

Beyond newsrooms: Younger journalists talk about job loss and re-employment in Australian journalism

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Abstract

This article examines the re-employment destinations of 10 younger journalists who lost newsroom jobs in the period 2012 to 2014 to understand the work options available in the current Australian labour market. With field theory as a framework, it considers how and why seven of these younger journalists now work beyond newsrooms, either freelancing or in corporate journalism (but not public relations). The remaining three younger journalists, who were in a position to push ahead with their careers, are still engaged in mainstream news reporting. The transition from full-time newsroom jobs to other forms of employment was tougher for some than others. The article argues these younger journalists pragmatically adjusted their ideas of journalistic work to suit their altered circumstances. These results are interpreted through the lens of field theory, and contextualised in the research on the transformation of journalism.

Introduction

Australian journalists seeking re-employment after newsroom job loss face a difficult labour market. Newsroom job openings are limited and highly competitive, as major media companies reduce staff in the context of digital industry restructuring. The Australian journalists' union, the Media, Entertainment, and Arts Alliance (MEAA), estimates that since 2012, around 3000 journalism positions have gone from print and broadcast news media companies (MEAA, 2017). Large-scale institutional employment in news media is likewise shrinking in many other Western societies, as a result of economic and technological pressures (Rottwilm, 2014). Moreover, finding work that provides an adequate income is another labour market challenge in this country. Part-time and contract job openings are now more common than full-time journalism work as a result of business interest in flexible and cheaper workforces. In 2017, the share of part-time work in journalism stood at 30.7 per cent of the workforce (Australian Government, 2017). Journalist unions around the world have found up to one third of their members are employed in 'atypical' work arrangements –

defined as flexible, non-permanent jobs – and often younger, female journalists are the most affected (see Walters, Warren & Dobbie, 2006).

For the past four years, the New Beats research project, led by Professor Lawrie Zion at La Trobe University, has explored journalists' various experiences of regaining employment in the aftermath of newsroom job loss (see www.newbeatsblog.com/). Younger journalists' experiences comprise one line of research inquiry (see O'Donnell, Sherwood & Winarnita, 2017). The author of this article is particularly interested in the relationship between re-employment destinations, labour market trends and the future of public interest journalism (see O'Donnell, Zion & Sherwood, 2016). This article therefore focuses specifically on the ways 10 younger journalists, who lost their newsroom jobs in the period 2012 to 2014, have navigated current labour market conditions to find new work.

The purpose of investigating these younger journalists' new jobs is to gain insight into changing labour patterns and practices from the perspective of relatively recent entrants into the Australian journalism field. Their experience in journalism ranged from two to 13 years. This article explores what the younger journalists see as the work options available to those who are laid-off, as compared to those who take voluntary redundancy. It argues that in seeking re-employment, these younger journalists pragmatically adjusted their ideas of journalistic work to fit their altered circumstances and varying work priorities (e.g. job security, job satisfaction, and career advancement).

Journalism field theory (Bourdieu, 1998, 2005; Benson & Neveu, 2005) frames the analysis as this framework productively directs attention to central concerns around changing journalistic labour patterns. These concerns include the impact of increasing economic constraints on job openings in public interest news reporting, and the consequences of increasingly available editorial work in corporate journalism, branded content and native advertising for public understanding (see Dodd, 2016; Simons, 2016). In this way, the article

potentially extends the scope of research on the transformation of journalism and its adaptability in the digital age (see for example, Anderson, Bell & Shirky, 2012; Lee-Wright, Phillips & Witschge, 2012, Waisbord, 2013; Phillips, 2015).

Journalism field dynamics, labour market realities and younger journalists

In theoretical terms, journalism fields are conceptualised as autonomous networks of journalism institutions, actors and expertise (Bourdieu, 1998, 2005). They result from the ‘social division of news labor’ (Waisbord, 2013, p. 217) and the historical development of news organisations and professional journalism. Journalism fields aggregate power by exercising ‘a de facto monopoly’ over the means of public expression (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 46), yet are subject to intense, even ‘brutal’, market pressures (1998, p. 53). To work in journalism therefore implies constant engagement with and responses to the field’s inherent duality.

