India for my cousin's wedding. This was not my first time in India. However this trip to India was different. I was in an exploratory period in my life. I wanted to better understand my faith and the universal concept of God. I decided to explore a number of faith traditions in the world. While in India, I traveled to a bookstore with one of my

relatives. He spoke to the receptionist to find for me the Quran, the Bhagwat Gita, and the Three Fold Path- The Holy Scriptures of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism respectively.

Of course as a cradle Catholic I had the Bible and de facto, the Torah (The Old Testament also know as Hebrew Scripture for the Jewish faith tradition) for study.

Upon my return to the States, I read the various scriptural texts. As I continued on my search to find truth, after several months of reading, research, and contemplation, I decided a few things:

1. I respect every faith tradition.
2. We are all human, all created by one God.
3. I believe in Jesus Christ.

I also realized, my decision to follow Jesus Christ did not diminish my respect or reverence for the traditions of other faiths.

Relevance of Proposed Topic

My professional project began with the intention to do a profile of major religions including the Abrahamic traditions of Christianity and Islam, as well as the Eastern traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism. However, I realized because of a number of religious limitations I would not be able to photograph my subjects in worship or in their personal lives as closely as I needed for this project.

Ultimately, I decided I would focus my project on the Christian faith and in doing so tell the perspective of people of color and their identity in Christ Jesus. As an Indian American woman, I feel that the perspectives of people of color are often underrepresented in today's media and academic literature. One of my missions as a photojournalist is to increase the representation of people of color. I believe my own

experience gives me an insider's lens to the photographs I made with my subjects while completing this project. In addition, as a woman of color I believe a number of factors influence my faith and belief in Jesus Christ uniquely verses the general American population. These factors include the manner in which I was raised i.e. family tradition and faith based community culture.

Professionally, I do not plan to continue working in journalism. I plan to pursue music in the performing arts as a vocalist. However, I believe the skills I acquired here at the University of Missouri both in photo and multimedia work will assist my endeavors to work in development at a later point in life. As a former Indicorps Fellow, my desire to work in India and other underdeveloped nations remain a passion and a responsibility.

Chapter Two: Field Notes

Week 1

Weekly recap:

Goals:

- Touch base w/ Mariah & Eugenia (get schedules from both)
- Research photojournalists with Christian backgrounds
- Meet with committee professors: Rees & Flanagan
- Begin researching Christian literature/background

In order to meet this week's goals, I did the following:

- Met w/ Eugenia in person and found out her weekly activities involved with the Catholic Church, which include the following:
 - Religion: Catholic, Age: 20, Race: South Asian/Indian&Malaysian, Class: Sophomore, Major: Elementary Edu.
 - Weekly on Sundays- Runs the Kindergarten Ministry class as a Sunday school teacher at the campus Newman center from 10-11am
 - Fun City- Periodic service on a 4 hour basis in local Columbia, depending on her availability
 - Jan. 31 – Feb. 1- Newman Center- Women's Retreat

- CMLI Conference San Antonio, TX, Feb. 21-23 (I will be unable to attend this)
- El Salvador, Spring Break Service Trip w/ Newman Center
- Spoke to Mariah over the phone and also found her weekly activities related to her church, which include the following:
- Religion: Christian- Non-Denominational, Age: 21, Race: African American/West Indian, Class: Junior, Major: Multimedia Journalism
- Law School- Praise Dance performance Feb. 3
 - Kids Across America event- Feb 4-6
 - Weekly on Sundays- 3-5:30pm, His Life Praise Dance Practice
 - Feb. 23- Praise Dance performance
 - Tea Party- April 13. His Life Hosted Event
 - His Life Production: May 4
 - Involved with internship called Vessels International (secular, but Christian based value NGO) Non-profit for distressed women and children
 - Black Woman Rock Committee (campus program)
 - Career Center program coordinator
 - Monday nights weekly, soccer team practice 10pm REC Center
 - Feb. 28- March 1, Second Wind Conference in Dallas, Texas, Mariah as a worship leader and counselor (I will be attending this conference)

- Met w/ Professor Flanagan on what differences I could capture in both the Catholic v. Protestant denominations. We discussed the following:
 - Iconic symbols: crucifix v. cross
 - Use of Biblical Text
 - Placement at the alter, communion, attire during services/mass
 - Posture
 - Exterior of building
 - Parking lot
 - Vehicles, public transportation, car, bus, the ways in which people travel to church
 - Demographic/ race
 - Interaction among members/parishioners both physical and non-physical
 - Leadership in church, positions and authority, gender
 - Lay involvement, clerical involvement
 - Different roles of men and women in the church
 - Sexual orientation, displays of affection, what is accepted or appropriate, what is not
 - Where the church is going, future of the church

Work assessment:

This week, I had the opportunity to meet up with both the women I will be photographing throughout this project. Eugenia who is Catholic and Mariah who is non-

denominational Christian, I thought I should begin but understanding some basics about the two denominations of Christianity. I spoke to them about both their secular and spiritual lives. Naturally, both are deeply involved with their churches and ministry and I was trying to figure out a way to best identify visually, the icons in both spaces.

After speaking to Professor Flanagan, we were able to brainstorm some possible ideas and “things to look out for” in each denomination of Christianity. I also want a basic understanding of the Christian faith (generally speaking) and asked for reading materials that would help me gauge some knowledge on the denominations of Christianity. Professor Flanagan referred me to, *A Short History of Christianity* by Martin Marty, which I plan to begin reading this week.

Understanding both Eugenia’s and Mariah’s schedules, both are heavily involved with the church and church activities, they are also involved with many secular groups on campus. Both will be attending a conference or a mission trip later this semester, which I hope to get to go to a few of these national events to capture some great visuals for the project. I am also hoping to at some point in time, photograph them with their respective families in order to understand their familial atmosphere and upbringing. Also I wished to observe whether or not, their home environment shaped their spiritual and personal relationship with Christ and self.

After discussing some possible visuals for photography between the two denominations with Professor Flanagan, we discussed that in Catholicism; there would be multiple opportunities to photograph iconic images of the faith as it is ritualistic in nature. I also discussed with him that I would be observing my subjects in their elements before officially photographing their experience in the church and relationship with God.

While there are both similarities and difference between the two denominations, I do not want to do a comparison of the actual religions or faiths, but rather the formation of an ‘identity’ in Christ between my two subjects. While showing the comparison and contrast of religion may aid in my understanding of the different nature and process of the formation of identity in Christ it is not my main goal to highlight the similarities or differences within the actual religions themselves.

Professional analysis update:

I plan to research some women photojournalists this week and also to meet with Professor Rees on identifying a few photojournalists who identify with the Christian faith strongly. I plan to flesh out some interview questions a Draft I and II, and check it with Professor Rees so that I know I am moving in the right direction.

I also plan to use this week as an observation period of both Eugenia and Mariah’s schedules. I will attend their weekly activities, both secular and non-secular and take note of visual possibilities for future photographing. I plan to continue reading, *A Short History of Christianity* and getting some underlying knowledge of the development of the faith and its various Christian denominations.

Work planned for next week:

- Observation of both Eugenia and Mariah’s life, secular v. spiritual
- Reading of Christian basics, what to look out for
- Research into photojournalists with identified Christian values
- Set up meeting w/ Professor Rees

Week 2

Weekly recap:

Goals:

- Visit Eugenia's weekly Kindergarten Class
- Register for Mariah's Second Wind Conference in March
- Research photojournalists with Christian backgrounds
- Meet with committee professor: Rees
- Continue researching Christian literature/background

In order to meet this week's goals, I did the following:

- Spent time working on which activities and conferences I am able to make for both Eugenia and Mariah.
- Scheduled meeting w/ Eugenia for her weekly Kindergarten class. Planning to observe her teaching.
- Spoke w/ Mariah about registering for the Second Wind Conference including costs and how I will meet her in Texas.
- Spent time reading about the development of the Christian faith. Catholicism/Protestantism various denominations of Christianity. Google Images searches.

Work assessment:

This week, I observed Eugenia's weekly Kindergarten Catholic studies class. The class is held weekly on Sundays for 1 hour from 10am-11am. This week's class had a speaker who is the pastor of the Newman center and he spoke about St. Joseph, the father of Jesus. It was an interesting class to observe because the children were all handed out postcard "looking" iconic orthodox art pictures of St. Joseph and were taught about the role that St. Joseph had in Jesus' life. While I have not been to a non-denominational or protestant Sunday school class, I imagined that they would not be teaching as heavily on the saints as the Catholic Church does (unless they were of course i.e. Lutheran, Presbyterian.) The children did some drawings of the Holy Family on their own during the first half hour of the session while the second half was the guest speaker- the pastor. The pastor asked many questions about St. Joseph to the Kindergarten class such as Who was he? What did he do in Jesus' lifetime? What was his profession? I noted the postcard drawings to be very particular to the Catholic Christian faith as well as the Orthodox Church who are also very iconic heavy in their religious tradition.

I've also begun doing some research on the Christian faith in general although I have not popped open *A Short History of Christianity*. I am doing online research and image research on the different faiths via Google. While the Catholic churches are more iconic, there are several protestant denominations, which are icon heavy. The most apparent and obvious differences between the Catholic Church and Protestant denominations are the crucifix. The Catholic Church uses the crucifix while Protestant denominations typically do not. However there are similarities in Presbyterian and Lutheran in the stain glass styles, the pews; the structural elements are close in imagery.

While researching Baptists churches, I found less iconic images. A simple cross with brick churches or churches that were painted white, it reminded me of some Methodist churches I have seen as well. I am curious to know what the cone shapes I see on top of many churches are, including the Catholic Churches. Structurally you will often see this cone and a cross on the top of it. Many of the older churches that are built are built in the Gothic style which was used in Western Europe in the Middle Ages.

Professional analysis update:

I plan to research some women photojournalists this week and also to meet with Professor Rees on identifying a few photojournalists who identify with the Christian faith strongly. I plan to flesh out some interview questions a Draft I and II, and check it with Professor Rees so that I know I am moving in the right direction.- (from last week)

I also plan to use this week as an observation period for Eugenia as she will be hosting a Woman's Conference in the Newman Center this weekend Jan. 31-Feb. 1. I will attend this retreat and will also be documenting Eugenia's leadership role during this time. I plan to begin reading *A Short History of Christianity* in order to improve my understanding of Christian history.

