

**THE ROLE OF INTROVERTS IN COMMUNICATIONS
FIELDS**

by

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A THESIS

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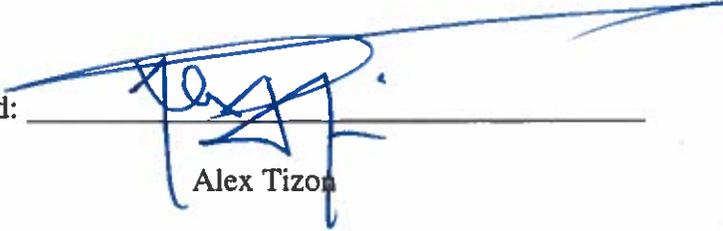
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This thesis discusses the experiences of introverted communications professionals in fields such as journalism and public relations through a long-form journalistic article. The article builds on the literature regarding introverts in American society and the workplace as well as on personal essays written by introverts in communications fields. This article explores the stories of a variety of individuals in order to cover as fully as possible the breadth of introverted personalities and experiences and to shed light on this overlooked topic.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Literature Review	3
Defining Introversion	3
Introverts in the Workplace	11
Introverts in Communications	16
Materials and Methods	18
Conclusion	19
Final Article	20
Quiet Communicators in Loud Roles	21
Bibliography	32

Introduction

At least one third of the people we know and interact with on a daily basis are introverts. In our classrooms, our families, and our workplaces, there are people who prefer to listen rather than speak, who recharge by staying home rather than going out, who do their best work on their own rather than in teams. Even in communications fields such as journalism, public relations, advertising and marketing, there are introverts who not only exist, but even thrive. This provokes the question of how someone who is drained by interacting with others could choose to make a living solely off their ability to communicate with others.

Inspired by this dichotomy, my thesis explored what draws introverts to these fields in the first place and examined the roles they play in fields of communication. I conducted interviews with communications professionals to learn why introverts often excel in roles as journalists and PR practitioners, what struggles they face and how they deal with those challenges. Inspired by Susan Cain's book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, heralded as the work that started the "Quiet Revolution," I wrote a long-form journalistic article that shines light on the strengths and struggles of introverts in communication fields and negates the stereotype that journalists and public relations professionals must be extraverted in order to be successful. Despite the fact that introversion has become a mainstream topic, there remains little discussion surrounding the experiences of introverts working in communications fields. To my knowledge, only one study of introverts in journalism exists, and it was published in 1995 – 20 years ago. The rest of the conversation exists in the form of personal essays published on personal or company blogs by introverts

who wish to share their own experience. Because of this, I felt there was an opportunity to not only revisit the topic, but to take a different approach. Rather than conduct a study, I decided to put my journalism classes into practice by conducting journalistic interviews and writing a long-form story.

For the purpose of this exploration, introversion and extroversion will be referred to as though they are pure states, but the truth is that most people are not pure anything. In fact, the influential psychologist Carl Jung, who wrote the book *Psychological Types* and upon whose thinking the popular Myers-Briggs personality test was based, said, “There is no such thing as a pure extrovert or a pure introvert. Such a man would be in the lunatic asylum.”

Psychologists often map the introversion-extroversion spectrum on a horizontal axis with the anxious-stable spectrum on a vertical axis. This illustrates the multitude of personality types, including calm extroverts, shy or anxious extroverts, calm introverts and shy or anxious introverts. In the middle are “ambiverts,” who find themselves displaying both introverted and extroverted tendencies. Even those who are primarily one or the other do not necessarily fit a certain mold. Introversion and extroversion interact with other personality traits, creating diversity even amongst introverts or extroverts. Given this spectrum of introverted personalities, not everything that is discussed in the following section will apply to every introvert, however it does provide an overarching understanding of what makes someone an introvert and what their experience may be like.

Literature Review

Defining Introversion

Introversion and extraversion are inherent temperaments that cannot be changed. While no one knows the actual percentage of our population that introverts make up (anywhere from thirty to fifty percent), introverts often feel significantly outnumbered due to the constant pressure to conform to an extroverted society.

Jonathan Rauch writes in his 2003 *Atlantic* article, “Caring for Your Introvert”:

In our extrovertist society, being outgoing is considered normal and therefore desirable, a mark of happiness, confidence, leadership. Extroverts are seen as bighearted, vibrant, warm, empathic. “People person” is a compliment. Introverts are described with words like “guarded,” “loner,” “reserved,” “taciturn,” “self-contained,” “private”—narrow ungenerous words, words that suggest emotional parsimony and smallness of personality.

