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Girls, girls, girls. A study of the popularity of journalism as a career among female teenagers and its corresponding lack of appeal to young males

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From the editors

This edition of *Australian Journalism Monographs*, contributed by a team of researchers from Bond University on the Gold Coast, examines the reasons why so many of us, as journalism educators, continue to see our classes and programs dominated by young female students. The trend has been evident for 20 years, perhaps more, but this is the first comprehensive Australian study to examine the reasons behind the trend. Importantly, it goes to the source—high-school leavers—and reveals their perceptions of the industry; and why they may or may not consider journalism as a potential career. It also examines the views of high school careers counsellors who can often have an influential role to play in the tertiary courses students choose to study, and interviews ‘elite’ sources from the journalism field. The work suggests some important changes for both the journalism education sector and particularly the high school English curriculum which has a strong influence on the perceptions many high school students have about journalism.

For the first time, this issue of *Australian Journalism Monographs* is available as a pdf. Go to Griffith University’s Centre for Public Culture and Ideas website for an electronic version of this volume. Past editions will also soon be available. This issue also sees the return of Susan Forde as Editorial Coordinator of AJM. Thanks to my colleague, Jacqui Ewart, for taking the reins for the 2007 and 2008 issues while I was on maternity leave. I’m now back on deck and looking forward to involvement in many future issues of AJM, which we are working to ensure grows and develops as an important source of published research for journalism educators and researchers.

We trust readers will find this comprehensive study of interest. The next issue of *Australian Journalism Monographs* will be published in August, 2010. See the inside back cover for Notes to Contributors, and abstract and paper deadlines.

About the authors

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Roger Patching recently retired as Associate Professor at Bond University after nearly half a century in daily journalism and journalism education. He began his career in the early 1960s as a cadet on the *Adelaide News*, and also worked for commercial radio and television, the ABC and Australian Associated Press (AAP). In 1979, Roger joined Charles Sturt University (then Mitchell CAE) as a lecturer. He is co-author of three editions of *Now the News in Detail* (Deakin University Press) and two editions of *Journalism Ethics: Arguments and Cases* (Oxford University Press). He was recently honoured with life membership of the Journalism Education Association.

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Dr Mark Pearson is Professor and Head of Journalism at Bond University. He is the author of *The Journalist's Guide to Media Law* (Third Edition, Allen and Unwin, 2007) and co-author with Jane Johnston of *Breaking Into Journalism* (Allen and Unwin, 1998). He co-authored (with Jeffrey Brand) *Sources of News and Current Affairs*, (ABA, 2001). He contributes freelance articles to newspapers and magazines, and in recent years has been published in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and *The Australian*.

Girls, girls, girls. A study of the popularity of journalism as a career among female teenagers and its corresponding lack of appeal to young males

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The authors express their gratitude to research assistants Jill Borchard and Naomi Busst, and to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bond University for funding the research. They are also grateful to the high school careers counsellors who kindly completed the survey and to the teachers who helped with the data collection among senior school students.

Abstract

Australian journalism programs have long reported a disproportionate number of female students and the industry is becoming increasingly feminised. The latest (2006) Census figures showed that, for the first time in Australian history, women outnumbered men in journalism and related occupations. While many researchers have commented upon the increased popularity of journalism as a career choice among young women and its decline in popularity among young men, none have undertaken a comprehensive project researching the reasons for this phenomenon. This study has addressed this gap in the research. The research team conducted an extensive literature review, surveyed 444 senior secondary school students and 32 high school careers advisers, and conducted in-depth interviews with 15 'elite' journalism industry personnel to explore the reasons for this trend. This monograph reviews the literature of the field, highlights the findings of the study, and discusses the implications for Australian journalism of the increasingly feminised newsroom. It identifies several gaps between the perceptions of teenagers about journalism and the realities of the career and questions the motivations and knowledge base of many students when deciding to pursue or reject the career choice. It suggests some careers advice they receive might be misguided, particularly when the advice is based upon performance in senior school English studies. The monograph concludes with a call for journalism programs and the industry generally to improve their communication with high school students, teachers and careers advisers to enhance their knowledge of the range of journalism careers and the mission of journalism in a democratic society. The authors also suggest further research be conducted into the compatibility of the senior secondary English curriculum with the workplace requirements of the entry level journalist.

Introduction

For more than two decades journalism educators and industry personnel have been puzzled by the popularity of journalism as a career choice for young women and its relative lack of favour amongst their male counterparts. This project aimed to shed new light on this conundrum by systematically gauging the views of senior high school students, careers counsellors and industry personnel. The feminisation of journalism programs has now progressed in statistical terms to the industry proper. In 2006, the Australian Census showed for the first time that more women than men were working in journalism. The transition from a male dominated profession had occurred over the preceding five years. The 2001 Census recorded marginally more men (8296) than women (8220) in the category 'Journalists and Related Professionals', totalling 16,516 (ABS, 2001: Occupation by SEX (a) – Persons (CC55)). By 2006, this had changed significantly to 8941 men and 9763 women, totalling 18,704 (ABS, 2006: Cat. No. 2068.0 – 2006, Based on the 1996 Australian Standard Classification of Occupations [ASCO]) (see Table 1). By 2006 only print journalism had more men than women employed, with 3199 males (50.7%) to 3106 females (49.3%), totalling 6305 (ABS, 2006: Cat. No. 2068.0, Alternative View (b): Culture and Leisure Occupations).

Table 1: Journalists and related professionals by gender (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001 & 2006).

Year	Male	Female	Total
2001	8296 (50.2%)	8220 (49.8%)	16516
2006	8941 (48%)	9763 (52%)	18704

Not only were there more women in journalism, but also many had started to break through the so-called 'glass ceiling' in recent years. Ita Buttrose, editor-in-chief of the *Australian Women's Weekly* and *Cleo* in the late 1970s, paved the way in newspapers when she was appointed editor-in-chief of Sydney's *Sunday Telegraph* in 1981 (Meade, 2009:5). She was followed by Michelle Grattan who was appointed editor of the *Canberra Times* in 1993 and Jeni Cooper at the *Sunday Telegraph* in Sydney in the late 1990s (Meade, 2009:5). In television, Cathie Schnitzerling became the first female news director in Sydney in 2008 while Kate Torney and Kate Dundas broke through the glass ceiling at the ABC in 2009 when they were appointed directors of radio and news divisions (Meade, 2009:5).

The gender breakdown of journalism recruits is important for a range of reasons, many of which are discussed by the industry interviewees in this project. Rash judgments about the gender balance in any occupation are fraught. Nevertheless, society as a whole benefits when young people enter a career for the right reasons and, equally, when they do not reject certain

careers for the wrong reasons. With that in mind, our research team set out to determine the perceptions of journalism as a career among young men and women and the views of careers counsellors who hold special sway over high school students' vocational decisions. We also sought the views of selected industry personnel to gain retrospective insight into their own motivations for choosing a journalism career.

Thus, two main research questions drove this study:

- Why are young women attracted to journalism as a career?
- Why are young men less attracted to journalism as a career?

Past research

Female students have outnumbered males in tertiary journalism programs in Australia for at least the past two decades and this gender imbalance has started to make an impact on the demographics of newsrooms. In the late 1990s, Roger Patching (1997:103-104) reported a ratio of female: male journalism students of between 2:1 and 4:1 in tertiary courses, while Pearson (1988) studied newspaper cadetship applicants in 1988 and found a 2:1 female: male ratio in respondents to a survey of that cohort. In New Zealand, the imbalance was even higher, with Yvonne Densem (2006) reporting the ratio was as high as 7:1 in that country's courses in 2006. Her work attempted to fathom why the ratio was so disproportionate. Her work served as the basis of comparison for Pearson (2008). The popularity of journalism courses among young women is certainly an international phenomenon. Becker, Vlad, Vogel, Wilcox and Hanisak (2008:206) reported about two thirds of US journalism and mass communication students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels were female in 2007, a slight decrease on the previous year.