Work planned for next week:

- Capture video footage of Eugenia's women's retreat at the Newman Center.
Weekend Retreat.
- Research into photojournalists with identified Christian values
- Set up meeting w/ Professor Rees

Week 3

Weekly recap:

Goals:

- Attend Eugenia's Weekend Woman's Retreat at the Newman Center
- Spend time in discussion with Eugenia and understanding her walk with God and faith formation
- Register for Mariah's Second Wind Conference in March
- Began reading and continue reading *A Short History of Christianity*

In order to meet this week's goals, I did the following:

- This weekend, I spent time with Eugenia at her overnight Woman's retreat at the Newman Center. – Friday, Jan. 31st- Saturday, Feb. 1st
- I decided I would alternate weeks with my subjects by spending time with each subject and photographing them every other week consecutively.
- I am officially registered for Mariah's Christian conference Feb. 28- March 1st in Dallas, TX.

Work assessment:

I spent most of my time taking video of Eugenia this weekend. She was involved in both organizing and participating in a women's retreat at the Newman center Jan. 31st to Feb. 1st. The theme of the women's retreat was "Our Call to Holiness"

emphasizing women's role in the church as human beings and the call to holiness in the every day life. It was an excellent time for me to observe and understand Eugenia's spiritual and religious life.

The first part of the retreat involved icebreakers and a brief of getting to know the members of the retreat, which involved a total of 10 women. The administrator allow me to film during this portion of the retreat however, once the group divided into a more intimate setting, I was not given permission to shoot.

After the first segment of the retreat that involved getting to know the group, the women entered the chapel where a vocational Sister, Sr. Karen, spoke on the call to holiness while providing scripture and an activity sheet for small discussion. There was no emphasis on one particular scripture, but she did give examples of holiness in the Bible including Ruth and Naomi of the Old Testament.

One aspect of this talk which I found interesting was that Sr. Karen spoke of various calls to ones life, these calls included: the vocational call (of becoming a Sister), the call to marriage, or the call to singleness. Sr. Karen emphasized that each calling is unique and distinct and that one must pray and seek God in holiness to understand which one of these is our call at a given moment in time. It was unfortunate that I could not capture this segment through video, but I still found it highly informational.

Following Sr. Karen's talk, there was also another speaker- David was his name who spoke about the specific steps one can take to fulfill the call of holiness. This segment I was not able to film as well, but again, informational. This brief talk was

followed by a quiet hour in which the girls spent alone time in a quiet space anywhere in the building to write, meditate, and spend time in silence with God. During this time I was able to film Eugenia and also observe her organization with her co-team member in fixing the itinerary. They made a few changes to the evening plan, decided on a few scriptures to add to the end of the day prayer, and Eugenia later sat alone to read a book named: *Jesus Calls*.

After this quiet time I waited for the group to reconvene and in prayer for the night. I was not able to film for the first half, but during the ending prayer the group gathered together, held hands, and sang the Hail Mary prayer together. This was a nice moment and distinctly Catholic, I was glad to have been able to capture this. Following the night prayers, the women actually went upstairs to the kitchen where they baked chocolate chip cookies from scratch. They baked for a women's shelter in Columbia and also put together care packages for the center. They planned to deliver the packages the next day to the shelter but due to the icy weather, this event was postponed.

I did not stay overnight as I was advised by Eugenia I would not be able to shoot during this period and the following day they would have an 'identity' session where they would look into a mirror and metaphorically see themselves as a reflection of God. The administrator advised I would not be able to shoot for this portion of the retreat, however I did want to photograph the women taking the cookies and care packages to the women's shelter, unfortunately this did not happen due to weather conditions.

I had a great weekend with the women and it taught me some things to look out for when taking video. I found it difficult to video and photograph together, so I think I am going to focus more on video because I believe there is more content there. I was going to ask Professor Rees if I could make this more of a video project than a photo project, but I will have to discuss logistics with him later.

The footage for the women's retreat turned out excellent and I was really excited to actually have some content. I was reviewing the footage on Sunday night when I got a text from Eugenia saying she wanted to talk to me about being part of the project on Monday. I knew what was coming. Monday when I spoke with her she told me that she did not think she could be part of my project anymore because she was overcommitted to multiple things on campus this semester. She explained that in the beginning she thought she was ready and that it would work out because photographing did not involve her doing the work, but she said she was stressed to have a camera following her around and she does not think she can do it for a whole semester. While I was bummed that this did not work out, I was immediately in thought for another candidate. I called up a contact I knew at the Newman center and decided I would need to get another lead before the end of this week.

Professional analysis update:

I found a contact for the Newman center whose name is Alfie. He is male and not a woman of color, so I might just have to drop the woman of color aspect and make this a 'people of color' project. Alfie has a unique story, he is openly gay and he is also a convert to the Catholic faith (only 2 years ago). I think he will be an excellent candidate

to film and get a whole new perspective on the spiritual/religious walk in terms of sexual orientation. I have a meeting with him Friday- Feb. 7th to discuss the project. This week, I also began reading *A Short History of Christianity* as per some email feedback and commentary via Professor Flanagan. I am not going to lie, it is a dry book to me, but I'll have to keep reading in order to expand my knowledge on the faith.

Work planned for next week:

- Daylong photograph/video shoot with Mariah- Praise Dancing practice and National Association of Black Lawyers event at Stotler Lounge in Memorial Union- live performance. Feb. 8th
- I will also be photographing Mariah during her non-profit fundraising with Vessels Intl. at campus dining in Dobbs
- Meeting with Professor Rees- Tues. Feb. 11th at 1:30pm

Week 4

Weekly recap:

Goals:

- Meet with Alfie this weekend to photograph his involvement with Life Teen Mass and Newman Activities
- Begin editing footage and continue storyboarding according to footage taken
- Continue reading *A Short History of Christianity*

In order to meet this week's goals, I did the following:

- This weekend, I spent my weekend with Mariah for the following activities:
 - Praise Dance practice and performance
 - Non-profit Vessel's internship fundraising event and logo designing

Work assessment:

This weekend I had a wonderful time. It was not only an excellent opportunity to capture footage, but I genuinely had a wonderful experience spending time with my subject: Mariah. I spent time getting to know her and being part of her spiritual daily activities.

As mentioned, I followed Mariah during two main events. The first was her praise dance practice and performance and the second was her non-profit fundraising activity. The praise dance practice started early on a Saturday morning. All the dancers meet weekly for about 2 hours in order to make up routines and work on choreography. This practice however, was specifically for an event they had later in the day for the Missouri Black Law Association.

Their practice was held on the bottom floor of the Student Center. The group is made up of about 15 young black women all students at Mizzou. The dance team is called *His Life* and their particular art form is called *praise dance*- dancing for the purpose of glorifying God- in their case specifically Jesus Christ as it is a Christian dance ministry. His Life performs for a number of events on campus. During this practice they reviewed and practiced the choreography for the LAW event in the evening. Their dance choreography was set to two songs: Destiny's Child Amazing Grace: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWbWAmmqEVI>

Mary Mary's Yesterday:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2l19a13Ff4>

As I spoke to Professor Rees during my meeting with him, He asked me if I felt that I was not just acting as an observer but feel as though I am participating during these events with my subjects. The answer is: I do! I did not want to convey or write this involvement initially because I thought I needed to remain objective, as a "researcher," however, I cannot help deny that I feel that I am walking on this spiritual and religious journey along with them.

When I was at practice with Mariah and I heard Destiny's Child Amazing Grace song play on their speakers, I was so inspired and nostalgic because I grew up with that song and I grew up listening to Destiny's Child. I also grew up surrounded by black culture and was heavily influenced by African American music and Hip-Hop. I felt right at home at Mariah's practice and I think my experience of the Black church will aid me in tell Mariah's story.

I was also discussing with Professor Rees that I feel that I am building a great relationship with Mariah. During practice, she asked me for my help concerning making a graphic design logo she needed to make for the non-profit she is working for: Vessels Intl. I didn't mind helping out so Mariah and I hung out together at the Evans Scholars House (where I am an RA) and worked on created the logo for a few hours. During this time we spent a great deal talking about how she began working with Vessels Intl. and how her career work, connects to her spiritual walk. It was such a great conversation and

I felt that I really got to know Mariah during this time. After this weekend, I just became so excited about going to the Conference with her in March and filming this experience! I'm really developing a personal relationship with Mariah and I feel connected to her like a spiritual Sister in Christ. While I do believe it is important to remain objective in our story telling, I believe my project is unique in that I identify strongly with my subjects' belief in Christ.

I also met up and had lunch with Alfie. As mentioned before my former Catholic subject had opted out of the project. My new subject who is male and a recent convert to Catholicism (2 years now) has agreed to be part of the project. Alfie is an openly gay male and he is also very aware of the dynamics involved with being openly gay and religious in the Christian faith. I am very excited to be video-graphing Alfie because I think it will bring a whole new element into this project in having relationship with Christ and identifying with the LGBT Community. Alfie has already graduated from Mizzou. He graduated in December 2013, just last semester and is now working at Gerbes. He is still highly involved at the Newman Center. He coordinates the weekly Life Teen events at the Newman Center and also is involved with "E3" a weekly worship night that is held Wednesdays at the Newman Center. I plan to spend time with him and photograph him this weekend so I hope it pans out well.

Professional analysis update:

A Short History of Christianity is coming along, although still boring (I'm not sugar coating). I also have a short attention span when it comes to sedentary activities. I'm thinking I should meet up with Professor Flanagan sometime next week in order to

get some motivation on this Christian research. I still have not organized a list of Christian Identifying photojournalists to interview for the project, but I hope to do so after my meeting with Professor Rees next week after getting more direction for the storyboard etc...

Work planned for next week:

- Photograph Alfie during Life Teen Mass Sunday Feb. 16th at 5pm
- Spend time with Alfie understanding his background and taking notes on his conversion story
- Meeting with Professor Rees- Tues. Feb. 18th at 1:30pm
- Email Professor Flanagan for a meeting



University of Missouri His Life Praise Dance Team gather together for a picture of their dancing feet after their performance for the Missouri Black Association of Lawyers Saturday, February 8, 2014 in Memorial Union.