The introvert is marginalized because their characteristics most visible to others are at odds with the cultural norm. Being reserved, cautious and thoughtful are rarely seen as positives. Indeed, the media often portray popular characters as outgoing while quiet characters assume the role of a victim (Markway).

The clinical concept of introversion dates back to the 1920s when psychologist Carl Jung coined the term, which was later used in the widely used personality test, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. A common misconception is that introversion is synonymous with shyness. Introverts are not necessarily shy; they just find other people tiring. Introverts process information in a different way, and they often become drained from being around large groups of people. Shy people, on the other hand, are anxious or frightened in social settings—think of a timid child hiding behind his mother's legs.

This is not necessarily how all introverts feel when placed in social situations. In fact, many introverts enjoy being social, just in a different way. They typically prefer in-depth one-on-one conversations rather than large cocktail parties and small talk and, after an hour or two of being socially “on,” introverts often need to turn off and recharge.

The strongest characteristic that distinguishes an introvert from an extrovert is where they draw their energy from. Introverts create their own energy through their internal reserve of ideas, emotions and interpretations. They can easily feel overstimulated by excitement and social experiences, which require them to expend energy. They feel the need to combat this by “shutting down” to conserve energy and seeking quieter environments in order to restore their spent energy.

Meanwhile, extroverts gain their energy from the external world and will fade when alone for too long. They feed off participating in exciting activities, spending time with other people and experiencing new places. Extroverts spend energy freely because they feel refreshed and refueled when out and about.

Introverts and extroverts also vary in how they respond to stimuli and their approach to knowledge and experience. While introverts need breaks from the overstimulation they feel in crowds, classes or any noisy environment, extroverts need to take breaks from long periods of internal processing, such as studying, to find external stimulation.

Extroverts enjoy a breadth of experiences, moving from one thing to the next without reflecting internally on the experience. Introverts, on the other hand, prefer depth and will limit their experiences so that they can process each of them deeply

without becoming overwhelmed. As psychologist Marti Olsen Lany, author of *The Introvert Advantage: How to Thrive in an Extrovert World*, puts it, the best way to describe the difference between breadth and depth is that extroverts like to experience a lot, while introverts like to know a lot about what they experience.

These temperamental differences are derived primarily from our neurochemistry, made up of neurotransmitters that direct where and how much blood circulates in our brain. The route and quantity of blood flow influence which parts of the brain are “turned on,” thereby impacting our responses and behavior.

The D4DR gene, or the “novelty-seeking gene,” affects the neurotransmitter dopamine, which is responsible for controlling excitement levels and affects physical activity and motivation. Novelty seekers and adrenaline junkies have been found to have a long D4DR gene and are less sensitive to the neurotransmitter dopamine, which means they rely on thrilling experiences to produce higher levels of dopamine (Hamer). Low-novelty seekers, on the other hand, have shorter D4DR genes and are highly sensitive to dopamine (Hamer). They receive enough dopamine doing quiet activities and don't rely on excitement to increase their dopamine levels.

Dean Hamer, an independent researcher at the [National Institutes of Health](#), is the scientist behind this research. In his book *Living with Our Genes* he says, “High and low novelty seekers don't differ in their desire to feel good—everybody likes to feel good—but they differ in what makes them feel good. High scorers need excitement for the brain to feel good. The same level of arousal makes a low scorer feel anxious. A steady predictable situation would bore a high scorer but comfort a low scorer.”

Because extroverts have a lower threshold of arousal, they need to work a little harder to get themselves up to the level others find normal and pleasant without doing anything at all. They do this by seeking out the company of others, novel experiences and risks. Highly introverted individuals find themselves over-stimulated by things others might find exciting or engaging and instead seek out conversations with close friends, solitary activities and comforting environments. This “level of arousal” is controlled by dopamine.

Researchers at the Center for Neuroscience at University of California, Davis, led by cognitive neuroscientist Michael Cohen, ran an experiment in which participants performed a gambling task while in a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) machine. The introverted and extroverted participants, as determined by a personality profile, showed differing brain activity during the gambling task, with the extroverted subjects experiencing a stronger response to gambling rewards in the amygdala and the nucleus accumbens. The amygdala is associated with processing emotional stimuli and the nucleus accumbens is part of the dopamine system, the brain’s reward circuit. Because extroverts’ brains respond more strongly to gambles that pay off, they are more likely to enjoy risks such as adventure sports or new social situations. These findings demonstrate how dopamine controls personality differences in how people respond to the world around (Stafford).