Several scholars have researched the reasons high school leavers enter journalism education and careers. These studies have identified a number of important factors which have led students to journalism. These include influences during their schooling, the students' interests and attributes, and their perceptions of journalism as a career. Many entrants into journalism appear to be directly influenced by staff at school (both at primary and secondary levels). Splichal and Sparks (1994:138) found that 58.3% of journalism students did not make their career choice autonomously, which suggests more than half of all students received some sort of career advice. This differs from their findings in other countries where the majority of students entered journalism after hearing second-hand information (Splichal & Sparks, 1994:130). Henningham's 1996 research backed up Splichal and Sparks' Australian findings. This study revealed that journalism was most

often chosen by someone because of their ability to write (a fact often pointed out by careers advisers in high schools).

Fitzsimmons & Bilboe (1999) had more evidence of the role that school staff played in students' career choices. They discovered that of their 81 respondents, 83% stated the number one reason for their choice of a career in journalism was because of a teacher. Another 15% stated that it was a teacher during their primary schooling who had influenced their career choice through instilling the idea that they were good writers. Teachers and careers advisers clearly have influence on their students by encouraging them in the area of writing. Pearson (1988) conducted a study of cadetship applicants and found that they may also have an impact in other areas. He noted that cadets were well informed about journalism and had researched or experienced the occupation first hand during work experience (an activity often organised by careers advisers).

Pearson's 1988 work also revealed that those interested in careers in journalism (typically females 17-18 years of age) did not only excel at English, but also they enjoyed the subject. These young women chose journalism as it fulfilled their desire to have a career focused on writing (Pearson, 1988:126). Other researchers (Henningham, 1996; Splichal & Sparks, 1994) also concluded that an interest in writing fuelled young people's interest in journalism. Some students have been noted as having an interest in current events, clearly a beneficial trait in a journalism aspirant. Hanna and Sanders (2007) found that of the participants in the United Kingdom, 37% were categorised as expressing a desire to enter journalism because of this interest.

Students entering any career will normally do so because of their apparent talents and interests (as discussed above) and their perception that their job of choice has an array of positive characteristics. A number of researchers have identified such positive factors which have encouraged students to embark on journalism as a career. The perception that journalism is a credible career was what motivated undergraduate students enrolled in print news majors in the United States, according to Endres and Warden (1990). Reinforcing this idea, Rauch, Trager and Kim's 2003 study into civic journalism suggested that news writing students in the US were inclined to accept journalism's related values and practices. However, the importance of journalism's credibility in career choice may be waning. In a study conducted by Hanna and Sanders (2007), only 17% of students in the UK revealed they were interested in journalism because of its public service orientation. Similarly, Hollings, Lealand, Samson and Tilley (2007) suggested that the feminised workforce, journalism in particular, could have resulted from a decrease in credibility of the career. Apparently, journalism was perceived as having changed its focus from current events to entertainment and lifestyle. Whether this opinion—that journalism is no

longer focused on current events and is of service to society—has filtered down to journalism students was one of the aspects we explored in this study.

Journalism has also been perceived by applicants as a creative occupation (Pearson, 1988), and noting participants' belief in the importance of creative writing (Fisher, 1978), the perception of it also being 'fun' and 'glamorous' (Densem, 2006) is reasonable. Considering that Alysén and Oakham (1996) profiled the typical Australian journalism student as a 19-year-old female aiming to work for a magazine or the features section of a newspaper, this view of journalism as incorporating creativity and access to celebrity may be assigned to the journalism aspirant. Finally, while this is only positive for half of high school students, Day (2004) has suggested that the significant presence of females in the media has encouraged women to pursue a career in journalism.

While journalism being a credible and creative pursuit may lead some to choose it as a career, the literature reveals that there are other perceptions of journalism which keep students away. Densem (2006) showed that there was a perception that journalism was a difficult career and that one needed to be intelligent in order to succeed. This perception of the career being hard may have led to the career being seen as boring (Frith & Meech, 2007), time consuming, and stressful (Endres & Weardon, 1990).

While Day's (2004) work suggested women's presence in the media may have led to more females joining journalism, Densem (2006) showed this may have had the opposite effect with their male counterparts. Densem (2006) demonstrated that the perception among males was that there were more women in journalism than men. According to the focus groups she conducted, males were "put off" by this fact (Densem, 2006:43). Prior to the current study, Densem's 2006 project was the largest of its kind conducted in Australasia. She explored the reasons for the popularity of journalism as a career among young New Zealand women and the relative lack of appeal for young men. Her study also featured several research methods including focus groups, short interviews, in-depth interviews and questionnaires distributed to both secondary school students and tertiary journalism students (Densem, 2006:42). However, her sample of high school students was one of convenience, limited to Christchurch, and involved a relatively small sample of 160 students. She did not interview careers advisers.

Other earlier studies have focussed almost exclusively on the views of young people who have already nominated journalism as their career choice as either tertiary journalism students (Alysén & Oakham, 1996; Patching, 1997) or newspaper cadetship applicants (Pearson, 1988).

In summary, numerous scholars in Australia and abroad have attempted to examine journalism as a career choice among males and females, but studies have been either limited to relatively small data sets or are now quite dated. This project is clearly the largest and broadest examination of disproportionate gender in journalism career choice undertaken to date.

Methodology

This project adopted a triangulated approach to its investigation of the three research questions, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative methods. The three methods used were:

- A survey of 444 senior Australian high school students (182 males and 262 females) to ascertain the attitudes of ordinary teenagers to journalism as a career choice. It included both Likert scale responses and open-ended questions.
- A questionnaire completed by 32 high school careers advisers on their perceptions of candidates for journalism as a career and their advice to students about selecting journalism as a career.
- In-depth interviews with 15 industry 'elites' – individuals from throughout journalism broadly reflecting differences in gender, role, level of experience and industry sector.

Ethical clearance was obtained for all three stages of data collection and protocols followed. The approach and rationale for each is explained here.

Stage One: Survey of 444 senior high school students. A quantitative research design was used to gauge the teenagers' perceptions of journalists and journalism as a career through 51 close-ended Likert-scale questionnaire items. There were also six tick-box questions covering age, year level, gender, news habits and study plans as well as four open-ended questions asking students to name a male and female journalist and offer their opinions of them and to volunteer further opinions of journalism as a career and explain their study plans. A total of 444 high school students were recruited for voluntary participation. A combination of purposive and convenience sampling was used. Participants were recruited from four different locations across Queensland, NSW and South Australia, including two private schools, a public school and a careers expo. Schools were chosen because of age appropriate students who would be leaving school within the next three years and staff willingness to assist by administering the surveys. The careers expo was chosen to randomise the pool from which participants were selected. Only students aged 16 and older were eligible to participate.

Some of the attitudinal questions were framed with the same wording as Densem's (2006) New Zealand study to allow for an international

comparison of attitudes, reported by Pearson (2008). For the Likert-scale items, participants were asked to read each statement and circle their levels of agreement, with five being the highest and one being the lowest. As there were no correct answers, participants were instructed to answer based on their immediate reactions to the questions rather than analysing them too deeply, in order to obtain valid and reliable participant reactions. Data were cleaned to check values beyond the limitation of the scales. Incorrect data were subsequently corrected or dropped. Once cleaned, the data were analysed using SPSSV15. Descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated for characterisation of the sample and exploration of the research questions.

Stage Two: Careers advisers' questionnaire. Convenience sampling was used in an open-ended instrument administered to 32 individuals at a careers advisers' day at Bond University, Queensland, on May 29, 2008. There were four demographic tick-box questions covering position description, gender, school type and school location, and seven open-ended questions covering the personality/character traits deemed to make a student suitable or unsuitable for journalism as a career; the required academic strengths; reasons for discouraging a student from pursuing journalism; perceptions of its popularity among young women and lack of popularity among young men; and provision for optional further comments. Given the small but elite sample, the responses were subjected to qualitative rather than quantitative analysis. The questionnaires were transcribed and input into the qualitative software program NVivo, where answers were grouped according to their question numbers.

Stage Three: Elite interviews with industry personnel. The final stage of the project involved extended interviews with 15 industry 'elites' to gauge their views on the popularity of journalism among teenage girls, the lack thereof among boys, and their observations about potential implications for journalism of this gender shift. Marshall (1989:34) defined an "elite interview" as "a specialised treatment of interviewing that focuses on a particular type of respondent". She continued:

Elites are selected for interviews on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research. Elite interviewing has many advantages. Valuable information can be gained from these respondents because of the positions they hold in social, political, financial, or administrative realms... Elites, in general, resent the restrictions placed on them by narrow, stereotypical questions. They desire a more active interplay with the interviewer.

