

The Labor Market for University Journalism and Mass Communication Graduates: The Role of the Media Industries

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Presented to the Media Management, Economics and Entrepreneurship Division of the
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Aug. 3-7, 2016,
Minneapolis.

(Aug. 9, 2016)

News content is a talent good, an experience good, a credence good (Reca, 2006), and, from an economic perspective, a singularity (Karpik, 2010). This means that the value of news content as a product is determined by the knowledge, experience, and talent of the individual who produces it; that consumers cannot determine whether a news story has any value to them personally until after they already have consumed it; that, unless they were personally present at the events reported, consumers have to take the accuracy and quality of the reporting they've consumed on faith; and that every news story is the result of a unique and non-imitable act of production. Consequently, for consumers to invest time and money in news content, they must have confidence in the quality, credibility, and value of the specific content product they consume.

From a management perspective, these characteristics of news products underscore that the economic value of news content is derived almost entirely from the qualities and abilities of the individuals who produce it. Thus, the journalists employed by a news organization are *the* key input in the company's value chain. Despite journalists' central role in the creation of value in news organizations, media companies historically have been notoriously reluctant to invest in education and training for their journalistic personnel (Flores & Subervi, 2014; Hansen, Paul, DeFoster, & Moore, 2011; Knight Foundation, 2002). Instead, media organizations generally have depended upon existing labor pipelines to supply qualified, ready-to-work journalists. The news industry's primary source for this critical production resource for the past 100 years has been university-based journalism education programs, with which the industry has had a symbiotic, if sometimes contentious, relationship.

Journalism and mass communication education in the United States has, from its beginnings, justified its existence in universities based on the importance of journalism to

democracy and on the news industry's demand for the graduates the programs produced. Since the beginning of this century, however, the news industry has been profoundly disrupted by technological change. Consumption of news content distributed by traditional media sources has sharply declined in many developed countries. In the U.S. the upheaval in news markets has resulted in the failure of some news organizations and major staff reductions at many others (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2013, 2015). The leading casualties in the news industry reorganization have been the most senior and experienced journalists who, if replaced at all, usually were replaced by younger, cheaper and more digitally oriented labor, or by freelance and temporary employees (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2013, 2015).

These changes in the makeup and dynamics of the journalism labor market have clear implications for the quality of news content, and by extension, its utility to media audiences (Hollifield, 2006a). To explore those implications, this study examines recent patterns in the journalism and mass communication labor market in an effort to understand its dynamics. Specifically, the study looks at the link a) between the overall labor market and the journalism and mass communication subcomponent, b) between forces in the communication industry and the entry-level labor market, and c) between supply of the entry-level labor market by university programs in journalism and mass communication and demand. The study considers what the changes in the entry-level mass communication labor market may suggest about the state of the industry and the future implications for those programs that supply the news industry with its most critical production resource.

Nature of Labor Market

A labor market is a type of market in which labor services can be rented (Ehrenberg & Smith, 2012). At least partly because of the characteristics of the products they produce and,

therefore, their centrality to the news-production value chain, journalists generally have been classified as professionals in the labor market. A profession is defined as a career in which, among other things, practitioners must have specialized knowledge and skills, provide an essential service that requires application of that knowledge in unforeseen situations, and have undergone professional education or training to gain their expertise (Bloor & Dawson, 1994; Bourdieu, 1988; Forsyth & Danisiewicz, 1985; Toren, 1969). The journalism and mass communication labor market, by extension, is the labor market in which professional communication workers negotiate for the renting of their services.

University level journalism education in the United States has been tied to the labor market of the media industries from its very start. The School of Journalism at the University of Missouri famously was founded in 1908 with the goal of providing the journalists and advertising personnel needed by the daily newspaper industry (Folkerts, 2014). When the field published its first survey of enrollments, the author (Banner, 1934) worried that “newspaper staff” might not be able to absorb the increased number of students studying journalism.

As the media industries and related communication labor markets changed, so did journalism and mass communication education. Initially resistant to radio and then television because of the link to the newspaper industry, journalism education in the 1940s and 1950s began to embrace the labor markets of those industries as well (Becker, Fruit and Caudill, 1987; Crook, 1995). As the field of public relations matured, journalism education embraced that occupation and its labor market also (Folkerts, 2014; Wilcox, Cameron & Reber, 2014). In 1982, the Association for Education in Journalism, the group of educators, changed its name to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (Emery & McKerns, 1987). When the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism and the American

Society of Journalism School Administrators merged in 1985, it took the new name of Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication (Emery & McKerns, 1987).

Research shows that in the United States, news industries have depended upon university journalism programs as their primary source of labor. The daily newspaper industry has hired a significant percentage of its full-time newsroom employees directly from college, and that the vast majority of these entry-level hires come from journalism and mass communication programs (Becker et al., 2011). In 2010, the most recent year for which data are available, 32% of the daily newspaper hires were directly from college, up from 21% in 1995. The percentage of those hires with a college degree was 87. The television industry hired 91% of its college hires for its newsrooms from journalism and mass communication programs in 2010, and the radio industry hired 83 percent of its college hires from these programs.

Other studies indicate that university journalism and mass communication programs are most closely related to the entry-level component of the media industry labor market. Becker, Vlad and Martin (2006b) argued that the journalism labor market is hierarchical, with entry-level hiring done almost exclusively by smaller organizations. Individuals are able to gain employment at larger media organizations only after they have served time in smaller ones, which, in turn, hire most of their journalists directly from university journalism programs. Although large daily newspapers did hire some entry-level applicants, the researchers found that a considerably smaller percentage of hiring done by large newspapers was at the entry-level than was true for small newspapers. The larger daily newspapers concentrated their hiring at the level of the experienced employee, hiring relatively fewer journalists who lacked any daily newspaper journalism experience.