Dr. Debra Johnson studied the brain function of introverts and extroverts by conducting positron emission tomography (PET) scans on groups of introverts and extroverts, determined by questionnaire responses. She discovered that introverts had more blood flow to their brains than extroverts, which indicates more internal

stimulation, and that their blood flow traveled along different pathways. The introverts' blood flowed to parts of the brain involved with internal experiences such as remembering, problem solving and planning, which entails a long and complex pathway. The extroverts' blood flowed to areas of the brain associated with visual, auditory, touch and taste sensory processing, which entails a shorter and less complicated pathway. While the introverts were attending to their internal thoughts and feelings, the extroverts seemed to be paying attention to what was happening in the lab. Dr. Johnson concluded that the main difference between introverts and extroverts was where they directed their focus: internally or externally (Laney, p.68-70).

Not only does introverts' and extroverts' blood travel on separate pathways, each pathway requires a different neurotransmitter. The primary pathway extroverts use for blood flow in their brains is activated by dopamine.

The neurotransmitter dopamine is associated with movement, attention, alert states and learning. Too much dopamine causes hallucinations and paranoia. Too little dopamine causes tremors, the inability to start voluntary movement, feelings of meaninglessness, lethargy and misery as well as lack of attention and concentration, cravings and withdrawal. The dopamine circuit is a rewards system within the body, creating the desire to repeat things that result in good feelings. For example, cocaine and amphetamines are highly addictive in part because they increase dopamine. Because extroverts have a low sensitivity to dopamine, but require large amounts of it to regulate blood flow in their brains, they rely on adrenaline-stimulating activities to make more dopamine in the brain.

Introverts, on the other hand, feel over-stimulated with too much dopamine in their system. They rely on a completely different neurotransmitter, acetylcholine, for their main pathway. Acetylcholine is associated with attention and learning, the ability to sustain a calm and alert feeling, long-term memory, and voluntary movement. Most importantly, it stimulates a good feeling when thinking and feeling. While extroverts rely on an activity-and-reward system to produce positive feelings, introverts feel content merely by thinking and feeling. These differences in brain function dictate how extroverted and introverted individuals respond to their environments.

There are also many differences between each introverted individual, which should be accounted for. The Neuroticism-Extraversion-Openness Personality Inventory – Revised (NEO-PI-R), developed by psychologists Paul Costa Jr. and Robert McCrae, measures the five domains of personality—neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness— and the six facets that define each domain. Extraversion, and correspondingly introversion, is broken down into the following facets: warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity level, excitement seeking and positive emotion. As explained by Susan Krauss Whitbourne, psychology professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, in her article for *Psychology Today*, these facets explain the discrepancies among introverted individuals. Introverts cannot all be classified as reclusive, anti-social beings as they each exhibit various degrees of these facets, creating complex personality traits.

The warmth facet is classified as the interest in and friendliness towards others. Being low on the warmth facet doesn't mean an introvert dislikes other people, but it does portray a difficulty in getting to know people and discomfort around new people.

Although this can hamper an introvert's ability to manage certain social settings, it also means that the individual is not likely to invade the boundaries of others and can show restraint in certain social settings.

The gregariousness facet measures the preference for the company of others. While extroverts typically seek out social situations where there are opportunities to be around others and meet new people, introverts who are low on this facet tend to avoid crowds and prefer quiet settings. Introverts who exhibit this characteristic use their alone time to recuperate and avoid burnout. They are fine being by themselves and spending time in contemplation. Extroverts, on the other hand, can easily go stir crazy when forced to be alone.

The assertiveness facet describes social ascendancy and forcefulness of expression. Assertive individuals are more likely to ensure that their needs are being met, whether that means complaining about poor customer service or standing up against others whose behavior they dislike. Introverts are less comfortable putting themselves out there and prefer to keep their opinions to themselves. Although this may be a reason why introverts are so often portrayed as a victim of bullying, they also tend to be more polite and well-mannered. In addition, because they often reserve their opinions, when they do decide to speak, they are more likely to be listened to.

The activity facet analyzes the individual's preferred pace of living. Introverts tend to prefer a slower lifestyle where they can use alone time to avoid burnout. They also prefer to react slowly to situations as they develop, thinking before they speak, making them less likely to commit social gaffes.

The excitement seeking facet looks at the individual's need for environmental stimulation. While extroverts crave sensory stimulation, introverts don't need to be stimulated by lots of noise and action and have a lower desire to take risks.

The positive emotions facet identifies the individual's tendency to portray positive emotions. Being low on this facet means that an individual has a hard time expressing joy or happiness, but may not be anxious, worried or depressed. While an introverted individual may feel inwardly content, he or she does not necessarily feel the need to outwardly display their pleasure.