This background is provided to underscore the iterative nature of the qualitative in-depth elite interview. Morse (1998:73) suggested a good

informant “is one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has the time to be interviewed, and is willing to participate in the study”.

A matrix was developed for elite interviewee selection so that some reflection of key criteria could be attained within the 15 in-depth interviews. Interviewees are detailed in the Appendix, with five opting for anonymity. Criteria included gender, location, seniority and media type. Interviewees came from the same three states as the high school students surveyed – Queensland, NSW and South Australia. Eight male and seven female journalists were interviewed for between 20 and 40 minutes on a range of topic areas, many based upon preliminary findings from the first two research stages. The interviews were undertaken in late 2008 – early 2009. While the actual questioning and topics varied somewhat in accordance with the fluidity of the elite interviewing methodology, questions centred upon why they thought journalism was more popular with young women than it is with young men, whether that developing trend had any repercussions for journalism in general, how this impacted on journalists of either gender, and how they thought more young men might be attracted to journalism if this was deemed important. Interviews were transcribed and input into the qualitative software program NVivo, where answers were grouped broadly according to topic and separate searches and processing was undertaken to aid with interpretation.

Stage 1 results

The survey of senior high school students about their attitudes to journalism as a career obtained 444 responses, including 182 males (41%), 262 females (59%). Sixty per cent of the sample were in Year 12 at school, while the remainder were in Year 11. Age breakdown was: 16 years old 39.5%; 17 years old 49.8%; 18 years old 10.2% and 19 years old 0.5%. The sample was comprised of both students interested in pursuing journalism and those that were not. In fact, 75% of the students indicated they would not pursue a journalism degree at university. This was important because the study aimed to understand motivations for and against entering the field and we were particularly interested in why it seemed more attractive to young women than young men.

The responses gave some insight into the news appetite of teenagers, with 1.7% claiming to catch up on the news hourly, 58% daily, 29.9% weekly, 1.7% monthly and 8.8% 'rarely'. Their news diet was also interesting, with 50.1% getting most of their news from television, followed by 11.2% relying on the Internet for their news, 5.9% using radio, just 3.8% using newspapers, and 29% claiming multiple or other sources of news. Significant gender differences included the fact that males (57%) were more likely to get their news from television than teenage females (44%) and that teenage females were more likely than males to turn to newspapers for their news (5.3%

versus 1.1%). In short, teenage girls were significantly higher users of all media apart from television as a news source and were also more likely than boys to access news from multiple sources.

The differences between the genders also became apparent in the students' responses to 15 Likert-scale questions gauging their perceptions of journalism as a career. The qualities chosen for ranking were drawn predominantly from qualities used in previous studies, as identified during the literature review (Pearson, 1988; Endres & Weardon, 1990; Frith & Meech, 2007; and Densem, 2006). This allowed for some comparison, some of which has been conducted through conference presentations (Pearson, 2008; Busst, Patching and Pearson 2008; and Blair & Borchard, 2008). For the purpose of analysis, the Likert scale answers were further reduced to three-way responses – 'disagree', 'neutral' and 'agree'. The relative level of agreement with the 15 attributes of all 444 respondents is ranked in Table 2.

Table 2: High school students' (n=444) responses 15 suggested characteristics of journalism as a career, ranked according to their level of agreement.

Characteristic	Rank	\bar{x}
Deadline focused	1	4.06
Full of travel opportunities	2	3.92
Focused on current events	3	3.87
Time consuming	4	3.82
Stressful	5	3.74
Hard	6	3.47
Of service to society	7	3.40
Creative	8	3.29
Highly paid	9	2.98
Boring	10	2.86
Fun	11	2.75
Flexible	12	2.67
Glamorous	13	2.59
Girly	14	2.39
Blokey	15	2.04

The respondents as a whole showed insight into the realities of a journalism lifestyle in four of their top five responses—demonstrating they were reasonably well aware that journalism was deadline and current events focussed, time-consuming and potentially stressful. However, the fact that ‘full of travel opportunities’ sits at second most agreed response indicates a serious misconception of journalism as a career, given that frequent travel is not the norm in most journalists’ work. At the other extreme, the least agreed items were the gender-driven perceptions that journalism as a career was ‘girly’ or ‘blokey’. While there were some noteworthy differences between genders in this response, its overall low level of agreement indicates its maleness or femaleness is not at the forefront of teenagers’ minds when they are considering their career choice. Also at the lower end of the comparative agreement rankings were the suggestions that journalism was a ‘fun’ or ‘glamorous’ career. This might at least partially alleviate concerns that young people generally are attracted by the false notion that the career holds great potential for fame and excitement, although again there are some gender differences in the responses worthy of note.

Each of the characteristics is now examined in further detail, with discussion grouped according to these topic themes: workload, excitement and glamour, knowledge, and gender bias. Further insight into the students’ views on journalism as a career was also gleaned from their responses to an open-ended question on the matter. Some of these qualitative comments have been selected to add further shades of meaning to the quantitative comparisons found in the tables.

Workload

Five of the 15 career perception questions related to the workload of journalists and the high school students showed an overwhelming perception that journalism was a time-consuming, stressful, difficult and deadline-focussed career generally lacking in flexibility. As can be seen from Tables 3-7, more than two thirds of the respondents agreed that journalism was time-consuming and deadline-focussed, while more than half saw it as stressful and hard, and slightly fewer than half saw it as relatively inflexible as a career.

The gender breakdown of these perceptions was similar for most of the qualities, although two differences are worthy of note. It is interesting that significantly more girls (67%) than boys (59%) agreed that journalism was a stressful career, particularly given its popularity among young women. If girls see journalism as stressful career, then why are they so keen to pursue it? Not as surprising is the fact that fewer girls (41%) than boys (48%) disagreed that journalism was a flexible career. Day (2004) has reported that female students viewed access to new technologies allowing women to work from home as an indicator of career flexibility, while Aldridge (2001) noted the

view that women can only be successful if they are willing to sacrifice family to do so. It could be that even in their teenage years girls are at least hoping for a reasonable level of flexibility with work arrangements later in their lives when they might be seeking such flexibility to help balance their work and parental responsibilities. It might also be that girls and boys have different understandings of the word 'flexibility', and this possibility was not explored in the study.

Table 3: I consider a career in journalism to be time-consuming

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	9.3%	7.3%	8.1%
Agree	64.8%	65.6%	65.3%
Neutral	25.8%	27.1%	26.6%

Table 4: I consider a career in journalism to be stressful

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	14.8%	10.7%	12.5%
Agree	58.8%	67.2%	63.5%
Neutral	26.4%	22.1%	23.9%

Table 5: I consider a career in journalism to be hard

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	16.5%	19.8%	18.3%
Agree	53.3%	52.7%	53%
Neutral	30.2%	27.5%	28.6%

Table 6: I consider a career in journalism to be deadline focused

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	12.1%	5.7%	8.3%
Agree	69.8%	76%	73.2%
Neutral	18.1%	18.3%	18.6%

Table 7: I consider a career in journalism to be flexible

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	48.4%	40.5%	43.6%
Agree	16.5%	20.6%	19%
Neutral	35.2%	38.9%	37.4%

Several students' comments in the open-ended section strongly reinforced this notion of journalism being a demanding career. Comments included:

- "It is hard and time consuming and there is too much pressure if something wrong gets written by a journalist."
- "It would be very stressful and time consuming, but if you were good you could go very far and have an amazing career."
- "It sounds stressful and hectic as one would have to stay on top of current events. It sounds like a person would have to be really focused in a competitive area..."
- "I believe that journalism is a stressful career as all work is completed on a deadline basis."

Excitement and glamour

Both male and female respondents rejected the notion that seeking out fame and glamour might be a motivating factor for journalism aspirants. Only 16.6% of the students ranked journalism as a glamorous career, a response common to both genders. There was, however, the perception that journalism was full of travel opportunities, with about 70% of boys and girls perceiving it this way. Given that Stehlik (2008) has noted that travel opportunities are likely to attract young people into a career, this might partly explain its popularity, although recruits might become disillusioned by the fact that many journalists go their whole working careers without embarking upon very much work-related travel beyond their own neighbourhoods. Either way, it sheds little light on the gender difference because both boys and girls offered similar responses.

