MONASH University

Coping with change in print journalism:

An analysis of the lived experience of Melbourne journalists, 1975–2015

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Abstract

Between 1975 and 2015 print journalists in Australia experienced an unprecedented period of change in terms of technology, culture and security of employment. Many adapted and thrived, a number left the industry and others were forced out through redundancy. In order to better understand this critical period of journalism history this thesis examines the lived experience of nine Melbourne journalists. Using an oral history approach, encompassing life history as well as career history interviews, the aim is to explore how individual journalists adapt to change and what they find most challenging. The time period takes in major technological changes including the introduction of Visual Display Terminals (VDTs), mobile phones, laptop computers and voice recorders as well as the development of the Internet as an information-gathering tool and a medium for disseminating news. It also includes significant structural and managerial change and a transformation from a heavy drinking culture closely integrated with news gathering practices to one where drinking during work hours was discouraged and reporters spent more time talking to contacts on the phone than in person. This was a time of changing audience demands and the multi-skilling of print journalists to incorporate areas such as video commentary and social media. As a point of commonality the interviewees had all spent an extended time on the industrial round, a speciality area of some complexity and relevance, now in decline, but not previously the subject of academic scrutiny.

While the scope of change under study was deliberately broad, only a relatively small number of interviewees could be selected due to the detailed nature of the interviews and the scope of the research. To narrow the field of potential interviewees a number of common career factors were used including location and expertise in industrial relations reporting, a specialty field, which has been the subject of little commentary and no academic research. Additionally interviewees were selected with a view to the group as a whole covering the time period and major mastheads. The thesis comprises analysis chapters covering two distinct life periods: the path to becoming a journalist and working as a journalist. The first analysis chapter looks at the interviewees with a view to understanding the types of people who pursue a career in journalism, their motivations and values. The second chapter examines how the interviewees adapted to different kinds of change

including technological, managerial, social and cultural change and how these changes impacted on them in terms of skills development, job satisfaction and longevity in the journalistic profession. The main conclusion is that the journalists of this study show a general resilience and ability to adapt to technological change per se. The more difficult challenge involves those situations where an individual is put in conflict with their personal and professional values.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature: 

Print name: Judy Hughes

Date: 17 August 2017

Publications during enrolment

'Taking the leap: including video in audio oral histories', *Oral History Australia Journal*, Issue 37, 2015, pp. 63-71 (peer reviewed, sole author).

This journal article arises from the coursework undertaken as part of this degree, rather than the research component.

Student signature [redacted] **Date:** 17 August 2017

The undersigned hereby certify that the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the student's contributions to this work.

Main supervisor signature [redacted] **Date:** 17 August 2017

Acknowledgements

Thanks to my nine interviewees for their generosity in sharing their lives for this research. The 21st Century is an uncertain time for journalism and I acknowledge that a big part of their motivation in agreeing to be interviewed was to help in some small way the cause of quality journalism.

I also acknowledge the incredible support of my supervisors Al Thomson and Deb Anderson. Al Thomson, in particular, steered me though some very difficult times personally and without him I don't think I would have completed this thesis.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my mum Enid Hughes, an incredibly smart and independent woman who always encouraged my academic efforts, but sadly passed away earlier this year before this thesis was completed.

Permissions

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Note on punctuation

This thesis includes several quotations from the 28.5 hours of interviews with the nine interviewees. Due to word-length restrictions it was not always possible to use all quotations in their entirety. In such cases I have indicated deletions with an ellipsis and striven to ensure that any deletions did not alter the meaning of the full quotation.

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Chapter 1: Researching journalists' lives

> I just hope that people today and into the future understand that journalists are just people. They're just people who have to pay their taxes, raise their kids, obey the road laws, want what's best for everyone else and when they're journalists they don't cease to be those people.
>
> *Shaun Carney*

> You always hear stuff that makes it sound like it's a calling; it's not a job. It's like some glowing orb has told you go out there and be a journo. That's overstating things but it is a special position and journos, they consider themselves special. They get treated specially. They sort of get to see things other people don't get to see. They can ask people anything.
>
> *Terry Brown*[1]

Journalism is one of those jobs often defined in moralistic terms—the capacity for good or evil. Those considering the effects of any changes in journalism are generally interested in the consequences for the economy, the democracy and its people. Like any occupation, however, a key factor in the quality of the work produced is the skillset and the mindset of the individual producing that work. This thesis looks at four decades of change in Australian newspaper journalism—1975 to 2015—through the lens of personal experience. As the comments by interviewees in this study illustrate, the identity or 'self' of an individual journalist is a combination of their role as a private citizen in society and their professional role in writing and disseminating news and facilitating public discourse. Human

[1] Shaun Carney and Terry Brown are two of the nine journalists interviewed for this thesis. Information about the interviewees is contained in the Methodology section of this chapter, the Bibliography and Appendix 1.

beings are complex and fallible. If society wants a quality free press as a democratic ideal then it is important to understand journalists as people not just employees, and change as multi-facetted not just technological.

This research has its origins in the current debate over the future of journalism in the 21st Century, especially the value of print journalism. Media commentators and academics have explored themes including challenges to the financial viability of newspapers as well as the consequences of massive redundancies and shrinking newsrooms and trends towards media convergence and citizen journalism.[2] As a former journalist myself (1983-1999)[3] it struck me that as important as these changes were they were not the only significant changes that many long-serving journalists had experienced in the course of their careers. In understanding present challenges I believed it would be useful to explore how individual journalists had adapted to different types of change—technological, cultural and organisational—in earlier times and over time. I chose oral history as the principal methodology because of its focus on lived experience and individuals and the fact that it had been little used in journalism history research.[4] The approach utilises life history as well as career history interviews to provide a broader context to the journalistic experience of change.

From a journalist's perspective, the period 1975 to 2015, the span of a working life, saw the mainstream newsroom evolve from a noisy, smoky, frenetic environment with typewriters clacking and people shouting to a quiet, open-plan business office with people focused on computer screens. With the advent of mobile

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[2] Examples include: Penny O'Donnell, David McKnight, and Jonathan Este, *Journalism at the Speed of Bytes: Australian Newspapers in the 21st Century*, Walkley Foundation, July 2012, < http://www.walkleys.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/SpeedofBytes.pdf> accessed 17 August 2017; Eric Beecher, 'The death of Fairfax and the end of newspapers', *The Monthly*, July 2013 < https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2013/july/1372600800/eric-beecher/death-fairfax-and-end-newspapers> accessed 9 August 2017; Margaret Simons, *Journalism at the Crossroads*, Scribe Publications, Brunswick Vic., 2012; Roger Dickinson et al., 'Studying journalists in changing times: Understanding news work as socially situated practice', *The International Communications Gazette*, 75(1), 2013.

[3] From 1983-1999 I worked for the *Geelong Advertiser*, Australian Associated and *The Australian*.

[4] An exception being Fay Anderson & Sally Young's, *Shooting the Picture: Press Photography in Australia*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2016, which was based on oral history interviews.

communications and the Internet, journalists could gather and disseminate more information, more quickly than ever before. At the same time, however, they were more office-bound and their employment more precarious as the number of mastheads declined and newspaper sales as a proportion of population fell by almost two-thirds—from 28.8 sales per 100 people in 1977 to just 9.7 in 2011.[5] In exploring this period I wanted to know what changes journalists found the most difficult, how change had affected their work practices and job satisfaction and to what extent change might have been a factor in decisions to stay or leave newspaper journalism.

This thesis is structured in the following sections: this introduction, incorporating an overview of the research, the relevant literature and the methodology; two analysis chapters; and the conclusion and appendices. The analysis chapters cover two distinct life periods: the path to becoming a journalist and working as a journalist. In the first of these two chapters the aim is to understand the types of people who pursue a career in journalism, their motivations and values. The second chapter examines how the interviewees adapted (or not) to different kinds of change in their journalistic career and how these changes impacted on them in terms of skills development, job satisfaction and longevity in the journalistic profession. In the conclusion I assess the broader lessons learned from examining the lived experience of change, the effectiveness or otherwise of oral history as a methodology in this inquiry and possible pathways for further research.

Media historians Bridget Griffen-Foley and David McKnight have compared the development of media history literature in Australia to the 'growth of an erratic but colourful patchwork quilt'.[6] In this thesis I seek to stand back from the patchwork of journalism history to see how individual experience can help some of the pieces fit together to form a meaningful portrait of journalists at work. Also, since it is widely accepted that journalism plays a pivotal role in a functioning

[5] Raymond Finkelstein & Matthew Ricketson, *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Media and Media Regulation*, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Canberra, 28 February 2012, p. 69.

[6] Bridget Griffen-Foley & David McKnight, 'Introduction: Australian Media History', in *Media International Australia*, No. 99, May 2001, p. 5.

democracy—and as Barbie Zelizer would argue, journalism is 'too important to be understood only partly'[7]—and that public confidence in journalism is low[8], it is desirable for the public to better understand how journalists work.

Approaches to journalism history

At the outset it is useful to define the term 'journalism history' as I will apply it in this thesis. Journalism history is not an account of journalists reporting on historical matters or journalists as historians[9] (unless of course the journalist historian is researching the practice of journalism). Also, as Griffen-Foley and McKnight note, journalism history is not the same as media history, although the two terms are often used interchangeably. The latter constitutes a much broader field—the institutional or industry-wide history of media.[10] Journalism history is a subset of media history, with a focus on reporting and the craft or profession of journalism. It is the study of work practices, routines and the creative process—how journalists do their job, as well as the outcome or product of their work.[11] It can also encompass organisational and managerial decisions and policies that impact on the practice of journalism.[12] In this research, the broader media history provides an essential context for the study of journalism history, particularly the issues of changing commercial imperatives and technological, cultural and workplace relations change. The study is focussed more on the practices of journalism—and print journalism in particular—than the output. It also intersects with the field of labour history in that it deals with issues of union activism and perceptions of employee rights amongst journalists.

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[7] Barbie Zelizer, 'Introduction', in *The Changing Faces of Journalism: Tabloidization, Technology and Truthiness*, Barbie Zelizer ed., Routledge, London, New York, 2009, p. 6.

[8] Finkelstein & Ricketson, p. 106.

[9] Jackie Dickenson, 'Journalists writing Australian political history' in *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 56, issue 1, 2010, pp.105-119.

[10] Griffen-Foley & McKnight, p. 5.

[11] Martin Conboy, 'The Paradoxes of Journalism History', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 30 issue 3, 2010, p. 417.

[12] Jeffery A. Smith, 'Writing Media History Articles', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 92 issue 1, 2015, p. 21.

There is no single text outlining the history of journalists' work in Australian newspapers, but there are a number of texts, which provide insights, some more useful than others. Media histories of particular industry sectors (print, radio, television, online, suburban or metropolitan), or particular organisations, employers, time periods or specialist reporting areas, for example, do provide some detail of journalistic practice, but the nitty gritty of a journalist's working life is not their focus. Similarly, journalism education handbooks, including those produced by media companies and journalism educators, and studies of particular areas of journalistic practice can provide some of that information, but they are also limited in that they are generally focussed on a point in time and reflect best practice rather than everyday working life. Some of the more useful works include Clem Lloyd's history of the first 75 years of the Australian Journalists Association, in which he details the work practices and professional issues of newspaper journalists, and later broadcast journalists, in the context of various industrial campaigns.[13] *Journalism: Print, Politics and Popular Culture*, edited by Ann Curthoys and Julianne Schultz, also include considerable details on the daily work of journalists but through a more thematic approach covering issues such as journalistic independence, gender, workplace culture, training and specialised reporting in two broad time periods—the colonial press and the 20th Century.[14] Patricia Edgars *The Politics of the Press* [15]and Bridget Griffin-Foley's *The House of Packer*[16] are examples of books on broader themes that also contain some rich detail of journalistic practice.

One means of determining how journalists work and the values they hold is to conduct quantitative research through a survey or series of surveys. Journalism

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[13] Clem Lloyd, *Profession - Journalist: A History of the Australian Journalists' Association*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1985.

[14] Ann Curthoys, Julianne Schultz, and Richard Nile, *Journalism: Print, Politics and Popular Culture*, UQP Australian Studies, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld, 1999.

[15] Patricia Edgar, *The Politics of the Press*, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1979.

[16] Bridget Griffen-Foley, *The House of Packer the Making of a Media Empire*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, Australia, 1999.

academic John Henningham conducted the first national study of Australian journalists in 1992 and surveyed 1068 journalists from mainstream news media including newspapers, radio, television and wire services. His findings, published in several academic papers, found the general characteristics of Australian journalists were similar to those in other developed western economies. The findings included that Australian journalists were young (median age of 32), predominantly of Anglo Saxon ethnic origin and middle-class backgrounds, and more likely to be male than female by a factor of two to one.[17] This work provides an invaluable benchmark for the study of journalism history, but by its nature is a snapshot in time—the early 1990s, a time before Google (founded 1998) when journalists generally did not have access to the Internet and email in their workplace. Since this research, a number of surveys of Australian journalists have been undertaken which contribute to a broader historical view. Of these, the most significant is the 2012-13 national survey undertaken by Folker Hanusch, which involved telephone interviews with 605 Australian journalists across a range of media sectors, part of the Worlds of Journalism Study. In examining the backgrounds and professional views of journalists since the Henningham study, Hanusch found that the typical Australian journalist was more likely to be female than male, older, more experienced and better educated with political views 'slightly more to the left' than 20 years ago. They were less likely to be a member of the journalists' union, were still overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon in origin and despite pressures on the industry and job losses, remained 'extremely satisfied with their jobs overall'.[18]

While a quantitative research approach can provide a representative portrait of Australian journalists, the averaging process cannot capture the nuances of real life or what that life *means* to those practising journalism. In advocating the advantages of a qualitative research approach, Susan Gair and Ariella van Luyn

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[17] John Henningham, 'Australian Journalists' Professional and Ethical Values', *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 73 no.1, 1997, pp. 206–209.

[18] Folker Hanusch, 'Journalists in Times of Change: Evidence from a New Survey of Australia's Journalistic Workforce', *Australian Journalism Review*, vol. 35 no.1, 2013, pp. 29–42.

describe 'making a choice to uphold narratives over numbers'.[19] As oral historian Lynn Abrams observes, narrative is the 'way people use language to communicate, experience, knowledge and emotions'.[20] By using a qualitative approach in journalism history it is possible therefore not only to gain information about what happened, but what that experience *meant* for the interviewee. How a journalist frames a story about their life experience reveals their values and priorities and reflecting on past events provides a more contextualised account. Consider the example of the recent research by Fay Anderson and Sally Young. In documenting the history of press photography in Australia they employ the rich detail of oral history interviews with 60 photographers to explore broader themes including news values, gender and trauma.[21] Gair and van Luyn also highlight another advantage of this approach in that the narratives gathered in the research can be 'understood by, and benefit, the communities from which they emerge'.[22] Given the challenges facing print journalists in the 21st Century an approach that can be of benefit to this particular community is both timely and of value.

Defining the scope of the research

Within the constraints of a Masters by Research and Coursework thesis it was necessary to restrict the scope of this research. Before examining further relevant literature it is useful to briefly outline my reasoning for the selection of the era 1975 to 2015 and some of the common factors I adopted as part of this study. These decisions were based partly on practicality as well as my experience as a Melbourne-based print journalist (1983-1999) who specialised in industrial relations and political reporting for both Australian Associated Press and *The Australian*. While I sought diversity across eras, ages, gender, mastheads and career trajectories the common threads in this study involve mainstream print

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[19] Susan Gair, Ariella van Luyn, 'Introduction: Showing and feeling community narratives', in *Sharing Qualitative Research: Showing Lived Experience and Community Narratives*, Taylor & Francis, Routledge Advances in Research Methods, Abingdon, New York, 2017, p. 17.

[20] Lynn Abrams, 'Narrative', in *Oral History Theory*, Routledge, London, New York, 2010, p. 109.

[21] Anderson & Young.

[22] Gair & van Luyn, p. 17.

journalism, predominantly Melbourne-based reporting careers, journalistic experience (although some interviewees were more experienced than others) and an extended period on the industrial relations round, a significant area of speciality reporting that has not previously been the subject of research.

Another reason for selecting the industrial round as an area of expertise is that I was concerned this subject area had become under-reported in recent years compared with its significance to the national political agenda. My own experience included covering major legislative change in industrial relations[23] in the federal sphere, Victoria and Western Australia as well as reporting on major disputes such as the 1999 national waterfront dispute. From 1999 to 2012 in my role managing media communications for the national industrial tribunal, I observed a steady decline in the number of dedicated industrial reporters at the same time as the legislative regime became vastly more complex.[24]

Time period

In choosing the time period 1975 to 2015, my approach was in some ways similar to that of Jane Chapman and Nick Nuttall in their book *Journalism Today: A Themed History*.[25] In this publication they identified current and longer-term issues for journalism and society and then traced those issues back historically. The theme-based chapters also included case studies and journalist profiles as representative examples. Similarly, I started looking at the current debate about the future of journalism, particularly in regard to technological change and the Internet, and looked back through several waves of change to the time immediately before the introduction of Visual Display Terminals (VDTs) and computer typesetting. As a former journalist, I was intrigued by the idea that a single journalist's lifetime could encompass such a wide spectrum of change and wondered what could be learned from those experiences in preparing for the challenges ahead. The end

[23] Industrial relations is also known as workplace relations. I have chosen to use the former term.

[24] The Australian Industrial Relations Commission became known as Fair Work Australia in 2009 and the Fair Work Commission in 2013.

[25] Jane Chapman & Nick Nuttall, *Journalism Today: A Themed History*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2011.

date of 2015 reflects the year I conducted the interviews. The initial date of 1975 was chosen to reflect the typewriter era, to give a five-year lead-up to the 1980s journalists' strike and set a starting point broadly reflective of the four interviewees who started their journalistic career earliest—between 1968 and 1978.