Introverts in the Workplace

According to Laurie Helgoe, psychologist and author of *Introvert Power: Why Your Inner Life is Your Hidden Strength*, “Introverts are collectors of thoughts, and solitude is where the collection is curated and rearranged to make sense of the present and future. Introverts can tolerate—and enjoy—projects that require long stretches of solitary activity. Extroverts often have to discipline themselves for bouts of solitary work, and then they prefer frequent social breaks.” While extroverts get their buzz from being around other people, introverts get a high from being sucked into their work. Therefore, they are able to spend hours diving into a complex project that others may be overwhelmed or worn out by. Roberta Matuson, leadership consultant and president of Matuson Consulting, wrote in her article about the link between quietness and productivity for *Fast Company*, “It’s not about the noise one makes, but what one actually gets done.” Quiet people are often the most productive because being quiet strengthens focus, allows them to think before they speak, which saves time in the long run, and gives them the ability to dive deep into issues and ideas before moving on to others.

Introverts have also been shown to make great leaders. Professors Adam Grant of Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, Francesca Gino of Harvard Business School and David Hofman of Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina conducted a study that looked at introverted and extroverted leadership behavior by recruiting 163 college students to participate in a T-shirt folding challenge where the goal was to fold as many shirts as possible in 10 minutes, with iPods as rewards. The students were organized into groups with some students

randomly assigned to lead in either an extroverted or introverted manner based on examples given to them of notable leaders whose behaviors demonstrated either extroverted leadership or introverted leadership. Within each group, two graduate students were secretly instructed to either act passively or proactively by offering a more efficient way to fold the shirts. They found that when the graduate students were assigned to act passively, the teams performed better with an extroverted leader. However, when the graduate students were assigned to be proactive, the teams performed better with an introverted leader. The proactive graduate students and extroverted leaders clashed and the participants in the challenge perceived the leaders to be less receptive to ideas and so they invested less effort in the challenge. Published in the *Academy of Management Journal*, this research shows that both extroverted and introverted leaders can be equally effective, depending on the group of employees they are paired with. This contradicts the popular perception that extroverts always make better leaders. The researchers point to several possible explanations for this, including the “halo effect” that extroverts match the prototypes of charismatic leaders that dominate our culture (Grant). For example, an online survey of 1500 corporate executives earning at least six-figure salaries found that 65% saw introversion as a negative leadership quality (Tobac). Instead, introverts are better equipped to lead teams of proactive employees because they are perceived to be more receptive to their ideas and allow them to make decisions on their own.

Steve Tobac contends: “Introverted executives have an enhanced ability to concentrate and focus. If they choose to turn that skill outward, that would indeed give them an advantage in terms of reading people, a powerful tool for interviewing,

negotiating, motivating, and leading.” This idea relates to the Lieberman experiments discussed in Susan Cain’s *Quiet*. These experiments paired introverts and extroverts together to have a phone conversation. They were then asked to answer questions regarding how they felt about their own behavior during the conversation and how well they thought the other person liked them. With this first experiment, they found that extroverts were more likely than introverts to correctly assess how the other person felt during the conversation, which suggests that extroverts are better at decoding social cues than introverts. However, when the researchers asked the participants to listen to an audio recording of their conversation before answering the questions, there was no difference in the introverts’ and extroverts’ ability to analyze social cues and, in some cases, the introverts were actually better than the extroverts at decoding their partners’ social cues. The difference in the second experiment is that it measures how well introverts are able to observe social dynamics, rather than participate in them (Cain, 236-237).

One of the biggest disadvantages introverts face in their careers is the way they are perceived by others. Helgoe says, “Perceptions of competence tend to be based on verbal behavior. An introvert who is silent in a group may actually be quite engaged—taking in what is said, thinking about it, waiting for a turn to speak—but will be seen in the U.S. as a poor communicator.” In addition, because introverts are not prone to self-promotion, they may be passed up by more vocal extroverts for promotions. Because they do not fit the popular stereotypes of great leaders, they have a more difficult time rising through the corporate ranks to leadership positions (Nobel).

While introversion is often looked down upon in the United States, many other cultures embrace it as a quiet strength. There is such a difference between extroverted and introverted cultures that research psychologist Robert McCrae was able to map the countries of the world in terms of their aggregate personality, the mean personality trait level of cultural members. His map shows that Asian cultures are introverted while the majority of European cultures are extroverted. Of course, extroverts can be found in China just as easily as in America, but the difference is that Asian cultures are not only more accepting of introverted personality types, but they celebrate and admire them (Cain 186-187). Consider, for example, the Chinese proverb, “Those who know do not speak. Those who speak do not know.” While Asians think highly of those who are quiet, humble and sensitive to others, Americans value traits that promote individuality, such as boldness and verbal skill.