Table 8: I consider a career in journalism to be glamorous

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	49.5%	45.0%	46.5%
Agree	16.5%	16.0%	16.6%
Neutral	34.1%	38.9%	36.9%

Table 9: I consider a career in journalism to be full of travel opportunities

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	9.9%	8.8%	9.2%
Agree	69.2%	71.4%	70.7%
Neutral	20.9%	19.8%	20.1%

The open-ended responses reinforced these findings, with comments like:

- “Journalism seems to be becoming more and more glamorised which may be a stretch on the truth.”
- “In some ways dangerous, but fun because you get to opportunity to travel.”
- “I think journalism would be a great career to stay up to day with today’s news and would present many travel opportunities”
- “Full of travel and exciting opportunities.”
- “Probably an extremely challenging career, although if posted internationally or in areas of great interest it would be extremely rewarding.”
- “Hard to break into, very stressful, lots of travel.”

One flagged the so-called ‘*Getaway*’ factor (after the Australian television travel program by that name): “If I were to pursue journalism as a career, I would branch off into TV presenting on a show like ‘*Getaway*’ or ‘*The Great Outdoors*’.” At least one would be entering journalism with eyes open, however, showing a knowledge of the career beyond the stereotype: “I think movies (Hollywood) ‘over-glamorise’ the industry of journalism.”

There were significant gender differences in the responses to the questions related to level of ‘fun’ in journalism or its antonym, whether it was ‘boring’. The overall figures hide the fact that significantly more girls believed journalism would be a fun, rather than a boring career. As detailed in tables 10 and 11, just short of half of the teenage girls (49.2%) rejected the notion of journalism as boring, while only 31.3% of boys disagreed that it was boring. Similarly, while 34.7% of girls agreed journalism was ‘fun’, only 24.1% agreed with that proposition and more than half of the boys (50.5%) openly rejected that suggestion. Here we might start to fathom a reason for its popularity among females over males, given the attraction of fun and the antipathy to being bored one might find among teenagers of any generation, but particularly the 21st century digital generation.

Table 10: I consider a career in journalism to be boring

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	31.3%	49.2%	41.8%
Agree	38.5%	24.0%	30%
Neutral	30.2%	26.7%	28.2%

Table 11: I consider a career in journalism to be fun

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	50.5%	37.8%	43%
Agree	24.1%	34.7%	29.3%
Neutral	28%	27.5%	27.7%

Their views on this level of fun or otherwise in the career were also reflected in their open-ended comments, some of which combined the interest level with other characteristics, such as:

- “I think it would be stressful and boring.”
- “On many occasions it would be exciting, however, I feel there would be a lot of office work also required and I would find it hard to stay focused.”
- “It seems interesting, every day is different and creative, but not the best hours.”
- “It seems exciting and full of adventure.”

Knowledge

High school boys and girls demonstrated no significant differences in their responses to two questions related to their understanding of the career and its role in society, detailed at tables 12 and 13. Not surprisingly, about two thirds knew that journalism was focused on current events and there was a range of responses to their perceptions of the remuneration of journalists, with almost equal numbers agreeing and disagreeing that they were highly paid and 42.5% giving a neutral response. This could be explained by many factors. Perhaps teenagers simply do not know the pay rates of many careers or perhaps they are aware that some journalists are very highly paid while others, particularly regional journalists, earn about the same amount as their school teachers.

Table 12: I consider a career in journalism to be focused on current events

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	13.2%	6.5%	9.2%
Agree	60.4%	69.8%	66.2%
Neutral	26.4%	23.7%	24.6%

Table 13: I consider a career in journalism to be highly paid

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	28.6%	27.1%	27.5%
Agree	31.3%	29.0%	30%
Neutral	40.1%	43.9%	42.5%

Gender differences in the responses were evident, however, in the questions related to whether a career in journalism was 'creative' (Table 14) and of service to society (Table 15). More girls (50.0%) than boys (40.1%) viewed journalism as creative, while more boys (28.6%) than girls (19.5%) disagreed with the view that it was creative. This is quite interesting for our exploration into the relative popularity of the career for the respective genders because it implies young males are less likely to see it as an outlet for their creativity than young women are.

Table 14: I consider a career in journalism to be creative

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	28.6%	19.5%	23%
Agree	40.1%	50.0%	46.1%
Neutral	31.3%	30.5%	30.9%

Almost equal numbers of boys and girls agreed journalism was of service to society (44.5%), but there was a higher proportion of boys (28.6%) than girls (18.3%) disagreeing with that notion. This result was also somewhat of a surprise, considering Hanna and Sanders' (2007) study which reported that only 17% of students claimed an interest in journalism because of its public service. Young men are more pessimistic about journalism's value to society.

Table 15: I consider a career in journalism to be of service to society

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	28.6%	18.3%	22.6%
Agree	43.4%	45%	44.5%
Neutral	28%	36.6%	32.9%

The stronger disagreement with the service to society question from boys also links to a stand-alone question in the survey – Question 6, which asked students to agree or disagree with the statement ‘Journalism is a respected career’. Again, there was an interesting difference between responses on a gender basis. Overall, 42% agreed journalism was a respected career, with 42% neutral on the issue. However, only 29% of male respondents ranked journalism a respected career in contrast with 52% of females who felt it was respected. This, combined with the male-female disparity on the service to society question, might offer a significant clue as to why journalism is a more popular career choice among teenage girls. It could well be that boys are choosing other careers that they consider might be more respected in the community.

This result coincided with an avalanche of criticism of journalism ethics from respondents in an open-ended question: “Please express any other opinions you have of journalism as a career.” Some showed evidence of considerable experience in media criticism, perhaps developed via the media studies component of the senior English curriculum. Considering these comments were volunteered in the form of a written survey response, with no pressure or encouragement to compose considered responses as one might find in a focus group situation, the expressed attitudes to journalism ethics and credibility are remarkable for their negativity. Many seemed to relish the opportunity to vent about media ills, with these comments just a few examples of the range of views:

- “Journalism is a load of crap. They're just the people who can't get a real job so they write anything they can find and make something out of it.”
- “Journalism seems to be a job where you are either well-known (on TV or in a credible newspaper) or virtually unknown, lacking credibility (writing for a gossip magazine or local newspaper) without middle ground as such.”
- “It is a hard job and it can be very nosy and exploiting of people, isn't a good thing.”
- “Sometimes they look for entertainment and don't care about who they are hurting.”

- “It’s more focused on ratings than presenting the truth to society. I find it to be a career of bias rather than unslanted truth.”
- “I find it to be a rather slimy profession.”
- “Boring, stuck up and media related, all about money.”
- “I think journalism today is all about gossip. USELESS.”
- “Fictitious, melodramatic and overdone. Unless you’re on SBS or ABC, you’re not a real news show.” [sic]
- “Very intelligent people with lack of thought for others.”
- “I do not like journalism, it is the spawn of most evils.”
- “Journalists like to think they are making a difference, in reality they’re just a pain in the ass.”
- “I believe journalism is full of liars.”
- “Rude and attention seekers.”
- “I don’t like putting a spin on words to trick the public.”

We will return to this important aspect in the discussion and the conclusion.

Students also took the liberty to comment on the creativity aspect of the career:

- “Journalism seems like a creative career.”
- “I feel it allows people to be creative while also sharing important issues.”
- “I believe journalism would be a fun, creative job and you would learn a lot from it.”
- “Fun, challenging, creative.”

Gender bias

Diamond (1992) suggested there was a perception that journalism was a ‘boys’ club’, however the high school students did not perceive a sense of journalism being a more male or female career. If anything, girls were stronger in their rejection of the notion that journalism was ‘girly’ (58.4% disagreed) or ‘blokey’ (71% disagreed), as detailed in tables 16 and 17. At risk of reading too much into the ‘agree’ percentages, it was clear that more than twice as many students of both genders perceived journalism as a career to be ‘girly’. While we are dealing with less than one quarter of the sample here, this perception was almost twice as strong among boys (20.3%) than girls (11.5%). It might well be that the long-term domination of journalism courses by young women reported in the literature is indeed creating a perception among teenage boys that it is a feminised occupation and this might well be a disincentive to pursuing it.

