The Larrikin Paradox: An Analysis of Larrikinism’s Democratic Role in Australian Journalism.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Josie Vine

June 2009.
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The people who I need to thank for their contribution to this thesis are too numerous to mention here. They span across two tertiary institutions (particularly my very patient supervisor, Dr Jonathan Smith and my friend and mentor, Dr Mandy Oakham); two editors (Dr Gail Sedorkin and Lisa Svanetti); two professional associations (the MEAA and Melbourne Press Club); two children (Jeremy, now nine years and Ethan, now seven years, and with whom I was pregnant when I enrolled in this PhD); two ex-partners; and four dogs, Oscar and Tess (both deceased), and Mungo and Taz (both still going).

But the person who I need to thank most doesn’t have a name. Although I know, intimately, from where he’s come, I’m very uncertain about his future.

I first met him when I was kicked out of Mansfield High School in 1988, my year 10. My best mate, Lisa Lawson, pushed me, against all parental and other advice, to write a letter of complaint to then Victorian minister for education, Caroline Hogg. Her reply read something like this:
"I have spoken to the principal of Mansfield High School, and he would be happy to discuss your return to school in 1989”.

This was the beginning of my belief in the subject of this thesis: the larrikin - someone that every person who deserves thanks for their contribution to this thesis holds dear. So, thank you to all you larrikins. In the words of one of my favourites: “maintain your rage and enthusiasm”, ’cause we can make change.
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Abstract

The Larrikin Paradox is concerned with the unexplored nexus between Australian journalism’s larrikin tradition and Enlightenment-informed normative theories relating to journalism’s public responsibility in liberal democracy. Australian journalism’s larrikin tradition, with its connotations of irresponsibility, has so far been considered an inappropriate lens through which to conceptualise Australian journalism’s public role. Yet, paradoxically, it is the larrikin’s capacity for irresponsibility that gives him, or her, the potential to be an enacting agent of Australian journalism’s public responsibility.

Using a form of Cultural Historiography, The Larrikin Paradox tests this Thesis Statement:

In Australian history, larrikin journalists have been responsible for facilitating and protecting democratic freedom in the public sphere from authority. Because this freedom is in a state of vulnerability, contemporary Australian journalism still needs its larrikin tradition to vouchsafe a work culture capable of maintaining
its declared responsibility to 'inform citizens'
and 'animate democracy'.

However, the dearth of theory concerning the larrikin as a democratic figure has meant that The Larrikin Paradox has to conceptualise it, more or less, from scratch. After first assembling the figure from over a century of references to the larrikin, The Larrikin Paradox approaches this conceptualisation using a process of historiographical recovery and interpretation. Here, however, the problem lies in the fact that the larrikin’s meaning is contested.

For example, by the time Cyril Pearl published Wild Men of Sydney in 1958 – a biography of journalists, businessmen and politicians John Norton, William Patrick Crick and William Willis – the already 100-year-old larrikin figure had become invested with somewhat negative connotations. Says Pearl of his protagonists: “They were aggressive and accomplished demagogues who made little or no attempt to conceal their complex villainies” (Pearl, 1958: 7).

Later, however, when Clem Gorman published his anthology of Australian larrikins in 1990, the figure had assumed a more positive profile. After examining the stories of
larrikins as diverse as Harry ‘Breaker’ Morant, Dawn Fraser, Mary MacKillop and Barry ‘Bazza’ McKenzie, the larrikin, according to Gorman, is “larger than life, sceptical, iconoclastic, egalitarian, yet suffering fools badly, insouciant and, above all, defiant” (Gorman, 1990: ix – x).

Then, when John Rickard built on Gorman’s comments in his 1998 journal article, ‘Lovable Larrikins and Awful Ockers’ (Rickard, 1998: 78 - 86), it becomes possible to see the larrikin as a democratic figure. Rickard identifies six main characteristics of the larrikin: aggression; criminality; a censorious edge (“the larrikin can not only take the piss out of people, but stand in judgment over them”); humour; emotional innocence and a “romantic attachment to working class origins” (Rickard, 1998: 84 – 85). Rickard’s typology, combined with Gorman’s findings, contributes, in this investigation, to the development of a larrikin axiology relevant to Australian journalism micro-culture. This axiology is gleaned from an analysis of the term’s meanings in sources such as dictionaries and commentaries on Australian English, as well as biographical and autobiographical material directly related to Australian journalism.
Once gleaned, this axiology is used to inform an investigation into the history of larrikinism in Australian journalism. The history is drawn from those salient sources of journalism as a micro-culture: biographies and autobiographies by, or about, Australian journalists. Here we assume that our axiological ‘compass’ could help us seek out the larrikin elements in those micro-cultural sources; thereby identifying manifestations of larrikinism within almost 150 years of Australian journalism history.