Week 5

Weekly recap:

Goals:

- Spend one-on-one time with Alfie at his apartment, get a more concrete view of his spiritual life by understanding his environment.
- Spend time with Mariah as she prepares for her Black Women Rock event in March

In order to meet this week's goals, I did the following:

- I could not meet with Alife this week because his phone turned off and even after emailing him, he was not able to respond until 3 days later. I am a bit bummed because I have little footage of Alife himself and I wanted to spend this week getting to know him and his environment examining his personal life.
- Nonetheless, I was able to hang out with Mariah as she prepares for one of the notable annual black campus programs of the year: Black Women Rock.

Work assessment:

Black Women Rock is an annual even held at Mizzou honoring African American women within the Columbia community. BWR was modeled after the show on BET which commemorates the same cause. The BWR event is now in its third year running at Mizzou and Mariah has been involved with the program for the past 2 years. I had been

to BWR last year and Mariah hosted the program as the MC. She did a wonderful job, knowing her vibrant personality and incredible ability to speak and command the attention of the crowd, I know her leadership ability was no less during committee meetings.

Mariah has been working with the BWR committee for months now! The team started working at the very start of the school year for the program to be an amazing show. First the team has to let the community know to nominate someone. This takes quite a bit of time to get a rolling list of nominees, but once they do, the committee votes who wins a various position. There are several titles including : Black Woman Leadership Award, Black Woman who is the ROCK award, Black Woman in Service award. The winners of these awards are interviewed about their work and presence in the community and these videos are shown during the BWR event in March of 2014. Mariah's role in this committee is the public liaison where she markets the event and gathers particular people to delegate tasks for the program. For example, the event caters to women so Mariah had to form a list and committee of males who would participate in the program to serve sparkling cider to the women entering the event, open the doors for women, escort them if they were awarded, direct the audience members as ushers etc... While Mariah served as the public liaison, she did many tasks that were not in her job description such as marketing the event hard core and completing many miscellaneous jobs. One of the things I noticed when Mariah was meeting with the BWR committee, they always "prayed-in" and "prayed-out" to start the meeting with God and to end the meeting with God. This was always the priority.

When I asked Mariah about leadership and her faith she spoke about how God is her leader and that He is the one to give her the confidence to do all the things that she does. Currently, Mariah works/interns for a non-profit called Vessels as I mentioned before. With the number of hours in the day, I am unsure how Mariah does all that she does, she runs from “His Life” Praise dancing, to BWR meetings, to her multimedia journalism requirements, to her Vessels internship and still keeps a smile on her face through it all. And it is not that she doesn’t have bad days or moods, but she acknowledges the Lord in all that she does. Mariah mentioned that if she does not have her quite time in the morning, she is all over the place during the day. She constantly emphasizes that is putting God back in the center, in His rightful place at all times. This is the challenge. She touched on the idea of idolatry and that anything can become an idol. Work, school, her commitments elsewhere, and in the midst of all these things, there is a tendency to get caught up in all that one must do so she states that its always about keeping God in focus and “sometimes He gets out of focus but the point is that when He reminds me to bring Him back to the center, I need to commit to Him because it is He who orders my daily action in these other projects.” She also touched on this aspect of being of the world and not being of the world. Obviously there are certain tasks and purposes God gives up to complete. As His children, we are to live in the world, but we are not OF the world she reminds me. So her daily task is to understand and hear the voice of God and that is truly dependent on her quite time with the Lord.

Professional analysis update:

At some point I need to meet with Alfie, it is difficult to get ahold of him at times but I have to press on.

I will be meeting with Professor Rees about my updates in order to set up interviews for my analysis portion.

Work planned for next week:

- Next week I plan to go to TX to film Mariah for the KAA conference. I'll be there all weekend and drive back to Columbia with Mariah.

Week 6

Weekly recap:

Goals:

- Traveled to Texas to Meet w/ Mariah for the Second Wind Conference hosted by Kids Across America.
- Get a better understanding of Mariah's religious and spiritual background by meeting her community of faith, the people that keep her accountable, and the organization that has shaped her faith/beliefs during her childhood and teen years.
- Take footage of Mariah both in her staff role at KAA and leadership role at KAA. As a camp counselor many students come to Mariah for help, advice, and a person to talk to.

In order to meet this week's goals, I did the following:

- This weekend, I spent my entire weekend with Mariah in Plano, TX to videograph her involvement in the Second Wind Conference hosted by Kids Across America. The weekend involved a great deal of activities, seminars, and prayer sessions led by a number of leaders. Mariah's role in this ministry is camp coordinator.
- Mariah had formerly participated in Kids Across America via an organization called Higher Ground. Higher Ground is a 3-year Christian servant leadership program for children starting at the age of 15. The children meet for camp every summer (for 3 years) for a 12-week period. Throughout the academic school year however, they are in their respective locations where they must turn in assignments or work reports that include written work, Bible study, and personal prayer to Higher Ground ministries via internet.
- Mariah has not only formerly been enrolled and graduated from the Higher Ground program, but also has returned during the summer as a Camp Counselor. She is attending the Second Wind Conference this year which many of the students enrolled in Higher Ground participate, as an observer and confidant for her students in the program.
- The Second Wind Conference is hosted by the organization, Kids Across America, and is held annually for a period of 2 ½ days. They are a non-denominational Christian servant leadership program focusing on ministering to inner city youth. Please see site here:<http://www.kidsacrossamerica.org/index.html>

Work assessment:

Friday 02/28

- Christon Gray Concert- Christian Singer, students praising and worshiping, close shots of Mariah's hands, praise, fellowship with her friends etc...
- Introduced to a great number of people, Higher Ground Pastor, leadership, youth ministers, camp counselors etc...
- Got a basic understanding and feel of the conference and its objective: which is to increase in the belief of Christ and follow His will for your life
- Theme of the Conference: Pressure Points – Metaphor for what are the pressure points in your life that lead you to sin, or a relationship that is away from God?
- Introduction of Camp Counselors at Higher Ground- Mariah was participating in this
- Mariah was not a leader of any of the sessions or discussions, rather she was an organizer and many of her campers came to her to have one-on-one conversations regarding both personal issues and their walk with God.

Saturday 03/01

- Conference day where not only the participants of the conference went to seminar's but so did Mariah.

- Seminar I: Forgiveness: This seminar used the story of Joseph and his brothers as an example of forgiveness. The Old Testament discuss that Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob. Due to the jealousy his brothers had towards Joseph, they abandoned Joseph and took him away from his Father. Joseph was found and was taken to the prisons in Egypt. He later received dreams from God and the Pharaoh appointed him second to the king. Joseph informed the king that there will be 7 years of harvest and 7 years of famine, so during the time of harvest to keep storage of food when people come to the Pharaoh in the time of hunger. During this time of famine, Joseph's brothers came to see the Pharaoh for food. While his brother's did not recognize Joseph, Joseph did his brothers. Once Joseph's identity was revealed, he told them not to feel bad or angry because God had put him through the struggle so that the line of Jacob would survive. It was God's will that Joseph endure what he did for a greater purpose and so the discussion focused on forgiveness as a necessity in walking the Christian walk.

- I found this session to be extremely relevant to my life and I walked away from in not only learning something, but wanting to apply it in my own life.

- The next session was on Dating and Relationships, which I also found to be extremely helpful.

- After the sessions were lunch and I actually got the opportunity to meet and speak with a camper who was one of Mariah's mentees. This was an interesting experience because I got to get an insiders perspective on the conference. Tiliny was her name, and she spoke about how this place for her really wasn't that spiritually strong, but she still enjoyed coming because it is a place where she can be in fellowship with other Christians. As a freshman in college she was able to identify that God had her floating about in various Christian communities through which she can learn from rather than just one.

- Later that day the group had a ceremony and dinner to honor all the leaders of the conference.

Sunday 03/02

- Sunday, the conference continued, however Mariah and I did not stay as we needed to drive back to Columbia.

- However, Mariah's parents came up from Austin, TX to see her and have breakfast, so I not only was able to meet her family, but I was able to film them together having breakfast, praying before their meal, and seeing how they interacted. It was a wonderful time to engage with Mariah's family as it did allow me to understanding her spiritual and religious background.

- Her parents soon left and Mariah, I, and a few of Mariah's friends (also members of the conference and camp leaders of KAA) hopped into the car for the 10 hr. drive to MO.

Car Ride

- The car ride was probably the most engaging and critical time to understand the background of Mariah and her friends, especially in the area of religiosity and how Christianity affects their lifestyles.

- If I had to divide the car ride into a few topics, it would be music, purity, and secular talk.

- Music: During my time with Mariah, I was introduced to a great deal of Christian music. I never heard any secular music playing on in the background at any time during the entire conference or during the car ride.

- Purity: During our long car ride we got into a deep discussion about purity in regards to sexuality both for males and females. At the KAA camp the campers during the summer have a whole day dedicated to purity and learning about it via the Bible.

- Secular talk: There was not too much secular talk with Mariah and her close friends; they mostly spoke of everything via a spiritual and religious lens.

- One of the major differences I am picking up as I sit in on both the Catholic and Protestant arenas of the faith is that in Protestant Christianity there is a huge emphasis on the Bible over everything else. Various denominations of Christianity including the non-denominational church Mariah is involved with follow a '*solo scriptura*' format which considers Biblical text as final or absolute. In Catholicism, there is an emphasis on

scripture but also tradition and a number of Catholic dogma outlined in the Catechism and Vatican II.

Professional analysis update:

I have scheduled a meeting with Professor Rees for Tues. March 11th at 1:30pm and here I hope to show him my footage and being assessing my progress and updates for the project.

Work planned for next week:

- Spend time with Alfie as he faces the more recent challenges of being homosexual and catholic in the church. He recently encountered an incident where a conflict of actions suspended him from his Life Teen service for the remainder of the semester.



Kids Across America host their annual Second Wind Conference this year in Plano, Texas at the North Dallas Community Bible Fellowship Saturday, March 1, 2014. This year's conference entitled 'Pressure Points' focuses on the challenges Christian youth may face in the secular world and how to combat these issues in a Christ-like manner.