American society could learn to better tolerate introverts in schools and in the workplace by allowing them to exercise their strengths rather than expecting them to convert themselves to match the extroverted ideal. Both educators and employers can help introverted students and employees excel by giving them equal opportunities to submit their thoughts and ideas in writing as extroverts have the chance to express themselves verbally. Just as teachers know and accept that students learn in different ways, whether by seeing, hearing or doing, they should also realize that students exhibit their learning in different ways. Introverts may prefer to demonstrate their knowledge through individual assignments rather than group work and written papers or exams rather than class discussions. In the workplace, introverts may be able to do their best work when given the opportunity to do so away from the distractions of others, whether

in a private office or even from the comfort of their own homes. Rather than expecting introverts to confidently share their ideas in the middle of a department-wide meeting, managers should provide the opportunity for introverts to share their ideas one-on-one or via email afterwards in order to allow them the time they need to decompress and process their thoughts.

Introverts in Communications

According to a study of introversion in the newsroom conducted by Sharon L. Peters, 57 percent of reporters are introverts. My hypothesis is that the same reasons why introverts can excel as leaders in business can also apply to the strengths of introverts as communicators. Similarly, many of the drawbacks introverts face in the workplace overall may also be the struggles of introverted communication professionals.

While introversion and shyness may appear similar on the outside, the difference between them is that shy people desperately want to connect with others but find socializing difficult and lack the confidence to do so, whereas introverts seek time alone because they need it in order to recharge. Helgoe suggests, “An introvert and a shy person might be standing against the wall at a party, but the introvert prefers to be there, while the shy individual feels she has no choice.” I believe this is why introverts can still make excellent communicators—they are quiet not because they don't know how to interact but because they are reserving their energy and words for when they have something meaningful to say. An introvert may have no problem approaching a complete stranger in order to get to the bottom of a news story because he or she is not actually shy. However, after having collected the necessary information, that introvert will be more than happy to return to the news desk to spend some solitary time writing up the story.

Introverts have a biological makeup that enables them to see emotional stimuli as a distraction when they are focused on another task, making them good at eliminating distractions. Stanford biopsychologist Brian W. Haas used functional brain imaging to

measure the reaction time for introverts and extroverts asked to identify the color an emotionally provocative word was printed in. Introverts were better able to focus on the color, which required disregarding the emotional significance of the word, and had significantly better reaction times (Helgoe). While introverts can be a calming influence when other team members get easily worked up, this could also impact an introverted reporter's ability to cover a highly emotional story without getting their own emotions mixed up in it.

Materials and Methods

I conducted in-depth interviews with introverted communications professionals about the strengths that they contribute to their field as well as the struggles they face in a seemingly extroverted profession. I used a snowball approach to identify sources by soliciting recommendations from interview subjects as well as from my own network of colleagues and peers.

For the purpose of my project, I defined introverts as those who replenish their energy internally rather than from social situations and exciting activities. I allowed my sources to self-identify their personality type, but asked each to describe what that means to them in order to identify between a shy extrovert and a true introvert.

The questions I hoped to answer pertained to how introverts navigate and cope with a profession that may continually put them outside of their comfort zone and the strengths introverts rely on to excel in their careers as communicators. Being an introvert working in communications is not a universal experience. Because of this, I sought a variety of professionals in order to portray the breadth of experiences created by the spectrum of introverted personalities

Conclusion

Writing the article was the most challenging writing project I have taken on during my college career. It pushed me to not only conduct more extensive interviews than I have for any other writing assignment, but also to synthesize five different individuals' experiences into a story that represents the experience of introverts in communications.

One of the things I find most rewarding about journalism is that it gives you the opportunity to become knowledgeable in a vast array of fields. In writing this article, I had to conduct secondary research in outside fields such as psychology to gain a deeper understanding of such a complex topic.

Although it would have been more ideal to shadow an introverted professional long enough to develop more of their narrative for the story, I am proud to have completed a 3,000-word long-form journalistic article about a topic that I care deeply about. This process has been one of the most fulfilling things I have ever done.

Final Article

The following is the long-form journalistic article I wrote to culminate both the secondary and primary research I conducted. This serves as the creative component of my thesis.

Quiet Communicators in Loud Roles

It was his first day on the job at a small-town newspaper, and Steven DuBois needed to call a source for the story he had been assigned. He picked up the phone, heart pounding, and put it down again. He opened up his wallet, pulled out the only money inside – a twenty-dollar bill – and smoothed it out on his desk. Phone in hand, he concentrated on that twenty-dollar bill and told himself, “This is why you’re doing it. You have to make money because otherwise you’re going to be homeless or starving.”