Becker, Vlad and Martin (2006b), drawing on the work of Doeringer and Piore (1971), further argued that newspapers have the option of hiring from either Internal Labor Markets (ILMs) or External Labor Markets (ELMs). Newspapers that fill jobs by promoting from within the newspaper are using ILMs. Newspapers that bring in personnel from outside the organization are hiring from the ELMs and must compete with other firms that employ personnel with comparable skills. Becker, Vlad and Martin (2006b) argued that one of the consequences of the merger or assembly into a single company of daily newspapers of differing sizes is the potential to create an Extended Internal Labor Market. In fact, it could be that creation of an Extended Internal Labor Market is a reason for assembly of this type of newspaper company. The advantages of such a grouping of newspapers into an Extended Internal Labor Market is less exposure to the External Labor Market, better use of staff resources (human capital), and better return on investment in that personnel (training). Additionally, the ability to offer key employees the opportunity for vertical advancement within the company is a recruitment incentive for top talent.

In a follow-up study, Becker, Vlad, Daniels and Martin (2007) found that newspapers that had an Extended Internal Labor Market were more likely to hire minorities in their newsrooms and more likely to invest in all newsroom employees than newspapers that did not have such an Extended Internal Labor Market. The Extended Internal Labor Market, which allows newspaper groups to limit ports of entry to small newspaper markets and then to promote those employees along ladders up through the organization, was found to be an efficient response to the uncertainties of labor markets. The authors concluded that creation of an Extended Internal Labor Market might be one of the incentives for consolidation in some newspaper groups and an unintended consequence in others.

Research on the daily newspaper industry (Becker et al., 2011), shows that the percentage of entry-level hires who have a journalism and mass communication degree is lower when the job market for journalism graduates is strong. The researchers concluded that the newspaper industry, with relatively low pay, is less able to employ these graduates when there is more competition for their services. Other research (Becker, Vlad & Simpson, 2014) shows that graduates of journalism and mass communication programs look at multiple employers when they graduate, even though they have specialized in fields while at the university.

These two studies argue that the labor market that journalism and mass communication programs serve is larger than originally perceived by journalism educators. The data suggest that journalism and mass communication graduates are positioned in the general market for employees with communication skills, and that the industries competing for those skills extends far beyond the news and entertainment industries. So while it makes sense to talk about the newspaper labor market and the television labor market and the advertising labor market and the public relations labor market, the borders between these submarkets and between these markets and other industries is fluid. The negotiation for the renting of labor services needs to be understood both in terms of the submarkets and the larger overall market for communication workers.

Importance of Markets

Ongoing research in the field of media management and economics underscores the importance of labor and personnel issues for media industries. Research on competition in news media has used “quality” of news as the primary measure by which the effects of competition on media performance have been gauged (Hollifield, 2006a). Quality has been defined in different

ways by different scholars, but one of the most widely accepted ways is by measuring the organization's financial commitment to producing high quality news.

Content measures of news quality have been operationalized in previous research as balance and fairness, lack of sensationalism, strong local news coverage, accuracy, interpretation of news, believability, relevance, comprehensive coverage, favorable coverage of different groups in society, coverage of stories of interest to different groups in society, presentation of multiple points of view, reliance on authoritative sources, less emphasis on crime, more emphasis on coverage of local institutions, coverage that helps readers develop a sense of common values and community, a strong editorial page, visual appeal, and good writing (Becker, Beam & Russial, 1978; Becker, Kosicki & Jones, 1992; Bogart, 1989; Gladney, 1990, 1996; Just, 1999; Lacy, Fico, & Simon, 1989; Rosenstiel, Gottlieb, & Brady, 1999).

Organizational indicators of quality have been defined as editorial independence, staff professionalism, impartiality, editorial courage, community leadership, decency, integrity, staff enterprise, community leadership, and influence with opinion leaders (Besley & Prat, 2001; Gladney, 1990, 1996; Jacobsson & Jacobsson, 2004).

Financial commitment measures have been operationalized as the size and training of the news staff, reporter workloads, the amount of locally produced copy, the amount of non-advertising copy, the advertising-editorial copy ratio, the number of in-depth, investigative or interpretive stories, the amount of visual and graphic material, the number of wire services from which a news operation draws content, the length of stories in terms of offering readers depth, the number of stories or amount of time devoted to news programming, and investment in news gathering technologies such as satellite trucks (Busterna, 1988; Lacy & Fico, 1990; Litman & Bridges, 1986; Lacy & Blanchard, 2003; Powers, 1993). All such indicators require significant

financial investment in news production. However, in most news organizations, personnel is the single largest budget item (National Association of Broadcasters, 2014, 2011, 2010). In order for the news operation to produce a quality news product, it must make a financial commitment to hiring a quality news staff and, to do that, it must be successful in renting the services of qualified journalists in the labor market.

Hypotheses

This literature argues for the importance of understanding the basics of the labor market into which university journalism and mass communication graduates enter and from which media industries draw their entry-level talent. The universities depend on that market for their own resources. The media industries depend on that market to find the talent to produce content of a quality to allow them to attract and serve their audiences.

The existing research on the market provides some insights into its operation, but it does not address the unique features of the market. Of particular concern is the independence of the market from the larger market forces. It is common to assume unique characteristics. But those assumptions can be wrong. It is quite possible that the market for journalism and mass communication graduates is simply a submarket without any special features inside the larger U.S. labor market.

These uncertainties and the existing literature lead to the following set of hypotheses.

H1: The journalism and mass communication labor market will largely reflect the overall labor market, meaning that unemployment rates between the overall market and the market for journalism and mass communication graduates should be highly correlated.

H2: The journalism and mass communication labor market should be affected by economics of the major media industries, so the advertising revenue of the media industries

should be negatively related to the unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication graduates .

H3: The unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication graduates should be negatively related to the size of the labor market in the major media industries, that is, as those industries contract over time, the unemployment rate should increase.