The era under study takes in a time when journalists primarily gathered information out of the office by face-to-face contact to a time when a limitless supply of information was available at a few keystrokes from a desktop computer, tablet or smartphone. Technology changed not only the tools used by journalists to gather and write news but also the means of disseminating news and, particularly for newspaper journalists, the economic underpinnings of their industry. Considerable literature is available on the impact of technological change in newspapers and the broader media industry and the possible implications for the future. Some of the more prominent include the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance's *Journalism at the speed of bytes: Australian newspapers in the 21st Century* and the more optimistic Margaret Simons' *Journalism at the Crossroads*.[26] The significance of technology as a change factor in journalism history however, can be overstated. Kevin Barnhurst and John Nerone note 'a tendency to emphasise the importance of machines in shaping the course of journalism'.[27] They argue that this focus on technological change stems from a general intellectual interest in the evolution of the means of communication. While I would not go so far as suggesting there is an over-reliance on technological change in journalism studies, other factors certainly need to be considered. The broader economics of media industries, changing cultural attitudes influencing audience demands and a trend towards casualisation in the workforce all play important roles in modern journalism history.

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[26] Penny O'Donnell et. al., *Journalism at the speed of bytes: Australian newspapers in the 21st Century*, Walkley Foundation, 2012 and Margaret Simons, *Journalism at the Crossroads*, Scribe Publications, Brunswick, 2012.

[27] Kevin G. Barnhurst & John Nerone, 'Journalism History' in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, Routledge, New York, 2009, p 17.

Newspapers

Compared to their colleagues in the electronic media, newspaper journalists faced the most significant degree of overall change in the period of study. Technology changed the tools of the trade from typewriters to computers, mobile phones and the Internet, deadlines became more frequent and the range of journalistic tasks more diverse. In Australia in this period, job security diminished dramatically as a result of factors including increasing media ownership concentration and a reduction in the number of major mastheads, declining circulation,[28] newsroom downsizing and increasing casualisation. While it is difficult to quantify the number of journalists in this sector because of the changing nature of the definition of a journalist and the increasing diversification of journalistic work, Census data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) indicates an overall, downward trend in the employment of print newspaper journalists from the mid- 1990s. The ABS lists the number of print journalists employed in the 'newspaper printing or publishing industry' in 1996 as 5823[29], in 2001 as 4080[30], in 2006 as 4161[31] and 2011 as 3775.[32] Academics involved in the New Beats Project, which is researching the impact on Australian journalists made redundant in 2012 (94 per cent of the interviewees were print journalists) describe the 2012 round of job losses in the print news media as 'the most serious contraction in its history' with about 1000 journalists losing their jobs in that year alone.[33] The extent of the 2012 job losses and further job cuts since that time will be known when the 2016 Census data is released by the ABS in October 2017. The significant nature of job

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[28] Finkelstein & Ricketson, pp. 56-60.

[29] Australian Bureau of Statistics, cat. no. 4172.0 - Cultural Trends in Australia: A Statistical Overview, 1997, accessed 8 August 2017.

[30] Australian Bureau of Statistics, cat. no. 41720 – Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview, 2007, accessed 8 August 2017.

[31] Australian Bureau of Statistics, cat. no. 4172.0 - *Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview*, 2011, accessed 8 August 2017.

[32] Australian Bureau of Statistics, cat. no. 4172.0 - *Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview*, 2014, accessed 8 August 2017.

[33] Penny O'Donnell, Lawrie Zion, and Merryn Sherwood, 'Where do journalists go after newsroom job cuts?', *Journalism Practice*, vol. 10 no. 1, 2015, p. 35.

losses in the newspaper industry is worth examination given the newspapers have traditionally employed more journalists than other sectors, conducted more high quality and time-intensive journalism and had larger newsrooms with the consequent advantages for mentoring and specialisation.[34]

The focus of my study is on individual reporters, who have had, or continue to have, careers in mainstream newspapers meeting largely daily deadlines. I also note that increasingly newspaper journalists are experiencing multi-platform careers as well as leaving journalism to pursue other employment opportunities. Therefore, while my interviewees all share a background in print journalism they do not all have print-only careers.

Industrial round

While there are journalists who spend their entire career in one specialist area, particularly federal politics, sport and foreign correspondence, a more common path is a mixture of general reporting and specialist rounds (or beats), with junior roles leading to senior positions with more scope for comment and analysis. For some, reporting is followed by a move to production or management, to another news organisation or out of journalism altogether. Given that specialist rounds form an important part of many journalists' careers, I decided to include one common round amongst my interviewees.

I chose the industrial round for several reasons including my background as a former industrial reporter. Firstly, it is a national round that has a strong Melbourne focus. While there is also an important history of industrial reporters in Sydney (and to a lesser extent other State capitals such as Adelaide and Perth) Melbourne has traditionally been the home of the national industrial tribunal (now the Fair Work Commission), the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and one of the two peak employer organisations, the Australian Chamber

[34] With the exception of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, which provides a diverse range of news and news services and employs a significant number of journalists.

of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)[35]. Secondly, it is historically interesting in that it is a round that has declined in status and numbers at the same time that the subject area has become more complex and challenging to cover. This is an experience not unique to Australia, but little has been written about it and there is a paucity of research. In his 2011 self-published book *The Lost Tribe of Fleet Street,* English journalist Nicholas Jones described the decline of the industrial round in the United Kingdom as a result of a succession of catastrophic industrial defeats, tough legal restraints on strike action, a halving of trade union membership and 'far-reaching changes in the patterns of news reporting'.[36] Jones attributes part of the decline of specialist industrial reporting to a corresponding rise in business and financial news.

In both the United Kingdom and Australia there has been a perception of industrial reporters being closer to unions than employers. For those who hold this belief the demise of the round means the increased risk of unbalanced reporting of industrial affairs, due to business reporters being more focussed on employers than unions. Two Australian articles of recent years, both by former industrial reporters who have held media roles with the ACTU and both published in union publications, express concern that the lack of specialist industrial reporting leads to inaccurate and incomplete coverage of industrial issues and that has implications for an informed democracy.[37] Given such perceptions, an exploration of how industrial reporters do their job is of historical value. The period 1975 to 2015 is also a time of unprecedented change in Australian industrial relations at the federal level with the introduction of the Prices and Incomes Accord, enterprise bargaining, individual workplace

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[35] The other major peak employer organisation, the Australian Industry Group, has its headquarters in Sydney, but also has a substantial presence in Melbourne.

[36] Nicholas Jones, *The Lost Tribe of Fleet Street: Whatever happened to Fleet Street's Industrial Correspondents*, self-published, Great Britain, 2011.

[37] Mark Phillips, 'Whatever happened to the industrial round?' in *The Walkley Magazine*, Issue 71 May-June 2012,Walkley Foundation, Sydney, pp. 17-18 and Andrew Casey, 'Hold the Presses', *Workers Online*, No. 147, 9 August 2002, <http://workers.labor.net.au/145/b_tradeunion_reporting.html> accessed 3 November 2014.

agreements and unfair dismissal laws at the same time as a significant decline in industrial disputes and union membership.

Another reason for selecting the industrial round as a common factor is to explore to what extent reporting in this field has the potential to heighten the awareness of a journalist of their own role as an employee. This issue is particularly relevant given the longstanding debate as to whether journalism is a craft or a profession and the shift from recruiting school leavers to almost exclusively tertiary graduates. Barnhurst and Nerone note that journalism history has had a 'tense relationship with the notion of its subjects as workers'.[38] They argue that early journalism histories tended to portray journalists as 'autonomous professionals, not the sort of workers who would need to join unions or negotiate for wages and hours'.[39] Consequently, I intend to explore whether or not by covering industrial relations issues journalists are inevitably given an insight into their own professional and industrial interests and to what extent they might act on that knowledge in their own interests and the interests of their colleagues. Also, I consider to what extent journalists become industrial reporters, or are influenced as industrial reporters, as a consequence of their personal values, as perhaps shaped by the work experiences and views of their parents. As such, are they a distinctive group within the journalist community?

Other relevant literature and information sources

Before outlining why I have chosen an oral history approach for this research, I will briefly outline other possible sources of information relating to the change experience of newspaper journalists. As Barbie Zelizer has observed, journalism scholars have 'tended to favour unidimensional and unidirectional notions of how journalism works' which over time have not always reflected the journalistic experience 'on the ground'. [40]

[38] Barnhurst & Nerone, p. 25.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Zelizer, p.1.

Thematic literature

One way to document the history of journalism and journalistic practice is to focus on themes such as technology, values and ethics, gender, skills development and cultural and managerial change. There is considerable literature available on these and other themes—some of which date to particular time periods and others that trace developments over a number of years or decades. Rather than deal with these in the abstract here I will refer to relevant thematic literature in the analysis chapters.

Change literature

In terms of recent media history, a lot has been written about changing business models, media convergence, job losses and the rise of user generated content and more active and participatory audiences. Comparatively, far less research has been conducted on how journalists at an individual level are impacted by change and even less on the journalistic experience of change over an extended period of decades. Roger Dickinson, Julian Matthews and Kostas Saltzis argue that academic attention needs to be refocussed 'very specifically to the changing nature and experience of journalists as they themselves encounter the changes taking place in their industry'.

> It is impossible, we believe, to understand the implications of the rapid changes in the global news industry for its traditional democratic role without understanding what journalists do and how they do it… understanding change in news work must entail, first and foremost, the study of journalists' situated experience.[41]

Folker Hanusch, who conducted the survey of 605 journalists in Australia in 2012–13, has also pointed to the scarcity of academic inquiry into the journalistic experience of change and the need to 'track the impact of change on journalists'.

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[41] Roger Dickinson, Julian Matthews, and Kostas Saltzis, 'Studying Journalists in Changing Times: Understanding News Work as Socially Situated Practice', in *International Communication Gazette*, vol. 75 no. 1, 2013, pp. 4-6.

While his study provided a contribution to that end he acknowledged that there were limitations in that 'survey data can paint only a broad picture'. Hanusch suggested that in-depth interviews could 'yield valuable insights into the interplay between the various types of changes that journalists experience'.[42]

In this study my approach to documenting change in the work of journalists supports that advocated by Dickinson, Matthews and Saltzis in that it is important to study journalists 'in context' with reference to the prevailing structural, social and cultural milieus. [43] Consequently, I suggest that change affecting journalism is not just technological change or organisational change—where the employer introduces a change program, usually for a commercial end—although this is worthy of study as well. To understand the work of journalists over time I chose to take a broader view encompassing a range of factors such as cultural, social, economic, legislative and workplace relations change.

Biography and autobiography

If individual experience is important, a potentially fruitful source of information on journalistic work practices is the field of autobiography and biography. Many biographies and autobiographies of journalists provide details of early life history, the circumstances surrounding entry into journalism and behind-the-scenes accounts of reporting. Take the example of Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) foreign correspondent Peter Barnett's autobiography *Foreign Correspondence*. Barnett recounts his family heritage, growing up in the Western Australian town of Albany and early journalistic experiences at the *Albany Advertiser*, *Denmark Pos*t and *The West Australian* in Perth. He provides details of his cadetship training at the West Australian newspaper including the instruction of a cadet counsellor who had a genuine love of language and shared his knowledge with ease'. There is a fondness in this account, which runs counter to traditional perceptions of journalism and the sink-or-swim school of training. Later, Barnett talks of his involvement with the Moral Re-Armament (MRA) movement and provides a

[42] Hanusch, p. 51.

[43] Dickinson et al. p. 6.

poignant reflection on a period of unemployment, which 'made me sensitive for the rest of my life to the suffering of the jobless'. [44] These reflections highlight the value of examining the personal influences on journalists as well as the industry-wide impacts. Some individuals recounting their lives in autobiographies will of course be more reflexive than others, but there is a bigger issue. Journalist biographies tend to involve high-profile (and therefore, marketable) individuals with an emphasis on high-profile stories covered. Frequently these journalists tend to be celebrity broadcast journalists or high-profile newspaper foreign correspondents or political commentators.[45] As such, the information is valuable, but is skewed towards a journalism elite, who may well have different experiences to that of the much larger pool of non-celebrity journalists. One of the interviewees in this study, Shaun Carney, went on to write his own personal memoir *Press Escape*— after being interviewed for this research.[46] It should be noted, however, that he fits into the category of high-profile journalists having been a columnist with *The Age* and more recently the *Herald Sun* and the author of several books.

Biography, while similar in its focus, offers the perspective of the external observer, the interpreter of a person's life. In writing about the life of one of his journalistic heroes, editor of *The Age* Graham Perkin, Ben Hills found it was insufficient to rely on the massive archive of articles, speeches, letters and interviews 'by and about him'. Such documents had provided the 'what', 'when', 'where' of Perkin's life but were missing the 'why', the 'how' and the 'what next'. He said Perkins 'tells you what he was doing, but rarely why he was doing it'. [47] Again, biographies on journalists are valuable but are available for only the most high profile of journalists.

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[44] Peter Barnett, *Foreign Correspondence*, Macmillan Publishers, Australia, 2001, pp. 65-66, 105.

[45] Examples include: Derryn Hinch, *Human Headlines: My 50 years in the Media*, Domain LPO Cocoon Lodge, Melbourne, 2011; Ita Buttrose, *Ita Buttrose: a passionate life*, Viking, Ringwood, 1998; David McNicoll, *Deal me in: sixty years in journalism and never a dull moment*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1995.

[46] Shaun Carney, *Press Escape*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2016.

[47] Ben Hills, *Breaking News: The golden age of Graham Perkin*, Scribe Publications Pty Ltd., Melbourne, 2010, pp. 4-5.

The oral history approach

In seeking a representative portrait of journalists at work I wanted to gather experiences of everyday work life for a print journalist. In utilising an oral history approach my aim was to capture not only some of the real-life complexity of how journalists experience change throughout their career, but also how they regard that change in hindsight and in light of their life experience. Denis Cryle in 1997 noted one of the difficulties of researching colonial journalists was a lack of information from the 'private domain' of journalistic experience. The 'publicness' of a career as a journalist' encouraged them to obscure and censor details about their feelings and relationships'.[48] Values and identity for a journalist are not only developed on the job and within the journalist community, but stem from childhood and young adult remembrances as well as factors of culture and place. As such a life story approach offers both a broader context and the unique perspective of the narrator or interviewee. Alessandro Portelli in his seminal article 'What makes oral history different?' describes the oral history approach as 'less about *events* and more about their *meaning*'. In taking part in an oral history interview the narrator is not simply recounting a set of facts, but creating a narrative that *makes sense* of the past. Oral history sources 'tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did'.[49]

An oral history approach also offers the advantages inherent in its very 'aurality'. The meaning conveyed by the interviewees can be understood through analysis of pauses and omissions, in the emphasis on certain words and phrases.[50] Additionally the process also provides the benefit of creating source material that can be useful for other research. It is my intention that the interviews conducted

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[48] Denis Cryle, 'Journalism and Status: An Historical Case Study Approach', *Australian Journalism Review*, vol.19, issue.1, 1997, p. 177.

[49] Alessandro Portelli, 'What makes oral history different' in *The Oral History Reader*, Routledge, London, New York, 2nd edition, 2006, p.36.

[50] Ibid.

for this study be offered for inclusion in a public archive with the formal written permission of each interviewee.

The insider/outsider relationship

One important consideration in using an oral history approach is that, as with biography, the oral history interview is a collaboration with the biographer/historian actively shaping the content and the final product with the interviewee.[51] In this study, I note that I am something of an 'insider' collaborator. Like my interviewees, I have a background in print journalism and a specialisation in industrial relations reporting during the time period under study. Due to my selection of the industrial round as a common factor, most of the interviewees I either knew personally, or they knew me by reputation. As such it was my perception that I had their trust. It was also my perception that one of the key motivations for the interviewees agreeing to be interviewed was that they were concerned about the challenges facing journalism and saw the research as an opportunity to assist in some way. Frankly, this was an important motivation for me as well.

Acknowledging an insider relationship is important in ensuring a level of reflexivity by the oral history interviewer and researcher. The literature dealing with insider/outsider relationships, however, suggests that such relationships are fluid and complex rather than 'bipolar'.[52] Cynthia Edmonds-Cady advocates the concept of 'intersectionality' in considering the insider/outsider perspective. Insider/outsider relationships can be based on a range of factors including gender, class, race and in this case, occupational background. They can also be affected—or constructed—through the interactions of researcher and participant.[53] In conducting these interviews I believe my insider status assisted in gaining the

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[51] Lynn Abrams, 'The peculiarities of oral history' in *Oral History Theory*, Routledge, New York, 2010, p.24.

[52] Nancy Naples, 'A Feminist Revisiting of the Insider/Outsider Debate: The "Outsider Phenomenon" in Rural Iowa', *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 19 no. 1, 1996, p. 84.

[53] Cynthia Edmonds-Cady, 'A View from the Bridge: Insider/Outsider Perspective in a Study of the Welfare Rights Movement', *Qualitative Social Work*, vol. 11 no. 2, 2012, p. 177.

trust of the interviewees and informing the sorts of questions to ask. I did, however, have to be wary of imposing my experiences on the interviewees. As such I endeavoured to ask 'open questions'. I also note that at times I felt an outsider compared to the interviewees in regard to particular experiences that were unlike my own and felt an affinity on other non-journalism matters such as having a tradesman father or being passionate at science at school as well as English.

Use of oral history to date

As in the case of biography and autobiography, high-profile subjects tend to dominate the oral history interviews of Australian journalists. Film Australia's Australian Biography Online website, for example, offers access to extended interviews with two print journalists Mungo McCallum and Elizabeth Riddell. [54] The majority of interviews in the oral history collection of the National Film and Sound Archive, however, are not useful for an examination of print media reporting as they mostly involve radio and television personalities, particularly presenters and entertainment reporters. In contrast, the oral history collection of the National Library of Australia contains a more varied range of journalist interviews and a higher proportion of print journalists. A number of these interviews involve high-profile journalists such as former editor of *The Age* Creighton Burns[55] and *Sydney Morning Herald* foreign correspondent Margaret Jones.[56] There are, however, also interviews with lesser-known but experienced journalists such as those listed with the Australian Generations Project. [57]

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[54] Mungo McCallum interviewed by Robin Hughes, 1996, < http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/subjects/maccallum/> and Elizabeth Riddell interviewed by Robin Hughes, 1992, <http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/subjects/riddell/> accessed 14 August 2017.