“I was thousands of miles from home in a city where I knew no one, and I thought if this doesn’t work out, how are you even going to get home? At least stick it out – make the phone calls, write stories, get paid – and go on with your life,” he said.

A veteran reporter at the Associate Press in Portland, Ore., DuBois is a self-professed introvert. As a young reporter in his twenties, he was too timid to go into a department store and ask a salesperson for help and yet he fell into a profession that often requires him to approach strangers on the street for a quote. This seeming paradox of someone who would rather wander around a store for hours than approach an employee with a question or who feels drained by constant interactions with other people working a job that relies primarily on the ability to communicate with others – this is not as uncommon as one might think.

According to a study by Sharon L. Peters, a former journalist turned consultant, 57 percent of reporters are introverts. In communications fields such as journalism and public relations, introverts abound – some who struggle and some who thrive. While DuBois firmly believes that extroverted reporters have the upper hand, other introverted

journalists and even public relations professionals have found ways to harness their strengths and manage their weaknesses for success in their positions.

Although for DuBois, shyness and introversion are wholly intertwined, introversion itself is more than pure shyness. At its core, the difference between introversion and extraversion lies in where one finds energy, not how one engages socially. Introverts create their own energy internally, whereas extroverts gain their energy through the external world. As a result, introverts can feel easily over stimulated by social experiences and often combat that by shutting down to conserve energy or seeking quieter environments to restore energy.

For DuBois, this means preferring to work alone or choosing to socialize in a small group of two or three, but becoming quiet as soon as a fourth person joins the conversation or in any other situations where he finds the interactions with people around him draining on his energy.

In her study of the introversion-extraversion dynamic in newsrooms, Peters suggests that introverted reporters can do the extroverted duties of their job, but only by putting pressure on themselves, “like a right-hander writing with the left.”

Twenty years into his journalism career, DuBois still has to fight his introverted nature on a weekly, if not daily, basis. While he might not pull money out of his wallet to psych himself up anymore, the crime reporter still freezes when approaching convicts for a story or stops after interviewing two sources when the story needs four.

“I still want to leave the profession just because I don’t want to approach people. If I could figure out how to get paid without talking to people, I would,” DuBois said.

“It’s not an easy job to have, but I don’t know what else to do.”

It's how he got in the profession to begin with: he didn't know what else to do. After barely graduating from high school, he attended community college. "As the old cliché goes, 80 percent of success is just showing up, so I just showed up, and eventually I got a degree." He graduated from college in the early 1990s amid a recession that prevented him from finding a job, even at Barnes and Noble. One day it struck him that his love for reading the news could translate into writing the news.

"I had no clips of any kind because I had never been at a college or even high school newspaper or written any kind of story, but I did know current events and I read a lot – at least two or three newspapers a day. I was drawn to news and what's going on in the world," DuBois said.

Rejected by his small town newspaper, he decided to pursue an education in journalism. Graduate school gave him his first taste of what it would be like to be an introvert in a communications field. He says he was too panicky to interview people and would rather do anything than approach people and try to find news. He wrote just enough clips to send out to papers, and got rejected by hundreds before being offered a position at a small paper in Roswell, New Mexico. It was there that he had his introversion-defining moment of pulling the money out of his wallet to force himself to make the call.

Despite struggling early on, DuBois credits his profession for improving his introverted tendencies, the notepad allowing him to adopt a more extroverted version of himself when the time called for it. Twenty years of reporting made him less shy than when he started and better able to play an extroverted role during breaking news assignments.

“When I show up to work, I feel an obligation that I have to do it. I know I signed up for this so I will put myself out there,” DuBois said. “It’s like being an actor. When you know you have a role to play, you can turn it on at that moment. If an earthquake happens right now, I’ll go out and talk to everybody here.”

Although he’s managed to keep his position at the AP despite drastic cuts to news operations over the last decade, DuBois believes his introversion has held him back his entire career. “Obviously I’ve gotten this far, but there are journalists who I’m as good or better than who have far exceeded me. People who exude confidence, can put themselves out there, are good public speakers and just have this assuredness about themselves – even if they don’t know what they’re doing – they tend to rise to the top. Whereas people who are extremely competent, do their jobs well and don’t seek credit, they don’t get the advancements.”