Table 16: I consider a career in journalism to be 'girly'

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	48.9%	58.4%	54.6%
Agree	20.3%	11.5%	15.2%
Neutral	30.8%	30.2%	30.2%

Table 17: I consider a career in journalism to be 'blokey'

	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)	Total (n=444)
Disagree	59.3%	71.0%	66.4%
Agree	8.2%	5.7%	6.7%
Neutral	32.4%	23.3%	26.8%

Nevertheless, some gender-related comments did appear in their open-ended responses. One even appeared to have inside knowledge of, or at least a strong view about, a particular media outlet, volunteering: "Females = glass ceiling within 9 network." Others wrote:

- "Not suitable for women, not highly paid. But if successful... good job."
- "Women/young girls get the jobs because of their looks and who you know."
- "Seems pretty cut-throat, is a boys club and too deadline focused."

While these comments clearly came from the minority, they do represent a viewpoint held among the secondary school population.

Male and female journalists

The gender bias phenomenon links directly to the respondents' views about female and male journalists. Thirteen qualities, drawn from the previous literature, were put to the high school students to ascertain their impressions about female and male journalists respectively, with them disagreeing or agreeing on a five-point Likert scale. The purpose here was to gauge whether the teenagers ascribed different qualities to the journalists of different gender, perhaps indicating their view of them as potential role models or perhaps just flagging likely incentives or barriers to career entry.

As evident from Table 18, there was little difference in the male and female teenagers' perceptions of male journalists, with their intelligence, seriousness and credibility ranked among their top three attributes by respondents of both genders.

Table 18: Rankings of selected qualities of male journalists by secondary school students

Ranking of qualities of male journalists	(n = 444 students)		
	All	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)
Intelligent	1	2	1
Serious	2	1	2
Credible	3	3	3
Pushy	4	5	4
Nosey	5	4	5
Conservative	6	7 (tied)	6
Good looking	7	7 (tied)	7
Fun	8	6	8

However, the genders' views on female journalists differed markedly, as illustrated in Table 19. The appearance, or physical 'looks', of female journalists and their perceived 'pushiness' shot up the rankings, pushed by the views of male teenagers, while their female teenage counterparts still ranked the intelligence, seriousness and credibility of female journalists as their top attributes. In fact, boys ranked female journalists' top three qualities as 'good looking', 'pushy' and 'nosey', a marked departure from the attitudes of their female peers.

Table 19: Rankings of selected qualities of female journalists by secondary school students

Ranking of qualities of female journalists	(n = 444 students)		
	All	Male (n=182)	Female (n=262)
Intelligent	1	5	1
Serious	2	4	2
Good looking	3	1	5
Pushy	4	2	4
Nosey	5	3	6
Credible	6	6	3
Conservative	7	7	7
Fun	8	8	8

Some of the respondents' volunteered comments also reflected these perceived qualities of male and female journalists. A selection included:

- "Seems female journalists tend to be younger (mid 20s – 30s), whereas male journalists appear to be older (40s – 50s)."
- "People are focused on the appearance of new presenters, who need to be more laid back and human."
- "It is a stressful career which requires you to be attractive and up to date."

The final insight into the high school students' perceptions of male and female journalists was found in their responses when asked to name a male and female journalist with whom they were familiar and explain their opinions of them. Just over 45% of the students (201) did not volunteer the name of a female journalist, while 57.4% (255) did not offer the name of a male journalist with whom they were familiar. Those figures alone were telling. Recognition factors on female journalists were uniform among boys and girls at 55%, while only 40% of girls and 46% of boys were able to nominate a male journalist.

Table 20: Ten most nominated journalists by name, position, genre and male/female/total percentage nominees

Name	Position	Genre	Male %	Female %	Total %
Sandra Sully	Presenter, Ten News	TV news	12.1	16.4	14.6
Anna Coren	Presenter, Today Tonight, Seven	TV current affairs	13.7	9.5	11.3
Tracey Grimshaw	Presenter, A Current Affair, Nine	TV current affairs	6.0	5.0	5.4
David Koch	Presenter, Sunrise Seven	TV brkfast breakfast	7.7	3.1	5.0
Ray Martin	Former presenter, A Current Affair	TV current affairs	3.3	6.1	5.0
Karl Stefanovic	Presenter, Today Show, Nine	TV breakfast	3.8	2.3	2.9
Melissa Doyle	Presenter, Seven Sunrise	TV breakfast	2.2	1.9	2.0
Rod Young	Presenter, Seven News, Brisbane	TV news	0	3.1	1.8
Eva Milic	Presenter, Nine Weekend News, Brisbane	TV news	2.2	1.1	1.6
Peter Harvey	Reporter, Nine	TV news	2.7	.8	1.6

This indicates the high school students – both male and female – were more likely to be able to identify prominent female journalists than males. Highest recognition across all media went to television news readers and presenters of news or current affairs programs, equally split between male and female, but with the highest recognition going to three females. Highest recognised females and males are shown in Table 20.

Of the 151 journalists (63 female and 88 male) nominated by the teenagers, an overwhelming majority of 127 received only one or two nominations. Those with three nominations or more, apart from the top 10, were:

- Germaine Greer – print journalist, author and commentator
- Catriona Rowntree – Getaway reporter, Nine, TV travel program
- Natalie Barr – news presenter, Seven Sunrise, TV breakfast
- Chris Bath – presenter, Seven News, Sydney, TV news.
- Natalie Gruzlewski - Getaway reporter, Nine, TV travel program
- Mia Tampano – magazine writer, Frankie magazine
- Phillip Adams – columnist, *The Australian* newspaper; and radio host, ABC Radio National
- Harry Potter – reporter, Ten news, Sydney, TV news
- Peter Overton – reporter, 60 Minutes, Nine, TV current affairs
- Ian Ross – news presenter, Seven News, Sydney, TV news.
- Laurie Oakes – political reporter, Nine news, Canberra, TV news
- '60 Minutes guy' – reporter, 60 Minutes, Nine, TV current affairs
- Shane Webcke – sports reporter and presenter, Seven News, Brisbane, TV news
- Mark Beretta – sports presenter, Seven Sunrise, TV breakfast.

Thus, of the top 24 nominated journalists, who all received three nominations or more, 21 were television journalists and three were print journalists, one of whom was also a radio host (Phillip Adams). Of the 21 television journalists, nine were news reporters or presenters, five were current affairs reporters or presenters, five were breakfast presenters, and two were travel program reporters. Clearly, if one is to look for journalism role models for Australian teenagers, one need look no further than prime-time free to air television.

Notable, too, are the omissions from the lists of nominated journalists. While the questions "Name a female/male journalist you are familiar with and explain your opinion of her/him" might be seen as having a contemporary bias, missing from the responses were the types of literary and war correspondence male role models from Australia and beyond that excited a certain type of teenage boy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: names like Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, A.B. Paterson, C.W. Bean, Ernest Hemingway, Kenneth Slessor and George Johnston. Equally, there were no

modern equivalents of such literary figures. The so-called 'new journalists' and 'gonzo journalists' such as Tom Wolfe, Hunter S. Thompson, Norman Mailer and P.J. O'Rourke were absent. Iraq war correspondents such as Peter Arnett, Michael Ware, Paul McGeogh and Ian McPhedran were missing in action. Even the great modern era investigative reporters Carl Bernstein, Bob Woodward, Chris Masters, Paul Barry, Hedley Thomas and Ross Coulthart were not there. (Respected television reporters the late Richard Carlton and ABC's Eric Campbell did get two mentions each). At risk of this being seen as a generational issue, even the greatest names in e-journalism or blogging did not rate in the high school students' nominated journalists: *The Drudge Report's* Matt Drudge and *Crikey!* founder Stephen Mayne. While the television satirists from *The Chaser* received two nominations and the 'guy from *Good News Week*' got one, award-winning television interviewer Andrew Denton went unnamed. We return to this in the conclusion when we consider the implications of all this for the gender issue.

Writing ability

While there was a Likert scale question on creativity, none directly addressed writing ability, however the qualitative responses volunteered in the open-ended section certainly identified a clear perception among teenagers that journalists needed to be good at English and writing. Several stated as much in simple terms. Others took their comments further:

- "A job for people who are interested in language."
- "Must have a natural writing talent to be very good at your job (hard work will get you places, but natural ability makes or breaks your career)."
- "To be a journalist would require a lot of knowledge and literature... I think one piece of writing can make up a reputation."
- "The subject is up to the writer, it can be therapeutic because writing allows you to express yourself."
- "Lots of analysing and writing."
- "If you could write about stories you are interested in, it would be a great career."
- "Have to like writing about other people's business."
- "Hard work to write for a career – always need to meet deadlines."
- "I hate English, writing and social situations."
- "I usually think of journalists as people who write in newspaper or magazines and that seems hard and boring."
- "I just don't want to study a literature based course. High school year 12 put me off writing."
- "Don't like writing feature articles and no good at it either."