Journalists distinguish themselves from each other by the ways they accumulate and harness the power in the field associated with reporting in the public interest, while, at the same time, managing the constant pressure to adopt an ‘audience ratings mentality’ (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 43). This is not a zero-sum game. Journalism’s first obligation is to report the news, whether serious or sensational. However, as Waisbord (2013) notes, ‘pressures for bringing higher ratings and traffic to news sites exacerbate the push for dumbed-down news that has little to do with democracy and public life’ (p. 141). Hence, there is often more prestige attached to expensive, public interest forms of journalism that exhibit the field’s expertise, authority and autonomy (e.g. investigative reporting), while better salaries are available to those with greatest public influence (e.g. journalists working in commercial news and current affairs television). These complex field dynamics, and the rewards they offer, are often opaque to younger journalists. Yet, understanding of journalism’s internal logic

provides a means for achieving authoritative field positions (Bourdieu, 2005, pp. 43-44), and, by extension, career advancement.

Previous Australian journalism research provides some insight into the particular dynamics of the Australian journalism field at a time of industry volatility and change, including the labour market realities younger journalists face. For example, Quinn's (1997) survey of Australian newspaper journalists' internet use points to unexpected new competition for key senior positions in newsrooms. It indicates 'computer-literate younger colleagues' might takeover managerial jobs, due to the 'poverty' of digital skills amongst senior staff (Quinn, 1997, p. 10). Pearson's (1999) study of online news and journalism education foreshadows a different trend: more precarious work arrangements for younger journalists. It advises graduates to prepare for more part-time and contract work, as well as industrial relations disputes related to technological change. Alternatively, Ewart and Gregor (2001) identifies high job satisfaction amongst younger journalists working on the *Age Online* website, although their online work seems 'boundless', and mired in 'significant, unresolved industrial issues' (p. 47). Likewise, Molloy and Bromley's (2009) study of 'next generation' online journalists finds positive interest in the opportunities for career advancement, but negative feelings about excessive workloads, stress and uncertainty about roles (p. 77). Two industry-wide surveys undertaken around the same time identify recurring concerns about lower-paid, non-union younger journalists displacing older, higher-paid journalists across the nation's newsrooms (Este, Warren, Connor, Brown, Pollard, & O'Connor, 2008, p. 13; Este, Warren & Murphy, 2010, p. 23). Conversely, O'Donnell, McKnight & Este's (2012) study of veteran newspaper journalists finds pushback against poor quality online news content curated by 'young, inexperienced digital journalists'. One editor says, "The more the traditional journalists can change and embrace and adapt to the new medium, the better it will be for the quality of journalism online" (p. 21). Likewise, Sherwood and Nicholson's (2013) study of

Web 2.0 platforms and newspaper sports journalists finds concerns about the negative impact of social media on traditional reporting frameworks. Elsewhere, Bowd's (2013) study of non-metropolitan journalists adds further critical insight by highlighting younger journalists' awareness of the negative impact of social media and email on source networks, and the quality of journalist-community relationships (pp. 65-66).

In terms of the Australian journalism field's changing labour patterns, Meehan's (2001) survey of 19 freelancers is the first to document contract and payment problems across the sector. It finds commissioning editors favour those with newsroom track-records, whereas younger journalists, who have never worked on staff, got 'a rough time of it' (Meehan, 2001, p. 103). Das (2006, 2007) details two other problems of freelancing: 'relentless uncertainty over getting commissioned' (2007, p. 156), and, pressure to accept low pay rates. Industry wisdom suggests 'a 21 or 22-year-old' would take work whatever the going rate. Das finds freelancers coping with their marginal status by talking up their professional opportunities (2007, p. 158). Patrick and Elks's (2015) study of 'worker precarity' (p. 49), finds fear of insecure work, but also adaptability amongst those ready to repurpose their skills for audience-driven digital journalism. As one social media journalist in her late 20s explains, 'as long as you can provide content – and I mean content in the broadest of terms – then you're gonna be okay' (Patrick & Elks, 2015, p. 58).