[55] Creighton Burns interviewed by Garry Sturgess for the *Garry Sturgess collection*, 1980, < http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-216790157> accessed 14 August 2017.

[56] Margaret Jones interviewed by Ann Turner, 1994, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-217186813>, accessed 14 August 2017.

[57] Examples: Australian Generations Project interviews: Bertram Castellari, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn6252044> and George Williams <http://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn6223260> accessed 4 May 2017.

Of the interviews in the National Library involving specialist journalists the most common are political reporters and foreign correspondents. The only journalist interview I could find that involved someone identified as an industrial reporter was one with former New South Wales Premier Bob Carr who covered industrial relations—and politics—for *The Bulletin* from 1978 to 1983.[58] The Labor Council of NSW Oral History Project contains a few interviews involving the history of newspaper production—two with officials of the Printing and Kindred Industries Union (the union representing the print industry) and one with a former *Argus* reporter who left mainstream journalism to become involved in unionism and the socialist press.[59] These examples all involve NSW journalists. Melbourne print journalists, in general, do seem to be under-represented in the National Library collection. Consequently, at this stage, I have been unable to find any archived oral history interviews of direct relevance to my research.

Methodology

In this research I used an oral history approach to explore the lived experience of nine journalists in a specific location, media and time period. The interviews encompassed both the personal and career history of each interviewee and varied in length from two to four and a half hours. A total of 28.5 hours of interviews was recorded. As I was restricted to a maximum of 25,000 words, I made several key decisions in determining the interviewee selection criteria and the interview process. My background in journalism played a role several of these decisions and caused me to reflect on the issues involved in being an 'insider' interviewer.

Selection of interviewees

In selecting interviewees my aim was to assemble a group of journalists who spanned both the time period and the major print mastheads. I wanted interviewees from a range of backgrounds and with differing career arcs—

[58] Bob Carr interviewed by Craig McGregor in the Craig McGregor MS7949 collection, National Library of Australia, 1980, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn6391512> accessed 13 November 2014.

[59] Labor Council of New South Wales oral history project, 1986, National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn680338 > accessed 13 November 2014.

encompassing the lifelong journalists with those who had experienced journalism for a time but moved on to another career or a media platform other than print. Several of the interviewees were high profile, such as former *Herald* editor and long-time morning radio host Neil Mitchell, although all could be described as experienced and accomplished. I would have preferred to include some younger journalists and more women, but this was not possible within the scope of the research. Since I was familiar with the industrial round as a result of my personal journalistic history, I knew many of the major figures in this area and supplemented this knowledge with research of newspapers in certain time periods as well as considering recommendations from a number of journalists. I chose to contact directly a selection of journalists who met the criteria I had identified above. Only one of those approached for interview declined to be interviewed. That person was the youngest and least experienced of the group.

Figure 1.1: Photographs of the interviewees

The interviewees, left to right:

Row 1—Terry Brown, Shaun Carney, Andrea Carson

Row 2—Ewin Hannan, Neil Mitchell, Susie O'Brien

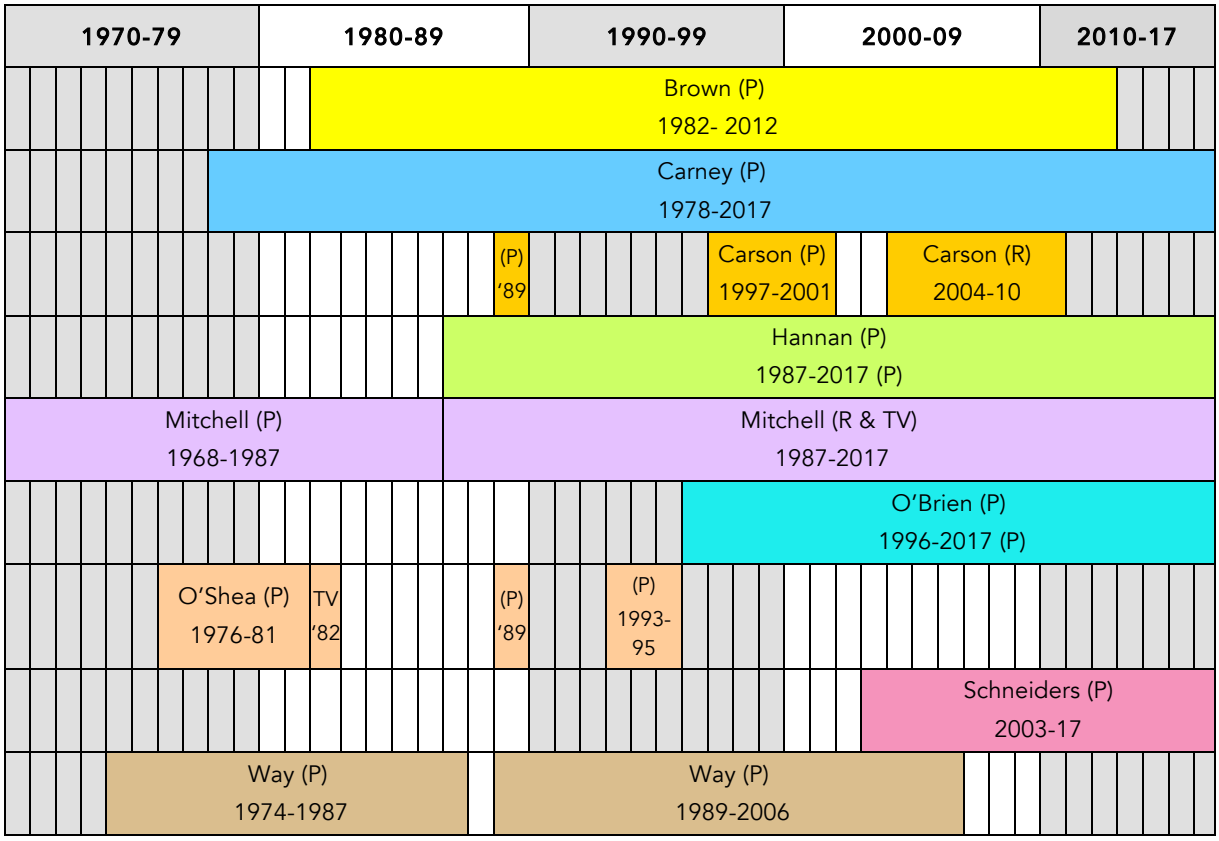
Row 3—Kerry O'Shea, Ben Schneiders, Nicholas Way.

Interviewee profiles

The journalists interviewed ranged in age from 37 to 64 at the time of interview. They included three women and six men who had worked on the major print mastheads in Melbourne including *The Age*, the *Australian Financial Review*, *Business Review Weekly*, *The Australian*, the *Herald Sun*, the *Sun News Pictorial* and the Melbourne *Herald*. All had spent a significant amount of time—at least two years—on the industrial relations round in Melbourne. One of the interviewees had also covered the round in another state—Tasmania. Of those interviewed, four were still working full-time as journalists (one of these in radio, rather than print) and a fifth was writing a weekly column in addition to other freelance non-journalistic activities. Two were still actively involved in reporting on the area of industrial relations, two were working in public relations and three held teaching

positions in journalism.[60] Figure 1.2 shows the journalistic career length of each interviewee and the relevant decades of their experience. While I sought gender balance I ultimately accepted a degree of imbalance (three women and six men) on the basis that the industrial round tended to be dominated by men during the period 1975 to 2015. It was particularly difficult to find female print industrial reporters in the most recent decade 2005 to 2015. I did, however, ensure that the interviews—both with male and female interviewees—covered gender issues in journalism.

Figure 1.2: Overview of the journalism careers of the interviewees



Note: (P) denotes print media, (R) radio and (TV) television.

[60] Only one of the three was a full-time academic.

Interview procedure

Potential interviewees were contacted by phone or email and invited to consider taking part in the project. In addition, interviewees were provided with an explanatory statement, a consent form, a questionnaire and an interview outline prior to interview. The questionnaire was intended to provide basic information for the interviewer, but was not returned in several cases and proved to be of limited value. In contrast there was overwhelming positive feedback to an interview outline. I decided to distribute the outline to the interviewees on the basis that journalists would feel more comfortable knowing the overall scope of the interview and would appreciate being given the opportunity to prepare any necessary dates or other information.[61] More than half of the interviews were conducted in a home setting while the remainder were conducted in an office or meeting room. My only advice to the interviewees on the location was that it be a quiet setting for recording purposes.

The interviews conducted were deliberately broad, encompassing early life history experiences with the career history of each interviewee. While I went into the interviews with specific themes in mind, I re-evaluated these themes after the interviews as I sought to find areas of commonality and difference. After conducting the interviews I was confident that the oral history approach had resulted in rich detail of life experience not normally available in journalism history research.

My task in the next chapter is to examine the early life experiences of the interviewees with a view to discerning the values and personality traits that were to be taken into a journalism career.

[61] The interview outline is included in this thesis as Appendix 2.

Chapter 2: The path to journalism

> And that, perhaps, is the most important quality the young reporter must have in the beginning—*wanting* to be a newspaperman.
>
> *Robert Coleman, advice to aspiring journalists, 1970*[62]

Journalism as a calling is a key element of the journalist trope—the intrepid reporter working long hours with dogged determination and a willingness to sacrifice one's personal life to get the story and thereby protect the public interest.[63] While no doubt there is some truth in this stereotype of the newspaper reporter, in real life journalists, like anyone else, seek to balance their work and private lives. They have families and friends, interests and passions, conflicts to resolve and mortgages to meet. In this chapter I examine what types of people become journalists, what sparks their interest and how they get their start. This chapter deals with the period from childhood to early to mid 20s, depending on the circumstances of each interviewee. This coincides with what has been identified in studies of autobiographical memory as the 'reminiscence bump'; the time of life experience where life memories are particularly vivid and prominent—when people are aged 10 to 30, but especially 15 to 25.[64] While there are a number of differing theories about the reasons for the reminiscence bump; the one that is particularly relevant here is the view that the period of adolescence to early adulthood is one of great change, new experiences and identity-formation.[65] If journalism is in some way a calling, then this period should be revealing for what it can tell us about the people who are successful in becoming journalists and how their identity as a journalist is forged.

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[62] Robert Coleman, 'An introduction to journalism', *Reporting for Work: A guide to daily journalism*, Herald and Weekly Times, Melbourne, 1970, p. 11.

[63] Henry Gullett, 'Journalism as a calling: a half-century's impressions', *The Australasian Journalist*, 25 April 1913, pp. 1-2, as cited in Curthoys & Schultz, p.3; 'Jill Abramson on the "Calling" of Journalism' 20 April 2016, <https://hds.harvard.edu/news/2016/04/20/jill-abramson-calling-journalism> [accessed 9 August 2017].

[64] Martin A. Conway, 'Memory and the Self', in *Journal of Memory and Language*, vol. 53, 2005, p.604.

[65] Ibid.

It can be extremely difficult to get a start in journalism, particularly on the major metropolitan and national mastheads. In 1970 the Herald and Weekly Times (HWT) publication *Reporting for Work: A Guide to Daily Journalism* estimated that for every young man or woman appointed as a cadet or copy boy or girl on the Melbourne *Herald* or the *Sun News-Pictorial* 'ten or more applicants go away disappointed'.[66] Today that disparity between the hopeful and the successful is much greater, especially on the major mainstream mastheads. As is the case in many other highly sought-after careers, I was expecting to find amongst the interviewees traits of determination and high performance as well as stories of luck and fortuitous connections.

Personal background

The nine interviewees grew up across the decades of the 1960s through to the early 2000s. The figure below gives an indication of the relevant era when each was 15 and 25 years respectively—the period of the 'reminiscence bump'.

Figure 2.1: Interviewees at the ages of 15 and 25 years

Interviewee	Era (year) at age 15	Era (year) at age 25
Neil Mitchell	1960s (1966)	1970s (1976)
Nicholas Way	1960s (1966)	1970s (1976)
Shaun Carney	1970s (1972)	1980s (1982)
Kerry O'Shea	1970s (1973)	1980s (1983)
Terry Brown	1970s (1976)	1980s (1986)
Ewin Hannan	1980s (1981)	1990s (1991)
Andrea Carson	1980s (1987)	1990s (1997)
Susie O'Brien	1980s (1986)	1990s (1996)
Ben Schneiders	1990s (1992)	2000s (2002)

Note: Shading in this table indicates the relevant decades.

The interviewees come from diverse backgrounds encompassing the only-child household through to a family of five children and two blended families, stable marriages and divorce, idyllic country life to working class suburbs. Seven of the

[66] Coleman & HWT, p. 11.

nine grew up in Victoria while the other two came from Tasmania and South Australia respectively. While academic excellence was a common feature of the group, two enrolled but did not complete tertiary education and only two of the group studied journalism at the tertiary level. Two of the interviewees went on to complete doctorates, one before journalism and one after, a proportion that is probably high compared to the journalistic workforce overall. In general the interviewees described fathers in greater detail than mothers, consistent with time periods when the father in the family was the principal breadwinner and therefore the most likely role model for the children in matters of employment. Three interviewees did, however, describe particularly close maternal relationships. One of those, Kerry O'Shea, came from a single-parent family in which her mother worked and she had no contact with her father from an early age. The other two interviewees, both male, also had working mothers.

In looking for common themes across the group it was not unexpected that these aspiring newspaper journalists would describe a love of reading, writing and the English language. A strong work ethic was a common description of the parents, particularly those parents who grew up in the Depression years, as was a devotion to family. As mentioned earlier, the members of the group were generally high academic achievers, but only two or three studied at what could be described as elite private schools. Their backgrounds were generally middle class, although several experienced financially tough times in their early years and lived in working class suburbs. Only two had relatives who were journalists and only one of those, a parent, but as will be discussed later, contact with individual journalists played a key role for many of the interviewees in fostering a desire to get into journalism. While not explicitly mentioned by any of the interviewees, there was also evidence of a somewhat adventurous streak, a hunger for excitement, that for a journalist would manifest itself in the useful traits of curiosity and passion.

In broad terms some of the societal changes from 1975 to 2015 were the evolving family dynamics, increasing educational opportunities and technological change. It also encompassed the politically charged time of the sacking of the Labor Government under Gough Whitlam, the peak of union involvement in the federal

sphere under the Labor Government of Bob Hawke and its Prices and Incomes Accord and the progressive decline in union influence during and after the Coalition Government of John Howard.

As expected, the older interviewees mostly came from families where the father was the breadwinner and the mother the homemaker, but for several of the younger interviewees, the parents were both working. Several interviewees benefited from the Whitlam Government's abolition of tertiary fees, making them the first in their family to achieve a tertiary education. Only one of the nine interviewees began their working life in the Internet era. [67]

The backgrounds of the interviewees growing up in the 1960s through to the 1990s are broadly in line with that described in both the Henningham[68] and Hanusch[69] studies for the same time periods. It is also similar to that described in the related field of press photography by Fay Anderson and Sally Young.[70]

The writer/communicator

Many of the interviewees detailed a love of writing, reading and humanities subjects, particularly English, politics and history. Of the two interviewees who professed a love of the sciences—Andrea Carson and Terry Brown—both spoke about how English was also very important to them. Andrea Carson talked about her 'inspiring' English teachers in the later years of high school and Terry Brown said he had received the English prize at his school in Year 12. A number talked about reading newspapers at a young age and watching television, but only two specifically mentioned watching television news. Tastes in literature could be eclectic, indicative perhaps of a journalist's interest in a wide range of topics and writing styles. Shaun Carney identified his early literary influences as American novelist and short story writer F. Scott Fitzgerald, Anglo-American journalist and

[67]The Internet era, as it pertains to journalists, is that period when journalists regularly used email communication and Internet-based research as essential work tools—from about the late 1990s.

[68] Henningham, p. 208.

[69] Hanusch, pp.33-34.

[70] Anderson & Young pp. 44-45.

author Christopher Hitchens and Marvel Comics' Stan Lee, but said he was also an avid reader of music magazines such as *Go-Set* and *Rolling Stone*. The following comment from Terry Brown shows something of the passion behind this love of reading and words.

> I read everything there was to read in Horsham. I read my way through the Horsham Tech Library, probably by about Year 9. I had some great librarians there. They used to bring in books for me of their own so I'd read maybe four books a week, five books a week even. I was just a voracious reader.

Terry Brown later specialised in the field of 'colour writing', a role in which relatively few journalists excel. This type of writing sees the journalist in the role of spectator or eyewitness describing the scene in a detailed, colourful way so that the reader can better envision what has happened. Terry's use of highly descriptive words such as 'voracious' and 'devour' to describe his reading habits indicate something of this talent, to describe the relatively mundane in an engaging way.

Another skill that emerges from the interviews is that of oral communication, particularly public speaking, debating and engaging others in conversation in the school years. Susie O'Brien talks about being good at 'debating, talking' and Andrea Carson refers to being a finalist in *The Age* Public Speaking Awards and how on the school bus from her parents' farm each day to Colac she liked to talk. This skill may be indicative of an emphasis on public speaking in certain schools but may also be especially useful for female journalists in surviving in the somewhat 'blokey' world of newspapers. For these two interviewees it is a skill that was clearly manifest at an early age. The skill of conversation wasn't confined to the female interviewees. In general it was relatively easy to get the interviewees talking about their life and several of the male interviewees apologised to me for talking too much. This easy rapport can partly be attributed to the fact that I was known to nearly all the interviewees prior to the interviews and shared a common

personal and career history, but it should also be noted that journalists are far more accustomed to interviewing others than being interviewed.