Back in the early days of the second Iraq War, DuBois and a colleague called the families of local soldiers killed in the line of duty. The difference between him and his extroverted coworker, DuBois said, is “when I make that call, I’m hoping to get the answering machine. Actually, I don’t even want the answering machine. I just want it to ring. On the other hand, she wants someone to answer. That’s why she’s a Pulitzer Prize finalist at *The New York Times* and I’m not. That’s where my career might have gone if I had her personality and her courage.”

DuBois says he would much rather be an extrovert, if given the choice. “People say to me, ‘Oh I’ve heard you interview and you do fine.’ Well, you don’t hear the interviews I don’t do because I never had the courage to pursue them.”

DuBois copes by finding ways to create breaks from his extroverted responsibilities throughout the day. He drives to work even though he lives only a mile away because he gets just two-hour parking at the meters around his office. Every two hours, like clockwork, he gets up from his desk to go for a walk and move his car.

He is the first person to volunteer for an assignment that requires driving to the source of the story. “I love just being on the road listening to my songs. I’m getting paid. I’m not at the moment of terror yet. That’s my favorite part.”

While DuBois believes being an introvert has stifled his career, other quiet communications professionals have found their place and feel like they thrive in their chosen profession. Kelsey O’Halloran quickly began to navigate the demands of being an introverted journalist after graduating from the University of Oregon with a degree in journalism.

Immediately out of school, she started at *The Register-Guard* in her college town of Eugene. Her days at the daily paper were exhausting, especially when she would go in at 1 p.m. for the afternoon shift and spend the next four hours on the phone, calling people before they left work for the evening.

“That’s just kind of my nightmare – having to make phone calls and talk to people for four hours straight,” O’Halloran said. “When I worked that shift, I would come home at 9 p.m. and just go to bed.”

After nine months at *The Register-Guard*, O’Halloran moved to the Portland area to work for *The Oregonian*. There, she says her values for traditional journalism with a focus on storytelling conflicted with the paper’s preference for flashy stories that

perform well on the web. The paper placed more importance on the quantity of stories and the number of clicks those stories received rather than the quality of storytelling.

“I like telling stories and trying to keep the story as true as possible because I’m not trying to get attention from it or make it flashy,” O’Halloran said.

O’Halloran also struggled working under a boss who didn’t understand her introverted nature. As a beat reporter for the school districts, she was often expected to ask difficult questions in hopes of exposing a conspiracy she had no evidence for. While O’Halloran asked enough questions to satisfy her editor, she stopped short of damaging her repertoire with school officials. Whenever she was put on the spot to give a synopsis of the story she was working on, her mind often went blank, calling into question her ability to stay on top of her assignments.

Six months later, she found herself as the sole reporter and editor for *The Southwest Community Connection*, a monthly paper in southwest Portland. The small-town atmosphere coupled with the fact that she is the paper’s only contributor gave her the freedom she needed to tailor her work to her personality. O’Halloran works in an office shared by all of the Pamplin Media Group papers, but chooses her own assignments and schedule.

She always takes the time to schedule an in-person interview because she prefers the quality face-to-face conversation to anxiety-ridden phone interviews. The slower pace gives her time to prepare her questions ahead of an interview so she can avoid getting flustered and allows her enough time to recharge afterwards.

O’Halloran says the trade-off between interviewing and writing keeps her energy levels in balance. Writing provides quiet time that helps her process. If she feels

zapped of creativity after a morning spent in meetings or interviews, she'll edit pictures or check her email or Facebook to keep up with what's going on in the community.

“Sometimes I wonder if I chose the right job, especially with my personality. I wonder if I can do it long-term, but I've done it for a couple years now and I like it,” O'Halloran said. “It really refuels me when I have a long interview with someone and can get to the heart of their story. Every few weeks I'll have one of those, and it will refuel me for the next week.”

One such story was that of Kylie Marble, a college student who had taken a spill on her bike while home for the summer and been exposed to a rare flesh-eating bacterium that quickly spread throughout her leg. O'Halloran met with her after doctors saved her leg, and she was in the midst of a long recovery process. There had been many stories about her over the previous five months that painted her as an uplifting Christian girl, positive in the face of adversity.

“She also had this element of seriousness, and you could tell she just learned a lot going through it,” O'Halloran said.

In her reporting, O'Halloran looked past the façade of positivity to explore the sobering moment when doctors suggested that she might lose her limb, if not her life. She traced Marble's healing process and her reliance on music as therapy. Marble was determined to walk, and even run, again.

O'Halloran says that being an introvert allowed her to listen a bit differently by focusing on her subject and just letting her talk. “Introverts are so fueled by quality conversations. It's a different feeling of conversation when you get that from someone. When I hit that, I know this is going to be a good story.”