Week 7

Weekly recap:

Goals:

- Spend more time with Alfie
- Research on the view of homosexuality and the Christian stance on this, both Catholic and protestant. The Catholic Church considers homosexuality acts sinful but not being homosexual itself sin. There are varying stances on this in protestant denominations.

In order to meet this week's goals, I did the following:

- Took interview of Alfie
- Filmed Alfie during mass
- Filmed Alfie during Wednesday Spaghetti dinner (once a month Newman Center hosts a Wednesday night Free Spaghetti dinner held for the Catholic Community)

Work assessment:

I was able to shoot Alfie two different times this week. The first was a combination of an interview along with his participation at mass. The second was him helping set up and participating in the community Spaghetti dinner.

Mass

I received special permission from the pastor at the Newman Center Chapel to film during a daily mass since filming during a Sunday service was out of the question. The mass began at 12 noon. I was able to get footage of Alfie spending time in blessing himself with holy water as he walked into the chapel, sitting and meditating in prayer, and receiving communion. It was interesting to watch the priest set up all the preparatory items at the altar including the chalice, the Bible, the Eucharist. I wished I could film him up front at a different angle but I may have to ask him for another day to film specifically this portion of the mass. During the mass, Alfie sat in silence just listening to the Bible readings and homily. Alfie seemed content after the mass. Soon after we prepared for the interview.

Interview

The interview was an extremely interesting, in fact it is the most interesting and compelling piece of footage I have thus far for the project. This interview was a background of Alfie's entire story- from being raised in a non-religious home, to

converting into Catholicism and the implications of this considering his sexual orientation, some conflicts he's experienced in the Catholic community etc...

Growing up "Agnostic"

Alfie explains his story from childhood. He grew up in an African American family where both his parents are black and did not hold any particular religious beliefs. Alfie categorized his experience growing up as "agnostic" where his parents did not practice any sort of religious beliefs or go to church on Sunday etc... His parents never expressed or passed on traditions of any faith during Alfie's growing up.

College

Coming to College, Alfie went on his way to study communications. During his freshman year, a resident in his dorm hall invited him to one of the Newman Center events. He decided to come and was immediately drawn to the community and group of people there. Alfie spend more and more time with the Catholic community on campus and finally decided to convert into Catholicism his junior year. Alfie went through the RCIA program the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. He was officially baptised into the Roman Catholic Church in 2012, second semester of his junior year.

Experience/Controversy

Alfie's experience with the church has been positive. He is very involved with various Catholic activities and missions the church hosts. He is a leader for the Life Teen

program which hosts Catholic education for high school teens. He also has served various position of leadership in the annual Newman musical and religious gatherings. Recently, Alfie underwent a controversy with the Life Teen program where he was placed on probation from the program for the rest of this semester. The controversy started when Alfie had posted a photo of a guy he believed was attractive on facebook. Alfie is friends with a few life teen high school students on facebook and this is where the controversy began. When Alfie signed up to be a leader for the Life Teen program, he signed a contract, as all leaders do, to uphold the teachings of the church as a leader he must be an example. The supervisor of the program, who is also a college student at MU, discussed with Alfie that his post on facebook was not in line with the church's teachings and he put Alfie on probation. Being the real and direct person that he is, Alfie, became angry at this supervisor and left the Life Teen program early the day he was addressed by the student supervisor. Alfie later wrote a long letter to campus ministry, Ccing all the team leaders and pastor of the church about this incident. Alfie's stated that he should be able to do what he did without being put on probation. He mentioned that had a straight person put a picture of a woman who was wearing scantily clad clothing, the team would have said nothing and certainly would not have put said person on probation. Alfie kept and stated his stance very directly.

I asked Alfie, given all that has happened with the fact that his sexual orientation is in conflict with what the Roman Catholic Church considers permissible and not, does he regret having joined the church. Also what is the reason that you joined, knowing this stance of the church?

Alfie stated that being homosexual does not take away from his relationship with God. He stated he felt called to and through the church and that is why he joined. During his conversion process, one of his mentor's Dan, told him that some people in the church would not be ok with him being homosexual and that those were things he would have to deal with as a member. Alfie was fully aware of this and decided to join due to the fact that his relationship with God overpowered what the Church itself believed about his sexual orientation. He also mentioned that since the incident, it is not that he regrets joining because obviously this doesn't change his relationship with God, but that his eyes are being opened to how people really think of homosexuality and homosexuals as himself. He states, "It doesn't make me not want to be Catholic, but it does show me, wow, is this really what they think."

It was upsetting to hear about Alfie's experience being on probation from Life Teen. I also believe he dealt with the controversy well, having spoken to all parties involved. His interview allowed me to reflect on aspects of the church I disagree with such as women not being able to take leadership positions in the Catholic Church.

Professional analysis update:

I've begun doing some scholarly research on the theology of Christianity and its belief on certain issues. I also realize I need to do some scholarly research on homosexuality in relation to Christian teaching.

Work planned for next week:

- Continue discussing with Alfie progress on his probation
- Research on homosexuality

Week 8

Weekly recap:

Goals:

- Reach out for analytical portion interviews with photojournalists of color who are self-identifying Christians.
- Contact Ms. Denise McGill at the University of South Carolina for contacts.
- Secure a minimum of 5 photojournalist of color to interview for the week
- Work on reviewing footage

In order to meet this week's goals, I did the following:

- After speaking to Ms. Denise McGill for USC, I was able to locate a wonderful contact in the Bay Area. A noted photojournalist named Gary Fong who is the Chair and Chaplin of the Christians in Photojournalism society.
- I was able to speak to Mr. Fong who was on his way to traveling to Bolivia in two days. He contacted me to 4 photojournalists of color who are self-identifying Christians. These photojournalists were all male, but I asked each of them to identify any women I could contact for my project.
- Researched on Christians in Photojournalism (CIP)

Work assessment:

Christians in Photojournalism is an organization that connects and supports photographers who are of the Christian faith, both in the spiritual aspect and the professional one. When contacting Mr. Gary Fong, we spoke for a while on the phone and he was very interested in my project. Over the course of our conversation Mr. Fong was interested to hear about my developments in the project thus far. The denominations that I've been photographing as well as the relationship I've built with my subjects. He told me it was very interesting that I had called because I was his second random call within the hour and he wondered what God had planned to connect us. The Holy Spirit was in motion when I was talking to him because I believe that is how we connected. At the end of our conversation Mr. Fong stated: "Sini, let me pray for you." He prayed over my project, the contacts that I would meet, the people that I would speak to and the will God had for me in completing this journey. I felt at peace after speaking to him. He advised me to send him an email so that he could add me to the CIP mailing list and what I needed from him. I worked up an email describing the depths of my project and he responded to me promptly giving me 4 names of members of CIP many of whom are world renowned photographers, even Pulitzer Prize winning photographer John White! I could not believe it! I was jumping up and down when he connected me to Mr. White! OMG OMG OMG!!! Photojournalist John White is a Pulitzer Prize winning Photojournalist. His work documenting the south side of Chicago truly captures the culture and life of the black community. He formerly served as a professor at Northwestern University. He still teaches at the University of Chicago. He was also a staff photographer for the Chicago Sun-Times before what happened with the 'letting-go'

of the entire photography staff at the Newspaper in 2013, last year. I could not believe that Mr. Fong had connected me to him, I was in complete awe for the rest of the day.

Mr. Fong also connected me to A-Rapping, Craig Lee, and Kenny Irby. These photographers are less known to me, but after looking at their work, it was amazing to see that Mr. Fong, yet again had hooked a sista up with the cream of the crop! I have set up a phone interview with Mr. Lee for April 18th. I received a response from A-Rapping and Mr. Irby, but they have not confirmed an interview with me. Unfortunately, I have not heard from Mr. John White, but I imagine that he is very busy.

Community

After researching the work of CIP and what they do, I could see a reoccurring theme that within more so Protestant Christianity rather than Catholic, there is this “brother-hood” so to speak; this intimate clan of believers. While I do believe Catholics have a “community” it is not as intimate or personal as the ones I’ve witnessed with the protestant circles I’ve journeyed through. Even for myself, as a practicing Catholic, I go to a weekly Bible study that is non-denominational Christian and the bond that I’ve formed with my sisters there, is really incomparable with the friendly relationships I’ve encountered within the Catholic Church. The non-denominational circle really helps me walk out and LIVE the Christian faith and my sisters keep me accountable and help me to grow spiritually. In the Catholic circle, I’ve found that I’ve created little to no bond with my co-parishioners and it’s quite sad. Why I speak of this intimacy and brother-hood, is because when Mr. Fong had sent that email to a group of photographers I could contact,

he group emailed us and several things happened. 1. He was sure by the nature of their close knit-bond, he could reach out to them knowing that the Holy Spirit would lead them to help me in my project 2. Mr. Fong ended his email with the term Agape, a term that means love- but God's divine love rather than human love. It was powerful for me to see this because this word is a word I was introduced to in the Black Church several years ago while in the MLK Scholarship at Seton Hall University. I've only seen it in the Protestant realm of Christianity. To show the intimacy of the group's relationship, after the mail was send out, Mr. Irby responded, hitting 'reply-all' and stated, "Gary, I am honored to be considered in this group of great men of GOD." With GOD in all capitals. Shortly after, Mr. Fong responded, "My brother, it is I who have the honor." When I saw this exchange I was overwhelmed. I was also grateful and yet envious. I wished I had a "sister-hood" like that too, and to be honest I do, here at Mizzou my Bible study girls, they hold me DOWN! Spiritually. I don't know what I would have done without them here at my time at Mizzou but I wanted that network in the long run. I hope our sisterhood will continue over time, and of course I know we will be friends, but to have that close-ness that unbreakable bond that transcends, time, place, and history. In the simple movement and understanding that the Holy Spirit is there I know I have sisters here and I just hope that continues in the name of Jesus.

Mr. Rapping also responded to the group addressing both myself and Gary stating, he is excited about the project. Later that day, I sent out a reply all to the group stating my background, how God led me to Mizzou, my desire to pursue music, my cultural background, and faith background. Later, I emailed them all with an interview overview and to please confirm with me if they are willing to partake in the project

understanding their own views on Christianity and how or if it has shaped their professional work.