Values

Numerous surveys in Australia and overseas in recent years have highlighted the low levels of public confidence in journalism. [71]The 2012 *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Media and Media Regulation*, however, makes it clear that this is not a new phenomenon. Concerns about accuracy, bias and ethical lapses in the Australian news media have been apparent in public opinion polls over decades, not just recent years. Significantly for this research, these polls also indicate that newspapers are less trusted than electronic news media.[72] Irrespective of the actual state of Australian newspaper journalism and whether or not public trust in newspaper journalism has hit record lows, trust is clearly an issue for readers. In this research I sought to explore the values that journalists bring to their work. Personal and professional values develop over time but those gained in the formative years of childhood, adolescence and early adulthood can be particularly influential.

Values develop through a range of influences—including, family, special teachers and mentors, life experiences, events, locations and social/cultural factors. The interviews in this study reflected such a range of influences. Some of the values one would expect from aspiring journalists include achievement (being the best), creativity, courage, enthusiasm/passion, fairness, humour/fun, independence, integrity, initiative, reliability, risk-taking and teamwork.

To an extent all these values were present in the interviewees, but those values that particularly stood out were achievement, enthusiasm/passion and humour/fun. Overwhelmingly, the two most common reasons the interviewees

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[71] Examples: Abigail Dawson, 'Public Trust in Australian Media Falls to All-Time Low', *Mumbrella*, 2017 <https://mumbrella.com.au/trust-in-daily-and-local-newspapers-on-a-steady-decline-according-to-essential-research-432670> accessed 9 August 2017; Lee Becker et. al., 'Public Trust in Journalism and Media: Analysis of Data from 1970 to 2015' <https://www.kettering.org/catalog/product/public-trust-journalism> accessed 9 August 2017.

[72] Finkelstein & Ricketson, pp. 123–24.

gave for choosing a journalistic career were that they thought they'd be good at it (particularly due to their skill in writing) and they thought it would be fun. An ambition of public service was noticeably absent at this particular life stage with goals not unexpectedly reflecting individual rather than collective aspirations. These results are very similar to those in the early 1990s Henningham study which listed the top two reasons for entering journalism as 'Good at writing' (27 per cent) and 'Exciting, interesting' (19 per cent). 'Service to the public' was just 4 per cent.[73]

Times of struggle and hardship can be character building and several of the group no doubt developed resilience and determination—key qualities for a journalist—as a result. Ben Schneiders, the youngest of the group, recalls that his father's traumatic experiences in Nazi-occupied Holland during World War II[74] had had an effect on his father's personal relationships and left his father sceptical of authority and with a sympathy for the oppressed. Ben reflected that these values may have been among the influences on his decision to pursue a career in journalism. Another profound influence for Ben was his experience with cancer during his university years.

> It's probably one of the most significant moments in my life. It really influenced me. I didn't feel as driven maybe as I would have. I didn't feel that work was everything. Once you've had cancer, and it was fairly serious, you have a real sense of your mortality... Later on I sort of had a preparedness to sort of walk away from jobs that I didn't feel were good for me.

Kerry O'Shea's childhood experiences in the 1960s and 1970s appear to have played a role in her developing into a particularly studious, independent child and young adult. She said her mother worked very hard to rise up the ranks in the television industry and bring up Kerry and her brother with virtually no support.

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[73] Henningham, p. 210.

[74] In his interview Ben Schneiders talked about how his father's experience of war had included the bombing of Amsterdam, the Nazi invasion of Holland on his 8th birthday and the subsequent German occupation of Holland.

This meant the siblings looked after themselves for a lot of the time, catching a train to school and getting the dinner started at the end of the day. Kerry describes how she learned to stand up for herself and 'learned to be pretty responsible at an early age'. Later as a reporter for the *Sun News-Pictorial* she was appointed to the industrial relations round, the first female reporter to be sent to the round by that newspaper. Her memories of that time are positive and she seems to have been undaunted by the masculine nature of the round and the subject area. Although not specifically describing herself as a feminist, the following comment about her grandmother shows an early awareness of gender issues.

> She tended to favour boys. And so I wasn't all that keen on going out there because whenever I would it would be a case of 'Kerry you help me with the dinner and the dishes and John you can go outside and play'.

It was a different experience for Susie O'Brien, a teenager in the 1980s. Susie not only experienced feminist role models in her life, but also an overtly feminist dialogue. She describes her mother as an 'outspoken feminist', who encouraged her to set high goals saying: 'You don't want to be a dental technician, you want to be a dentist. You don't want to be a nurse you want to be a doctor'. When Susie was at university she remembers her boyfriend's mother, a feminist and historian, telling her that she should keep studying, that she could have a career and a family and be a feminist. She said this had a significant influence on her. She kept studying, completing an Honours year, a scholarship in the United States and ultimately a doctorate in feminist studies. Today Susie is one of the few female columnists on the *Herald Sun* newspaper and works from home several days a week to better manage her work and family life.[75]

The adventurer

A natural curiosity is often described as one of the key traits needed in journalism.[76] This quality is particularly prominent in the interviewees. They are each, to an extent, adventurers, hungry for excitement and passionate about issues. For Andrea Carson and Terry Brown adventure was embodied in the goal of getting out of their small country town and getting 'in the thick of it' in the big city. Andrea remembers being 'really excited' leaving the family farm to study nursing in Melbourne in 1990. For Terry Brown the escape was to university, about 10 years earlier, in the late 1970s. He said he was living in a small country town and wanted to broaden his horizons. 'I couldn't get out of Horsham quick enough.'

Similarly, Shaun Carney describes his determination to get out of working-class Frankston and make something of himself.

> I knew I had to absorb myself in journalism if I was going to make it because I realised that you had to make your own way if you came from a place like ... Frankston, but also if you went to a school like my school, Monterey High School, which was just an absolute (pause) it was a shithole basically... a dreadful, dreadful place.

The adventurous spirit is obviously not unique to young people of the 1970s, '80s and '90s but it is indicative of a group of aspiring professionals wanting to expand the horizons of their upbringing and find out about the world, traits that would be useful as a journalist. It also indicates a certain determination and spirit of risk-taking.

Neil Mitchell's stories of his school days in the 1960s also show something of this adventurous spirit, but in a different way. He describes himself as 'a pain in the neck' for his ageing parents. Childhood was about sport, riding his bike and spending time with mates. He developed a 'questioning thread' in high school and got into trouble for making 'grubby jokes' and insulting a few teachers in a

[76]Sally A. White, 'Preface', *Reporting in Australia*, 2nd ed., Macmillan, South Yarra, Vic, 1996, p. ix.

column for the school magazine. He describes the experience as 'frightening' and a 'good lesson'.

> I didn't realise how much I'd offended people. Although I wrote under a pseudonym, everybody knew it was me. I wasn't being cowardly, I knew that I'd be accountable, but I didn't realise the power of what I'd done, no… I think I sort of pigeon-holed it a bit and thought well I've learned something there. If you're going to do it, be a bit more subtle or careful or pick your targets.

Unlike some of the other interviewees Neil Mitchell moved into newspaper management at a young age, eventually becoming editor of the Melbourne *Herald* at just 34 years in the 1980s. He notes that his parents did not have high ambitions for him and tried to convince him to seek a career in the public service or banking employment, which for them must have seemed very secure. While his stories indicate his preparedness to take risks and follow his own judgment, Neil conceded that some of his parents' values had stuck with him, particularly a conservative financial outlook and the fact that he had not had many employers. In a tight journalistic print market with a high concentration of media ownership, security of employment is obviously a factor in reducing career mobility.

Catching the journalism bug

In the extract at the beginning of this chapter Robert Coleman identifies *wanting* to be a journalist as the key to success as an aspiring young reporter.[77] Putting to one side Coleman's argument about the personal sacrifice expected of a reporter, I suggest it is useful to an understanding of journalistic identity to explore the origins of the *desire* to become a newspaper reporter. What is it that ignites that spark and what keeps it burning? As has already been discussed, the journalists in the interviewee group shared a love of English, writing and communication in their early years. There was an element of fearlessness and a hunger for

[77] Coleman & HWT, p. 11.

excitement and exploration. In examining this issue, I consider the age at which the interviewees decided they would pursue a career as a journalist and the experiences that influenced that decision, particularly contact with significant individuals. Since it can be difficult to get a start in journalism,[78] I also consider what factors helped them to ultimately succeed in getting that start.

Of the nine interviewees, four decided on a journalistic career while in secondary school and devoted themselves to achieving that ambition. The other five made this decision a little later—at university or upon completion of university studies—although several of these had considered journalism while at school, but not seriously. For those who made the decision early, a common factor was belief in the somewhat romantic notion of journalism as a fun, adventurous occupation, which brought you into contact with intriguing, important people. Shaun Carney remembers that he first thought of becoming a reporter as a result of his fascination with the 'Superman' story. By the age of 12, in about 1970, he told his father that he was committed to pursuing a career in journalism, not teaching, as his father had wanted.

> I said no, no. I really want to be a journalist. Because I'd worked out by then: even if you're not really terrific and you don't have great leadership qualities or great abilities as a businessman or a sportsman or an entertainer or whatever, if you're a journalist you can come in from the side. I always had this image of myself being in the wings, being right up close to the footlights, watching everyone and seeing everything and you get to talk to whoever's around.

At that stage neither Shaun nor his father had ever met a journalist, but Shaun was an avid reader of newspapers and eager to find a path to a more exciting life. While the above quote from his interview suggests some self-doubt, Shaun also recalls that he 'never really had any doubt that I would be a journalist'. This conviction appears to be based on the belief that hard work, strategy and his *desire*

[78] Coleman & HWT, p. 11.

to be a journalist would give him the edge. It was a belief so strong that Shaun decided to 'take the risk' and become the first member of his family to go to university rather than pursue a newspaper cadetship straight after secondary school.

Unlike Shaun, Kerry O'Shea as a teenager had already had some contact with journalists through her mother's work in television. She knew at first-hand how the life of a journalist could be glamorous. The daughter of a single mother growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, however, she was acutely aware of the place of women in society at that time. This awareness can be seen in her concern about equal opportunity and equal pay.[79] It also indicates her commitment to the value of 'fairness'.

> One of the things that attracted me (to journalism) was I wanted a job where there was equal pay. It was very important to me because I had, I think from the time I was young, this sort of burning sense of injustice when things weren't fair, particularly if I'd see them applied to mum or me or whatever. Like my grandmother asking me to help out with the cooking and the cleaning and not my brother, seemed to me to be fundamentally unfair.

Those interviewees with the singular commitment to pursue a journalism career generally came from the older group—those who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s—a time when many young people chose a career for life. Nicholas Way was an exception to this in that he said journalism 'sort of landed on my lap' but in hindsight he said he was glad he had taken that path. As might be expected, some of the younger interviewees considered, and in one case pursued, alternative careers before settling on journalism. Ben Schneiders considered teaching and Susie O'Brien was on track for an academic career after completing a doctorate.

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[79] Women journalists received equal pay in the first federal journalists award of 1917, many decades earlier than the landmark federal equal pay cases of 1969 and 1972. See Jeannine Baker, 'Australian Women Journalists and the "Pretence of Equality"', *Labour History*, No. 108, May 2015, p.1.

Andrea Carson worked at the *Colac Herald* for six months while waiting to get into nursing training. She completed registered nursing training, worked overseas as a nurse, secured a cadetship with *The Age* in the late 1990s and is now a university lecturer in politics and the media. While a larger sample would be needed to confirm trends, it appears from this sample that young people who aspire to journalism today may not necessarily consider it a lifelong career in the same way as their equivalents in earlier years.

Another key theme amongst the interviewees was the influence of a 'significant other' in igniting and/or fostering an interest in journalism. While only one interviewee had a parent who was a journalist, many described contacts with relatives or other individuals who had either assisted them in their preparation for applying to newspapers or acted as role models. Ewin Hannan secured work experience with the *Australasian Post* through a family friend in 1982 and this experience cemented his decision to go into journalism. Terry Brown received advice from an ABC Radio journalist who was a regular guest at a hotel where his mother worked and Neil Mitchell remembers in Year 11 talking to publisher Peter Isaacson who was a distant friend of his family. Ben Schneiders was inspired by his grandfather who had performed in ABC radio plays and an uncle who was a television sports journalist, while Susie O'Brien started writing columns for Brisbane's *Courier Mail* while studying for her doctorate and dating her future husband who was studying a Master of Journalism and ultimately became a television journalist. Nicholas Way knew a columnist with Hobart's *Mercury* newspaper who lived across the road, an editorial writer who was a friend of his cousin and the editor of the *Mercury* whose wife knew his mother. Even Shaun Carney, who had grown up without any contact with journalists, in a fortuitous turn of events met his first journalist, Bill Hitchings, through a family friend just after his first interview for a cadetship with the HWT in 1978. Hitchings told him what he could expect in the second interview and helped him to prepare by quizzing him on current news events. He also spoke to the senior executive who had interviewed Shaun in the first interview and asked how he had gone—an action which was likely to have drawn attention to Shaun's candidacy and possibly been seen as something of an endorsement.

Getting a start

In considering how the interviewees got their start in journalism I intend to examine three factors—the qualities being sought by those responsible for the hiring, the skills and attributes the interviewees believe helped them to be successful and the possible influence of third parties. The latter point goes to the perception of journalism as a field where *who* you know can be more important than *what* you know. There has been little study of allegations of nepotism in journalism, but it is certainly acknowledged that it is a profession that runs in families. While not comprehensive, lists published by online news site Crikey suggest that the 'dynasties' in journalism are just as prominent as those seen in media owners, such as Rupert Murdoch.[80]

So what is it that makes an aspiring journalist stand out from the pack? In the 1970s reporters' guide *Reporting for Work,* Robert Coleman lists three qualities: inquisitiveness, the knack of self-expression and 'nous' or 'gumption'.[81] In a more modern context, VICE Australia lists the following skills for aspiring interns in 2015:

> **Skills:** Writing, editing, proofreading, research, basic social media (FB, Twitter, Tumblr), better than average with computers (able to navigate, or at least learn a back end)
>
> **Bonus' (but not necessities):** Basic Photoshop, photography, interviewing [82]

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[80] 'Australia's many media dynasties', *Crikey*, 21 March 2015, <http://www.crikey.com.au/2005/03/21/australias-many-media-dynasties/> accessed 19 August 2015 and 'Hundreds of journalistic couples', Crikey, 25 July 2015, <http://www.crikey.com.au/2005/07/25/hundreds-of-journalistic-couples/> accessed 19 August 2015.

[81] Coleman & HWT, p. 17.

[82] 'Editorial Internship at VICE Australia', <http://viceaustralia.com/media_files/Editorial_Internship_Melbourne_2014.pdf> accessed 18 August 2015.

While VICE is a multimedia platform rather than a dedicated print outlet, this description of basic skills highlights how journalism has changed in recent decades, particularly in regarding 'interviewing' skills as a bonus rather than a necessity. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, writing expertise was a prerequisite, but so too were the more intangible qualities of curiosity/inquisitiveness and what could be described as guts and common sense. Today, aspiring journalists must have all this and more. Even a newspaper journalist needs to have multimedia skills, a knowledge of social media and 'better than average' computer skills. Whereas previously photography was a completely separate skillset, it is now part of what is expected of the modern, multi-skilled journalist.

Neil Mitchell, the only one of the interviewees to rise to the rank of editor, remembers conducting many interviews for both cadets and qualified journalists at both *The Age* and *The Herald* in the 1980s. Somewhat surprisingly he recalled that a problem in hiring cadets was that the top applicants were mostly women and at times he had to 'discriminate positively for men'. Neil remembers the ratio of applicants to jobs as being about 100 to one and while he sought to pick the best and brightest he would also each year take a punt on 'someone who had probably just scraped through their exams, was a bit scruffy and I thought was probably a bit of a goer'. For Neil being able to demonstrate good writing was important but not the highest priority.

> No, I wasn't too worried about the writing ability of the cadets. Yeah I'd look at that, but … you're going to teach them and bring them along. I'd be more concerned about their passion for it, their commitment to it, their interest, their alertness, their connection with what was happening in the world, their brightness, their ability to think on their feet.

This description of attributes highlights what appears to be a key difference in the qualities sought by those who hire trainee journalists today compared to previous decades. Where once a young person could make his way in journalism on intellect, passion and sheer raw talent, today a requisite formal skillset is usually also required.

Looking at the interviewee group, the qualities that seem to have led to their success in securing a cadetship included an innate interest in news and newspapers, self confidence, a love of writing and communication, a demonstrated desire to be a journalist and, to varying degrees, first-hand knowledge of how journalists work. As was discussed in the previous section, the interviewees had all at some time had personal contact with working journalists who directly, or indirectly, assisted them in preparing for the task of securing a start in journalism. A number of interviewees employed in the 1970s and 1980s expressed the belief that being a Catholic, or being perceived to be a Catholic, had assisted them in getting a job with the Herald and Weekly Times, the publisher of the *Herald* and the *Sun News Pictorial* and later the *Herald-Sun*, and News Limited's *The Australian*. In describing his interview with *The Australian*'s Melbourne bureau chief in 1985 Ewin Hannan said it was as if a 'light bulb seemed to go off in his head' at the mention of Ewin going to Xavier College, a Catholic school.

> Subsequently I found that there used to be what they called the Catholic Mafia that ran through the Herald and Weekly Times and News Limited around journalism… I was also told later that they liked people with a working class background. While I wasn't particularly working class, Williamstown itself was a working class suburb so my view was that it was a combination of the Catholic education and supposed working class background (that) sort of gave me a leg up. There was a view that working class kids would work a lot harder than people with a more privileged upbringing and they would be able to more easily relate to people.

Similarly, Shaun Carney and Kerry O'Shea remember that a Catholic connection seemed to give them the edge in their interviews. Kerry joined the *Sun News-Pictorial* in 1976 and Shaun was hired as a cadet at *The Herald* in 1978. As he recalls:

> I could tell the Catholic thing and the footy[83] was working well for me. Even though I was not a Catholic, had not been raised (Catholic), my father had lapsed, basically as soon as he'd walked out of St Thomas's, but I didn't bother to tell Bill [Hoey] that… In fact I think there was a kind of sectarian split—very much sort of Masonic, Presbyterian intake over at *The Age* and heavily Catholic intake at the Herald and Weekly Times.