We will return to the important issue of students' perceptions of writing or English ability in the discussion and conclusion after considering the views of careers advisers on the matter.

Stage 2 results

The second stage of data collection involved the distribution of an open-ended questionnaire to 32 high school careers advisers, as detailed in the methodology above. The rationale for this stage was that students turned to their careers counsellors for advice on their vocational choices, as noted by Splichal and Sparks (1994:130), Fitzsimmons and Bilboe (1999) and Pearson (1988). This meant it was important to gauge career advisers' views on the issue of journalism being a more popular career choice for girls than boys, and also to ascertain the qualities of those they directed into journalism.

The 32 careers advisers also went by the occupational titles of 'careers counsellor', 'guidance officer', 'careers practitioner', 'careers co-ordinator' and 'careers educator'. Twenty-two of the respondents (68.8%) were female, and 10 (31.2%) male. Almost 60% (19) worked at a state school while the remainder (13) worked at private schools, including Catholic schools. The majority (27 or 84.4%) of the schools represented in the survey were located on the Gold Coast, four (or 12.5%) were from the far north of NSW, and one just north of the Gold Coast. Some opted for confidentiality. Extended analysis of the data was reported by Busst, Patching and Pearson (2008).

Personality and character traits and academic strengths of journalism aspirants

The careers advisers suggested four main themes in their open-ended responses on the personality or character traits that might make a student suitable for a journalism career. They were: confidence, being a good communicator, strong English skills and being inquisitive. Two thirds of the group said potential journalists needed to be confident, self-motivated, independent, outgoing, and assertive or show initiative, with eight each mentioning either confidence or 'being outgoing'. The next main category, nominated by 19, included: good communication, English, and written and/or verbal skills. Of course writing ability is not technically a 'personality/character trait', but many chose to note it in this first question and then again in the second category of academic strengths. More than one third, 14, said potential journalists needed to be inquisitive, while just six focussed upon time management and organisational skills. Creativity, flexibility and open-mindedness only arise in four of the responses.

A later question asked them the reverse: 'What are the personality/character traits that might make a student UNSUITABLE for a journalism career?' Not

surprisingly, antonyms of the above traits were volunteered. Two thirds suggested shyness, being inarticulate and poor self-esteem as contraindications for a journalism career, while more than one third offered poor English or communication skills as a negative. A few suggested negative characteristics like being 'slack and dishonest', 'disorganised', 'regularly biased', 'closed minded', 'lack of interest in the world around them' or racist. Some linked the issue to looks, stating that working in television journalism needed an 'aesthetic appeal'. Prompted for other reasons they would discourage students pursuing journalism, more than one third (11) said poor English or communication skills would be a barrier, while a few suggested poor academic performance, narrow interests and inflexibility as career negatives. Three noted that poor job prospects was a reason they might discourage journalism as a career choice, while another said they would counsel students away from journalism if they were seeking a highly paid career.

On academic strengths, all 32 said journalism aspirants must be good at English, literacy or communication. The head of the senior school at Keebra Park State High School expressed the view that the Queensland English Extension curriculum was an unsuitable pathway into journalism, an issue we return to in later discussion. Second to English competence was research skills, nominated by more than one third (12), while nine offered public speaking and five suggested drama ability. Some suggested academic study areas, with English being the unanimous choice, followed by history (8), politics (5), social sciences (5), humanities (5) and computing (2).

Careers advisers' views on the gender issue

The careers advisers were also asked their perspectives on why so many young women were selecting journalism as a career and why so few young men were choosing it. No clear reason for the popularity with girls stood out, with the most common reason, nominated by 10 of the 32, that girls preferred the humanities and writing. Eight each suggested female role models, the glamour of the occupation and flexible working hours. Six nominated the opportunities for travel as the attraction for young women. Others mentioned the attractions for girls of a career in television, particularly as a 'Getaway' presenter, and as an entry point for the fashion industry.

They suggested two main reasons why males seemed less attracted to journalism, each nominated by 13 of the advisers: the attraction of non-humanities careers like computing, science, business and trades and boys' lack of interest in research, writing and communication. At the time of the survey (March 2008) young men were attracted to the money in trade work, with four nominating that reason. One offered the popularity of journalism with girls as a negative for boys – that is, it might be seen as a girls' career.

Six said young men saw journalism as a poorly paid career. Others mentioned the lack of 'power' in journalism compared with law.

Some suggested there was a shortage of information about the variety of careers on offer within journalism.

Stage 3 results

The methodology for the elite interviews with industry practitioners from a range of backgrounds was detailed above. The professional background of the 15 interviewees showed that a number had worked in several areas of the media during their careers and this would have added to the richness of their responses.

Journalism's popularity with young women

The elites did not believe the popularity with young women was easily explained. Various personal and societal changes clearly supported the significant shift evidenced over the past decade or more. Former newspaper journalist and at the time of the interviews assistant editor of *Golf Australia*, Jeff Centenera, recalled that in 1999 only two of 12 new staff at the *Canberra Times* were male (2008). "In my last few years almost all our entry level people were female," he said. "All the new bylines [today] are of the young people, all female. Finding a young male is really quite rare" (Centenera, 2008). Sharon Hill (2008), group editorial development manager for News Limited, said at least five to six times as many young women as men were applying for journalism positions two years previously, in 2006.

Amber De Nardi (2008), who edited 'Domain Your Home' and was the features coordinator for Fairfax Community Newspapers in Sydney, cited society's increasing acceptance of women both in journalism and also in almost every other role. "Women can go out on their own and ask serious questions - whether they're politicians or criminals it doesn't matter - and it's not seen as incongruous," she said. "Women could always do that except now everyone knows they can do it" (De Nardi, 2008).

Sharon Hill (2008) added that in the 1970s many legislative barriers kept women out of certain employment areas. "All of those fell away," she said. "It still wasn't particularly easy because we all still went into newsrooms where there were many more older men than there were younger women. But it may be that was the point at which it changed" (Hill, 2008). Tim Allan (2008), who reported sport for WIN Television in Wollongong, agreed. "I guess there was always this perception that a newsroom was full of fat balding creepy alcoholic guys, and I guess maybe that perception is starting to fall away," he said. "Maybe women are less intimidated about entering a newsroom now" (Allen, 2008). De Nardi (2008) suggested journalism "has become a little bit softer around the edges where it's not just in-your-face

type journalism". However, "there are some women who can really hold their own there as well – but there's more of a humanity feel about it," she added. "Maybe the human interest element has really surfaced and I think women are especially good at that" (De Nardi, 2008).

Both these characteristics were seen as another reason more women were entering journalism. "I think females in the last 10 to 15 years have become a heck of a lot more assertive than they ever were," said an older male journalist with experience in TV, radio and newspapers (2008). "They have an ability to push to get the story perhaps more than men ever have. It is my experience they are more determined than a bloke and don't mind whose toes they tread on to generate the story. At the same time, they are not unethical, they are not breaking the rules" (TV, radio & newspapers, 2008).

But then there was the 'Getaway' factor, the attraction for a particular type of young woman. "So many of the girls want to go into journalism because they equate it with glamour, money and travel," said newspaper columnist and radio host Madonna King (2008). Sharon Hill (2008) agreed: "There's particularly an element of that [in those] who were doing broadcast journalism classes. They were aiming for that infotainment type of program which they saw as a great lifestyle and a way of being a bit of a celebrity, with not so much hard work." Nicky Haydon (2009), who reported for the Ten Network in Queensland, said she found many of the students on work experience at her newsroom wanted to be 'Getaway' presenters." We get Mums ringing up saying 'My daughter doesn't want to be a journalist, she'd like to be a presenter, so she'd like to come in and do work experience'," Haydon (2009) said.