Taken together, then, previous research provides evidence that the Australian journalism field offers new work opportunities for younger journalists, arising from digital industry restructuring, yet the jobs are often less than ideal (Molloy & Bromley, 2009, p. 79). Traditional intergenerational patterns of collegiality and mentoring appear to have been replaced by job rivalry, industrial disputes, and scapegoating. Likewise, the traditional rewards of journalism work appear more elusive or, perhaps, less relevant, amidst more fluid employment arrangements, work practices, and notions of the audience. The one recurring

expectation seems to be that younger journalists will do ‘all things digital’ as well as do ‘more with less’. Accordingly, this article examines more recent labour market conditions by addressing the following three questions: Where do younger journalists find work after job loss? How does the new work compare to their former full-time positions in newsrooms? Is digital expertise important in their current work? In this way, it proposes to extend understanding of the significance of recent developments in journalism work patterns and practices.

Method

This investigation forms part of the New Beats research project, a longitudinal investigation into the aftermath of job loss in Australian journalism following digital industry restructuring in the period 2012 to 2014 (O’Donnell, Zion & Sherwood, 2016; Zion et al., 2016; Sherwood & O’Donnell, 2016; New Beats Project, 2017). Workforce downsizing and job cuts have mostly affected mid- to late-career print journalists (Zion et al., 2016), but the project’s survey cohort includes 19 younger news workers, under 35 years of age. This prompted interest in exploring the question of whether or not their relative youth made for an easier transition to new employment. In 2017, ten of the 19 younger journalists agreed to be interviewed. Semi-structured qualitative interviews (Creswell, 2009, p. 182) were conducted in June 2017, via telephone in seven cases and, in the other three, via the internet – a growing researching medium (James & Busher, 2012). Two informants spoke from overseas. The interview protocol comprised 26 open-ended questions, covering a wide range of issues related to re-employment, digital journalism and the future of journalism careers. The average interview duration was 60 minutes. All informants gave informed oral consent, as required under the approved ethics protocol.

The author’s data-analysis organised and interpreted the interview content specifically

related to re-employment destinations, in order to draw out its meaning and implications. It proceeded in three steps: close reading of the interview transcripts, coding of themes and informants' viewpoints on those themes (Saldaña, 2013), and, finally, interpretation of the results in relation to the theoretical framework, and previous empirical findings. Importantly, the findings of this particular investigation provide insight into a new area of Australian journalism studies – re-employment options for younger journalists at a time of industry volatility and occupational change. We know the Australian labour market now has limited job vacancies for journalists (see Young & Carson, 2016), but it is less clear who gets the work, whether youth is an advantage in getting recruited, or how long jobs last.

This is exploratory research that has produced a rich corpus of qualitative data, but the findings of such a small sample are indicative, not generalisable. Interviews provide descriptive, situated knowledge of a topic. Kvale (2007) defines them as ‘research conversations about private lives for public consumption’ (p. 142), and argues, that when done well, they generate substantial findings (see for example, Winarnita & Tanu, 2015). The primary challenge of qualitative interviewing, therefore, is to produce ‘new knowledge worth knowing’ (Kvale, 1994, p. 171). In this article, younger journalists’ descriptive accounts of their current work in journalism, and their perceptions of how and why that work differs from their previous full-time newsroom jobs, provide a means of knowing more about labour patterns and practices. Broader questions about the younger journalists’ career trajectories will be addressed separately in a subsequent publication. In the results presented below, informants are referred to by job descriptors not name to protect the confidentiality of the data.

Findings

This article is primarily concerned to understand the re-employment of younger journalists

after newsroom job loss in relation to changing work patterns and practices in journalism. It analyses the labour market realities these younger journalists were forced to deal with.

The research sample comprised six women and four men, all aged 35 years or less. Six of them took voluntary redundancy and four were retrenched. Nine out of the 10 had worked in journalism for eight years or less at the time they lost their jobs. Eight had worked for major newspaper companies (4 reporters, 2 online reporters, 1 social media editor and 1 photojournalist), and two had been news reporters for commercial television stations. Half the cohort had earned between 60,001-80,000 (AUD) per year in their former jobs, while the other half had earned between 40,000-60,000 (AUD) per year. Five of the younger journalists left their full-time newsroom positions in 2012, four left in 2013 and one left in 2014.

These demographic details tell us that prior to their jobs being made redundant, all 10 younger journalists had promising journalism careers, based on institutional employment (e.g. converged newspaper or television newsrooms) and professional work practices (e.g. multi-platform news reporting for mass audiences).