It is notable that those interviewees who were hired as cadets at Fairfax, publisher of *The Age* and the *Australian Financial Review* did not mention any sectarian interest in their interviews. Further research would need to be conducted to see how widespread sectarian influence was in the major Melbourne newspapers in the 1970s and 1980s and whether or not this influence continued.

While the high demand for cadetships provides a wide pool of talent for newspaper employers, from these interviews it appeared that although academic achievement was considered, it was not a critical determinant of success. A number of interviewees said they did not see their results as being particularly outstanding, although several of the group were clearly high achievers. The period of this study covers a transition from newspapers mostly selecting cadets straight from secondary school to the present where new entrants are virtually all graduates, with some having multiple degrees and/or a previous profession, such as Andrea Carson, who was a registered nurse before gaining a cadetship. Of the nine interviewees, three were recruited without tertiary qualifications, one of these as a copy boy, an administrative post that often leads on to a cadetship.[84] While most of the group secured their start with a metropolitan daily newspaper, three took an alternative path. Terry Brown did his training with a Melbourne suburban newspaper chain, Andrea Carson spent six months with the regional newspaper the *Colac Herald* (although she was not in any training program and not officially a

[83] Shaun Carney's uncle Jack Carney played Australian Rules football for Carlton Football Club.

[84] The copy boy position is now known as an editorial assistant, while entry-level journalists are now generally known as trainees rather than cadets.

cadet) and Ben Schneiders, the only one to have started journalism in the Internet era, worked for a finance news website before getting a cadetship with *The Australian Financial Review*.

A more contentious issue is that of the influence of third parties. As discussed earlier, the interviews suggest that knowing a journalist can be extremely useful in preparing a young person for the cadet interview process and while there was little evidence of direct or improper influence, there were suggestions that being associated with respected journalists was seen as a favourable attribute. Nicholas Way recalls that in a 'small town' like Hobart it was definitely an advantage for him that he was known by a number of senior journalists. He said he was interviewed one-on-one while other candidates attended group interviews and he walked away from his interview feeling extremely confident, that he 'had a lot of people pulling for me'.

One of Kerry O'Shea's connections to journalism was through her father, a journalist at several newspapers including the Melbourne *Herald*. Kerry's contact with her father, however, was limited to her early years before her parents divorced. An alcoholic, Kerry's father was neither a journalistic role model nor someone who encouraged her ambitions. He was, however, still an influence due to what has been described as the 'kinship' of journalists. Consider the following extract from the HWT reporters' guide and then Kerry's memory of the influence her father may have had on her start in journalism in 1976.

> The young reporter soon finds there is an element of kinship among journalists, not only among those from his own paper but among his competitors as well. This is another of the job's enjoyable features. It is true that we are slightly within the category of a "race apart". Journalists tend to like the company of other journalists, and when a few are gathered together socially the talk almost invariably turns to 'shop'.[85]
>
> *Reporting for Work*

[85] Coleman & HWT, p.14.

> The thing I remember most, Bill Hoey was a pretty strong Catholic so it was in my favour that I'd been to Presentation College at Windsor. I think it also helped that my father had been on *The Herald*. I don't think he knew him, but other people at the newspaper did.
>
> *Kerry O'Shea*

In exploring the issue of nepotism in the corporate world in the 21st Century, independent journalist Gideon Haigh notes that occupational tradition is not the same as nepotism.[86] A young person aspiring to the same occupation as their parent or relative is not the same as expecting—and receiving—preferential treatment on the basis of a familial connection. Haigh's argument that the rise of the 'brand' in modern society may be contributing to a 'new nepotism', although not specifically directed at journalists, raises some interesting issues when applied to journalists today.[87] Haigh notes that brand is 'indicative of known quality and quantity' and that a known family name 'not only instils confidence but provides a ready-made benchmark for comparison' as well as a certain 'fascination'. In an era of journalist-as-celebrity and a move towards a greater degree of opinion over straight news reporting, it seems increasingly likely that carrying the family name of a famous journalist could be an advantage to an aspiring reporter.

In examining the personal backgrounds of the interviewees from early family life to aspiring cub reporter several common themes emerge. Members of this group shared several character traits and values from an early age that either helped forge their interest in journalism or at least denoted an aptitude for a career in journalism. Getting that all-important start in journalism was generally a matter of persistence and determination but serendipity at times also played a part; a chance meeting with an established journalist or a family association that later proved of interest to a particular recruiter. In the next chapter I explore the working lives of

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[86] Gideon Haigh, 'Building the Family Brand: [Paper in: Webs of Power, Schultz, Julianne (ed.).]', *Griffith Review*, 2004, p. 109.

[87] Ibid, p 91.

the interviewees and the challenges they faced in the changing times of 1975 to 2015.

Chapter 3: Working as a journalist

> A professional life tends to be lived 'in the moment' with little time for reflection or examination of contexts, historical or otherwise.[88]
>
> *Jane Chapman & Nick Nuttall*

In the deadline-driven world of journalism where success is measured by production speed and getting the story first it may seem natural that a reporter's life is lived 'in the moment'. If there is time to contemplate beyond the here and now a journalist's thoughts may turn to optimism or concern about the future or a nostalgic nod to the last 'golden age'. Rarely, however, is consideration given to a full journalistic life, the context in which it is lived and the lessons that may be learned. In their book *Journalism Today: A Themed History*, Jane Chapman and Nick Nuttall warn against viewing journalism history too narrowly and in particular to avoid entrenched viewpoints such as the contrary 'gloom and doom' and 'inevitable march of progress' constructs. Commenting on the current speculation over the future of journalism in a period of rapid technological change, they suggest it is helpful to remember the 'continuities in media heritage', the constant factors and the ongoing themes.[89] It follows, therefore, that in order to assess current changes affecting journalism practice, it is necessary to appreciate the impact of previous changes.

In this chapter I examine the reflections of the nine interviewees about their experiences over the years 1975 to 2015 in newspaper journalism. While they had varied journalistic careers, the focus in this research is mainly on their experiences in reporting and in the print media, rather than sub-editing or management or with other media platforms. The period 1975 to 2015 is marked by dramatic waves of technological change including computerisation, mobile communication technology and the Internet. There was also, however, significant change associated with professional development and journalism culture—both social

[88] Chapman & Nuttall, pp. 105-106, 113-114.

[89] Ibid pp. 5-6.

and organisational. In analysing these reflections I seek to identify some of the constant factors and ongoing themes for journalism history. I look at the types of changes that have presented the greatest challenges, the factors in adapting to change and the broader contexts in which those changes take place. Finally, I consider how those change experiences may have influenced decisions to leave or remain in newspapers and journalism.

Figure 3.1: Examples of technology used by Australian journalists 1975-2015

Images from top left: (1) manual typewriter; (2) corded rotary phone; (3) floppy disks; (4) pay phone; (5) acoustic coupler; (6) early laptop computer; (7) early mobile phone; (8) microcassette recorder; (9) smart phone.

Training & career pathways

The early experiences of the interviewees as cadets/trainees contributed to the formation of their identity as journalists. The colleagues and mentors who helped them, the training program they received and the culture that surrounded them reinforced values they would take through their career. For the older interviewees the emphasis was on accuracy and straightforward, but engaging storytelling, but for the younger interviewees there was a big focus on speed, being first with the story and *interpreting* what they saw. Training regimes varied widely across the interviewees. Some had the complete 'sink or swim' experience receiving virtually no formal training while others looked back with appreciation at training programs that included workshops, regular feedback on stories, mentoring and lectures from senior specialist reporters and external speakers, rotation across specialist rounds and access to tertiary education. Overall, there was little uniformity in the training provided at the cadetship or traineeship stage and of the nine interviewees, only two completed dedicated tertiary journalism studies. For some there was virtually no formal training other than 'on the job' and shorthand classes. It did not necessarily follow that the more 'serious' the newspaper the more comprehensive the training. The cadetship program at the *Sun News Pictorial* in the 1970s outlined by Kerry O'Shea was one of the most rigorous and multifaceted described by the interviewees.

In terms of ongoing training, the most significant factor described by the interviewees was mentoring and role models. The journalists described learning on the job, but they also recounted stories of learning from other journalists—both those they worked with and those they observed within and outside their own organisation. Andrea Carson admitted to an element of 'hero worship' when she joined *The Age* and met some of the journalists she had been reading 'for years and years and years'. Terry Brown and Neil Mitchell said they were influenced by some of the great editors they had worked underneath. All of the interviewees talked about great journalists they admired or had learned from, particularly those, such as Andrea Carson and Susie O'Brien, who had worked under a senior

reporter on a specialised round. Many also talked of learning from senior sub-editors and photographers.

One of the consequences of the reduction in journalist numbers in major newspapers has been the limited capacity to have more than one journalist on each specialist round. Yet the evidence in the interviews undertaken for this study suggest that learning from a more senior specialist reporter is one of the most enlightening training experiences a journalist can have. Andrea Carson worked on the industrial round for *The Age* in the early 1990s under experienced industrial and political reporter Paul Robinson. She said they constantly talked about stories and he would brief her on some of the historical context that was important for understanding issues and the motives of some contacts. She said this period contrasted markedly with the time immediately prior when she first went on to the round and the senior reporter assigned to her suddenly left the newspaper.

> So it was just me for about five or six weeks I think and it was horrible because I had no idea about who was who. I had people ringing me up in secret tones telling me this was the best story and they were handing it to me because I was the industrial relations reporter at *The Age*. I had no idea what people's motives were. I didn't know how they fitted into things.

The old adage of 'sink or swim' is often raised in relation to journalism, yet this research suggests that journalists of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s may have been better supported with mentors than journalists in more recent years. This was due in large part to the fact that the journalists in this study worked in large newsrooms with access to many experienced staff with different specialist knowledge and expertise. With recent mass redundancies resulting in smaller print newsrooms and the growth of small, niche online publications, access to in-house mentors is consequently more difficult. Janet Fulton in examining mentoring in journalism suggests that with the increase in fluidity in the

journalistic workforce mentoring may need to take place outside the workplace rather under the in-house model.[90]

Few of the interviewees talked of any formal mid-career training, other than that associated with technological change, such as video presenting. This interest in specific job skills associated with new technology is consistent with the findings of a 2014 report by Lars Willnat and David Weaver of Indiana University. In their report on a survey of 1080 US journalists, Willnat and Weaver found that the additional training most sought after by journalists was video shooting and editing (30.5 per cent) with the least sought after knowledge of world affairs 8.6 per cent).[91] This survey was not restricted to print journalists but gives an indication of the growing interest amongst journalists in multimedia skills. The change is likely due to the increasing use of multimedia platforms in the news media and the understandable desire of journalists to make themselves more employable by developing multimedia skillsets. It may also, however, reflect a broader cultural change, in which a new generation of aspiring journalists is more comfortable with telling stories in a range of platforms rather than just through words and still images. Although the Internet makes it much easier for journalists today to engage in relevant short courses at low or no cost, none of the interviewees referred to this type of training.

[90] Janet Fulton, 'Mentoring and Australian Journalism', *Australian Journalism Review*, vol. 36 no. 1, 2014, p. 53.

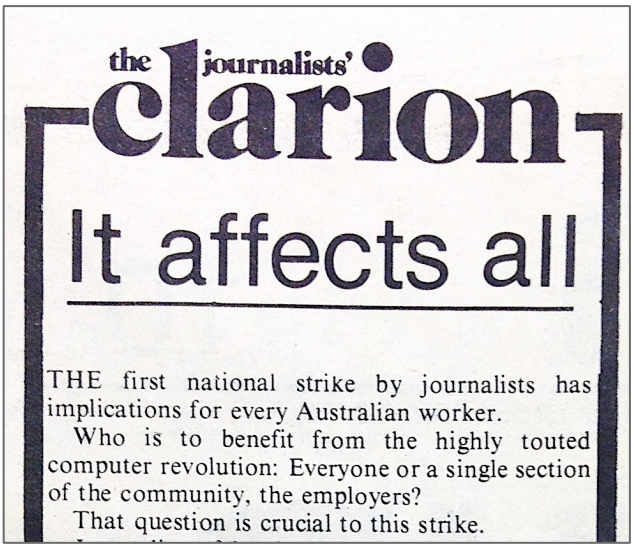
[91] Lars Willnat and David H Weaver, 'The American Journalist in the Digital Age: Key Findings', School of Journalism, Indiana University, Bloomington, 2014, p23 <http://archive.news.indiana.edu/releases/iu/2014/05/2013-american-journalist-key-findings.pdf > accessed 2 November 2016.

Technology

> To use machines, which the newspaper owners hope, will reap them millions of dollars, journalists must acquire extra skills and we ask only a fair share of the cake.[92]
>
> *Ken Haley of The Age, in The Journalists' Clarion, 1980*

In 1980 Australian journalists staged the first, and to date only, national journalists strike. The issue was the introduction of visual display terminals (VDTs)—basically, computers—replacing typewriters and copy paper. The technology was part of the change in newspaper production from 'hot metal' to 'cold metal'[93] with the big benefit for newspaper owners being that the process resulted in many of the printing jobs becoming redundant. Journalist jobs were not threatened but journalists were required to skill-up for the new technology and to take over some of the checking and layout functions previously handled by production staff. Like staff in other industries, journalists wanted to be compensated financially for the change and the new skills acquired. Compared to the present day, it was a time of relatively high trade union membership both across the Australian workforce generally[94] and in print journalism

Figure 3.2: Editorial excerpt from (Victoria) vol. 1, no.1


the journalists' clarion

It affects all

THE first national strike by journalists has implications for every Australian worker.

Who is to benefit from the highly touted computer revolution: Everyone or a single section of the community, the employers?

That question is crucial to this strike.

[92] Ken Haley, 'Why we went out on strike', in *The Journalists' Clarion*, Australian Journalists Association (Victorian Branch), vol. 1 no. 1, 1980, p. 3.

[93] Cold metal production refers to the introduction of phototypesetting, a technology that replaced hot metal typesetting, which used molten lead.

[94] Trade union membership as a proportion of Australian employees (in connection with their main job) declined from 51 per cent in 1976 to 17 per cent in 2013. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics cat. nos. 6310.0, 6323.0 and 6325.0.

in particular.[95] Although journalists could hardly be described as the most militant sector of the workforce, this issue prompted an unprecedented response—the first national journalists' strike, lasting about a month. The trigger was the sacking of 29 journalists who refused to use the new technology until a pay deal was reached—28 were sub-editors employed by Rupert Murdoch's *The Australian* in Sydney with the 29th employed by Fairfax's *Sydney Morning Herald*. The quotation at the start of this section was taken from the first Victorian issue of the union-produced strike paper known as *The Journalists' Clarion*.[96] Today it is hard to imagine journalists either using the language expressed in *The Clarion* or going on strike over technological change. *The Clarion* was also unusual in that it featured contributions by many high-profile senior journalists from competing mastheads in an act of solidarity. If this strike set the high water mark for journalistic outrage about change, it is worth looking at how the interviewees involved—and those not involved—regard the change and their reflection on it today.

[95] Henningham, 'Australian Journalists' Professional and Ethical Values', p. 209 notes that heavy unionisation in Australian journalism began to decline from the early 1990s as sectors of industry were pressured to take up contractual arrangements. According to the 2012-13 Hanusch study, p.42, by the early 2010s only about one-third of recent entrants chose to join a professional association.

[96] The Australian Journalists' Association produced the strike paper *The Clarion* in Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Sydney during the 1980 journalists' strike.

Figure 3.3: Tear sheet of the strike paper *The Journalists' Clarion* (Vic) Vol. 1, No. 2

the journalists' clarion 10c

The strike newspaper of the Australian Journalists' Association (Victorian Branch) Vol.1 Number 2

Published by the Australian Journalists Association (Vic Branch) Editorial: Phone 67 1043

VIDEO WAR

More strife: unions

By MICHAEL GORDON of the Age

THE Alley decision on the use of video display terminals could lead to industrial unrest in several industries, a group of union leaders warned yesterday.

Introduction of Visual Display Terminals (VDTs)

Those interviewees involved in the 1980 journalists' strike told of the determination of the strikers, of going to meetings and the pub afterward, of camaraderie and militance, but also hardship through loss of income. Kerry O'Shea was in her early 20s and working on the industrial relations round for the *Sun News Pictorial* at the time. She recalled the unfairness she and many other journalists felt about what they considered to be the reluctance of employers to adequately compensate journalists for significant technological change.

> A month's a very long time. We didn't have a lot else to do apart from put a newspaper out, party and march the streets. We used to have meetings at Nicholas Hall where we'd debate whether or not we'd go back to work… Yeah I was pretty active in that strike.

Nicholas Way, who was working in Sydney at the time, also remembers going to the meetings, but with a young family to support it was not an easy time. To make ends meet he secured work in a zipper factory and sold his share in a boat he owned with friends.

Looking back on the dispute, none of the interviewees could imagine such a long strike occurring with journalists again, partly because of reduced unionisation rates in journalism and also workplace changes that made it easier to replace striking journalists. Although the striking journalists achieved increased pay and more annual holidays, Kerry observed that the dispute might well have had the unintended consequences of undermining the journalists' industrial power and threatening their jobs in the long term.

> Unfortunately what happened is the people who stayed behind, the proprietors, who were on the whole ex-journalists, did a pretty good job of getting the papers out and to the untrained eye it didn't look that much different from the newspaper that we produced. The problem was that once we all came back to work after a month, they realised they could put it out with a lot fewer resources. I think the introduction of that technology saw the gradual decline in journalists' jobs.

The change to cold-metal production with the introduction of VDTs for journalists took place progressively throughout the Australian newspaper industry over a number of years. Those in specialist rounds or bureaus outside of head office generally used typewriters longer. Most of the interviewees who experienced the transition reflected on it as a positive and not particularly difficult change. For Shaun Carney the main difference was it was easier for reporters to produce 'clean copy'.