Gold Coast Bulletin sports reporter Daniel Meers (2009) agreed it was the glamour that appealed to young women: "The appeal of the TV journo ... they're all stars and girls aspire to that." Two other reasons he thought journalism was attractive to young women were that girls outperformed boys at English in their latter high schools years (a factor mentioned by many of the careers advisers) and that news values in general had changed. "Hard news seems to have dropped back a bit and there seems to be more focus on lifestyle and celebrity news," he said. "A lot of the girls in our office would rather do the celebrity or lifestyle stuff" (Meers, 2009).

Sharon Hill (2008) also said even if they were not focusing on glamour journalism, some young women were aiming for the features department rather than the newsroom – "not the sharp end but for 9 to 5, Monday to Friday," she said. "What they don't understand until it hits them in the face is that yes, you will get a lifestyle that's easier, but by choosing not to be involved in the pointy end, not doing the night shifts, not coming up through police rounds and all the rest of it, you do make your chances for significant

promotion lower than they would be otherwise” Hill (2008). Some women indeed saw journalism as a flexible career.

Online editor with the *Courier-Mail*, John Grey (2008), said while this could change in the years ahead, at present some women thought: “I’ll be able to work three days a week in this job and still be Super Mum.” Nicky Haydon (2009) said she had delayed having children because she did not know what would happen with her job when she returned from maternity leave. “I just don’t think I’d have the same opportunities once I did come back. Can you go to Ballina for three days [with a young family] for a fishing boat sinking and that sort of thing?” she asked.

Journalism’s lack of popularity with young men

According to the elite interviewees, journalism had become less popular with young men mainly because of the money – and because of young women who were more assertive. News Limited training executive Sharon Hill (2008) said she felt it was to do with journalists’ remuneration.

The marks you need to get into journalism are very similar to the marks you need to get into law and medicine. But there’s a huge disparity in a lifetime earning potential. You could say why don’t women care as much about lifetime earning potential as men do. But the reality is they probably don’t. Most women still expect to marry, to not be the sole provider for the lives of other people. Whereas men, there’s a good chance that at some point, maybe for their whole married life, they will be the sole providers for a group of people. So maximizing their earning potential is, and I suspect always will be, more important for men than for women. If I were a young man and I had done so well in high school that I got the marks to get into journalism, I might think twice about whether I wanted to do that when I could choose to use those marks to get into law or medicine (Hill, 2008).

As well as the greater earning potential, other professions also offered a greater chance of becoming one’s own boss, she suggested.

Hill (2008) agreed senior editors, managers and executives could earn high salaries, but pointed out in the whole country this represented only a small group.

A lawyer or doctor who didn't make multiple hundreds of thousands a year would scarcely be trying. Our industry doesn't have much potential to go on adding to your salary year after year. If you're a lawyer and choose to work hard, there's almost no limit to what you can make. You can't say that about journalism. Here this work will steal your life away from your family and you will still only get your \$250,000 or tops \$300,000 as an editor and you'll still be working all the hours God sends. Whereas as a lawyer you're going to make \$750,000 or a million a year and bonuses (Hill, 2008).

Gold Coast Bulletin's Daniel Meers (2009), five years into his career, said he thought young men believed they could earn more in other jobs. "At school all the girls want to be journos and I think it scares a lot of the guys away. When I went to uni it was the same – spot the blokes," he added. A young South Australian male journalist (2008) supported the view of some of the careers advisers: "A lot of the guys in my year are doing trades, like brickies and that sort of thing."

Both Madonna King (2008) and an older South Australian male journalist (2008) suggested young men were not as good at selling themselves as young women, which comes back to the careers' advisers' point about confidence and self esteem. "Boys are not good at trumpeting their abilities in their late teens," said King (2008). A young female newspaper journalist from South Australia (2008) agreed, saying men "just don't seem to be as go-getter about it. I think the girls are really hungry for it, they really want it and so they're beating out the guys."

Young men who do choose journalism often do so because is a way of following their main love – such as sport. Golf magazine assistant editor Jeff Centenera (2008) said he still worked in a male-dominated environment, but "maybe it wasn't the journalism that drew them in".

Maybe [it was] the opportunity to surf a bit, and then write about it. I met the editor of the surfing magazine and I was talking about my background. I made some offhand remark, very embarrassingly, that I had newspaper experience, and that I thought every journalist should start at newspapers and then find something else to do, be it magazines or in television or radio. I think he was a bit flustered because he hadn't. I think he had gone straight from just writing features for the magazine as a

freelancer, to getting a job with the magazine and then editing the magazine (Centenera, 2008).

Strategies for attracting young men to journalism

Asked how to attract young men to journalism, few of the interviewees had concrete suggestions. 'Give them more money' or 'tell them there's plenty of girls in every newsroom' were among the immediate responses. Some could offer no solution at all. *Triple J* reporter Michael Atkin (2008) said he would encourage any young man to consider a career in journalism "as long as they don't mind being badly paid". *Courier-Mail* online editor John Grey (2008) suggested: "Tell them you might be able to make your money by watching sport, or eating in restaurants."

But several of the interviewees felt young men may misunderstand what the job entailed. The careers advisers had said that the lifestyle of the journalist was what attracted many of the young women. Why wouldn't the prospect of flexible working conditions, travel, meeting famous people and going to work each day not knowing what exciting assignment was ahead of you appeal to young men?

A young South Australian journalist (2008) said he told others that journalism was not an office job, that you were always out and about. "I met Kevin Rudd two weeks ago. You're just doing something different every day," he added.

Network Ten's Nicky Haydon (2009) believed the 'hard edge' of news journalism (as opposed to the softer news values mentioned earlier) needed to be emphasised to young men. "That it's not all froth and bubble," she added. Madonna King (2008) was as much concerned about the age imbalance in newsrooms as she was about the obvious gender imbalance. She proposed that every newsroom needed a balance between the young and the more mature. She felt older journalists should be encouraged to stay in the profession. "There are some things that only come with grey hair," she said.

Gender issues in the newsroom

Some of the interviewees volunteered observations on the way gender differences played out in the newsroom. Madonna King (2008) suggested young women were perhaps 'their own worst enemies' when it came to returning from maternity leave. "If a woman chooses to take a couple of years off to have a child, she can't expect to advance at the same rate as a man who keeps on working for those two years," she said.

When it came to the suggestion that either gender might suffer discrimination, there was general agreement this did not happen in the

modern news organisation any more than in other walks of life, although some staff thought there was the potential for it, and the mature interviewees could all tell stories of the male-dominated newsrooms of yesteryear. Asked if she had ever been treated differently because of her gender, Madonna King (2008) said never in the newsroom, but she had been called by well-meaning older listeners suggesting she should be 'home with the kids' instead of on the radio. She has two young children. Some of the interviewees felt that women were still being discriminated against at the higher levels of media management, but others pointed to more women nowadays holding senior newsroom positions as noted in the introduction to this monograph.

Discussion and conclusion

The results from the three stages of data collection – high school students, careers advisers and industry personnel – combine to offer important insights into young people's selection or rejection of journalism as a career choice and lay out some crucial challenges for journalism educators, the news media industry and the secondary school education system.

The key findings stem from the teenagers' views on the career and the careers' advisers motivations for directing students towards journalism or steering them away from it. The perceptions of the careers advisers and the industry personnel about the gender imbalance can only be regarded as secondary findings because, while their opinions are well informed, they may well be just encapsulating the folklore of the issue among teachers and journalists. In other words, they are educated guesses that can only reinforce the empirical findings of the first-hand accounts. Our discussion is best arranged as a response to the research questions.

Why are young women attracted to journalism as a career?

The empirical evidence emanating from Stages 1 and 2 of this research establishes clearly that girls are attracted to journalism as a career because:

- They were more likely to perform well at English and the humanities at school and these are the students encouraged by careers advisers to consider journalism, supporting the findings of earlier literature in this field.
- Girls are more likely to see journalism as 'fun' and less inclined to see it as 'boring', supporting Densem's (2006) findings.
- Young women rejected the notion of journalism as 'glamorous', but the prominent journalists they named were predominantly glamorous television news, current affairs and travel presenters, suggesting something about these individuals appealed to them that they might not label as 'glamour'.

- Girls turned to television for their news and female television presenters were the most identified journalists, contributing to the perception of journalism as a suitable career path for women.
- The 'Getaway' factor plays at least some role, with the false perception that journalism was 'full of travel opportunities' and female presenters of these programs being among the top 24 most identified.
- Journalism seemed to match females' idea of a 'creative' career.
- Careers advisers viewed confidence as assertiveness as key character traits for journalists, more often associated with more mature teenage girls than boys.