Against expectations, the data analysis found converged newsrooms were neither the ideal nor actual re-employment destinations for most of the cohort. Only the social media editor had a digital journalism job descriptor (cf. Ferrucci & Vos, 2017). What is more, while all but one worked for online publications or multiplatform outlets, only four agreed that digital expertise was an important part of their everyday media work. The rest highlighted reputation and expertise in writing and story-telling as more important. The implications of this surprising result are beyond the scope of this article and will be taken up in more detail elsewhere.

The prime focus here is on where the 10 younger journalists are working now. The data analysis found five of them created self-employment opportunities and now work as freelancers, two found full-time jobs in corporate journalism, while the remaining three

pushed ahead with their careers by pursuing new professional journalism opportunities either in Australia or overseas. All ten younger journalists described themselves as still working in journalism.

This article argues that forced or voluntary redundancy was the decisive factor shaping re-employment experiences. The interviews provide unequivocal evidence that leaving newsroom jobs behind was tougher for some than others. Retrenchment was more traumatic than opting out through voluntary redundancy. On top of the shock of unexpected job loss, and the scramble to find new work, these younger journalists had to face up to the fact that their promising career paths had been derailed. The following section analyses what they did next.

Wising up to commercial realities

The four retrenched younger journalists had been well aware of job cuts across the industry but were caught off-guard by their dismissal notices. At the time, two of them were working in online news, one was a commercial television reporter/presenter, and the other a sports reporter. The youngest, an online reporter hired on contract after doing an internship at a local paper, had been in her job for just two years. The oldest, in his early 30s, had moved to the city from a rural town, successfully landed a newspaper job as a sports reporter, and spent six years working ‘very hard’ to keep it. A third younger journalist had risen to the position of online sports editor, at the age of 26 years. The commercial television reporter, with a Graduate Diploma in Broadcasting, had landed an entry-level job in regional news but, within a year, was promoted to the main metropolitan newsroom.

They did not anticipate their own positions were at risk.

Retrenchment meant wising up to the journalism field’s ‘unforgiving’ commercial realities: “I thought redundancy would be something that would happen to people who let

their skills lapse,” said the commercial television reporter, “but if I made myself as invaluable and as versatile as possible...then it would be a more compelling case for someone like me to stay. But that wasn’t enough.”

The others expressed similar sentiments of disillusion. “Once you’re sort of out the door, you’re just an empty chair in the office to them,” said one, while another explained, “I don’t think I’ll ever feel secure, ever again...once you have been made redundant, you do have the view that you are disposable, no matter how good or bad or how you are at your job.”

They had believed journalism was a vocation. Finding it to be a ‘numbers game’ triggered feelings of powerlessness and self-doubt. The sports reporter described this shift in thinking in the following way:

The reality is, when you’re below the line – they make a line, and, when you’re below it, you’re gone, and when you’re above it, you’re safe, and really, nothing you do has too much effect on that. It’s a numbers game and often we can never see it, and we don’t really understand our own worth anyway. You need to be prepared for the powerlessness of that whole situation...I think it just gave me a little less self-worth...I think the only thing that really changed in my mind was just the realisation that you really had to want to stay in this. So, freelancing is the way to do it. But, if not, you need to go out of it, because it can be so deflating if you’re not really bought in to staying in it.

Yet, as the sports reporter indicates, disillusion did not spiral into despair. None of the four abandoned the industry as a lost cause. Instead, they pragmatically reappraised their options. As one explained, “I just needed a job to pay the mortgage.” Another said, “I think the expectation that journalists will work in newsrooms is just not there anymore.” So, they looked for, and eventually found, work elsewhere.

Two of the younger journalists took jobs working for corporations, with one producing magazines in the resource sector, and the other as social media editor for an insurance company, and those jobs have lasted. “There’s a lot of corporate newsrooms now,” the social media editor explained, “like banks and other organisations having newsrooms, generating content – that’s sort of where journalists can hope to work now.” In fact, she felt lucky to have landed an “editorial-based” job, rather than work in what she jokingly referred to as “the dark side”, just “putting out press releases for stuff I don’t care about”.