H4: The unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication graduates should increase as the number of graduates entering the market increases, given the maturity of the overall communication labor market.

H5: Controlling for the effect of the overall market on the journalism and mass communication labor market, the advertising revenue, labor force size, and number of graduates entering the market each should predict to the unemployment rate of the graduates entering the market.

H6: Employment for students specializing in print journalism will be predicted (negatively) by the overall labor market unemployment rate, by the advertising revenue for the newspaper industry (positively), by the workforce size of the newspaper industry (positively), and by the number of journalism and mass communication graduates (negatively).

H7: Employment for students specializing in telecommunications will be predicted (negatively) by the overall labor market unemployment rate, by the advertising revenue for the television industry (positively), by the workforce size of the television industry (positively), and by the number of journalism and mass communication graduates (negatively).

Methodology

Data on the level of employment of journalism and mass communication graduates are available from a survey designed to monitor the employment rates and salaries of graduates of

journalism and mass communication programs in the United States in the year after graduation (Becker, Vlad & Simpson, 2014). The surveys were conducted from 1964 to 2013, however, data collected prior to 1981 are no longer available.

The sampling methodology, beginning with the survey of 1981 graduates, had two stages. Each year a sample of schools was drawn from a list of journalism and mass communication programs in the country. From 1981 until 1988, the population of programs was defined by *The Journalist's Road to Success: A Career Guide*, formerly published and printed by the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund, Inc., and now known as the Dow Jones News Fund. Beginning with the survey of 1989 graduates, the population list was expanded to also include programs listed in the *Journalism and Mass Communication Directory*, published annually by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Schools listed themselves in the AEJMC Directory. All U.S. programs accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications and all U.S. members of the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication were in the AEJMC Directory. To be included in the News Fund Guide, the college or university had to offer at least 10 courses in news-editorial journalism and those courses had to include core courses, such as an introduction to the mass media and press law and ethics, as well as basic skills courses such as reporting and editing.

The sample of schools to be included in the survey was selected probabilistically, stratified by state and/or region of the country. The sample of schools remained relatively stable after 1990. As schools withdrew their participation, replacement schools were selected probabilistically from the same state or region. In addition, starting in 1992, the population was expanded to include Puerto Rico, and one of the two journalism programs from the Commonwealth was selected by chance.

Administrators at the selected sample of schools were asked in early summer each year to provide the names and addresses of their spring-semester degree recipients. From 1981 to 1988, only bachelor's degree recipients were included in the graduate survey. Beginning with the 1989 survey, administrators were asked to include the names and addresses of their spring master's degree recipients, if they had a graduate program.

In the second stage of the sample, a questionnaire was mailed in November or December to all spring-semester graduates from the selected programs. A second questionnaire was sent to nonrespondents in January or February. Starting in 1993, a third mailing was sent in March or April. Graduates in 2003 and from 2006-2013 were given the option of completing the survey online.

Return rates for the Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Graduates dropped consistently from 1987 to 2013. The final return rate in 2014 was 20.6%. Return rate is calculated as the number of completed surveys divided by the number of mailed surveys with a working address. One possible source of return rate error is the real-world experiences of the graduates with the labor market as they enter it. It is possible that graduates are less likely to return the instrument when the economy and labor market are bad and they have had less success in the market. Of course, it also is possible that graduates are more likely to return the instruments in a bad economy as a way of signaling their problems to their administrators and to the students entering the market the following year.

In fact, there is little evidence to support either expectation. Return rate is highly correlated with the year the survey was fielded. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient is $-.97$. The return rate also is negatively correlated with the unemployment rate. The Pearson's r is $-.52$, meaning that there is a link between high unemployment and low return rates.

Unemployment and year of the survey also are correlated, with a Pearson's r of .50. The partial correlation between return rate and unemployment rate, controlling for year, is $-.17$. If return rate is regressed on year, unemployment rate does not change either the R or the R Square. In sum, year is the predictor that matters.

Measures of Employment

The survey used a series of measures to indicate the nature of the labor market experienced by graduates of the sampled programs. Measures were added in the 1986 to 1994 period but were consistent from 1994 to 2013. The graduates were asked if they had looked for a job, if they were employed on Oct. 31 of the year the survey went out, and if they were currently employed, that is, employed when they returned the questionnaire. They also were asked if the job they held used the skills they had learned in college. The exact questions and response options are in the appendix.

To measure employment in two specific industries, newspaper and telecommunications, two additional measures were used. Graduate who reported having communication jobs also were asked in which organization they worked. In addition, graduates were asked their area of specialization in college. Employment in the newspaper industry was indexed by looking at the percentage of graduates with a news editorial specialization who reported having a job with a daily or weekly newspaper or a wire service. Employment in the telecommunications industry was measured by looking at the percentage of telecommunications graduates with a job in television, radio or cable.

Measures of Predictors

Total newspaper advertising was obtained from the Newspaper Association of America (2016). Total Television Advertising for Local Stations was taken from the Pew Research Center

(State of the News Media, 2015). The size of the newspaper newsroom workforce was taken from the American Society of News Editors (2016). The median size of local television news staff was taken from the Radio Television Digital News Association (2016). The total numbers of employees for newspapers, periodicals, radio and television were taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016). The total number of graduates from journalism and mass communication programs was taken from (Becker, Vlad & Simpson, 2014).

Findings

Chart 1 shows the five measures of employment used from the 1986 survey until the project's ending in 2013. The high degree of correlation among the measures is obvious from the chart. As shown, the percentage of graduates with at least one job offer correlated .84 (Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient) with the percentage of graduates who had a full-time job on Oct. 31 across the 20 years for which both measures were available. Similarly, the percentage of graduates with a full-time job on Oct. 31 correlated .97 with the percentage of graduates with a full-time job when they returned the questionnaire across the 20 years for which both measures were available. The percentage of graduates with a full-time job when they returned the survey instrument correlated .89 with the percentage of graduates with work in the field of communication across the 27 years for which both measures were available. In other words, all of the measures show that graduates are more likely to find work in the field of communication when the market is strong.