As mentioned the only person I have scheduled is Mr. Lee for April 18th. I will have to wait for Mr. Fong to return from Bolivia mid-April to interview him as well. I am also seeking to interview women of color photojournalists who identify as Christian. Mr. Fong ironically referred me to only men! I am hoping the team responds with some useful FEMALE contacts!

Professional analysis update:

As stated in these field notes I've been making progress on contacting people for interviews. I have an outline of the interview questions and process which I have emailed to the group Mr. Fong sent me. I wanted to review my official questions with Professor Rees next week so that we can have a clear idea that I am able to achieve my objective for the project within the 30 minutes I have with each person.

In the mean time I'm hoping to video Alife a bit more and review the video footage which I have yet to complete! Time is ticking!

Work planned for next week:

- Editing, Editing, Editing!!!

Week 9

Weekly recap:

Goals:

- Begin reviewing footage and drafting storyboard
- Meet with Mariah for interview

In order to meet this week's goals, I did the following:

- This week I spent time looking at the footage I've taken of Alfie and labeling which ones I can use and which ones I cannot.
- This week I spent time with Mariah for a few days during Spring Break. She had called me to take out her sew-in in her hair. I had told her previously I needed to take an interview of her during break and this time worked out well.

Work assessment:

On Wednesday March 19, I got to spend the whole day with Mariah. In the morning, we took time to take out the tracks from her hair, which was a very useful time to bond. We also got to Facetime on the phone with one of her Higher Ground co-counselors- Prentice. One of the main things we got to talk about were relationships. We got into this discussion because Prentice was giving Mariah a hard time about anyone

Mariah is dating. Prentice is like an overprotective brother for Mariah. They've known each other since high school. Prentice and Mariah's other two Christian 'brothers' Tre and Andre are all up in arms about Mariah dating. They will ask Mariah if her standards are being met if this brother is really a Man of God etc... Mariah confessed that her "older brothers" can be a bit overbearing, but she is still happy that they are there to hold her back.

Mariah and I more or less agree on this issue that we 1. Desire a man who is a leader and 2. Desire a man who is strong in his Christian faith being able to lead his woman and family in the faith. After some time, Prentice's facetime logged off due to lack of battery so Mariah and I ended up continuing the conversation for the next hour. We both were able to bond through this because we told each other our stories of relationships from the past. We also discussed that it is always a difficult situation to be in because your heart reigns over what your mind tells you at times and that's why it is always important to keep God at the center and not make 'man' an idol.

After taking out Mariah's tracks I tied her hair in Bantu knots. When I was young, my mom used to make me sit down on the steps of our house and oil, comb out, and braid in my hair- this is a traditional Indian element of every Indian girls life. I felt like "Mama status" after doing Mariah's hair and we took a well-deserved break! We later proceeded to complete the interview for the project after snacking on veggies. The questions included:

- Tell me about your faith formation, did you grow up in the church, how so, what roles did you take on etc...
- At what point did you decide to walk in the Christian faith?
- How is your identity as a Christian important in the way that it shapes your life, does it?
- What are the biggest challenges in maintaining your Christian walk?
- Explain the role of KAA and the Higher Ground program in your Christian faith development.
- Where do you see yourself in regards to your faith a few years from now both in your personal life and professional work?

Topic of maintaining your Christian faith. I identified three things in particular that Mariah has mentioned reoccurring regarding how she maintains and grows in her faith during the interview. These factors included:

- Fellowship/Community

I recognize that Mariah's ability to maintain and grow in her faith is in her community as she identifies. Growing up she grew up in a Southern Baptist church where her father was a Deacon. She grew up very active in the church when it came to altar service, praise and worship leader, step team, dance ministry etc... Over a period of time

Mariah came to realize that her faith was not actually her 'own' but something that had been passed down to her through tradition and practice. She spoke about her experiences in high school and how while she still believed in God, she was not walking the 'Christian Walk'. In her senior year of high school she went to a service at her church where one of her mentors called her up during altar call and at that moment she felt the presence of the Holy Spirit and she took Jesus not just a tradition, but a knowing. At that time was when she decided to follow Christ to the fullest and keep on the Christian walk. Her program training as she mentioned in KAA and Higher Ground really kept her encouraged. She mentioned that had she not had that network and support close knit community, she would not have been able to follow through with her calling as a Christian.

- Reading the Word [Bible]

In Mariah's Christian setting with KAA and Higher Ground, there is a very big emphasis on the Word of God aka the Bible. I've asked Mariah some controversial questions regarding homosexuality, abortion, and the Big Bang theory. Her response has been consistent with conservative Christian thought which regard all of the above as 'sin' or not in line with Christian teaching. What I appreciate about Mariah however is her non-judgmental spirit. She equated lying to fornication that they are both equal according to the Word and she always stated that no sin is too great for God.

- Prayer/Quiet Time

Quiet time is an essential part of Mariah's Christian walk. She states "All my roommates know, if I don't have my quiet time in the morning, I a mess the rest of the day." Quiet time is what Mariah calls her alone time with God, a time where she reads the word, worships God, thanks God, asks God through prayer. It is a silent time where she can focus her energy and time to the Most High and allow Him to be the center and not this focusing is carried throughout her day.

Professional analysis update:

I've reached out to Ms. Denise McGill, Photojournalism Faculty of the University of South Carolina as per Professor Rees's recommendation. I will be speaking to her Tuesday- April 1 to discuss possible self-identifying Christian photojournalists who may be able to help with my analytical portion of the project.

I've also slowly began compiling and organizing my video footage so that I am able to begin the editing process. Here because I have hours of footage, I will most likely take the next two weeks to go over the footage and begin editing the short Micro-Doc piece for my project.

Work planned for next week:

- Edit, edit, edit

- Mariah's praise dance ministry His Life may meet in a small group for prayer
- Alfie's work with Life Teen and progress if any on the controversy that occurred
- Week 10 - Week 14

Editing Video, Sequencing, and compiling all video footage

Chapter Three: Self Evaluation

I believe I learned a great deal from completing this project. I was able to get deep and personal with my subjects, an aspect which was not only deeply meaningful for me but also educational. The process in completing this project was tedious and time consuming. I wish I had spent more time in documenting both Alfie's and Mariah's journey but I also wanted to complete this project by the summer's end. What struck me most about this project was the diversity in experience and opinions on faith. Both Alfie and Mariah were distinct subjects to interview. The photojournalists whom I interviewed for the professional analysis also had a great deal of knowledge to share. Everyone's journeys both within and outside the faith were different, yet they all shared common values and ethical standards they lived by.

One aspect I learned from every individual with whom I came in contact was that faith is a developmental process, like anything else. Along the way, there are a number of challenges, moments of doubt and question, which many of the interviewees experienced. I felt that completing this project was a reflection of my own journey in faith as well, finding it, understanding it, and developing it. Many of the experiences, moments of testing, and hurdles which my subjects expressed, I have experienced, too, on my spiritual journey.

Alfie spoke about the crossfires he's experienced within the church institutionally and personally. He stated that while there are particular stances on church teaching that affect him directly, he still continues to be himself daily and this aspect does not diminish

his faith. Alfie's conflicts with institutionalized religion resonated with my own experience in the faith in many ways. Institutionally, there are a number of dogmatic teachings I disagree with when it comes to Christian policy, nonetheless, this does not diminish or abate my belief in Christ or the journey with God I choose to grow in. My desire to become a better human being is what motivates me to continue seeking God and uphold the principles set forth by the example of Jesus Christ. My journey in faith led me to a consciousness about photographing my subjects with dignity and integrity while in the area of my professional work. Interviewing with a number of photojournalists who share the same faith was both inspiring and enlightening.

What I learned through the process of the interviews is that I should have taken more time to dig deeper on the overall issues, conflicts, and questions each photojournalist tried to convey concerning their faith and professional work. I feel that I touched on the surface of the issue but was not able to break that barrier of soil to the roots. A follow up interview with every photojournalist, as well as spending more time with my committee for feedback would have resulted in a far better analysis than I have now. While I believe I gained much from the interviews personally, journalistically I felt it was difficult for me to piece the puzzle together. Throughout the text portion of my project I speak a great deal of my personal opinions and experiences and focus less on the topic at hand. It is difficult for me to assess the interviews through a lens that is more objective rather than subjective. However, the interviews themselves provided a great deal of insight that still has the opportunity to be dissected. It will be interesting to know the response of the photojournalists I interviewed once they have reviewed my project. I think it useful to know their feedback on how their interviews were viewed and used to

formulate this project. While the analysis portion of the project could be deeper, I believe other areas of the project have stronger elements, such as the video piece.

Chapter Four: Evidence of Work

Reference Media Folder:

Video Project- FindingFaith.mov

Chapter Five: Analysis Component

As an undergraduate I traveled to India to research the adverse affects of globalization on poverty. I traveled to my motherland and photographed the poor and destitute. What I learned from my experience greatly affected my approach to photography. I began feeling conflicted in taking photographs of individuals in distressed situations. Not only were my subjects in extremely helpless situations, I felt guilty and disrespectful for framing and ‘using’ subjects for photographs. I felt as if I were creating what others have described as “Poverty Porn” - the making of photographs of subjects in distressed situations, which may highlight the issues of plight of people but also do not address subjects as individuals, seemingly focusing more on the abilities of the photographer than the suffering of the subject(s).

After my experience in India, I felt guilty for using my subjects through photography. I decided from then on I would no longer make photographs of individuals trapped in vulnerable situations. As a student photojournalist I intentionally chose not to photograph images that may frame or cast my subjects in a negative light. This decision stemmed from my spiritual conviction to show and represent my subjects with integrity and not to exploit them for alternative gains.

I became intrigued with understanding how other photojournalists handled the dilemma found in my own personal life, and so I chose to interview photojournalists of color since I am a woman of color and because I believe the voices of people of color are limited in today’s journalism literature. I interviewed three males and three females for

the project. All worked for secular publications for the majority of their professional careers. Almost all photojournalists interviewed identified with a Protestant Christian denomination. Five out of the six of my interview subjects identified as practicing Christian, with the seventh, Kimberly Mitchell identifying with no religion but considering herself as 'humanist'.