While some in the media industry might scoff at corporate journalism for producing pro-industry ‘guff’ (see Dwyer & Martin, 2013), these younger journalists saw it providing freely available general news. For the online reporter now working in the resource sector, it represents the next frontier in journalism work opportunities:

If you want to remain in journalism, then you have to adapt...I mean, I’m still young as far as I’m concerned, so I can adapt to whatever changes come along...So yeah, I think, obviously, the job types change...traditional journalism jobs are disappearing...which is sad, but there are other opportunities out there. I think just maybe the new normal is communication specialists.

The sports journalist, who has been freelancing for the past four years, also does some corporate journalism. He writes regularly for sporting bodies and, then, during the off-season, files news stories on a piece work basis for the same newspaper company that had retrenched him. He said, “I’ve always just gone by the creed that I’m a journalist: who, what, why, when and how is what matters, and what I’m covering is immaterial.”

The commercial television reporter is not doing corporate journalism, but job loss did spark entrepreneurial zeal: by 2017, she was earning ‘close to’ 100,000 (AUD) by working a 65-hour week doing four jobs at the same time – a full-time position as a talkback radio

producer, casual contracts for university tutoring and voiceover work, and running a small business ‘on the side’. She described herself as ‘a sucker for punishment’, but had no regrets: “I’m working on my own terms,” she said, “it’s a better mode of money. You’re getting more reward for the time that you put in.”

The experiences of these four retrenched journalists point to employment growth in journalism in non-traditional organisations (Cokley, Gilbert, Jovic, & Hanrick, 2016), market demand for editorial content (other than daily news reporting) (Chadwick, 2017), and more ‘portfolio’ workstyles that patch together a range of different jobs for different employers (Deuze, 2007). For the four retrenched younger journalists, these developments represented opportunities for a second life in journalism.

The distinct experiences of younger journalists who took voluntary redundancy are analysed in the next section.

Moving beyond (unhappy) newsrooms

All the other six younger journalists put their hands up for voluntary redundancies in the period 2012 to 2014 because they wanted to get a payout, and then move on. None of them feared unemployment. On the contrary, they knew what they wanted to do next. This section explores re-employment for the three younger journalists who were determined to move out of converged newsrooms.

The finance reporter, photojournalist and the general reporter indicated they took redundancy because it was easier to go than to stay. All three had been unhappy in their jobs.

Research on younger journalists in similar work situations in the USA (see for example, Reinardy, 2009, 2010, 2011), found they felt ‘exasperated’ by the intense pressures of working in converged newsrooms (2011, p. 47). They had low job satisfaction, high levels of cynicism (particularly around the increasing ‘journalistic shortfalls’ in newspapers) and a

propensity to burnout. Reinardy (2011) linked these negative feelings to what he called ‘the transitional burden’ (2011, p. 34), that is, the increased workloads carried by those left behind in down-sized 24/7 newsrooms. He concluded burnout was eroding younger journalists’ career commitment.

Three of the younger Australian journalists also seemed exasperated. They no longer had faith in newspaper work as a sustainable form of employment offering opportunities to get ahead. Instead, they were frustrated by perceived constraints on their ambitions: from gender-based discrimination to excessive workloads and poor management.

The general reporter said, “one of my main bugbears was that a lot of people [that] were promoted were males, and were hard asses so to speak...I didn’t see a lot of upward room for movement for women and that was another reason to leave.” Alternatively, the finance reporter said he felt “really squeezed” by his double workload, filing daily stories for the paper but publishing continuously on the web “from first thing in the morning”. He said, “I wanted a career where I wasn’t going to die of stress.” The photojournalist’s experience was different again. She did not mind doing a lot of overtime, but really objected to being micro-managed:

It was always super last minute and just like a ‘this is what you’re going to do’. There was one e-mail we got that was like, ‘you will work this Saturday, you won’t get time-in-lieu, you won’t get paid overtime, but you’ll go to do this...I just didn’t want to be in that environment anymore.

All three are now self-employed, earning higher incomes, and happier. They work from home or in spaces shared with other freelancers. Re-locating has been rejuvenating.