Also included in Chart 1 is a measure of full-time employment based on the Oct. 31 reference only for those graduates who looked for work. Those who had decided to go on to more university studies or who had decided to delay job-seeking to travel or for any other reason were eliminated. This measure is very highly correlated with the level of full-time employment

using the Oct. 31 reference for those who did and who did not seek work (.99) and with the level of full-time employment based on when the respondent returned the questionnaire (.95).

The U.S. government computes unemployment rates based only on those who look for work, and Chart 2 shows this same measure for the graduate survey, based on employment status when the respondent returned the questionnaire. Data using this measure are available from 1979 to 2013. The overall pattern is clear. Unemployment has gone up and down over the years, with the highest level of unemployment being in 1990 (16.8%) and 2008 (17.5%). These were the period of greatest stress in the U.S. economy generally during the years when data were collected. Overall, however, the pattern is for increased unemployment over time, with an unemployment rate of 15.0% in 2013 compared with 9.4% in 1979.

As predicted (Hypothesis 1), the labor market for journalism and mass communication graduates is highly linked to the labor market overall. Chart 3 shows the unemployment rate for those journalism and mass communication graduates who looked for work as well as the unemployment rate for the U.S. labor market as a whole and for unemployment rate for the 20-24 year age cohort. This is the cohort into which most journalism and mass communication graduates fall. The correlation between the unemployment rate for the journalism and mass communication graduates and for the labor market as a whole across the 27 years for which there are comparable data is .68. The correlation between the unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication graduates and for the labor market cohort of 20-24-year-olds is .71. The data are census data for the period of study, so no statistical tests are appropriate.

While the correlation between the unemployment rate in the overall labor market and in the labor market made up of journalism and mass communication graduates is very high, it is far from perfect. There is noticeable variability between the unemployment rate of the national

cohort and the unemployment rate of journalism and mass communication graduates over time, with the labor market in some years better for journalism and mass communication graduates than for the cohort and sometimes worse. Only 50.1% of the variance in the journalism and mass communication unemployment rate is explained by the cohort unemployment rate, leaving room for additional explanations.

Table 1 reports the correlations between the unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication graduates and the predictor variables lying behind Hypotheses 2-4. As expected, total newspaper advertising revenue is negatively correlated with the unemployment rate. The same is true for local television advertising revenue. While neither correlation is very large, the finding is consistent with Hypothesis 2. The size of the daily newspaper newsroom workforce is moderately negatively correlated with the unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication graduates. The median size of local television news staffs also is negatively correlated with the unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication graduates. The same is true for the measure of the total workforce for newspapers, periodicals, radio and television. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, as the news workforce decreased in size across time, the unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication graduates increased. Finally, as the number of journalism and mass communication graduates has increased, the unemployment rate also has increased. This was as predicted in Hypothesis 4.

The unemployment rate for journalism and mass communication graduates was regressed first on the national unemployment rate for the 20-24 year old age cohort. The R for that regression (based on 16 cases) was .77. Next, the variables number of journalism and mass communication graduates, total newspaper advertising revenue, local television advertising revenue for stations with news operations, total number of newspaper employees, total number

of periodical employees, total number of radio employees, and total number of television employees were introduced. The R went to .97. None of the variables individually predicts a great amount of additional variance. The variables, of course, are highly correlated. The increase in the R, however, supports Hypothesis 5.

The percentage of students who said they had majored in news editorial or print journalism declined dramatically during the period from 1986 (21.8%) to 2013 (10.8%). During that period the number of students who had majored in radio, television or film (telecommunications) held steady at 17.6% in 1986 and 18.8% in 2013. Reflective of this shift, the number of students who sought a job with either a daily or weekly newspaper dropped from 38.3% in 1986 to 28.9% in 2013. The percentage of students who sought a job with a radio station, television station or in cable went from 47.1 in 1986 to 55.5. These figures are for those who actually looked for work after graduation. The percentage of all graduates with a job with a daily newspaper dropped from 14.1 in 1986 to 5.7 in 2013. The percentage of all graduates with a job in radio, television or cable went from 9.7 in 1986 to 8.2 in 2013.

One way of looking at the changes in the job market for graduates with career aspirations in the newspaper industries is to look at the percentage of news editorial/print journalism majors who found work with a daily or weekly newspaper over time. Similarly, the percentage of graduates with a telecommunications major who found a job in those industries reflects the changes in that segment of the labor market. The focus on those who specialized in their studies on the respective industry sectors eliminates those graduates seeking work in fields for which they didn't have adequate preparation. Chart 4 plots those data over time and also shows the unemployment rate for the age cohort from the overall labor market. The correlation between the unemployment rate for the age cohort in the labor market and the employment rate of print

journalism graduates in the newspaper industries is $-.83$. The correlation between the age cohort unemployment rate and the employment of telecommunications graduates with a job in their field is considerably lower at $-.49$. This means that telecommunications graduates were less affected by conditions in the general labor market than were the print journalism students.

Table 2 shows the bivariate correlations between three predictor variables and these measures of employment. Advertising revenue for the newspaper industry is positively correlated with the employment rate for news editorial graduates, and advertising revenue for local television news is positively correlated with the employment rate for telecommunications (RTV) graduates. As advertising revenue has increased over time in these two industry segments, the employment rate for news editorial graduates also has increased. Total employees (from the Bureau of Labor Statistics) in the newspaper industry is positively correlated with the employment rate, and total number of employees in the telecommunications industry is positively correlated with the employment rate for telecommunications students. As the size of the workforce in these two industries has increased, so has the employment rate. The number of graduates (bachelor's degree recipients) in the news editorial or print programs, however, has had a negative relationship with the level of employment for those graduates. This indicates that journalism programs have supplied more entry-level labor than the publication industries have been able to absorb. In contrast, the number of telecommunications students has been slightly positively correlated with the employment rate for telecommunications students, indicating that telecommunication program enrollments have been more closely aligned with the industry's demand for labor.