Biographical sketch of the photojournalists interviewed here:



Gary Fong
San Francisco, CA
Principal, Genesis Photo Agency

Gary Fong is the Principal of Genesis Photo Agency. Genesis is a group of professional photographers with a dream of elevating the effectiveness of photography in evangelical and secular publications around the world. Fong is also the former Director of Editorial Graphics Technology at the San Francisco Chronicle. He is the Chief Photography Officer of WeArePhotographers.com, a new website dedicated to educating and advancing photography for professional and enthusiasts alike.
<http://www.genesisphotos.com/>



Sonja Foster
Hampton, VA
Funeral Photographer

Sonja Foster typed obituaries while working as an editorial assistant for The Virginian-Pilot, which gave her the grace and experience to console others in documenting the loss of life. Foster formerly worked for USA Today, the Milwaukee Sentential Journal, and Bloomberg before becoming a freelance and funeral photographer.
<http://www.fosterfarewellphoto.com/>



Kenny Irby
St. Petersburg, FL
Senior Faculty, Poynter

Kenny Irby founded Poynter's photojournalism program in 1995 and currently serves, as it's senior faculty and Director of Community Relations. Irby directs The Write Field initiative, an academic enrichment and mentoring program for minority male youth. He formerly chaired the 2007 Pulitzer Prize photography categories, currently serves as a member of the Eddie Adams Workshop board, and is a founding member of National Press Photographers Association.

<http://about.poynter.org/about-us/our-people/kenny-irby>



Danese Kenon
Indianapolis, IN
Multimedia Photojournalist, The Indianapolis Star

Danese Kenon is an award-winning visual journalist who serves as a full-time multimedia photojournalist at The Indianapolis Star. Kenon formerly worked at The Rochester Democrat and Chronicle and teaches multimedia journalism to Chips Quinn Scholars, the Diversity Institute Scholars at the Freedom Forum, and to students at the National Association of Black Journalists.

<http://www.danesekenon.com/>



Kimberly Mitchell
Detroit, MI
Photojournalist, Detroit Free Press

Kimberly Mitchell is a staff photojournalist and video producer at the Detroit Free Press. She is a graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism and finds a strong connection with creating socio-economic change through dynamic, story-telling photography. In 2006 Mitchell received an NPPA award for runner-up photographer of the year for the state of Michigan.

<https://twitter.com/souldelightfull>



Anacleto Rapping
Thousand Oaks, CA
Freelance Photographer

Anacleto Rapping is a freelance photographer who is currently entrepreneuring to establish a photography business. Rapping served as a staff photographer for the Los Angeles Times for over two decades and won three Pulitzer Prizes for team news coverage with the publication. He was also nominated for an individual Pulitzer Prize in 1996 for his photography in the Atlanta Summer Olympics. Rapping has a passion for people, places, and global events, he says, “Every time a photograph is taken, that moment become a part of history.”

<http://www.arapping.com/>

The experience of these photojournalists ranged from newsroom settings, to owning their own business to working as freelancers. These journalists often shared their personal testimony in finding faith. Many also identified the deciding moment in which they committed to becoming ‘Christian-identifying’.

A number of photojournalists stated their ‘walk’ with God was a process and journey that grew over time. All identified challenges, set backs, moments of courage, and strength as they discussed these personal and candid aspects of their faith journey. These photojournalists commented on their Christian faith as a lifestyle. Just as with any skill or craft, spirituality and religiosity was an aspect of their lives that needed to be cultivated and maintained. For some, this involved attending church every Sunday, reading the Bible, as well as designating a quiet time for prayer. All of the Christian identifying photojournalists interviewed identified a community or a body of people they turned to to keep them strong and grounded in faith- family members, a group of friends, a church community, or all of these factors combined.

The adage “what would Jesus do” sums up the theme of the interviews. Most photojournalists said being a Christian did not mean making overt statements about their

faith when working in the professional arena. They often cited their faith as a de facto mode rather than a clear verbal or behavioral dividing line separating them from others. These photojournalists considered faith as something that informed their lives even though it did not receive explicit mention when pursuing their professional work.

Framing & Telling Stories

Prominent photojournalist Gary Fong, founder and principle of Genesis Photo Agency in the Bay Area, explained how his Christian beliefs influences how he makes photographs. Citing an example of a well-composed photograph he made several years ago of a man practicing Taichi. Fong stated God spoke to him while making the photograph saying, “Gary watch this, watch what I can do in front of your lens. Move a little bit right, and then He says, move a little bit left and now watch this..., and literally the clouds parted in front of me and this Taichi guy was going at it doing his exercise and the sun kinda was right there as the clouds were parting. And I said, Lord, its beautiful, I don’t have to take a picture of this as I can remember it on the back side of my mind forever,... and God would say, in a funny kind of way, just don’t stand there, take some pictures, show other people. So I said ‘ok’.”



For Fong, both his personal and professional work involves constant and consistent internal conversation with God. There is no separation of his life in faith and in the newsroom.

Danese Kenon staff photojournalist for The Indianapolis Star said her faith is simply “who I am.” Kenon spoke about a small gold cross she wears around her neck regularly. One day, she entered a Sikh temple and a man referenced her necklace and asked her “Is this what you believe?” “Yes” she responded and he replied with, “Then welcome.” Kenon explained that for her, she did not give a second thought to the religious icon she was wearing, but it surprised her that this man noticed the cross she wore and in seeing it, respected her specific religious belief.

When asked if her faith affects the way she frames or photographs stories, Kenon stated, “I don’t think so... A lot of photojournalism, particularly if you’re on the streets and shooting spot news, a lot of its instincts.” Recently, Kenon photographed a

motorcycle accident in which a cyclist was pinned to a car, yet he lived. Following the assignment, she mentioned she was not going to write a caption about how she witnessed the grace of God in this event, which she felt happened, but she would share this story with friends outside of work, opting instead for a more 'cut-and dried' journalistically accepted outline. Kenon says that faith does not affect the way she takes pictures, however, her profession, with the versatility of stories she is able to witness, allows her to appreciate and reflect on the grace of God every day.

Christian Values & Human Values

Freelance photojournalist Sonja Foster shared similar ideas about photographing. Foster is a funeral photographer and worked with various publications before becoming a freelance photographer. As a funeral photographer, Foster takes photographs of the grieving by request, from the families connected to the deceased.

In her own life she distinguishes between Christian and human values. Foster gave an example of a time when she photographed a set of children at a carnival. The children were playing in an inflated play pen and she framed a number of photos of the children interacting, however in one of the photographs, a little girl's dress had flopped up as the child was climbing the playpen ladder. Before sending out the full take to her client, Foster excluded the photograph of the female child's dress out of place to protect the child. While on assignment, Foster says she does not have time to focus on anything else but shooting. However, during editing, she is deliberate about which photos she will send to her client and which she will not. She states, "I don't want to leave it up to someone else to make a moral decision about something I submitted. I have to make the decision because it's my work." While Foster mentioned that she believes it was the

'Christian' in her that compelled her to exclude this female child's photograph from the full take, she did not know if it was strictly from her Christian values, her conservative upbringing, or her human instinct to protect the child as a woman.

Many other photographers interviewed tended to agree that most Christian values are indeed humanistic i.e. protecting the value and dignity of life and the golden rule of treating others with respect, as you would like to be treated. Poynter faculty Kenny Irby touched on this subject stating, "The spiritual guides the secular." Irby discussed the landscape of the Christian faith in relation to the secular world and notes the two are not mutually exclusive. The difference in universally human values from Christian values is the aspect of motivation. For self-identified Christians, aspiring to follow Christ as the primary moral example provides the motivation for attempting to live out certain values and ideals regardless of whether they are unique to Christianity. For Foster, there was certainly an inter-mingling of origins from where her practiced values derived from, whether they were Christian or humanistic.

One's traditional practices whether religious or secular are influenced by far more than one single known experience or tradition, and can be influenced by a spectrum of teachings combined. Such is the point of view of photojournalist Kimberly Mitchell who noted she was raised in the Christian faith but no longer identifies as Christian, but humanist.

Mitchell mentioned that she respects religion overall and that there is a great deal to learn from the Christian faith, however she did not want to confine herself to one category. There are aspects about the institutionalized religiosity of some conservative denominations, which she disagreed with, such as casting someone to hell for not

believing in Jesus Christ or using the Bible to justify inequalities in law i.e. the position for denying LGBT rights to marry asserted by many traditional Christian denominations.

Mitchell mentioned it is important to maintain the dignity and integrity of every human being both in ones personal and professional work. Maintaining the integrity of ones subjects remained the core value and priority for her when photographing and communicating with her subjects on the job. These very human values are what Mitchell make an effort to practice each day.

Controversial Issues

Most photojournalists interviewed said they were comfortable photographing any situation. However, photojournalist Anacleto Rapping mentioned in his early years of Christian formation he encountered a controversial topic.

More than twenty years ago, when homosexuality was an underreported topic in the media, Rapping, in his early Christian formation period at the time and given his understanding of Christian teaching on the topic, felt uncomfortable photographing the topic of homosexuality. Rapping approached the news editor and said he would prefer not to photograph this story, however the editor responded that no matter what his personal opinion on the matter, he needed to get the job done.

Rapping spoke to church elders and sought guidance on what action to take concerning his dilemma and was encouraged to complete the assignment and to view it as God giving him a unique purpose in photographing this topic. Rapping completed the assignment, and reflecting on this incident now, he states it was his youth that made it a difficult decision, “I just did it... I went in as much as I could with a... mind of ‘I’m still going to take the best picture I can.’ It may not be what I agree with, but I’m going to

take the best picture I can because that's part of being a professional... that's part of being a photojournalist- Is that you're there to tell a story and you're there to document what is happening, and so I went and shot.”

After years in the field, Rapping said there are times when he still feels conflicted photographing a situation he may not fully agree with, however he takes on the story because he believes God has purposed him to do so.

In summary, I had hoped through conducting these interviews to provide understanding about how Christian religious or spiritual convictions affect the manner in which photojournalists tell stories. My findings overwhelmingly reveal it did not. However, all the photojournalists interviewed said they saw every situation, story, and event they photographed as a spiritual lesson. One factor evident in almost all the interviews was the desire of each photojournalist to be open to the instruction from God while remaining an active photojournalist.