The photojournalist highlighted a welcome lack of routine: “I just work when I need to work and when I don’t need to work I don’t work so no it’s not really as structured, it’s very

fluid and flexible.” The finance reporter indicated he no longer felt “squeezed”: “working for myself and having a freelance career is just so much lighter and easier and less stressful than working in a newsroom.” And the general reporter described freelancing as a “perfect way out”, saying she was “thrilled to be working for myself.”

For these three younger journalists, freelancing has been ‘a ticket to the good life’ (cf. Cohen, 2017). They talked about work patterns that were individualised and delivered work/life balance because they were adjustable around personal and family needs. Workloads fluctuated. Some jobs crashed. Yet, they believed there was always work to be had, and they knew how to get it.

Their experiences are far removed from the exploitative labour patterns found in previous Australian research (see Meehan, 2001; Das, 2006, 2007; Patrick & Elks, 2015), a gap which at first glance seems inexplicable.

New theoretical approaches to understanding freelancing as ‘venture labour’ (Neff, 2012; Cohen, 2017), along with recent industry-wide research on Australian freelancing (Freeline Group, 2017; MEAA, 2017) provide some critical insight. Venture labour is defined as a strategy for managing risk at work, which involves ‘the explicit expression of entrepreneurial values by non-entrepreneurs’ (Neff, 2012, p. 16). Self-funded upskilling by journalists, in the hope of keeping their jobs, is one example. Freelancers turning a spare bedroom into an editorial production site is another. The venture labour concept directs attention to the freelancers’ paradox: they are entrepreneurs enjoying ‘the ultimate in journalism independence’ *and* ‘a class of workers facing declining power, autonomy, and control’ (Cohen, 2017, p. 2031).

In Australia, around 25 per cent of unionised journalists are freelancers but the major industry employers will not negotiate collective terms of engagement (MEAA, 2017, p. 9). There is no shortage of ex-journo freelancers, and competition from international service

providers (e.g. freelancers.com, contentmart.com) also keeps pay rates down. This leaves many individual freelancers mired in problems of unfair contracts, inadequate defamation protection, and costly public liability insurance, which exert a ‘chilling effect’ on their story choices (Freeline Group, 2017, p. 14). The photojournalist shared a practical example of employers’ control over the labour process: “My normal day rate is about \$1,500,” she said, “and the last job I did for a newspaper they were going to pay me \$150.”

‘Who can afford to be a journalist these days?’ asks Cohen (2017). What will happen to public interest journalism if freelancers do not win enough legal protections ‘to challenge narrow editorial boundaries?’, ask freelance advocates (Freeline Group, 2017).

Pushing ahead with journalism careers

This final section explores re-employment for three younger journalists who were intent on pushing ahead with their careers. Despite very different backgrounds, the commercial television journalist, newspaper social media editor, and business reporter were of one mind in believing the best way to survive industry volatility was to pursue new professional opportunities. So, they leveraged their track-records into new work positions at home and abroad. Re-positioning has given each of them fresh purpose.

The newspaper social media editor landed a job at a London-based newspaper after taking a gap year overseas. Six months on, she landed an even better job, and then promotion to section editor, at a prestigious British national broadsheet. She reported clocking up to 60 hours on the job in a “busy week”. She said, “I kind of think journalists are a bit of a special breed of people who weirdly kind of are suckers for this stuff...when it’s a big news event, you want to be in the newsroom rather than outside of it.”

The business reporter had ambitions to be a stringer and decided on a working life overseas. He moved to East Asia to improve his university-level Mandarin and to immerse

himself in the region's distinct economic culture. Four years on, he was still there, earning most of his income by writing for a mix of Australian news media and corporate clients. He said, "I've been trying to build up more mainstream media work. Even though it pays less it's just more interesting and just more exciting."

The television reporter moved from full-time work in an Australian commercial television network to a more senior, part-time position at a public service broadcaster. She said, "I wanted to be employed in the type of journalism where I really respected the work that I was doing, and the direction of the media outlet." She opted to work part-time for family reasons. Her two other work commitments were lecturing one day a week at a private journalism school, and running a not-for-profit.