The employment measure for news editorial graduates was regressed first on the national unemployment rate for those 20- to 24-years old. The multiple R for that relationship among the

21 years or cases was .78. Adding the three variables for number of print degrees granted, newspaper advertising revenue, and total number of newspaper employees increased that R slightly to .80.

The employment measure for telecommunication graduates was regressed on the national unemployment rate for those 20- to 24- years old. The multiple R for that relationship among the 16 cases in the equation was .81. Adding the three variables of number of telecommunications degrees granted, local television advertising for news stations, and employment in the radio and television industries increased that R to .83.

The support for Hypotheses 6 and 7 is modest at best. Clearly the bulk of the variance is explained by the national unemployment rate, and the additional variables add just slightly to the explanatory power of the equation. As was the case for the earlier regression analysis, it is difficult to make sense of the individual contributions of the three variables because of the high level of correlation among them.

Conclusions

In summary, employment rates for journalism and mass communication graduates in the U.S. were highly correlated with conditions in the overall U.S. labor market, in general, and with conditions in the labor market for 20-to 24-year olds, specifically, across the 22 years in which data were collected. Despite the correlations, however, labor conditions explained only half the variance in the demand for entry-level journalism and mass communication labor. Closer examination showed that structural changes in the news industries had significant impact on the job prospects of graduates in news fields.

Advertising revenue in news organizations was correlated with the employment rates for journalism graduates across all industry sectors and among newspaper graduates and radio-

television graduates. Staff sizes in daily newspaper and in television newsrooms also was correlated with employment. Staff sizes, particularly at newspapers, have been declining. Despite this and despite declining enrollments in journalism and mass communication programs across the 22 years studied, enrollments have not retrenched at the same rate as industry jobs, leading to an oversupply of entry-level news labor.

Finally, even among those graduates who might be considered to be best prepared for the careers they seek – that is, those who specialized in developing the skills for a single industry sector and then sought a job in that sector -- the labor supply has outstripped demand. Particularly among news editorial and publication companies, the demand for entry-level labor has fallen more sharply than the supply. In contrast, even in difficult overall employment markets, the demand for entry-level personnel with multi-media production skills has been more closely aligned with the labor supply produced by university programs, as reflected in the telecommunications graduate employment rates. These findings may indicate that media sectors are becoming increasingly similar in their need for personnel who can produce content using video, audio, text and interactive forms. This would increase demand for graduates with a wider range of communication skills and reduce demand for those with a narrower skill set. It also, however, might reflect the expansion of demand for digital multiplatform content and the contraction of demand for printed newspaper and periodical content. Given the available data, it is not possible to disentangle those possible explanations.

What is clear is that, if demand for entry-level labor continues to fall faster than supply across news industries, wages for professionals in the field are likely to fall from current levels. Similarly, the vertical contraction of both internal and external labor markets through the

elimination of many senior-level jobs for journalists is reducing the opportunity for long-term careers in journalism for many who may enter the field out of college.

These downward pressures on the journalism labor market and profession are likely to make the field increasingly unattractive to highly educated and talented individuals capable of succeeding in alternative fields. As demand for entry-level journalism labor falls, demand for seats in journalism education programs also can be expected to decline. In an industry where the quality of the core product is almost entirely dependent on the talents and abilities of the individuals who produce it, new thought must be given to addressing these disturbing trends in the journalism labor market. As Porter (1985) noted, competitive success hinges on identifying and strengthening the key links in a company's value chain. The data in this study show, however, that U.S. journalism organizations are, in fact, doing the opposite.

The study draws on data across a limited period of time, and the findings must be interpreted in that light. It would be advantageous to have data that extend back to the origins of university-based journalism education in the U.S. and to track more fully the relationship as the educational field matured and the media industries dealt with the technological revolution represented by the advent of broadcasting and particularly television. It also would be helpful to have data from other fields of study. Such data simply do not exist. It also is important to note that the relationships examined here are for only one country. The links between the media labor markets and the education systems of other countries are almost certainly different in some ways from what exists in the United States.

At the same time, an advantage of the data available is that they come from a standardized survey that allows for comparability across a time of change in the U.S. media landscape. They also are robust enough to show changes in the overall economic patterns of the

country. Specifically, the data include the recession of the early 1990s and the much more dramatic recession following 2008. What those data show in simplest terms is that the features of the overall labor market are the primary determinant of the entry-level labor market for journalism and mass communication graduates and their corresponding media industries. Yet such specific factors as the supply of graduates and the size of the labor force for the media industries do matter.

The leaders of journalism and mass communication education 100 years ago were quite right in being concerned about the labor market of the graduates. Those graduates are entering a labor market seeking to find someone who wants to rent their services. The overall demand of the market matters, but so does the demand of the specific industrial segment and the number of others seeking to market their services.

The implications of the findings are straightforward. Administrators of journalism and mass communication programs cannot expect to have much impact on the overall labor market, which will have significant influence on what the graduates of their programs will experience when they complete their studies. But supply does matter. Particularly in an era of a declining labor market for industry segments, administrators should recognize that oversupply has negative consequences. The administrators should consider retooling their programs accordingly, phasing out or shrinking programs that do not meet market need, developing new programs or expanding existing programs to respond to growing markets, and exploring new offerings that will create markets in the future.