Why are young men less attracted to journalism as a career?

The empirical evidence emanating from Stages 1 and 2 of this research establishes clearly that boys are less attracted to journalism as a career because:

- They are less likely to perform well at English and the humanities at school and are thus likely to be discouraged by careers advisers when they inquire about the career.
- Boys are less likely to see journalism as 'fun' and more inclined to see it as 'boring', supporting Densem's (2006) findings.
- They perceive the career as difficult, stressful and time-consuming, and their outlook at school-leaving age might repel them from such an occupation, as suggested by Densem's (2006) focus groups.
- Boys were far less likely to view journalism as a respected career and fewer than half agreed it was of service to society.
- This links with the perception among almost one third of all students that journalism was not a highly paid career which, when combined with the suggestion by the elites and careers advisers that this might matter more to boys, could be a significant turn-off.
- Boys were less likely to agree that journalism was a 'creative' career, suggesting other careers as outlets for their creativity, such as computer games or film careers.
- Boys are less inclined than girls to reject the proposition journalism is 'girly', supporting Densem's (2006) findings.
- Hollings and Lealand et.al's (2007) observation that the perception of journalism was that it had changed from current events-driven to entertainment/lifestyle driven is supported by boys' lower level of agreement about the current affairs component of journalism and their nomination of high profile television presenters as role models.
- Boys turned to television for their news and female television presenters were the most identified journalists, contributing to the perception of journalism not as suitable career path for men. The

lack of prominent male literary, war, investigative and e-journalists nominated by high school students indicates young men no longer aspire to either great non-fiction writing or high-level journalism research and investigation.

- Boys viewed the main qualities of female journalists as 'good looking', 'pushy' and 'nosey', and the thought of working in a newsroom with such women might well be an intimidating prospect for a teenage boy.
- Careers advisers' emphasis on confidence, independence and self-motivation are less likely to fit the image of the teenage boy.

What are the implications for Australian journalism of the increasingly feminised newsroom?

Firstly, it should be reiterated that the feminised newsroom is not, by definition, a problem. Further research needs to explore the impacts of the gender shift, if any, on actual newsrooms throughout Australia. The comments of our elite interviewees offer only a taste of the possibilities and there is a scope for a major study of this issue.

Nevertheless, if we restrict our comments to the recruitment end of the spectrum we can see several implications of our findings for Australian journalism and, by extension, for journalism educators and the secondary school education system. Women will continue to outnumber men in the career for as long as boys' and girls' perceptions of journalism as a career, and their careers' advisers' views on their suitability for the career, remain unchanged. The gender imbalance is, however, a problem if it means young people are entering journalism for the wrong reasons and if capable young people are rejecting it as a career because they have been misinformed.

Our findings point to these key items of misinformation about the career among young Australians:

- Young people, mainly girls, are being encouraged to consider journalism because they are good writers when the journalists they identify with most are television presenters, whose job involves minimal written work.
- Young people, again mainly girls, are being encouraged into the career because they are good at English when, as one teacher pointed out, the complex analytical and creative written English rewarded in the senior school curriculum is far removed from the clear, concise and simple English of most journalism. Boys are being discouraged from journalism for the same reason, when they might well be writing simply and performing poorly in English and be well suited to journalism.

- Teenagers are quite ignorant about many aspects of journalism as a career. They are under the strong misapprehension that journalism is ‘full of travel opportunities’, when many other careers are as likely to offer travel prospects and many journalism positions have minimal scope for travel. They also are relatively uninformed on other issues such as remuneration and work flexibility and the breadth of career options in the field.
- Young Australians have a particularly dim view of journalism’s credibility and seem unaware of its importance to society. The litany of scathing comments in the high school survey quoted at length above might be less confronting if they had been accompanied by several balancing comments about journalism’s important role in society. Sadly, there were none.
- The fact that students did not nominate literary or investigative journalists as journalists they were ‘familiar with’ leads to a serious questioning of the place of non-fiction literature in the secondary school curriculum and the lack of the important role of the media in democracy in media studies, politics and history classes. Both of these theories are worthy of serious investigation in subsequent studies.

The issue of English excellence as a prerequisite for journalism is worth further exploration. Take, for example, this question from the 2007 Queensland Secondary External Examination in English (Queensland Studies Authority, 2007), which requires students to write a ‘feature article’ for a newspaper or magazine about a novel:

Topic: about turn

Genre: feature article

Roles and relationships: feature article writer to readers of a newspaper or literary magazine

Write a feature article for a newspaper or literary magazine defending the actions of a character marginalised in the novel.

You should:

- refer to specific incidents from the novel
- analyse the ways in which the novel has been constructed to position audiences to view this character
- provide an alternative and/or resistant/oppositional reading of the text.

This has been a requirement of the Queensland English curriculum for some time, and prompts serious questions related to this study:

- What does the Queensland Studies Authority mean by ‘feature article’?
- What feature article would ever venture into such multi-level analysis and critique?

- Might a student successful in such a task be suited to a career in journalism?
- Might a student unsuccessful in such a task be discouraged from journalism as a career?

It reinforces the view of the Keebra Park State High School teacher that the Queensland English curriculum was an unsuitable pathway into journalism, and might explain the comments of one high school respondent who said: "High school year 12 put me off writing". This finding signals a need for journalism educators and media industry bodies to influence both the secondary English curriculum and to educate careers advisers and teachers of the actual requirements of journalism as a career. Clearly, journalism is not even on the radar for many young people who may well be suited to it.

Also of serious concern is the bleak view of journalism ethics and credibility so many of the high school students seemed so ready to volunteer. Further research might explore the extent to which this is also emanating from the media studies component of the secondary curriculum. It flags the need for better understanding of the role of journalism in a modern democratic society. The students' answers give no hint of an understanding of journalism's Fourth Estate role historically and today. In other words, if indeed civics education is devoting any time to the media's role, only the negative aspects are making a lasting impression on our youth.

We are sure that none of these factors alone can bear the responsibility for the gender shift in journalism overall, although individual teenagers might be moved to pursue it or reject it for a single reason. Rather, the overall trend is likely the result of a complex combination of factors related to students' perceptions of the career and their advisers' influences. Some might argue that none of this matters in a depressed economic environment where media employers have been shedding jobs. However, there is an equally compelling argument that it is exactly at this time that employers need to be hiring the right people with a clear understanding of journalism as a career and their suitability for it. An occupation based around communication can do a much better job explaining to the next generation exactly what it does and why it does it.

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Appendix: Industry professional subjects for elite interviews

Named interviewees

- Allan, T. (2008, August). Sports reporter, regional television.
- Atkin, M. (2008, April). Reporter, Triple J.
- Centenera, J. (2008, August). Assistant editor, *Golf Australia* magazine.
- De Nardi, A. (2008, August). Features editor, *Domain Your Home*.
- Grey, J. (2008, December). Online editor, *Courier-Mail*.
- Haydon, N. (2009, January). News reporter, Network Ten.
- Hill, S. (2008, August). Group editorial development manager, News Limited.
- King, M. (2008, December). ABC Radio presenter, newspaper columnist and television commentator.
- Meers, D. (2009, January). Sports reporter, *Gold Coast Bulletin*.
- Moses, A. (2008, April). Technology reporter, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*.

Anonymous interviewees

- Senior female newspaper training executive (2008, August).
- Television, newspaper & radio (2008, July). Older male journalist Adelaide, South Australia.
- Metro newspaper journalist (2008, July). Young male journalist, Adelaide, South Australia.
- Radio producer and magazine reporter (2008, July). Older female, Adelaide, South Australia.
- Suburban newspaper journalist (2008, July). Young female, Adelaide, South Australia.

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Australian Journalism Monographs welcomes submissions of manuscripts on any aspect of journalism and news media research. Manuscripts should be between 7000-12,000 words, and should not have been published elsewhere. Manuscripts will be subject to a double-peer blind refereeing process, and referee's comments and reports will be returned to the author.

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Referencing style following the in-text author-date method, followed by the page number where applicable—for example: Rodriguez (2001: 36) argued...or alternatively, Community media can be considered the newest form of citizen's media (Rodriguez, 2001: 36). We do accept the footnote method for scholars who may need to provide further explanation or detail on some points.

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