With larrikinism’s historical and axiological significance established, *The Larrikin Paradox* moves on to a comparative analysis of Australian journalism during the Whitlam (1972 – 1975) and Howard (1996 – 2007) eras using oral history and industry-specific publications. This part of the investigation finds there is a marked divergence in Australian journalism’s cultural interpretation of its larrikin tradition arising from distinct socio-political contexts. In short, the Howard generation (1996 – 2007) of journalists is found to be less larrikin than those of the Whitlam generation (1972 – 1975).

However, with the cultural theories of Stuart Hall (1978) and Raymond Williams (1958, 1977) in mind, *The Larrikin*
Paradox concludes that the larrikin, as a democratic figure, can be re-constructed within the micro-culture of Australian journalism.
Introduction: The Enlightened Larrikin

The Larrikin Paradox is concerned with the unexplored nexus between Australian journalism’s larrikin tradition and Enlightenment-informed normative theories relating to journalism’s public responsibility in liberal democracy. Australian journalism’s larrikin tradition, with its connotations of irresponsibility, may seem an inappropriate lens through which to conceptualise Australian journalism’s public role. Yet, paradoxically, it is the larrikin’s capacity for irresponsibility that gives him, or her, the potential to be an enacting agent of Australian journalism’s public responsibility. In short, larrikin journalists may be Enlightenment figures insofar as they have the requisite character and wherewithal so famously noted by Immanuel Kant (1784): “the courage to use [their] own reason”, including the determination to “make public use of their reason” (Kant, 1784/1963: 3&10). If this be so, then larrikin journalists can be seen as democratic figures within what German sociologist
and neo-Enlightenment philosopher, Jürgen Habermas (1962) labels as “the public sphere” (Habermas in Öüthwaite, 1996: 370).

The Larrikin Paradox is, however, not about Habermas’ theory per se. Instead, whenever the translated form of Habermas’ Offentlichkeit is used hereafter (Habermas in Öüthwaite, 1996: 370), it will be for the relevance of its meaning (“publicness” or “publicity”) to our inquiry into journalism’s public responsibility. Thus we shall understand the “public sphere” as the place where authority - effectively a tenant or delegate of the public - is held accountable to its democratic masters. It is where individuals, or groups of individuals, with little or no economic or political power, can redress this imbalance by communicating with authority and the wider public via, for example, letters-to-the-editor and radio talk-back (Ward, 2002). The public sphere is thus where people can both contribute to, and access, diversity of opinion, including what may be deemed as ‘wrong’ opinion. As Australian journalist and academic, Professor Donald Horne says:
One of the tests of a liberal-democratic political community can be: to what extent do the mass media present a competitive marketplace of ideas about what is going on, why it is going on, and what should be going on? To what extent are the mass media offering diversity? (in Schultz, 1994: 9).

In a liberal-democratic system such as Australia, it is journalism, and to a lesser extent the cultural industries in general, that arguably have responsibility to facilitate and protect the integrity of this public sphere, including ensuring equality of representation, balance of opinion and transparency of authority upon it.

By acting as the public sphere’s champion, Australian journalism is able to protect democratic liberty from authority. The Australian journalism national union and main professional association, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), articulates this role in a manner akin to Kant’s call for “the freedom to make
public use of one’s reason” in his influential newspaper article, ‘What is Enlightenment?’ (Kant, 1784/1963: 4-5). Says the MEAA:

Journalists describe society to itself. They convey information, ideas and opinions, a privileged role. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, suggest and remember. They inform citizens and animate democracy. They give practical form to freedom of expression (MEAA, Code of Ethics).

By exploring the implications of links between Australian journalism’s larrikin tradition, its public responsibility and Enlightenment thought, The Larrikin Paradox seeks to fill a gap in the current body of knowledge on Australian journalism culture (see Chapter One). Indeed, it is in this very gap that we can discern the larrikin’s significance as a recognisably democratic figure, standing at the crossroads of an apparent divergence of values in contemporary Australian journalism culture. Thus, in light of the above, we can now posit our Thesis Statement:
In Australian history, larrikin journalists have been responsible for facilitating and protecting democratic freedom in the public sphere from authority. Because this freedom is in a state of vulnerability, contemporary Australian journalism still needs its larrikin tradition to vouchsafe a work culture capable of maintaining its declared responsibility to 'inform citizens' and 'animate democracy'.