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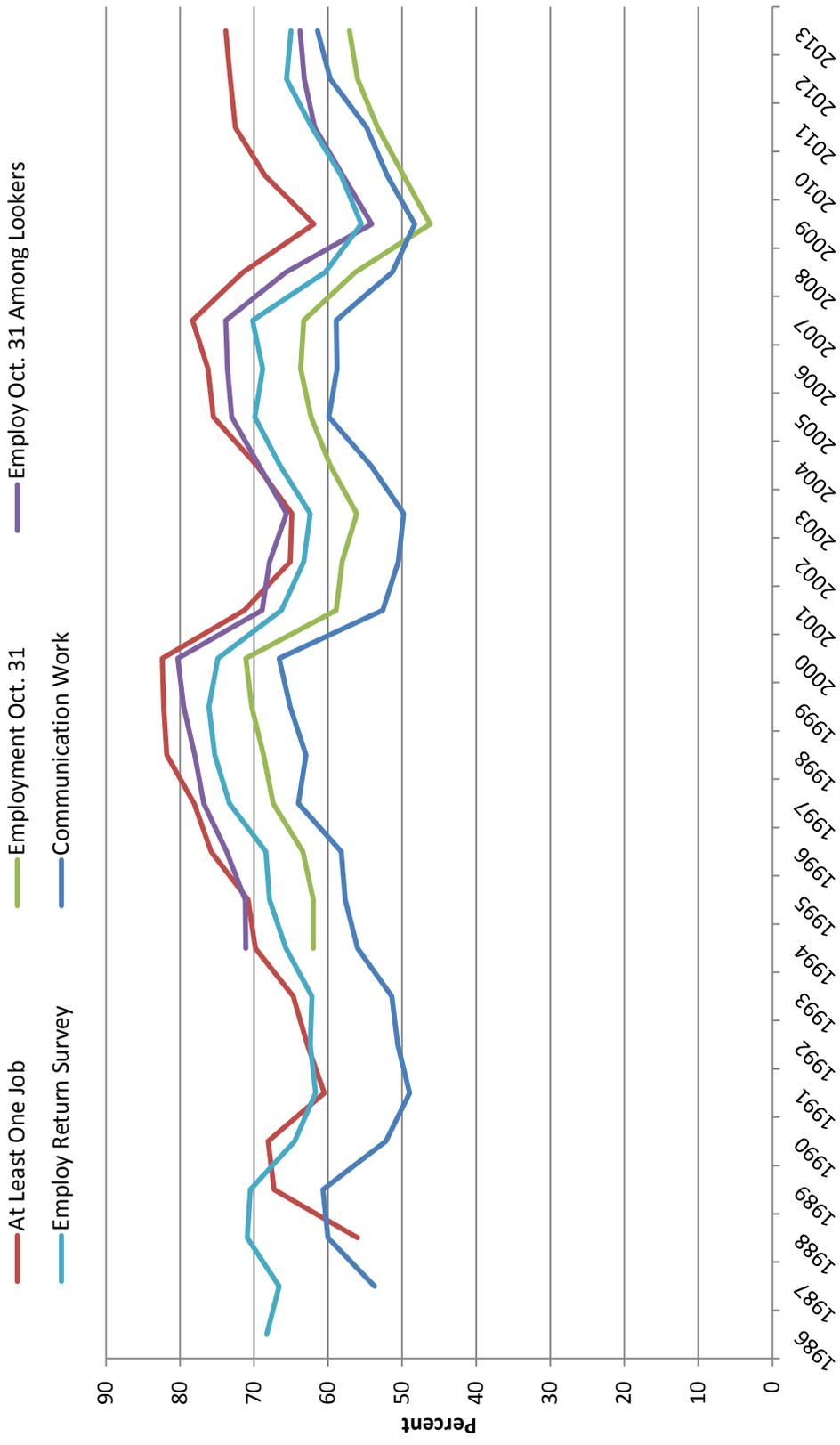
**Table 1. Predictors of Journalism and Mass
Communication Unemployment**

Predictor	Unemployment Rate	N
Newspaper Total Advertising Revenue	-0.34	26
Local TV Advertising	-0.40	19
Daily Newspaper Newsroom Workforce	-0.47	27
Median Local TV News Staff	-0.27	13
Total Newspaper Employees	-0.65	22
Total Periodical Employees	-0.53	22
Total Radio Employees	-0.59	22
Total Television Employees	-0.17	22
Number Graduates (Bachelor's)	0.70	26