> That had always been a problem, that you had to type your stuff in pretty quickly and the subs didn't like having dirty copy full of x's and cross-outs and all that sort of stuff… Things were smoother and there

were fewer mistakes, but it was just a production issue, nothing to do with getting your stories done more quickly.

Kerry O'Shea experienced the change in the early 1980s when she went from a hot-metal environment at *The Sun* to a new job at the *Australian Financial Review's* Melbourne bureau, which was moving to the new system. While the transition was not all that difficult for Kerry in her role with the *Australian Financial Review* (*AFR*) as a reporter in Melbourne, she did experience problems when she moved with the newspaper to its head office in Sydney.

> I was putting out a weekly section called 'Money Life' and on the same night there was a deadline for the *Sydney Morning Herald's* classified advertising section, and the system would frequently crash due to over-demand on it. This siren used to go through the building and it would go 'Woo-woo-woo' and you all knew you had about five minutes to save your copy or it would all be lost…

Nicholas Way, who at that time was working as a sub-editor in Sydney with a number of news organisations including Australian Associated Press and the *AFR,* also remembered the technology problems at Fairfax. He described the Fairfax computer system as the '*worst* computer system known to mankind' and said it was the subject of frequent wildcat strikes.

The introduction of computer technology is now seen as a milestone technological change in the workplace. While there was no doubt anger at the time of introduction and some fear about change, the above interview excerpts indicate that *upon reflection* these journalists saw the introduction of VDTs as not especially difficult, even when the technology was problematic. What is significant about these accounts is not so much the protests over the new technology but the *persistence* shown by the journalists dealing with it. In these more militant times, the journalists were prepared to use industrial tactics to put pressure on

management to fix the problems. The protests were not so much about the new technologies, but the efficacy of those technologies.

Portable recorders and the demise of shorthand

Of all the changes in technology, training and work practice in this period of study one of the most profound is the move away from shorthand to using a tape recorder or digital recorder. This is not just a technology change but a training change as well. Between 1975 and 2015 the length of cadetships changed from an average three to four years to one year as newspapers started recruiting tertiary graduates in preference to school leavers. It is difficult to become proficient in shorthand in the span of a year, the usual time for a graduate cadetship or traineeship.

At first glance it might seem that greater accuracy can be achieved by using a digital device. However, the practicalities of tape recorders and digital recorders mean that it can be very time consuming to extract quotes from a long interview. Ben Schneiders described how his lack of shorthand meant that he had to learn other skills: the ability to paraphrase and to focus on the most important parts of an interview. Terry Brown highlighted the problems of verbatim quotes saying that what someone says might sound all right, but read 'like crap'. He said that tape recorders 'just seemed to slow things down too much' and he preferred to rely on broken quotes. These comments highlight the fact that technological change is not always more efficient than the practices it replaces.

The mobile office

> The Age building was in Collins Street then … it had a wall full of booths with old phones in it. So if you didn't have a phone on your desk you could go over there and, if they rang, people were decided to answer them. As the cadet, you had to answer them.
>
> *Neil Mitchell*

In the 1970s journalists were probably working outside of the office more than in it, conducting interviews in the field and either retuning to the office to file their

stories or dictating to a copytaker over the telephone. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, technology providing answering machines, laptops and mobile phones allowed journalists to work in a way that was distant from the main office but did not rely on other staff. Instead of a reporter in the field finding a telephone, calling a copytaker in the main office and dictating the story, the reporter could write on a laptop and send the story directly through the telephone line by means of a device known as an acoustic coupler.[97] On a round where there might be several competing newspapers in the same office space, there no longer was a risk of a competitor picking up your call. But this was only the start of the mobile office. Ultimately technology would deliver products that allowed a journalist to research an article, take calls and file a story from a laptop or smart phone from home or a café without ever setting foot in the newspaper office.

As frustrating as it may seem today to find a public phone, rummage for change and then dictate a story to another person, several interviewees remember the practice fondly and as a positive skill-building experience. Working for an afternoon newspaper, *The Herald*, in the late 1970s Shaun Carney was frequently required to file quickly, on deadline, remotely from the office.

> It was *great*. It was *fantastic*. Because you would formulate the story and then you'd go to a phone box and you'd file it. Or later when I was an industrial reporter, you might type it up, but you might not. You had the facts and they were in your notebook and you might have marked up a few of them. You might have written out the first part. Then you'd get on the phone… You'd file it, and the story would come into place. So you were reciting the story and creating it in real time. Fantastic discipline. I found it still works for me now as a columnist—helps me in sort of ordering the story.

The ability to assemble a story mentally, often under pressure, is one known to television and radio reporters but probably something of a lost art now for

[97] An acoustic coupler was a device that fitted to the handset of corded telephone at one end and a laptop computer at the other, providing for the transmission of a computer file over the telephone line. See Figure 3.1.

newspaper reporters. It takes time and practice to develop such a skill. Newspaper reporters in a multimedia environment may yet have to re-learn this skill.

Advances in communications technology in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s not only provided journalists with the means of filing their stories directly into their organisation's computer network, but also provided a means of contacting senior staff in head office more easily and regularly. This assisted a journalist with tasks such as 'selling' their story to the chief of staff or news editor, arranging for a photographer or securing information in preparation for an in-the-field interview, but it also marked the start of a new pressure—being constantly on call. Several interviewees talked positively about being located in an office remote from head office, either on a round or at a bureau, such as a State bureau of a national news organisation, or in the field on assignment. These are times they describe as being 'fun', of having the freedom to approach stories in an independent way, and mix socially with colleagues from other news organisations or with contacts. Terry Brown reflected that the introduction of new technology in the late 1980s, early 1990s took the fun out of regional trips. Before mobile phones and laptops, he would go to a regional centre, spend two-to-three days looking for stories and then come back to the office at the end of the trip to write.

> It meant that if you went up to Gippsland for three days or something you weren't working all day, going back to the room, filing your story, getting it all done by 8:30 at night or whatever, then trying to find something to eat, then hitting the hay. You'd sort of knock off 5 o'clock, go back, freshen up in your motel, go out for a drink, talk to contacts, sort of find some more yarns for tomorrow, that sort of thing. It wasn't just the 'feed it through straight away' stuff. And that took all the fun out of those sorts of trips. You'd be riding in the car, you'd be getting carsick because they wanted you to file something which was really an anytime story.

Ewin Hannan offered another perspective: the advantage of advanced communication technology in covering a complex, high-profile story and

providing more—rather than less—opportunities for face-to-face contact. Ewin compared covering the 1989 national pilots dispute to covering the 1998 national waterfront dispute.

> There was a capacity to file stories more regularly, update stories. We used mobile technology because obviously you could spend a lot more time down at the wharves and the waterfront. You had a laptop computer. You had a mobile phone. So there was no need really to be in the office if you didn't want to be. Obviously back in '89 that was a harder thing to do because of the technology you had to rely on: ringing up from a phone box or a car phone from the photographer's car, which was like an old CB radio, where people had beepers and that's how you communicated with the office, and a lot of 20-cent coins.

These experiences show that greater mobility achieved through technological change can provide advantages for journalists in terms of filing directly into their organisation's computer system from a remote location, maintaining contact with head office and keeping in contact with sources, but these changes also come with extra pressures. Being constantly on call can mean compressed deadlines and the potential for more managerial interference in the way the journalist wants to investigate their story. Several interviewees observed that as technology was introduced to make work practices more effective, deadlines seemed to get earlier. Some interviewees reflected on their preference for simpler times, but they did not suggest they had put up any opposition to the introduction of such technologies.

The Internet era

While every major technological change has an impact for journalistic work, the introduction of the Internet era, based on this study, appears to be the most significant change yet.[98] Online information is quicker to access and vastly more extensive than traditional sources in newspaper libraries and from conducting interviews. It is much easier to disseminate news quickly and there is a closer, more interactive relationship with readers through social media. The interviewees described additional pressures from multiple deadlines and filing for different media platforms as well as increased risks including online trolling and filing directly online without sub-editor or legal checks. One interviewee also detailed how advances in telephony and the use of laptops had resulted in a newsroom practice known as 'hot-desking', where journalists carried their tools of trade in a box from desk to desk.

Of the nine interviewees, only one, Ben Schneiders, started in journalism in the Internet era. Comparing his early experiences to the other interviewees there are some marked differences as well as some noteworthy similarities. Unlike the others, Ben's first job in journalism (2001) was on a news website rather than a print publication, thus reflecting a broadening of the pathways to the profession. His first impressions of working in a newsroom were not of typewriters and shouting, as older interviewees described, but a 'reasonably quiet' open-plan office akin to that of any modern-day office worker. The days of the long lunch were over and communication was much more about telephone and email than face-to-face contact. While Ben shared the concerns of the other interviewees about the 'challenging' economics of the newspaper industry, continuing job losses and the prospect of securing high-paid positions, he also talked of 'new opportunities' including the chance to make a mark in areas that had become under-reported due to contracting newsrooms. He talked enthusiastically about how a story could 'take-off' on social media, opening up a journalist's work to a much wider

[98] As discussed above, I define the Internet era, as it pertains to journalists, as that period when journalists began to regularly use email communication and Internet-based research as essential work tools—from about the late 1990s. This period paved the way for other related developments such as the advent of social media and advances in mobile communications technology.

audience, and how there were new opportunities for developing a range of digital skills, particularly in video. This contrasted with the closing comments of several older interviewees who said they 'felt sorry' for young people pursuing a career in journalism today. They believed journalism was not as much fun and was generally lower paid than previously compared to the Australian workforce. Journalism may in fact be less fun than in the past or these comments may reflect a degree of nostalgia. Another factor at play may be the freedom and excitement associated with early career and early adulthood—in any era.

Susie O'Brien is one of those who has made the most of the opportunities available through the technology of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Of all the interviewees she is the epitome of the Internet-era newspaper journalist: she writes opinion, is a high profile part of her employer's marketing, engages in social media, makes guest appearances on television and is the only interviewee to regularly work from home (a flexible work practice she fought for rather than one being freely offered by her employer). With a doctorate in feminist studies, she is also highly skilled in using online sources for research. This success, however, has been hard-won with Susie admitting that she had deliberately sought to 'future-proof herself'.

Success as a high-profile journalist in the Internet era can come with additional risks. For Susie, one of the challenges was dealing with the problem of online trolling, particularly in response to her blog.

> They call me a hypocrite a lot. No, I'm not allowed to say that dogs shouldn't be put down because I had an abortion 25 years ago. You know, that sort of stuff, they're just obsessed with that. Whatever, I couldn't care less. What I have found confronting is when some of the feminists have gone [for] me, when they disagreed, because they can be quite brutal…

Susie said she generally did not take negative and abusive comments personally and would probably be more concerned if she was not getting any online

comments. She saw the problem of trolling as just 'part of the job'. But should it be? In 2016 *The Guardian* commissioned research into the 70 million comments left on its website since 2006 and discovered that female writers were much more likely to be the target of abuse and trolling than male writers. Of the 10 most abused writers eight were women, and the two men were black. The 10 least abused were all men.[99] Susie may be tougher than many female journalists, but there does seem to be an organisational lack of support for women writers.

Another risk inherent in the trend towards journalists being required, or at least encouraged, to engage in social media is the prospect of increased workloads due to the task of moderation and, where necessary, responding to comments. Susie's situation with online trolling was no doubt made more difficult by the fact that she received no assistance in moderating the comments posted to her blog. Conducting the moderation role alone not only required a significant amount of work but also exposed her to the worst of the negative comments. Significantly, another male columnist on the *Herald Sun* was not expected to moderate comments on his blog and received assistance in this regard.

The security of digital information and the potential for access to vast quantities of sensitive information through leaks or illegal hacking is another minefield for journalists in the Internet era. Controversy over the actions of WikiLeaks and former Central Intelligence Agency employee Edward Snowden highlights the issues journalists face in this situation. While the media have always had to be careful with confidential information, modern technology not only provides the means to access a greater range of information, but also to distribute it to a much more extensive audience. More than ever journalists must be careful to ensure they are on solid legal and ethical grounds when they divulge sensitive confidential information. Ben Schneiders was one of three journalists from *The Age* newspaper who in 2010 were the subject of police raids, an investigation and subsequent court proceedings for illegally accessing a restricted electoral database

[99] Becky Gardiner et. al., 'The dark side of Guardian comments', in *The Guardian*, 12 April 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/12/the-dark-side-of-guardian-comments> accessed 22 October 2016.

held by the Australian Labor Party. The three ultimately admitted guilt and were ordered to pay a $500 fine and publish a written apology. In the interview for this study, Ben described this time as a 'pretty stressful two or three years' but said he learned lessons from it, not just in terms of the legal risks of accessing confidential information but also in terms of securely holding confidential information on electronic devices.

> You delete a text message or you delete an email—the smartphones, iPads, are mini computers and on their hard drives all this information is retrievable via the telco companies… So all of that information where people have spoken to you in confidence can potentially be accessed by the authorities—in this case they had a boring discussion with union officials and employers, not what they were looking for, but that was all they were able to dig up. I think it's a real vulnerability for journalists now the security of their communications.

Change literature suggests that the commitment of employees is one of the key factors in successfully implementing change in the workplace.[100] The interviewees in this study indicated that while they were generally prepared to try new things such as mobile technology or social media they needed to be convinced of the benefit. Ewin Hannan, for example, said he had decided not to write a blog because he would prefer to keep his stories and commentary for the newspaper. Ben Schneiders said he had used iPads for filing out of the office, but in more recent times had used a laptop or his smartphone because he found them easier. Susie O'Brien said she would use Twitter strategically to promote her columns but unlike some other journalists she had observed, was not prepared to tweet constantly. Where management had mandated technological change, such as in the implementation of VDTs and other devices for filing stories, the interviewees

[100] Lynne Herscovitch and John P. Meyer, 'Commitment to Organizational Change: Extension of a Three-Component model', in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 87 no. 3, 2002, p. 474; George B Cunningham, 'The relationships among commitment to change, coping with change, and turnover intentions', in *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 15 no. 1, 2006, pp. 29-45.

indicated they supported such change so long as it was effective, did not interfere in the work of reporting and any financial benefits were shared with staff. The comments from the interviewees indicate that agency is particularly important in securing the success of technological change. Journalists need to be convinced that new technology will deliver a better outcome for both their work and their readers.

Workplace culture

> I think I was so enthusiastic about being a newspaper journalist and so committed to succeeding, that is being accepted, that I didn't take a contrary view of newspapers for quite a long time. I basically drank the Kool-Aid. So I absorbed all the news values so that within a few months when I was called to knock on the door of a family who'd lost someone in an accident, merely to get some sort of heartrending story and get a picture, I didn't think this is unnecessary or a bad thing. I just thought: 'This is what we do, it's my job.'

Shaun Carney's description of his early years on *The Herald* in Melbourne in the late 1970s captures the potent nature of the culture of a large newspaper office at that time. It is fast-paced, competitive, exciting and even somewhat romantic. Add to that a heavy drinking tradition, smoking in the office and frequent socialising with colleagues and contacts and you have the makings of a Hollywood movie. The older interviewees talked nostalgically about the fun they experienced during this time. Part of that nostalgia seems to be related to a perception of freedom and adventure (values identified in the previous chapter), as well as a sense of community—being part of a privileged club. While there has been considerable scholarly focus on the impact of technological change in newspaper journalism[101], in this section I look at some of the key changes affecting workplace culture.

The way journalists work is influenced by many factors including their training on and off the job, their professional and personal experiences, contact with peers and mentors, the legal and regulatory regimes of the time, societal norms and the values they hold. These factors could probably be attributed to any occupation, but in the study of journalism there are a few factors particularly worth considering. Firstly, journalists have a strong sense of identity—what it means to be a journalist, the motivations and responsibilities. Secondly, journalists face the

[101] As cited earlier, footnote 2.

challenge of balancing public duty against commercial reality and thirdly, as indicated in the previous section, they face the prospect of technological change dramatically affecting their work practices, industry and job prospects.

Identity

Journalists throughout history have demonstrated a powerful sense of collective identity. In looking at the history of journalism Wolfgang Donsbach identifies three traditions of journalistic identity: the subjective tradition—advocating personal opinions and causes; the service tradition where journalistic responsibility is to the public and objective truth; and the commercial tradition where the key value is what sells.[102] Each of these traditions have operated at various times, in various locations and in different combinations, but it is fair to say that the public service tradition and increasingly, the commercial tradition have been the dominant traditions in Australia and the Anglosphere generally. Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel offer another perspective. They say that while the face of journalism may have changed over years, decades and even centuries, the defining purpose of journalism as understood by journalists and the public has remained 'consistent and enduring'. Put simply: 'The primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing.' This is what makes journalism different from other forms of news: there is an obligation to truth and independence, a discipline of verification and a responsibility to exercising conscience.[103] Additionally, this 'ideal and practice of public duty' as Denis Cryle argues, has historically provided grounds for considering journalism as a profession.[104]

While several interviewees did acknowledge the commercial realities of the newspaper business, particularly in the 2010s, it was more in the vein of a 'necessary evil' rather than a career driver. Their reflections on journalism and

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[102] Wolfgang Donsbach, 'Journalists and Their Professional Identities', in *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism*, Routledge, London, 2012, pp. 38–41.

[103] Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, 1st rev. ed., Three Rivers Press, New York, 2007, pp. 5-6, 12.

[104] Cryle, p.176.

what it meant to be a journalist were more commonly about standards and values—engaging writing; uncovering the truth; being fair; meeting important and fascinating people; the privilege of the work. Getting the story first was also a driver, which could be described as commercial, but appeared more likely to be part of the competitive nature of journalism. Somewhat surprisingly, no interviewee mentioned the classic journalism phrase of the 'public's right to know' as a factor in their being a journalist, although Neil Mitchell, who has been a radio talk show host for many years, said that he believed journalists had a duty to 'fight for people without defenders, without a voice'. These values are consistent with the five ideal-typical values identified by Mark Deuze, which he says give legitimacy and credibility to the work reporters and editors do: public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics.[105] The fact that the interviewees did not highlight public service may be due to the fact that the interview focussed on their personal experience rather than the purpose of journalism as a whole.