On the larrikin’s significance for journalism, The Larrikin Paradox mostly agrees with Lynette Sheridan Burns (although we cannot see anything in larrikinism that would necessarily preclude a woman from being a larrikin figure). Says Sheridan Burns:

In Australia, the popular tradition of the journalist is ... as a somewhat undisciplined larrikin ... He (and it is a he, despite the statistical reality that the majority of journalists are female) has seen it all at least twice. He is a pub philosopher who likes nothing more than bringing the mighty to account, or championing the cause of society’s
However, as Sheridan Burns points out, pressures on journalism, particularly public expectations for entertainment, commodification of audiences and changing world views of journalists themselves, have played out in divergent, and often conflicting, value and belief systems. Yet, for Sheridan Burns, whether a journalist or editor is “compromised” or “challenged” by social and commercial “obligations of the craft” depends on the character of individual journalists. The Larrikin Paradox shares, yet extends, her concluding argument:

Good journalism will disappear if journalists give up and declare themselves … ‘agents for others’. Journalists who seek to absolve themselves of social accountability by declaring themselves ‘in the business of selling news’ find a strident and long-established culture of rationalisation ready to comfort those fleetingly afflicted with conscience about what they do. Those who take
up the challenge to explore the world, tell all, and perhaps even make some sense of what they learn, will find they too have the power to profoundly affect what they do and therefore what they are (original italics) (Sheridan Burns in Tapsall & Varley, 2001: 37).

Indeed, many in academia and industry note that great changes in technological, economic, political and social spheres have profoundly affected the core cultural values and beliefs of Australian journalism. Former Executive Producer of the ABC’s Media Watch, David Salter, for example, argues that journalism – the “trade” that he’s “always loved” – “… seems to be going soft”, as a result of market forces:

With very few exceptions the mainstream media are just not prepared to risk the small loss of market share that might come from knocking the gloss off our lovely self-satisfied lives. Result? Too much of what is published and broadcast today has the consistency of baby food: timid; premasticated pap (Salter,
Similarly, long time political correspondent, Michelle Grattan, claims the business model of journalism has pushed commercialism “into the ascendant” as Australian journalism’s “core value” (Grattan, 1998: 1). Journalism scholar, Mandy Oakham, has described these changes in Australian journalism’s values as a “revolution” (in Tapsall and Varley, 2001: 71).

The problem is that, although Australian journalism culture has had to evolve to keep up with rapid changes in technology, economics, politics and society, its self-articulated responsibility in Australian liberal democracy (see MEAA, Code of Ethics) remains the same: to facilitate and protect democratic freedom in the public sphere, and ensure equality of representation, diversity of opinion and transparency of authority within it. This tension between Australian journalism’s fundamental responsibility and its changing socio-economic
context has contributed to the creation of what Suellen Tapsall and Caroline Varley describe as a “crisis of identity” among Australian journalists (Tapsall and Varley, 2001: v). The Larrikin Paradox contends, however, that uncovering the significance of the larrikin for Australian journalism culture may assist in clarifying this “crisis” and may even ameliorate its negative impact on journalism’s capacity to ‘animate democracy’.

Yet, as the Literature Review of The Larrikin Paradox demonstrates (see Chapter One), larrikinism, as a means of vouchsafing a work culture that can uphold Australian journalism’s public responsibility has, until now, been largely left unexamined.

Until relatively recently, professionalisation has dominated scholarly discourse on reconnecting Australian journalism’s foundational responsibility with its shifting cultural values and beliefs. Led by seminal journalism academic, John Henningham, the professionalisation paradigm
contends that compulsory journalism education and professional association affiliation would enable journalism to resist undue external influence, such as that borne by market forces, on its public responsibility (Henningham, 1989). This model of professionalisation, however, is wrought with difficulties.

For example, educational and professional association requirements (both of which potentially homogenise journalism culture to a group of elite individuals) has the potential to remove journalism from the very public it has the responsibility to serve. Further, such mandatory requirements would need some form of regulation, opening the way for outside bodies, each inevitably with its own agenda and self-interest, to be in a position to select what information is permitted to be published, and by whom. This is not to say that education and professional association affiliations do not have a role in contributing to journalism culture. However, The Larrikin Paradox contends that Henningham’s strict model of professionalisation poses unacceptable
risks to the very notion of journalistic independence that it attempts to protect.

The professionalisation model also suggests parallels between journalism and other professions such as law and medicine (Pearson, 1991: 107). Even so, journalism is quite different from other professions, with unique challenges facing the fulfilment of its public responsibility. These challenges are, on one hand, vital to protecting democratic liberty from authority but, on the other hand, will not always attract either public praise or support from institutional authority.