In field theory, these three younger journalists' choices and comments are analytically significant because they demonstrate journalism's traditional logic or *doxa*, a term that refers to the tacit premises, insider knowledge, and everyday practices that make the field's work meaningful to all those who share it (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 37). While outsiders – sociologists, politicians, news consumers and others – may see journalism's 'day-to-day thinking' and 'obsession with "scoops"' as a cause for concerns about public understanding, journalists – the field's insiders – typically find competing for 'the news that is the newest and hardest to get' to be professionally exhilarating (see Bourdieu, 1998, pp. 6-7).

The remarkable finding in the case of these three younger journalists is that the traditional logic of journalistic work still guided their career moves. For the newspaper section editor, this meant work in a converged newsroom on big news events, for the would-be stringer it was building up mainstream news work even when it paid less, and for the public broadcasting journalist it was an employer known for 'respected' journalism. Industry volatility and occupational change have intensified and complicated the journalism field's continuing struggle for control of the means of public expression, yet their experiences

provide some indication of the field's continuing capacity to assert and reproduce its core expertise.

Bourdieu (2005) further argues journalists' capacity to report in the public interest and manage market pressures – or, in theoretical terms, 'to resist the impositions of the state or the economy' – is tied to field position and the authority that comes with it (pp. 43-44). In other words, career moves are always constrained by structural processes that shape both the availability of work opportunities and journalists' perceptions of those opportunities. The public broadcasting journalist's rationale for taking a new job captures this idea of pre-constrained 'choices':

I had planned on being in print – lucky that didn't eventuate because we've seen what's happened to the print industry. But, overall, I just wanted to continue developing my skills and continue storytelling, irrespective of the platform. I have worked in digital, radio, online and TV, and I think that's why I've been able to have longevity, because I can file and work across all the different mediums...I volunteered for a redundancy, it came at the right time, because I was ready to go back to public broadcasting journalism...What I did learn from the commercial world and what I appreciate is the speed and efficiency, the rate at which people work. However, in public broadcasting, I think the checks and balances, the editorial support and the editorial standards are far better. So, there's a bit to learn from both.

Here we see the journalism field's structural dynamics (e.g. print industry in decline) putting a brake on early career ambition but fostering unexpected career advancement, first in commercial television news and then in public interest journalism. Commitment to storytelling, the field's core mission, drives both continual upskilling and continual job-seeking. All types of journalism work are seen to offer learning opportunities but some clearly

foster journalistic power more than others.

Conclusion

The aim of this investigation was to produce new knowledge about changing work patterns and practices in journalism that would be of interest to at least three types of stakeholders: scholars concerned to understand an under-researched aspect of media transformation, journalism practitioners and job-seekers looking for pragmatic knowledge of the labour market, as well as journalism educators and students honing their skill-sets and career expectations. We know that journalists cannot expect full-time, life-long careers in newspaper companies and that entrepreneurialism is on the rise (Rottwilm, 2014), but there is less clarity around the implications of irreversible industry trends for journalistic work.

This article shows that changing work patterns and practices in Australian journalism are seen to provide attractive as well as exploitative work opportunities. Most of the 10 younger journalists were relieved to find journalism work beyond newsrooms. In the case of the four retrenched younger journalists, it was relief in finding they could re-start their careers, and, in two or three cases, do other types of work for other types of employers. For another three, self-employment provided multiple reasons to feel relieved: from leaving behind job dissatisfaction and ‘the transitional burden’ of work in converged newsrooms, to gaining control of their own output, flexible workstyles that delivered work/life balance, and higher incomes. Of course, the small research sample means this is an indicative rather than generalisable finding, and this is a limitation of the investigation.

The fact that only three younger journalists pursued mainstream newsroom work should not be cause for catastrophic thinking. On the contrary, this investigation shows those who were in a position to push ahead with their journalism careers, did so.

The value of this research is that it encourages new thinking about journalistic work

options at a time of industry volatility and occupational change. It offers provocative critical perspectives and successful cases studies to journalists who are interested in self-employment. And it provides evidence that careers can be re-started after retrenchment.

Finally, this article concludes by pointing to some of the changing labour patterns and practices in the journalism field that merit further research. These include portfolio workstyles, venture labour and corporate journalism. More broadly, the apparent decoupling of journalism work from newsrooms and daily news reporting represents a major development in the journalism field, that clearly has implications for public interest journalism, and, therefore requires more theorisation and empirical investigation.

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