Analysis of the early years of each interviewee also indicates that achievement and quality are core values. For the older interviewees in particular, this was manifested in the principle of accuracy (ensuring facts and spellings were correct) and was fundamental to their identity as a journalist. A number described how they had been taught this early in their career and how it no longer seemed to be as important to young journalists. Kerry O'Shea talked of learning accuracy as a cadet in the 1970s:

> You were terrified of the chief sub because if they called you over to check something in your copy you were just living in fear and hoped that you knew the answer … They told you very early on that if you got people's names misspelled, people wouldn't trust the rest of your story.

For these interviewees accuracy was an institutional value, which they learned in the impressionable early years of their journalistic life. Comments by Ewin

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[105] Mark Deuze, 'Technology and the Individual Journalist', *The Changing Faces of Journalism: Tabloidization, Technology and Truthiness*, Barbie Zelizer ed., Routledge, London, New York, 2009, p. 91.

Hannan, however, indicate that accuracy can also be a late career individual goal reflecting a journalist with the confidence and experience to aspire to their best work.

> I'm really increasingly conscious of the need to be completely accurate in the way I do things. These days, if necessary, I will regularly, after I've interviewed someone and distilled the quotes I'm using for the newspaper I will ring that person back and tell them what I'm writing in advance. Previously I might not do that. I might say I don't need to do that; I was confident of what I'm doing, but if it's something complex and nuanced and I'm now more conscious of it being a sensitive issue, so I was striving for accuracy. But also I want to have an ongoing relationship with people and trying to be balanced.

Accuracy is an aspirational goal, whether or not it can be achieved in practice, and is related to the deeper journalistic quest for 'truth'. Peter Dahlgren describes the 'commitment to truth' as part of the 'bedrock' of journalism, but one beset by tensions.[106] While spelling someone's name correctly is straightforward, portraying the 'truth' of a situation can be extremely difficult with competing facts and judgments to be made about the weight to give to certain interpretations. In describing his own commitment to accuracy and the implied goal of 'truthful' reporting, Ewin observed that with increasing deadline pressures and limited time to produce stories, there was greater potential for less experienced reporters to make mistakes. He added that he did not believe any reporter wanted to publish a story that was wrong.

Identity, however, is also a product of influences from personal life—a person's interests and passions, their family and friends. The concept of 'news value', for example, is one area where personal influences, play a part for a journalist. The interviewees generally described news as what was interesting and what mattered

[106] Peter Dahlgren, 'The Troubling Evolution of Journalism', in *The Changing Faces of Journalism: Tabloidization, Technology and Truthiness*, Barbie Zelizer ed., Routledge, London, New York, 2009, pp. 156-157.

to their readers. Their use of the word 'interesting', I took to mean stories and subjects that were engaging and popular, caught the imagination, and were relevant to readers. But how does a journalist know what is interesting to readers? That view is informed by reader feedback, what sells, what fellow journalists think is news, what management think is news, but significantly, also what a reporter's private circle of friends and family think is news. For Shaun Carney working out the best way to write a story was a principle underpinned by personal experience—imagining he was writing for his father.

> I don't mean a letter to Dad. I mean whenever I wrote a story I would think of him sitting in his armchair at home where you could push the little back up and the foot rest would come up … He was a guy who had an intermediate boilermaker certificate and then moved into a low-level white collar job, proud of the fact he'd paid for his home. Suburban life, car, go camping for your holiday in the summer. Loved beer. I thought of that person, how can I communicate with that person and hold their attention for as long as the story takes. So that was a very, very big influence on me and continues to be.

Consider also the following list offered by Nicholas Way in describing what makes a good editor: ideas, challenging, loyal to staff and encouraging. These comments could just as easily have been describing a parent or a teacher and as such reflect his personal as well as professional values.

The oral history approach used in this research means that it is possible to compare what the interviewees expected journalism to be with the reality they found and their later reflection on what it meant to them to be a journalist. In the previous chapter I suggested that the values of the aspiring journalists that stood out in the interviewees were achievement, enthusiasm/passion and humour/fun. These values were certainly present in their descriptions of their introduction to journalism as well as their career reflections. In addition the interviewees reflecting on their careers talked of how being a journalist was special, how it provided privileged access to people and situations and how they felt responsible

to their readers. My overall impression of the interviewees was that all had a strong sense of journalistic identity, they felt part of a journalist community and I was part of it as well.

Specialisation—the industrial relations round

One of the advantages of a large print newsroom is that young journalists get to try their hand at a broad range of subject areas and writing styles. They can specialise for a time and then change to a different specialisation later, all within the one organisation. The interviewees described rotating through specialist rounds early in their career as important for building their confidence and skills as well as providing opportunities for mentoring by more experienced reporters. As a point of commonality in my interview selection process all had spent an extended period on the industrial relations round, a complex subject area, which in its heyday in the 1980s and early 1990s was high profile, combining elements of industrial disputation, economics, federal politics and finance. One of the factors that appealed to the interviewees about working a round was the autonomy and independence such work provided. In general, rounds reporters generated their own stories although some received more direction from management than others, depending on the editorial style of the publication.

Working on a round is frequently a means of progressing to a greater level of seniority in a newspaper because of the opportunities it provides to break stories and to produce more in-depth quality reporting. In the 1970s and 1980s, with high levels of industrial disputation and unionisation rates, the industrial round was a coveted job with a national profile. In the 1990s and into the 2000s, however, big disputes became less frequent and legislative change more complex at the same time as the interest in tabloid news and celebrity journalism increased. The interviewees all agreed that covering industrial relations was 'important' but was not always well understood, even by their chief of staff, and that this had become even more the case in recent years. This meant they had to develop two valuable skills—making a complex issue understandable to a broad audience and selling an important but complex story to their superiors. In the earlier decades of the study period 1975 to 2015 these two goals were made easier by the high profile of senior

reporters on the round, but as the number of dedicated industrial reporters diminished so too has the prospect of using the industrial round as a springboard to more senior newspaper roles.

The downsizing of large print newsrooms in recent years has seen an overall diminution across a range of speciality areas. Industrial reporting has been one of the worst hit with numbers decreasing dramatically from the 1980s and 1990s to the 2010s.[107] This experience is not restricted to Australia. In his book about industrial reporting in the United Kingdom, Nicholas Jones chronicled how the round had devolved from an 'elite and prolific band of journalists' who dominated the national news media but fell to 'relative obscurity'.[108] As in the United Kingdom[109], the decline in industrial reporting in Australia can be attributed to a range of factors including declining unionisation rates, the election of conservative governments with anti-union agendas, the growth of entertainment-based news and smaller newsrooms. Concern about the low numbers of dedicated industrial reporters is understandably acute within unions and the labour movement generally as this is a highly contentious area of public policy that has been an election issue throughout Australian history and particularly in recent years. In an effort to raise the profile of industrial reporting the journalists' union, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, in 2017 introduced industrial reporting as a new category in the national Walkley Awards for excellence in journalism.[110]

At this time when the industrial round is at a low ebb in terms of numbers it is useful to look at what factors appealed to interviewees about working on the round and the challenges they may have encountered. Kerry O'Shea said the thing that she liked about industrial reporting was the 'sense of workers battling for a

[107] Phillips, pp. 17-18.

[108] Jones, p.1.

[109] Ibid.

[110] 'Helen O'Flynn and Alan Knight Award for best industrial reporting', Walkley Foundation website, <http://www.walkleys.com/awards/industrial/ > accessed on 19 March 2017.

fair go'; while for Shaun Carney the experience was significant as 'very, very good training'.

> You knew this was important stuff, this was going to influence the lives of millions of Australians and you were there and you were able to tell people about it, and you had to get it right and to be fair to all sides of the argument. That's why it was good for me. You understood your role as a journalist; you understood how important it was.

As discussed earlier, the number of specialist journalists on mainstream newspapers is diminishing but at the same time this research highlights that specialisation can still have career advantages. For Ewin Hannan, specialising in politics and industrial relations appears to have made him more, rather than less, employable even though the industrial round has diminished in recent years in terms of the number of reporters on the round and the prominence of industrial stories. Ewin developed his profile as an industrial and political specialist as he moved from *The Australian* to *The Age*, back to *The Australian* and at the time of the interview, moving to the *AFR*. [111]

> There's less journalists in newspapers, there's less resources. There's a view that we can only spread resources so far, so (if) there's key areas you want to cover … you want it covered by fewer people. I suppose I've covered it on a newspaper so I can cover it alone. I don't need as much assistance as I might have and there might not be as much space devoted to it as well.

The idea that specialist journalists may have an edge in an industry where reporters are constantly being asked to do more may seem counter-intuitive at first glance. As Ben Schneiders observed, there is an opportunity for young journalists to make their mark by focussing on an area that is being under-

[111] Ewin Hannan subsequently moved back to *The Australian* newspaper in the time between the interview and the publishing of this thesis.

reported due to lack of resources. It is also worth considering that the capacity for specialisation can provide a level of job satisfaction that will keep journalists in journalism. Ewin Hannan's comments show he enjoys the depth of knowledge he has gained over years of specialisation and the greater employability and mobility such expertise provides.

The question for further research is to what extent the experience of Ewin Hannan and Ben Schneiders, the only members of the interview group to remain in industrial reporting at the time of interview, is a temporary one. If the future of newspaper journalism is one of small newsrooms how possible will it be for someone to establish a reputation as a specialist reporter? It may be that as those with legacy expertise, such as industrial reporting, leave journalism newspapers may turn to specialists in niche publications to provide copy on a contract basis.

Union activism

As a former industrial relations reporter who has witnessed several journalists from this round become active in their own union, I was interested in the views of the interviewees on the ethics or otherwise of journalists being active unionists and whether or not this had changed over time. While only one of the nine held an executive position in the Australian Journalists Association, or its successor the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, a number said they were involved in disputes at the house committee level of their own newspaper. Like other industries, unionisation rates have been dropping in journalism, where once it was a virtual 'closed shop'. Ben Schneiders said he found it difficult to imagine journalists of his era going on strike for a month as they did in the VDT dispute or even for 24 hours as they did in the dispute against the Kennett Government's industrial reforms in 1992. Yet Ben was active on his house committee from 2008 and was head of the committee during the redundancies at *The Age* in 2012. He said he found this time stressful but did not experience any negative consequences from management as a result of his activism. While he tried not to be too active in the union while he was an industrial reporter he nonetheless found his knowledge of industrial relations useful in that it gave him a more realistic attitude of what

was possible in negotiations and an appreciation of the economics of the newspaper industry.

Like Ben, a number of the interviewees said they were approached to join house committees because of their knowledge of industrial relations but they conceded that there was little union activism in recent times. Ewin Hannan remembers Melbourne journalists marching against the 1992 Kennett Government industrial reforms and deciding against joining them.

> I think there was an ethical issue, particularly with people reporting on politics. Really at the time I assume there was probably freedom of choice to be part of it or not. But I think as a journalist, it's an obvious conflict of interest so you should have probably stood apart from it. That's what I tried to do. I was fortunate because I had the day off for some reason.

At the time of finalising this thesis, Fairfax journalists were in the middle of a bitter dispute over job cuts and had taken the unusual step of striking for a week. In general, however, the level of militancy by newspaper journalists is much lower than it was in the past.

The comments of the interviewees suggest that rather than becoming radicalised by contact with the trade union movement, industrial reporters were more often sought out by their peers to take on an industrial role because of their greater knowledge of workplace issues and the workplace relations system. I note, however, that this is a small sample and that Kerry O'Shea was on the industrial round in 1980 at the time of the national journalists' strike and remembers not only be active in that dispute but other industrial reporters speaking at meetings. Journalists generally have become less industrially active due to declining unionisation rates, greater concentration of media ownership and an increasing proportion of the journalist workforce becoming casualised. Mark Deuze proposes that as journalists become more multi-skilled their work becomes more

individualised and it is easier for management to exert both editorial and industrial control.[112]

Women in journalism

> They all smoked and they all drank, and it was mainly older men. I can remember, the water cooler was down *The Herald* end of the floor, and I used to walk down this aisle. I could feel everybody's eyes on me, so it was incredibly intimidating.
>
> *Kerry O'Shea*

The proportion of women journalists in Australia, as indicated by the Henningham and Hanusch studies, has risen dramatically from about 10 per cent in the early 1970s to 33 per cent in the early 1990s to 55 per cent in 2013.[113] Considering this is significant change in overall numbers, the interviews in this study revealed only a moderate change in the experience of women journalists. While the scenario described by Kerry O'Shea in the 1970s was not reflected in the interviews of the two younger women, there was general agreement across the group that a 'blokey' atmosphere remained in modern-day newsrooms, that men dominated the managerial ranks and the shift-work nature of journalism made it difficult to balance work and family life, particularly for women who were generally the primary care providers for children.

Given the small number of women in this study, it is not appropriate to generalise, but I note that the three women interviewed had experience in what are regarded as 'hard news' rounds where men frequently dominate. Kerry O'Shea may have felt intimidated in her early days as a cadet and was denied the opportunity to work on the police round as a junior reporter, but she did not reflect on any particular difficulties in working on the male-dominated industrial round in the late 1970s. This may be that Kerry was fortunate with supportive male colleagues, worked outside of head office and had a resilience as result of her personal

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[112] Deuze, pp. 83-94.

[113] Henningham, pp. 207-208 and Hanusch, p. 42.

upbringing. Similarly, Andrea Carson did not detail any difficulties being a woman on the industrial round in the 2000s. It should be noted, however, that both Kerry and Andrea left newspaper journalism to work in other fields and subsequently had children after leaving journalism. Susie O'Brien, the one female interviewee still working in daily journalism was the most forthcoming about the difficulties faced by women journalists.

One of the most high profile women journalists at the *Herald Sun* newspaper, with a doctorate in feminist studies, Susie said it had been a big achievement for her to secure regular work from home after having her first child in about 2003. This had partly only been possible because she was doing the social affairs round.

> It was seen as a bit of a ground breaker ... the mum in the newsroom, working part-time, job-sharing that wasn't something that they did much at all. Probably it was a bit of an indulgence because it was the family round. You sort of got away with it. I don't think if I was doing industrial or something like that they would have let that happen.

Susie said she was told not to tell her colleagues that that she was working from home. It was a continuing battle to retain home-based work and she attributed her success to hard work, regularly producing her own stories, specialising in opinion writing and the family round and ensuring she kept up a dialogue with the main office. She conceded, however, that she came under pressure to write 'lighter' columns and to not write about politics. She said journalism was tough for women and she was conscious she was in a privileged position.

> There's definitely a lack of women with kids (in journalism). There's a whole 15-year age gap that is totally not represented in newsrooms I'd say. So there's women up until the age of 30, 35, and then between 30 and 45, or maybe 50, maybe 30 to 45, nowhere to be seen. Then maybe when the kids are older or they're empty nesters they might come back, but they're in features or they stop altogether or they go work in communications. It's too hard.

Louise North notes that 'women's lack of representation in positions of authority is viewed as a problem for and about women' and is a consequence of women's disadvantage and not of men's advantage.[114] It is easy to look at Susie's experience and pass judgment that she has 'sold out' by focusing on family and social affairs based stories. Yet, Susie's very presence in this area, one not traditionally pursued by men, shows the impact that a woman's perspective in journalism can have. Given the small number of women journalists in this study and the increasing proportion of women journalists, I suggest that the experience of women journalists and the changes in the gendered nature of the profession is worthy of further study.

Drinking alcohol & making contacts

The heavy drinking culture of newspaper journalism is legendary, but seldom the subject of research.[115] All the interviewees, other than the youngest, Ben Schneiders, described incidents involving long and frequent periods of drinking with colleagues and contacts. The stories ranged from drinking with colleagues after work to having a long lunch with contacts to an office party where a journalist frustrated by the noise while he was writing threw a typewriter through the television. Whether or not heavy drinking was any more prevalent in journalism than other industries at the time would require further study, but the interviews in this research show how integral it was to journalism culture for many years.

Kerry O'Shea's father, a journalist, had such a severe drinking problem that he was 'constantly getting fired'. At 17 Kerry was legally unable to drink when she joined the *Sun News Pictorial* as a cadet in 1976. It was something that she saw as an advantage because she would remain in the newsroom while other journalists

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[114] Louise North, '"Blokey" Newsroom Culture', *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture & Policy*, no. 132, 2009, pp. 5–15.

[115] Paula Hamilton, 'Journalists gender and workplace culture 1900-1940' in *Journalism: print, politics and popular culture*, eds. Ann Curthoys & Julianne Schultz, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld, 1999, pp. 112-114 and Josie Vine, '"If I must die let me die drinking at an inn": the tradition of alcohol consumption in Australian Journalism', *Australian Journalism Monographs* V12, 2010, Griffith Centre for Cultural Research, Griffith University, Qld.

went to the Phoenix Hotel across the road and 'things would come my way'. Later she remembers being careful with her drinking but still taking part in socialising with colleagues and contacts.

While in earlier decades the heavy drinking culture of journalism may have operated as something of a boys club to the exclusion of women,[116] in the period of this study, neither male or female interviewees referred to women reporters being unwelcome, or feeling unwelcome, in a work-related drinking environment.[117] Kerry O'Shea described how on the industrial round the hotel over the road from the Victorian Trades Hall, the John Curtin Hotel, was a regular haunt of unionists and journalists covering industrial relations.

> At 5 o'clock I think it was, every afternoon, we used to go across the road to the John Curtin, which is where your networking really began because you were talking to all these unionists. Bob Hawke would go in there, Simon Crean would go in there, Bill Kelty would go in there, people from the Transport Workers Union, and that's where you'd find out what was going on. My technique, because I was the only female… I would drink white wine and soda, half a glass of white wine, half a glass of soda, while the boys were drinking their beers. I'd pop into the ladies toilets and write down what the unionists had told me. Then there was a phone in the pub in an area called the nook, which had a little table, and you could use the phone to file your stories. So you could either do that or go back to your office, but usually we filed from the pub.