Photojournalist Gary Fong emphasized while one may be a Christian working as a photojournalist, you must strive for excellence in making photographs. He advised the younger generation; while being a Christian is a wonderful experience it is critical that faith not dull but sharpen one's craft. Photojournalists who identify as Christian and want their work to be consistent with that identity must demonstrate powerful skill and commitment to the profession of photography if they wish to excel. He emphasized that in doing so God will use their gift as a means to impact others lives as well as their own.

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Appendix

Professional Project Proposal

Professional Skills & Analysis Component

Professional Skills.

For the professional skills component, I photographed two students of color in relation to their Christian faith, examining how their Christian faith influence the decisions they make, their daily lifestyle, and purpose in life. These two students are Mariah Brennan and Alfred Cox. Mariah, a junior at the University of Missouri, is of the Protestant Christian faith and is African American. She grew up in a Southern Baptist denomination and currently attends a non-denominational church. Alfred, more commonly known as Alfie, is a recent graduate of the University of Missouri with a Bachelor's degree in communications. Alife who is African American, is a unique story because he grew up in what he calls an "agnostic household." After attending school at Mizzou and finding a faith based community at the university, Alfie decided to convert to the Catholic faith his sophomore year of college. Alife is an openly gay individual and while knowing the stance of the Catholic Church on homosexuality Alfie willing joined the faith because he believed God was calling him into a deeper relationship with Christ.

The qualifications I have for this project were acquired through my participation in the graduate photojournalism program at the University of Missouri as well as my former work with multimedia and photography in India. My former work in India allowed me to produce a short documentary film and photo exhibition entitled India

UnCut in October of 2009. I believe my prior experiences helped me to carry out my professional project.

I officially began my professional project on Wednesday, January 15, 2014 and ended my project on Wednesday, June 11, 2014. I used the Nikon D7000, an HD DSLR camera to capture and shoot the short documentary video for this professional project. Included in this project is a short multimedia piece less than 10 minutes documenting the individual faith journeys of Mariah and Alfie. This piece includes interviews, interaction, and involvement of both subjects in their spiritual and secular lives. This video is published on a hard copy disk and is available for use to be disseminated for educational purposes via the University of Missouri.

The video footage I captured contains visual information involving my subjects' religious practice, spiritual identity, and community fellowship. Video footage was captured during Sunday services/masses, Bible studies, morning/evening prayer, and prayer before meals.

In the case of Alfie, I photographed his involvement at the Catholic Newman Center on campus at the University of Missouri. With Mariah, I captured her interactions with the organization, Kids Across America (KAA) as well as her involvement as a praise dancer with *His Life*, an student dance ministry at the University of Missouri. I also traveled to Texas with Mariah, the weekend of March 1st, 2014 during the Second Wind Conference, a national conference hosted by the KAA organization. The Second Wind Conference is a gathering of the Christian ministry KAA Mariah is a part of as a worship leader, counselor, and team member. While in Texas, I met her close family and friends and was able to video her in a more familial setting.

The multimedia piece serves as the abundant physical evidence for my professional skills component. Professor Rees has been a guiding mentor for me as I have completed this project. Professor Flanagan helped me to brainstorm the best approach to documenting and understanding the many different angles of faith. The previous semester I was able to take Professor Flanagan's Reality of God class in the Religious Studies department. The dialogue in the class allowed me to think about why and how individuals believe in God and gave me great insight on how best to approach this professional project. Finally, Professor Rice served as my visual editor for the video piece as I worked as his graduate teaching assistant in the Micro-documentary class this past year. He also contributed greatly in editing my main text for this project.

Each week, out in the field, during my project, I took field notes and posted them on my blog as I documented the lives of my subjects. I periodically sent the updated link to my blog to my professional project committee for review. The field notes included still images, description of my conversations with my subjects, and personal commentary. The field notes show my progress in terms of the footage I have shot, the interviews I have conducted, and the written/hard components of my professional project I have gathered.

My personal experience combined with the examination of my subjects' faith based lives give the audience a better understanding of how Christianity plays a major role in my subjects' lifestyle. This completes the professional skills component of my project.

Analysis Component. The analysis component of my project includes interviewing Christian photojournalists of color and the role their faith may or may not play while reporting and working in a professional environment. This portion of the project is examined through the classical theory of gatekeeping.

I examined the Christian faith in relation to the practice of journalism by interviewing seven photojournalists of color. The question:

How often and to what extent do self-identifying Christian journalists feel their values affect the stories they report?

Questions I posed to my interviewees include:

- Does your faith affect the stories you report as a journalist?
- In what way does your faith influence your decision making as a journalist, if at all?
- Does your Christian faith affect the manner in which you report (or frame) a story to a particular audience? Or do you maintain absolute objectivity as a journalist?
- When reporting a story, what comes first, your role as a Christian or your role as a journalist?

Affect of Faith on Professional Work.

For this project I interviewed six Christian identifying photojournalists and one non-Christian identifying photojournalist. My interview subjects included Gary Fong, Anacleto Rapping, Craig Lee, Kenny Irby, Danese Kenon, Sonja Foster, and Kim Todd. To understand if faith had an influence over the manner in which Christian photojournalists told stories, I examined this perspective via the gatekeeping theory.

Several of the Christian photojournalists said that matters of faith did trickle into their professional work but for others it did not. While there is much literature that discusses the role of religion in society and media, there is little scholarly research that examines Christian journalists' personal accounts working in a professional environment and the ethical and moral value judgments they must make on the job in reference to their faith.

In Rodgers, *Social Gospel and the News*, the author cites various examples of the role and juxtaposition of religion in our professional society. Rodgers quotes Rev. Washington Gladden, a prominent US pastor in the 19th century who observed that a large number of commercial papers in the country were owned by "corporations and stock companies who did so for profit." Gladden states, "...the doctrines, political or moral or religious, taught by their journal, concern them less than the annual balance sheet. That is the paramount consideration. The newspaper business is primarily, business." Gladden continued to remark on the growing influence the secular press had on the shaping of American society and how our current capitalistic system poorly served our moral Christian obligation to serve the marginalized. Rodgers continues to cite a number of agents including Michael Schudson in the 20th century who "attempted to define journalistic norms as moral perceptions of social behavior via moral conduct and content rather than commercial interest." A prime reason for the failure to prioritize the ethical argument in the practice of journalism not only lied in the weighted value of economic gain, but the principle of maintaining objectivity in journalism.

Ron Rodgers', *Goodness Isn't News*, discusses objectivity including the real responsibility journalism has to society. Rodgers examines the work of Rev. Charles

Sheldon 1900 national discussion of press responsibility. Rodgers explains that Sheldon's assertion of editing a newspaper from a "Christian point of view" was a failure however the role of journalism in being an "agent of education and moral uplift upon the press" is relevant. It was Sheldon who in the 19th century acknowledged, "the power and responsibility of the pulpit had been conferred on the press," however he was opposed by J.K. Hudson, editor of The Topeka Daily Capital who stated that the press "stands today as the most powerful protectors of communities against crime, tyranny, and corruption of officials... and in my judgment making it conform to certain restrictions and limitations in order to bring it within the ideal of Christian daily would detract from, rather than add to, its influence and usefulness." In Sheldon's, *What would Jesus do? Considering politics, economics and social obligations in Ethics*, he provides a counter argument to the proposition of pure objectivity in that nothing can be truly objective and that the lack of ethical and moral responsibility of individuals in the press has "damaged the world with false philosophy and devilish diplomacy." In the end however, the national debate between Hudson and Sheldon revealed that, "At one end were those who believed the press had a responsibility to society in educating its public opinion and protecting and reinforcing its moral fiber. At the other end were those who believe a newspaper's success was dined by profit and who's maxim was 'give readers what they want'"(Rodgers, 2009).

In the number of interviews I completed photojournalists commented on the notion of objectivity and the fact that it was almost impossible to maintain as a working professional. Documenting the lives of Mariah and Alfie allowed me to see why this was true. When completing both the phone interviews with photojournalists and

simultaneously filming the lives of my subjects, I observed patterns and themes on several fronts, which continuously reemerged. These themes included the emphasis of reading the word of God, engaging with a faith-based community in fellowship, and maintaining relationship with God through prayer, all on a daily basis. These practices shape and influence the personal lives of each individual, which in turn affect their lifestyle.

The Word.

The Bible is an integral part of Christian spiritual development as many see it as the direct word of God, which cannot be transgressed. Others view it in an interpretive manner, however one factor is certain that the books of the Bible were written in the social and cultural context of its time. Christians now, use it as a core foundational structure for both religious and spiritual faith in Christ Jesus.

Fellowship & Community.

Without the aspect of community it is difficult to walk the straight and narrow way many Christians. Alfie, said it was the community that attracted him to the religion of Catholicism more than the faith itself. While interviewing a number of photojournalists for the project, there was a clear community of brotherhood within my first contacts. Gary Fong the Chaplain of Christian Photojournalists, referenced me to a number of photojournalists to contact via email. He copied all the journalists in the email he sent me and the response of all the individuals who replied was un-mistakenly a bond of brotherhood. Photojournalist Kenny Irby was the first to reply-all to the email by saying, "It is my honor to be in the company of these great men of God." Similar emails followed

by those copied in the email thread. From these examples, I sensed among them a great bond of brotherhood that was rooted and linked through their Christian faith.

Prayer.

Prayer involves conversation with God. For Mariah she referred to her personal time with God as ‘quite time.’ She spends quite time in the morning reading the word, sitting in the silence and simply speaking to God out loud or in her mind. She also uses this time to worship through dance or song and allows the spirit of God to overcome her before beginning her day. Alfie also cited this aspect of prayer and ‘quite time’.

Christian Values Shaping Daily Life.

The interviews specifically spoke about the constant and consistent effort of maintaining a relationship with God through daily prayer. Photojournalists identified a number of values within the interviews that resurfaced. These core human values include: compassion, kindness, and positivity. Working in the newsroom environment, most journalists I interviewed spoke about the aspect of objectivity and that one cannot remain truly objective as a human being. While most journalists admitted that they are not overt about their Christianity in the work place or while on assignment, their colleagues know they are practicing Christian.

Christian-Identifying Values.