O'Halloran's innate ability to listen carefully and ask thoughtful questions allowed her to establish a connection with Kylie Marble, resulting in a better story. After the article was published, Marble thanked her, saying, "No one told my story that way. I feel like you understood me more than other people did."

Despite the times when being a reporter can be draining or uncomfortable, stories like Marble's remind O'Halloran of why she loves the job. "It's a combination of when I connect with someone, I appreciate their story and I also feel like I can understand it in a different way than other reporters have."

Like O'Halloran, Josh Kulla has managed to find his place as an introvert in journalism. Kulla started out as a reporter for local papers belonging to the Pamplin Media Group in Portland, Ore. There in the newsroom, he found more introverted personalities than he expected.

"A lot of us got into it because of the writing and ended up pretty good at it – quite eloquent and articulate – and, writing being the product, that's why we got hired," Kulla said.

He found one-on-one interviews stimulating although they exhausted him at the same time. Still, the times when he wondered what he was doing in this field happened frequently, usually when covering community events with lots of people.

"It's all those types of situations that are the equivalent of cold calling, where you're thrust into groups that require you to find someone, anyone, who you don't know and connect with them. It's like this massive raging creek that you have to cross," Kulla said. He admitted with embarrassment that at times he has skipped uncomfortable events or interviews when not crucial to the assignment.

Despite that, Kulla says he's never let his introversion become a detriment to his work. In some ways, he even sees it as an asset. His preference to be inside his own head allows him to work for hours on writing or research projects without getting distracted.

“As a journalist, you get thrust into a lot of topics you may know very little about so you end up knowing an inch worth of material on a million different subjects,” he said. “Being able to focus and tune everything else out is one of my talents when it comes to researching, writing or editing.”

The time spent writing or researching helped him balance out the stress of events and interviews. Kulla also began driving out to Central Oregon to photograph the stars at night as a way of recharging from his exhausting days. His hobby soon translated into a career move. Now a staff photographer for the *Gresham Outlook* in his hometown, he has found a position that allows his introverted nature to thrive. At large events, he can hide behind his lens, observing and documenting rather than talking and interviewing. Within the first week, he had already noticed how his new job as a photographer left him with less to recharge from.

“You're at the event and you're shooting, but then you know that you get to go back, and it'll require just as much time to edit and post photos, and that can be done solitarily,” he said.

Although Kulla has considered starting his own photography business, he is wary of the marketing required to build a business, which to him feels like the equivalent of standing on the street corner and screaming at people. “That actually

makes journalism a sort of refuge if you're an introvert and you're also very creative.

It's one of the few areas you can kind of fit.”

Behind the journalists reporting the news are public relations practitioners, responsible for pitching their clients' stories to reporters like DuBois and O'Halloran.

Jessica Landre, an introverted soon-to-be graduate studying public relations at the University of Oregon, is used to being told to speak up or smile more. She tends to internalize her thoughts and feelings rather than communicate them with others, something she knows she will have to adjust as she prepares to enter the working world. Although she excels at key PR tactics, such as writing email pitches and news releases, she has begun to realize the importance of face-to-face communication in her current internship at R/West, a marketing and PR agency in Portland.

“You need to be able to work in a group and communicate your ideas verbally as well,” Landre said. “Those things are what I've been working on the most because they don't come as naturally as the writing aspects.”

Despite the extroverted demands of a job in PR, such as client relations, pitching the media by phone and event planning, many introverts have found their home in PR. Claire Tonneson has been moving up the PR ladder in Washington, D.C. since she graduated from the University of Oregon in 2011.

Now a senior account executive at Sunshine Sachs, Tonneson says she counters her weaknesses as an introvert in the communications realm by preparing ahead of time for meetings and other situations where she needs to act more extroverted, being thoughtful in the way she expresses herself and finding unique ways to contribute to her

team. However, being an introvert doesn't mean that she can't be gregarious or outgoing at times.

“When I'm going to a networking event or something, I put on my game face, and it feels like I'm becoming a more outgoing version of myself,” Tonneson explains. “People will think I'm definitely not introverted at all, but I leave the event exhausted.”

Being an introvert has made her more observant, allowing her to better assess situations before making decisions. “People who are introverted like to think before they act. Being able to assess a situation before diving in, whether you're representing a client or tackling some sort of crisis is definitely a tool for introverts,” Tonneson said. “We notice things that others don't while they're busy being extroverts.”

By harnessing their strengths and putting on their game face, introverts can excel in any career path they choose, even those that seem to require extreme extraversion, such as journalism or public relations. Soon-to-be graduates hoping to pursue a career in communications and 20-year veterans alike can take hope in the fact that other introverted professionals have found their place in the field.

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