Courting contacts over drinks was so accepted a practice that several interviewees said they were provided with a regular allowance for entertaining. Many described getting stories this way and a number recounted some of the dangers of

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[116] Ibid.

[117] I note that the number of interviewees in this study is small and the three women interviewed were involved in hard news reporting and rounds out of the office where contact-building was particularly important.

the practice. Nicholas Way remembers that in his time with the Hobart *Mercury* he would socialise with unionists in their homes and even in his own home. He said he was taken off the industrial round after an incident when he under-played a story that a competitor on the Launceston *Examiner* developed into a page 1 lead.

> The next morning it was page 1 of *The Examiner*, a massive headline… and I thought 'mmm'. Anyway, *The Mercury* was not happy and the editor wasn't happy and it was decided that I probably got too close to my contacts and I think in hindsight they were right.

Another aspect of the heavy drinking culture is the role it played in the creative process for journalists. Newspaper employees including production workers, photographers as well as journalists would meet regularly after work, often at a hotel identified with their newspaper. They would talk about the stories of the day and new stories they were chasing. Terry Brown said the best piece of advice he ever received about journalism was from an old journalist while they were both drinking in the Phoenix Hotel, across the road from the *Sun News Pictorial*.

> I remember having a beer with him and I'm probably 50 years younger than he, and no reason he should have given a rat's who I was or whatever. I was talking to him and he asked what story I'd been doing that day and I told him. I can't remember at the moment. I said: 'Yeah, it was a bugger and I just couldn't get the intro to spin for ages and ages'. He said: 'What was the story?' I told him and he said: 'That's how you write your story. You write it like you're telling somebody in the pub, because when you're telling somebody in the pub, the first thing you tell them is the most interesting thing...'

The heavy drinking culture of journalism, as in other occupations, is clearly over. While some of the interviewees reflected on the time nostalgically none suggested that it was appropriate for modern times. The demise of work-related drinking in journalism reflected a greater emphasis heavier workloads and multiple deadlines

as well as health concerns. Yet in some ways it left a void in journalism culture that is still to be filled.

While newspaper journalism is a team effort involving reporters, sub-editors, photographers and artists in the news process, the reality is that contact between those in different roles is quite limited. The drinking environment provided an opportunity for mixing with others in the news organisation with whom a reporter might not normally have contact. In terms of cultivating contacts, there is no doubt that in many ways the old drinking culture of journalism made that task easier.

Management style & structural change

It is not within the scope of this thesis to detail all the management and structural changes in Melbourne metropolitan newspapers over the period from 1975 to 2015. Suffice to say that changes to media ownership laws, technological changes affecting advertising revenues as well as a series of management decisions resulted in some major changes in editorial direction as well as mass redundancies of journalists. The effects were dramatic. As a result of the Hawke Government's changes to cross media-ownership laws, for example, the number of metropolitan daily titles across Australia dropped from 19 to 11 in the five-year-period from 1987 to 1992.[118] In this section I will focus on one of the major changes affecting Melbourne newspapers during 1975 to 2015: the merger of *The Herald* and the *Sun News Pictorial* to form the *Herald Sun* in 1990. In particular I am interested in how the interviewees affected by these changes reacted and what actions they took to adapt.

While earlier analysis has shown that journalists are generally prepared to accept changed technology and work practices if they are practical and beneficial, change in management style and structural change can be a matter of values rather than commitment. Shaun Carney had trained as a cadet with *The Herald*, but as he gained confidence and experience by the mid-1980s he came to believe that the

[118] Rodney Tiffen, 'The Press' in *The Media & Communications in Australia*, 4th edition, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2014, p. 101.

newspaper had lost its way. While he had found afternoon newspaper journalism personally 'unsatisfying', he said that he had also become disillusioned with the values of the newspaper, which he found old-fashioned. He suggested in 1980 that *The Herald* should create an environmental round, but was told: 'We don't have time for that sort of thing. *The Age* can do that.'

> In that period when I understood that I had to leave *The Herald*, I could see that the news values they had acquired were killing the paper and driving readers away.

While Shaun Carney found *The Herald* old-fashioned and wanted change, over at the *Sun New Pictorial* Terry Brown loved his life as a tabloid reporter. He became disillusioned when media magnate Rupert Murdoch decided to merge *The Herald* and the *Sun News Pictorial* to form the *Herald Sun*. Terry remembers that his parents were proud of him when he first joined the *Sun News Pictorial* because he was working for the paper that they bought. He enjoyed working with what he saw as a 'working-class newspaper' but that all changed after the merger.

> It was a personal thing for me as well when the paper changed, when the *Sun* was axed and the *Herald Sun* brought into being. As I said before, it felt like a hostile takeover, but when the product actually came out it wasn't the *Sun*. It didn't look like the *Sun*, didn't read like the *Sun*. It was political. It was mean-spirited. One thing about the *Sun* was it was always a friendly paper. It didn't have a mean bone in its body. It would have all the news but it wouldn't have nastiness to it whereas a lot of the stuff that was being published, all the political stuff, the union stuff, had a nasty streak to it in the new paper. I used to save every clipping of every story I wrote at the *Sun* and I stopped doing that at the *Herald Sun* because I wasn't proud of the paper I was working for any more.

As devastating as the changes were for Terry, as much as they were an affront to his values, he continued with the newspaper. One of the reasons for that appears to be that as the newspaper changed direction, Terry managed to retain a measure of autonomy in his writing. He later specialised as a colour writer, something that he excelled at and loved doing, but he never lost his personal value of fairness and always tried to bring that to his writings. One of the factors that Terry found difficult in the merger of *The Herald* and *The Sun* was bringing together the different cultures of the two newspapers—the former a serious broadsheet and the latter a working class tabloid.

Career in journalism: Leave or stay?

Journalism has always been a profession where a certain proportion of its members move on to other professions. The skills of writing and communications are transferable to many other occupations including public relations and even politics. If journalism is to retain experienced, high quality journalists in a period of great change we need to examine the factors involved in leaving or staying in the profession. The interviewees indicated that the factors that attracted them to journalism included the freedom to perform quality work, to be autonomous, to have access to fascinating people and to collaborate with other talented professionals. In many ways their comments echoed their aspirations as young people: they loved journalism because they loved writing and they wanted fun and adventure.

Those who left or changed news organisations were looking for new opportunities or a way to balance their work and family life. Those who stayed still felt the passion of journalism and still felt valued. Kerry O'Shea lamented that journalists today were 'working so hard' and speculated that those who stayed 'must just still love it'. That was certainly the case for Ewin Hannan who said he could see himself in journalism for at least the next five to 10 years: 'I like the profession, the opportunities it gives me. I still get a buzz.'. Several of the interviewees had left newspaper journalism to pursue journalism in either radio or television and two took voluntary redundancy after long newspaper careers. All still clearly saw themselves as journalists. Kerry O'Shea, who had worked in media relations for several years, said she still employed many of the skills she learned as a journalist.

This study examined the experiences of nine journalists, five of whom were still working as journalists at the time of the interview. While the research provides some insights into the reasons for staying in journalism or leaving, a more comprehensive study on journalists and redundancy is under way with the New Beats Project.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

> Each generation of journalists, at least until its muscles start to sag, assumes it is unique in having to face challenges unknown to previous generations. History, for people geared to thinking of the day before yesterday as dead meat and next week as long-term planning, is not generally thought to offer much in the way of instruction.[119]
>
> *David Randall*

In this thesis I have used an oral history approach to better understand the experience of Australian newspaper journalists living through change in the period 1975 to 2015. The principal motivation on my part, as well as that of my nine interviewees, was to see what could be learned from these experiences given the challenges facing journalists today. Some writers have noted the reluctance of journalists to learn from the history of their profession. In his book about 13 of the world's great reporters David Randall laments the shortsightedness of journalists. He argues that an understanding of how the work of outstanding reporters has changed over time, and how it is performed within its time, can provide both inspiration and role models for journalists today. Similarly, in noting the extreme pressure on independent reporting from political, economic and cultural forces James Carey proposes that a better understanding of history 'might help journalists grasp the significance of this moment and perhaps to see directions of growth and reform in the practice of this valuable craft'.[120]

Utilising oral history as the main methodology in this research succeeded in producing a wealth of rich detail on the life experiences of the interviewees. This was both a blessing and a curse. At times I felt overwhelmed by the weight of the material and wondered how I could provide justice to it in 25,000 words. As a result I was forced to restrict my focus to several key themes including the

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[119] David Randall, 'The World of the Reporter' in *The Great Reporters*, Pluto Press, London, 2005, p. 5.

[120] James W. Carey, 'A Short History of Journalism for Journalists: A Proposal and Essay', *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* vol. 12 no. 3, 2007, p. 5.

relevance of early life experience to a career in journalism, exploring how journalists cope with changes in technology, workplace culture and training.

While the breadth of the time period and themes meant it was difficult providing sufficient depth to each theme explored, it was very useful in painting an overall portrait of a working journalist in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. What I found was the early values and interests of the interviewees not only helped set them on the path to journalism, but stayed with them throughout their career and played a part in how they worked. As a whole, journalists coped with technological change very well, particularly if provided with the agency to choose the most useful technology for their work. Where they struggled with change was in circumstances involving a challenge to their values and beliefs. Such challenges, however, were generally not sufficient to result in a decision to leave journalism if their job satisfaction level was high due to the quality of the work they were doing and the independence provided to them to do their work in the way they saw best fit.

There was a degree of nostalgia in the older interviewees who believed that journalism was no longer as 'fun' as it used to be. I note, however, that for all the interviewees, a love of writing and reading were strong factors in becoming newspaper journalists, as was a sense of adventure. While more research needs to be conducted with younger journalists, I expect that many of those entering journalism today, would be strongly attracted to digital storytelling techniques and the opportunities inherent in global news and online platforms. As such, their drivers for job satisfaction and 'fun' may be slightly different than the previous generation.

In terms of avenues for further study, I believe more research could be conducted on the experience of women journalists and on the industrial round and the issue of how to report on serious news issues in a way that is engaging to a modern audience. As well, I believe research is needed on the effects of change on sub-editors. My research suggests that sub-editors have experienced a higher degree of change than reporters in terms of both the reduction in the number of jobs and a diminution in status – and therefore remuneration, in the longer term. The

interviewees in this study told of a significant distancing in the relationship between sub-editors and reporters. Once sub-editors had been both revered and feared and yet in the 21st century they had no role in the emerging area of social media and a diminishing role in checking newspaper content.

I believe this research demonstrates the value of utilising life experience as a way of appreciating and recording labour history. It provides a significant contribution to not just journalism history but more broadly to journalism studies, which traditionally have rarely examined the lived experiences of journalists. The work provides a portrait of journalistic practice and experience over a 40-year period. The interviewees illuminated both uniquely Australian experiences as well as constants of international journalism.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Short profiles of interviewees

Terry Brown grew up in the Victorian regional town of Horsham and was the only one of the interviewees to go to a technical school. He started in journalism in Melbourne suburban newspapers in the early 1980s but spent most of his career at the *Sun News Pictorial* and its successor the *Herald Sun*, specialising in colour writing. He left the *Herald Sun* in 2012 and has since worked as a freelance journalist, creative writer and a lecturer and tutor in journalism ethics at Macleay College.

Shaun Carney was an only child and grew up in the outer Melbourne suburb of Frankston. He joined the afternoon Melbourne newspaper *The Herald* as a graduate cadet and subsequently moved to *The Age,* holding a number of senior positions before leaving in 2012. He is the author of several books and a prominent columnist most recently with the *Herald Sun*. He combines work as a columnist with various freelance work and is an Adjunct Associate Professor with Monash University's School of Political and Social Inquiry.

Andrea Carson grew up on a dairy farm outside of the Victorian regional town of Colac. She worked briefly with the *Colac Herald* in 1989 before training to become a registered nurse. After working as a nurse in Australia and overseas she joined *The Age* as a cadet in 1997 and left in 2001 to work for the Australian Workers' Union. From 2004 to 2010 she worked for ABC Radio and from 2010 she has been a lecturer and tutor in media and politics at the University of Melbourne.

Ewin Hannan - Grew up in the Melbourne suburb of Williamstown and began working in newspapers straight from high school as a copy boy with *The Australian's* Melbourne bureau. He was subsequently offered a cadetship with *The Australian* in 1987 and since then has specialised in the fields of politics and industrial relations. In addition to *The*

Australian, he has also worked for *The Age* and the *Australian Financial Review* (*AFR*). He is one of the most experienced of the interviewees in the field of industrial reporting.

Neil Mitchell is a prominent Melbourne radio presenter. His early childhood was spent in the Melbourne suburb of East Oakleigh, but his family moved several times in and around Melbourne due to his father's work commitments. Neil joined *The Age* as a cadet in the 1970s, almost straight after school. He held several senior positions at *The Age*, including sports editor, and in 1985 became one of the youngest editors of a major Australian newspaper, *The Herald*. He has worked as a presenter at Melbourne radio station 3AW since 1987 and has also worked in television, hosting documentaries and his own program.

Susie O'Brien grew up in mining towns in outback Western Australia and South Australia before her family settled in Adelaide. She has a doctorate in feminist studies and was on track to become an academic when she decided to seek a cadetship at the *Adelaide Advertiser* in the late 1990s where she spent several years. Susie joined the *Herald Sun* in the early 2000s, working on several rounds. She is one of the newspaper's most prominent columnists.

Kerrie O'Shea was born in Brisbane but grew up in a single-parent family in Melbourne's southern suburbs. She joined the *Sun News Pictorial* as a cadet straight from school in 1976 and was the first woman from the newspaper to work on the industrial round. From 1980 she worked for the *AFR* and for a short time as a researcher in television. Since that time she has worked as a government press secretary, a film publicist and a freelance columnist but most recently has specialised in communications in law and the courts.

Ben Schneiders was the only one of the interviewees to start journalism in the Internet era. He grew up in the Dandenongs on the outskirts of Melbourne and got his first job after university in 2001 on a finance website. He left two years later and succeeded in securing a graduate cadetship with the *AFR*. After grading he moved to the *Melbourne Times* for a short time and then travelled to the United Kingdom where he worked for the

The Independent. Ben returned to Australia in the mid-2000s and subsequently joined *The Age*, working in business, the industrial round and at the time of interview was joining the newspaper's investigative reporting team.

Nicholas Way was born in Devonport in Tasmania, but grew up in Hobart. He completed his cadetship at the Hobart *Mercury* in the 1970s and after a few years got a job as a sub-editor in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. After returning to Australia in about 1980 he has since worked for Australian Associated Press, the *AFR*, *The Australian* and *Business Review Weekly*, specialising in sub-editing and then industrial and finance reporting. In 1988 he took a year off from journalism to try his hand as a stockbroker and he left journalism in 2006 to work in public relations in the business sector.

Appendix 2: Interview guide

I provided this document to interviewees several days before the interview so that they understood the scope of the interviews to be conducted.

OPENING	Tell me why you agreed to do this interview?
Growing up – tell me about …	
Birth	Date and location
Family	Parents, grandparents, siblings • Earliest memories, describe individuals • Family routines, traditions
School	Primary, secondary, tertiary • Name schools with location • What sort of student were you? • Typical day • Favourite/least favourite subjects • Accomplishments
Interests	What did you like to do: • sport, hobbies, clubs etc. • friends, outings, holidays
Aspirations	What were your goals: • career, personal, heroes • journalism?
Work – starting in journalism	
Before journalism	What work? (If any)
Getting into journalism	When, how, difficulty Application process Ideals, expectations
Early training	Formal – degree? On the job – provided by company, shorthand, law, style, writing, mentoring
Early work	Types of stories/tasks Early memories – newsroom, people, routines. Describe a day. Union – knew of it? Joined? Impressions?

Journalism career	
Overview	Major roles, rounds, organisations, milestones, awards Technological change
Big stories	What were they and what was your role in them? News process: • getting the news, interviews • writing it • interactions with sub-editors, chief-of staff etc. • any ethical dilemmas
Routine	Average day (note use of technology) Keeping up to date with news, skills, training Getting the story – allocated, finding own Making contacts Mentoring (within organisation and with other journalists) Interaction with other staff (photographers), colleagues Social aspect – with colleagues, contacts, drinking
IR round	
Era	Years on the round, organisation, role Main players – unions, employers, political, other reporters on round Base – at Trades Hall or office Prominence of round (regard by office, public regard)
Uniqueness	How was round different/similar to other rounds? What types of stories/areas did it cover? Challenges: • getting the story • getting a run • interactions with other rounds (e.g. Canberra) • union activism as a journalist
Stories	Big stories and daily routines. (If not covered above.)
Work and interests – outside of journalism (if relevant)	
Jobs	What were they? Effect of journalism background on new roles
Other roles	Clubs, volunteerism etc.

General reflections	
Technology	Effect of changes – benefits, challenges
Stories	Changes in news values, types of stories that are popular
Producing	Other than technology, how have processes changed? How has your work/writing changed?
Professional	Training, ethics, public regard, ideals/independence
Women	Women in the newsroom – changes over time
Media industry	Media ownership – effects
Personal	Effect of personal life on your journalism Effect of journalism on your personal life and other work
CLOSING	What has it been like reflecting on your life and career?

Appendix 3: Attribution for use of photographs

In Figure 2.1 I used nine photographs to illustrate some of the technology commonly used by journalists in the period 1975 to 2015. I was the photographer for images (8) and (9) showing a microcassette recorder and a smart phone. The other seven images I sourced from Wikimedia Commons and used under Creative Commons licensing. Here are the relevant acknowledgments:

(1) Manual typewriter—By Austin Calhoon (http://austincalhoon.com) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0) or GFDL (http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html)], via Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AOlivetti_Lettera_32_Typewriter.jpg>

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(6) Early portable computer, Radio Shack TRS-80—By NapoliRoma (Own work) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons,

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