During the interview process, there remained a number of practices that the journalists discussed when working in the professional realm. The core, critical, and consistent finding from the interviewed journalists was their Christian faith is a lifestyle. This ‘lifestyle’, was an effort to reflect Christ in all they do and to become more Christ-

like in their daily walk. It encompassed for them the human values of integrity and the 'golden rule': loving and treating others, as they would like to be loved and treated.

Almost all of the journalists I interviewed explained that their faith was a daily renewal and call to become a better human being. While some photojournalists were outward about their Christianity in the secular environments they engaged in, others did not express their faith directly with co-workers or within the newsroom. However, many of the photojournalists interviewed said most people they interacted with had the knowledge they were self-identifying Christians. While working in the secular newsroom and completing professional work taking photographs as a photojournalist, most of the interviewees stated their faith did not affect the way they directly photographed or framed stories.

One Christian-identifying photojournalist identified that when they were at a younger age in their life when they were new in their walk with Christ, they were asked to photograph a story regarding homosexuality. This photojournalist at the time felt uncomfortable photographing this issue because of their early understanding of Christian teaching on the subject. At this time, the photojournalist was asked to shoot the story regardless of their personal opinion and completed the job assigned by the editor. Reflecting back on this moment several years later, the photojournalist mentioned that they would have no problem shooting the story today as they are stronger in their faith. This photojournalist also stated that shooting a story on a controversial topic in regards to their faith now does not affect their professional work because the way that they see it is, God places them in all types of situations to carry out their professional work.

Another interviewed photojournalist made a distinction about whether their values were in fact Christian values or human values. This photojournalist gave an example of once shooting at a carnival event where children were playing in an inflated pay-pen. After shooting the event, the photojournalist reviewed the photos and found one photo where a female child's dress had flared up. The photojournalist removed this photo before sending it to their client. The photojournalist did not wish to show their subjects in a negative manner and thus their pre-editing was a deliberate moral decision. The photojournalist identified that in this situation, they were not certain whether or not their decision stemmed from their personal human convictions or their conviction in regards to Christian values. This photojournalist also mentioned they were raised very conservatively in a Christian environment from a young age so this may have had an influence on the reason why they treated the editing process in this way.

This particular example began the conversation of understanding our moral system. It posed the question: *Is one a human first or a photographer first?* A number of photographers I interviewed, spoke about acting appropriately in a professional situation. More than two photojournalists gave the example of a car accident. Was it their responsibility to help or to take photographs? These photojournalists stated being a human came first and only when nothing could be changed or helped by them specifically, they proceed to take photographs. Others had disagreements, they stated that taking photographs remained the priority and as a practicing professional one must realize this comes with the job.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: Gatekeeping.

According to Shoemaker and Vos's Gatekeeping Theory, "Gatekeeping is the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people each day, and it is the center of the media's role in modern public life." In terms of understanding how Christian faith, values, and morals affect decisions as a journalist, gatekeeping is a relevant theory to use in this analysis due to the fact that one's religious convictions may conflict with professional duties on the job. How Christian journalists deal with choosing to report or not report a story based on their personal Christian convictions is understood through gatekeeping theory.

While America is a secular state, it is a Christian nation, with a majority of its population practicing the Christian faith. In the realm of politics, advertising, and media, there are cultural and religious undertones that guide and shape American culture via the institutions that make up the country. One of the many factors that shape the manner in which American media is framed, is Christian philosophy.

However, in recent years, there has been an increase in the public's skepticism of the media, both in television and print news. With the proliferation of the Internet, the increase in globalization, and the rise of social media, there are questions about whether or not, what the media reports is in fact, truthful. While journalism was created to hold the state accountable, we now see a demand to hold the media accountable. Mass media today reports an increasing number of stories that scandalize events, defame reputations, and belittle subjects. These examples contradict the ethical role and philosophies of

journalistic “truth telling.” These values are called into question. They are contradictory to core Christian values.

There is little discussion and understanding over why news organizations do not prioritize truth and justice for subjects in a manner that does not defame or scandalize their character. The reason for this may be the relationship news networks have with advertising (Shoemaker, 2009). It also points to the changing nature of media to gross the greatest number of hits, views, likes, and shares for a story on social media rather than prioritizing the subjects of the story. The greater number of audience views, the more success, monetarily the network receives (Shoemaker, 2009).

This literature review examines what reasons influence the stories news networks, report and do not report. Here we point out the decision makers of gatekeeping practices, understanding whether editors, reporters themselves, or the entire news team decided to report or not report a story. Here we evaluate the reasons behind why decision makers choose to tell one story over another. The literature on Christian gatekeeping theory is minimal.

In modern day journalism we see a paradigm shift. News networks are not the only actor or player in the field of journalism in media today. There are citizen journalists and online media that contribute to informing the public.

According to Ethics and Journalism, “being a reflective journalist isn’t inimical to good reporting. If we consider what skills and knowledge journalists should have, the reverse is likely to be true.” (Sanders, 2003). Unlike the 20th century, 21st century citizens are more likely to receive, understand, and digest material given to them by media with question rather than at face value. We see that there are alternative methods in which

news is distributed to the public and the processing of information has changed the field of journalism.

We find that because journalism and advertising go hand in hand, the public has developed skepticism about modern journalism that is not as prevalent in “traditional journalism.” In traditional journalism, the skeptic voices are less apparent. According to Graeme’s *Media and Society*, “Even when the text is attended to, there are meanings which the reader is conscious of, and yet other meanings which may be produced unconsciously. In this sense, the reader of texts is not entirely in control of their engagement with the text.”

Conversely, in modern day journalism, the public is much more in control of how they are processing the information they are given (Lazaroiu, 2011). In Lazaroiu’s *Conceptualizing Gatekeeping in the Digital Era*, he quotes Paulussen, who writes “journalism is in need of a redefinition of its democratic role in a changing society” (Lazaroiu, 2011).

- Are the stories we write transparent?
- Which stories reflect the subject and which do not?
- Which side of the story do we as journalists, plan to tell the public?

These are all questions involved with gatekeeping theory and how new media has shifted our perspective on how a story is told. For this project, Christian values may or may not affect the Christian journalist’s moral obligation to both their subjects and the general public.

According to *The Principles of Journalism*, “As a rule, every journal is established mainly to advocate certain principles, to support a certain cause, to perform a public

service or supply a public need.” (Yost, 1924). Journalism is noted for being the fourth estate, the whistleblower in society that keeps the bodies and institutions of society in check. Due to globalization and the rapid growth and distribution of mass media, the public questions the actual truth of news in the 21st century and the striving process to tell the truth is the battle Christian journalists face in reporting a story.

According to Broersma, critics verify that it is impossible to tell the whole truth but aspects of the truth, facts that exist independently, can be found out and told (Broersma, 2010). Shoemaker and Vos cite Lippman stating “Every newspaper when it reaches the reader is the result of a whole series of selections as to what items shall be printed, in what position they shall be printed, how much space each shall occupy, what emphasis each shall have.” Gatekeeping is the process of selection, why some stories are included why others stories are rejected (Vos, 2009). Shoemaker and Vos cite the work of David Manning White who translated Lewin’s theory of gatekeepers by dividing gatekeeping into various variables that need consideration including: Merit’s of the items content (how true is the story?), the amount of space in the newspaper, the amount of other similar stories that are running in the papers, what readers like to read, and the variety of stories in the paper. From a Christian perspective, gatekeeping involves some of these variables as well; including: how true is the content, will it misrepresent an individual or issue, and will this cause more harm than good? It was White who concluded that a gatekeeper’s personal values influence the decision to take on a story or not. However, there have been distinguishers if gatekeeping in actuality, is the organization (news network) making the decision to report the story or the individual itself.

Recent research shows that individuals are in control of gatekeeping which stories they tell based on personal values rather than the organizations themselves (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). There are some organizational gatekeeping variables that influence the story such as deadline, however the crux of gatekeeping lies with the individual reporter.

Gatekeeping Practices in Traditional Journalism.

According to Robertson's, *Gatekeeping: The Decision Process*, traditional gatekeeping in the newsroom has a specific process "although it is unwritten" (Robertson, 2008). Robertson's study examines three newspapers, *The Columbus Dispatch*, *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, and *The Plain Dealer* and notes that while specific reporters (gatekeepers) select a number of stories, it is the editors in the newsroom who make decisions regarding which stories will run, and where they will appear, and so on (Robertson, 2008). While Robertson's study focuses more on gatekeeping in terms of telling national news in contrast to international stories that coverage is based on what the newspaper believed would be most receptive to the local audience. Robertson used observation to understand gatekeeping. She states that all three newsrooms noted the changing nature of news and due to advertising there was less room for news as newsrooms reduce their news space. Robertson identified leadership positions as gatekeepers in the newsroom who prioritized stories in and out of budget meetings reviewing the coverage of wire services, hours ahead of the next day's news-cycle (Robertson, 2008).

In Smith's, *A Gatekeeping Study of Gannett's All-Local Newspaper Experiment*, the study noted that a factor that influenced gatekeeping was the "traditional news judgment", "the sense the editors have to include what ought to be in the newspaper"

(Smith, 1988). Both Smith as well as Robinson acknowledges that while the reporters do the writing, often times it is the editors who make the decision to run or not run a story. However, this is changing in the newsroom around the world. The fourth estate has a fifth estate in citizen journalism, which has altered the shaping of gatekeeping. In traditional newsroom settings, editors make the decision to tell a story, however, more reporters are taking gatekeeping into their own hands by reporting on their interests.

Gatekeeping Practices of the 21st Century.

Gatekeeping practices of the 21st century differ because social media and the Internet globalized the nature, distribution, and accessibility of news. Some experts' state it is questionable whether gatekeeping will exist due to the rise of the fifth estate. Quick accessibility of the media via mobile phones and computer technology allow the audience to interact and engage with their news in a way that was not available before (Lazaroiu, 2011). This factor challenges the role of traditional gatekeeping practices, which are discussed in the interviews I conducted during my professional project.

Publication Possibilities

The following is a list of publication possibilities for this professional project: *Journal of Mass Media Ethics, Discovering Collection, Sage Journals Online, ATLA Religion Database.*

Changes

Changes I made to this project compared to the original proposal was that I completed this project solely as a video documentary piece.