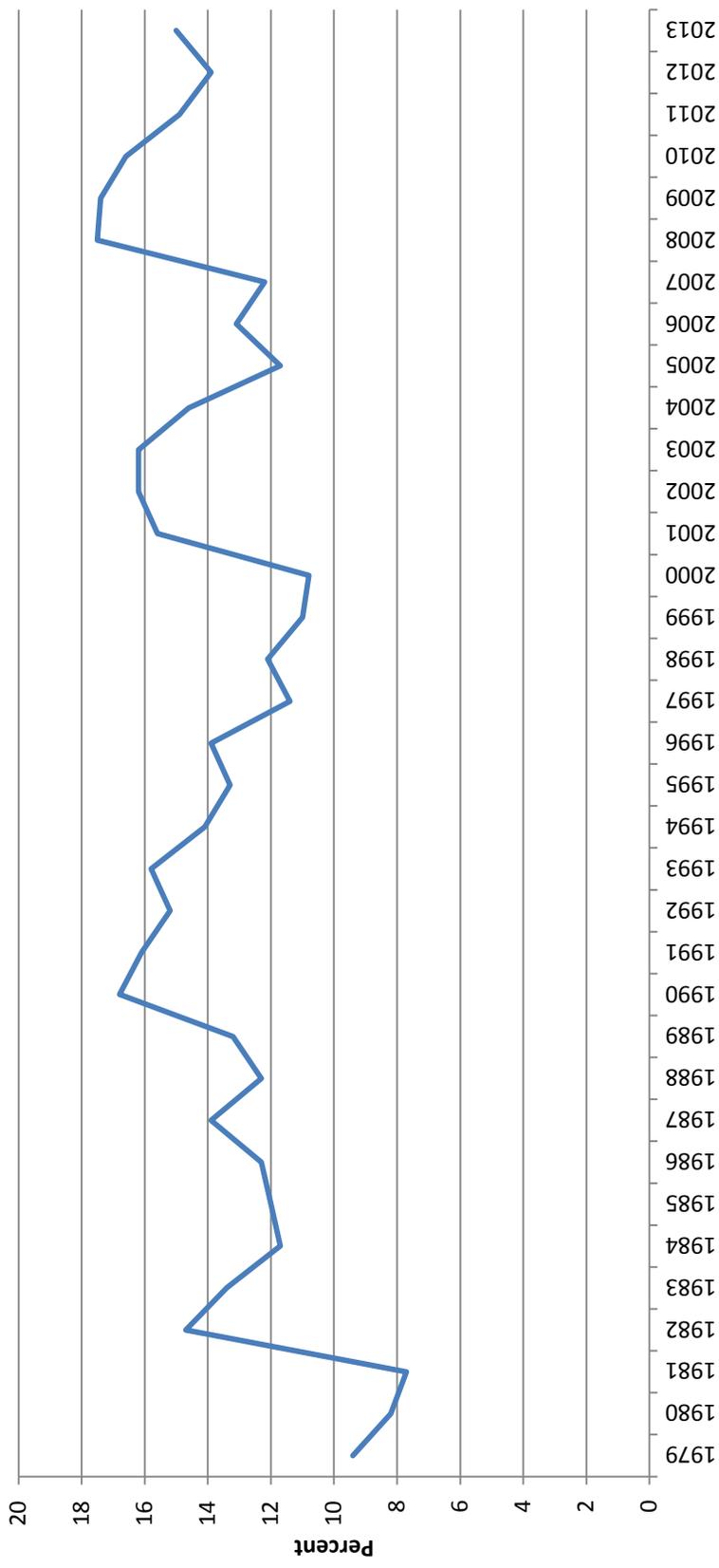
Table 2. Predictors of Newspaper, RTV Employment For Graduates Who Specialized In Those Areas

Predictor	Newspaper Graduates		RTV Graduates	
	Employment Rate	N	Employment Rate	N
Advertising Revenue (Newspapers or Local TV)	0.52	26	0.49	19
Total Employees (Newspapers or RTV)	0.64	22	0.67	22
Number Graduates (Bachelor's) (News Edit or RTV)	-0.59	26	0.15	26

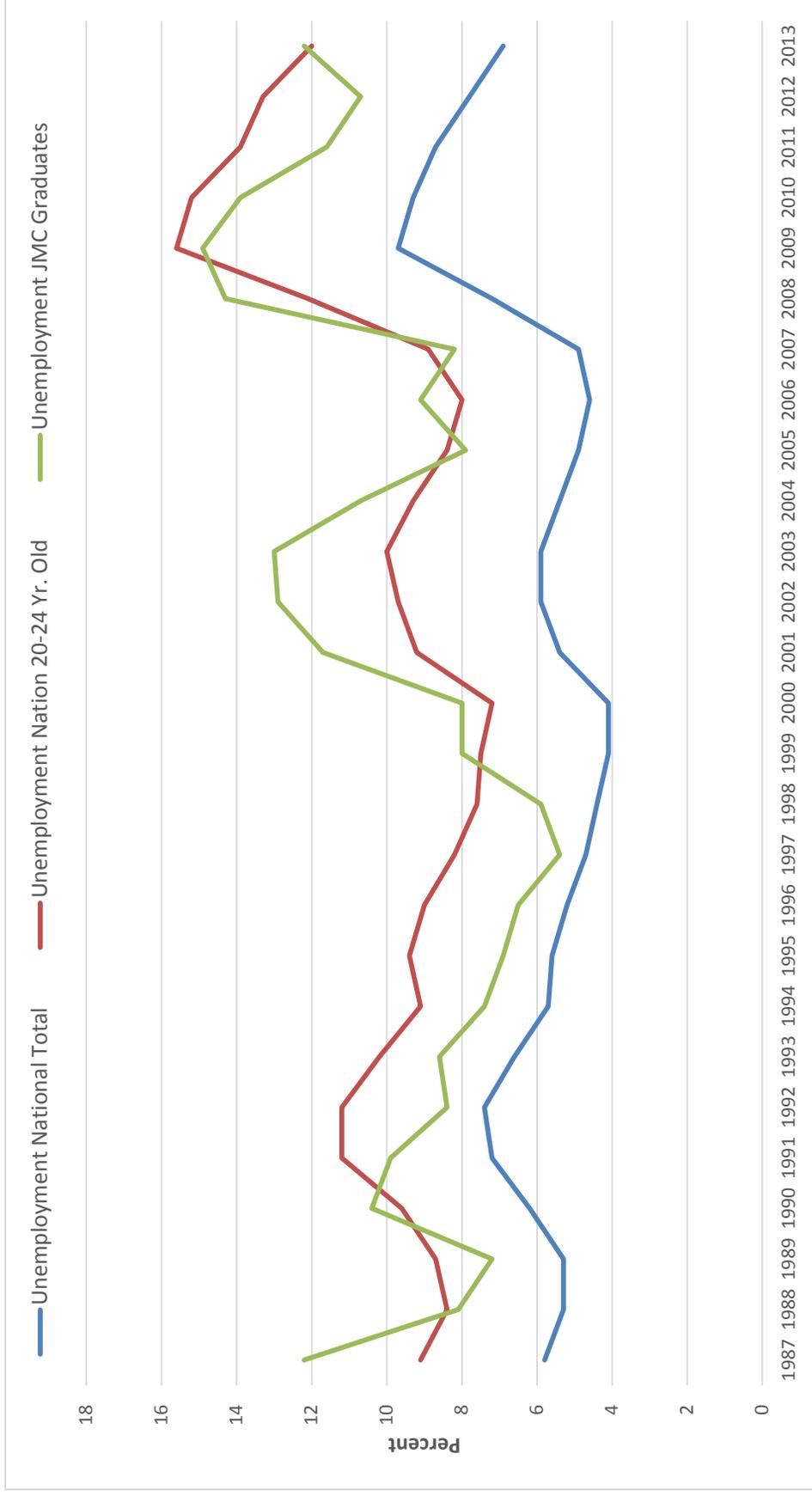
1. Employment Measures



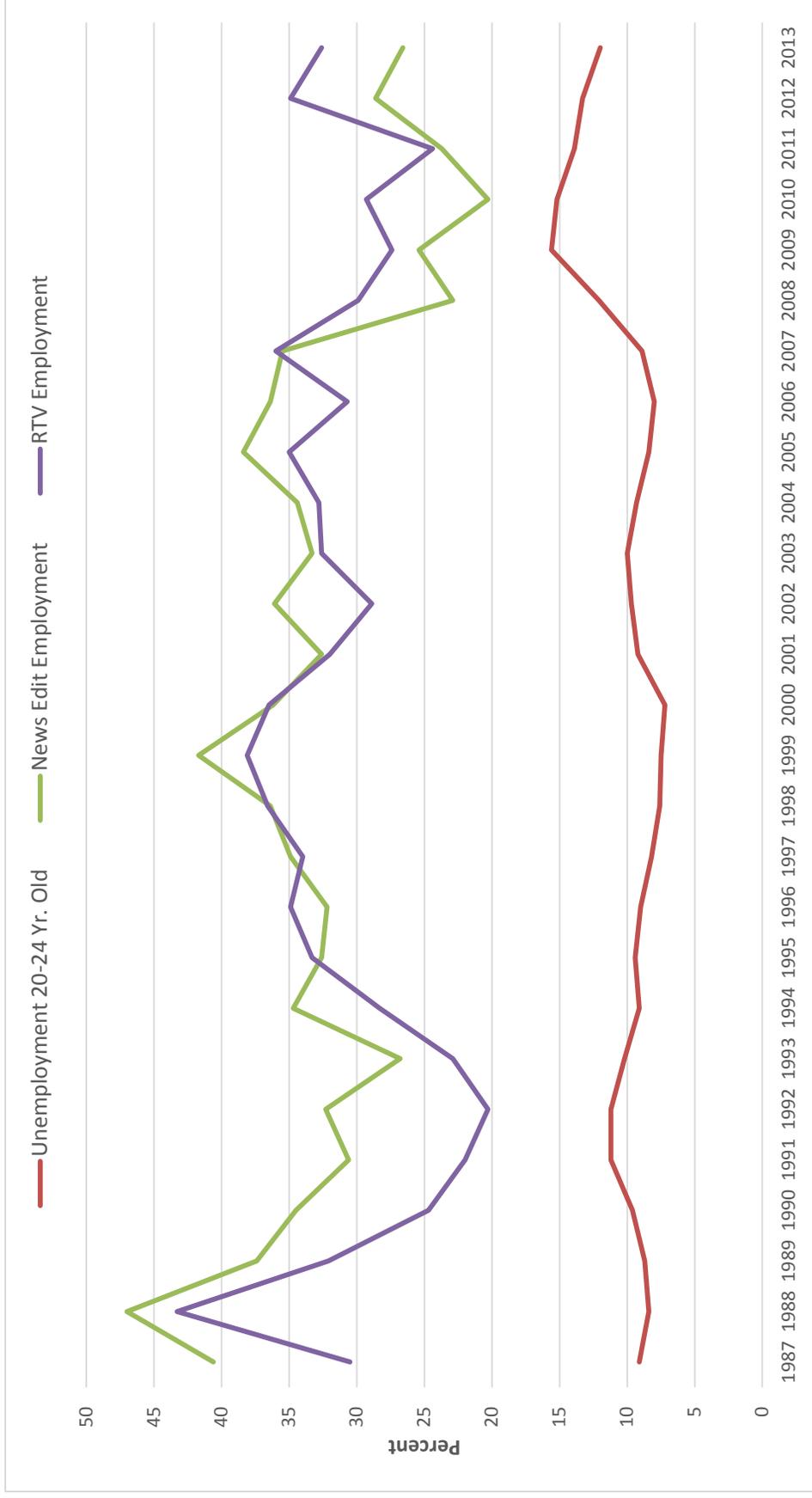
2. Unemployment for Those Who Sought Work



3. National and Journalism and Mass Communication Graduates Unemployment Rates



4. Unemployment All Graduates and Employment in Field News Edit and RTV Students



Appendix 1. Measures of Employment

In the time since you completed your studies, have you looked for a job?

- No, went to the military
- No, continued in job I held while in school
- No, accepted position held open for me while I was in school
- No, took a job I found before or upon graduating
- No, have not yet started to look for employment
- No, some other reason
- Yes

As of October 31, 2013, were you employed?

- Yes, full-time
- Yes, part-time
- Yes, both full-time and part-time
- No, I was enrolled in school
- No, I was unemployed but looking for work
- No, I was unemployed but I was not looking for work
- Other (please specify) _____

Are you currently employed?

- Yes, full-time
- Yes, part-time
- Yes, both full-time and part-time
- No, enrolled in school
- No, currently unemployed but looking for work
- No, currently unemployed but not looking for work at present
- Other (please specify) _____

Is your current, primary job (in terms of hours worked) one that involves communication activities and skills related to your area of study in college?

- Yes
- No