It is partly for this reason that Julianne Schultz (1994) argues that the professionalisation of journalism is “far from complete” (in Schultz, 1994: 35). Schultz insists that the traditional concept of “professionalism” is not appropriate for journalism. Instead, she argues for a “new definition of professionalism in journalism”, which involves “reaching out to the public as citizens”, rather than as “merely consumers, victims or talent” (Schultz, 1994: 35). It is here
that The Larrikin Paradox’s historiographical analysis of larrikinism in Australian journalism culture permits a foreshadowing of the larrikin figure as a kind of cultural broker capable of forging alliances between journalism and its publics. Indeed, the larrikin figure may even have the potential to realise Schultz’s “new definition” of professionalism in journalism.

Here, Angela Romano’s concept of journalists as interpretive communities is relevant (Romano, 2003). Borrowing from the notion originally put forward by Gaye Tuchman (1978), Romano sees journalism as a micro-culture with its own value and belief systems that are separate from those of the wider macro-cultures, such as the media and society itself (Simons, 2007: 20). In other words, when studying journalism, it is wise to not only analyse the formal, standardised patterns of professional association and interaction, but also the “cultural discussion”, or how journalists monitor the appropriateness of their own behaviour through interaction with other journalists (Romano, 2003: 9). The Larrikin Paradox studies
the "cultural discussion" of Australian journalism, and investigates the place of larrikinism within it.

However, the dearth of theory concerning the larrikin as a democratic figure has meant that The Larrikin Paradox has had to conceptualise it, more or less, from scratch. After first assembling the figure from over a century of references to the larrikin, The Larrikin Paradox approaches this conceptualisation using a process of historiographical recovery and interpretation. Here, however, the problem lies in the fact that the larrikin’s meaning is contested.

For example, by the time Cyril Pearl published Wild Men of Sydney in 1958 - a biography of journalists, businessmen and politicians John Norton, William Patrick Crick and William Willis - the already 100-year-old larrikin figure had become invested with somewhat negative connotations. Says Pearl of his protagonists:
“They were aggressive and accomplished demagogues who made little or no attempt to conceal their complex villainies” (Pearl, 1958: 7).

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and a “romantic attachment to working class origins” (Rickard, 1998: 84–85). Rickard’s typology, combined with Gorman’s findings, contribute to the prospect of developing a larrikin axiology relevant to Australian journalism micro-culture. This axiology can, we assume, be gleaned from an analysis of the term’s meanings in sources such as dictionaries and commentaries on Australian English, as well as biographical and autobiographical material directly related to Australian journalism.

By excavating key characteristics of larrikinism (such as nonconformity, anti-authoritarianism and exceeding limits) in light of the aforementioned ‘crossroads’ of values and “crisis of identity” (Tapsall & Varley, 2001: v), a deeper appreciation of the larrikin’s significance can become clear. What is needed, however, is a fuller understanding of the figure’s long historical tradition as an enacting agent of Australian journalism’s ability to fulfil its public responsibility.
Indeed, it is in that very history that we can begin to discern the hitherto ignored nexus between larrikinism, Australian journalism and Enlightenment thought. Here, we initially concur with journalism historians, Denis Cryle and Clem Lloyd, who found that the origins of Australian journalism’s ideals could be traced back to Enlightenment thought (Cryle, 1997: 12 and Lloyd in Tanner, 2002: 3-5). Cryle identifies John Milton’s *Areopagitica* (1644/1952) and John Stuart Mill’s *Freedom of the Press* (1825) as seminal texts for Australian Colonial journalism’s ideological penchant for freedom of thought and the role of the press in scrutinising, censuring and, according to Australian press historian, Clem Lloyd, “even challenging” rulers and the state (in Tanner, 2002: 3).

At this point, however, it is pertinent to bring in an influential Enlightenment figure, surprisingly unmentioned by Cryle and Lloyd: Immanuel Kant. It is in Kant’s popular definition of Enlightenment, as related to press freedom and authority, that we discern elements of the
larrikin journalist’s defiant determination to think freely in the face of any ‘unenlightened’ authority that would presume to direct and control freedom of individual thought:

Enlightenment is man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man’s inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. Sapere aude! ‘Have courage to use your own reason!’ — that is the motto of enlightenment (Kant, 1784/1963: 9–10).

Kant goes on to note the implications of this attitude for freedom of thought within the context of a firm, yet — he contends — enlightened central authority. Here Kant had Prussian ruler, Frederick the Great (1712 – 1786) in mind:

I have placed the main point of enlightenment — the escape of men from their self-incurred tutelage — chiefly in matters of religion because our rulers have no interest in playing
the guardian with respect to the arts and sciences and also because religious incompetence is not only the most harmful but also the most degrading of all. But the manner of thinking of the head of a state who favours religious enlightenment goes further, and he sees that there is no danger to his law-giving in allowing his subjects to make public use of their reason and to publish their thoughts on a better formulation of his legislation and even their open-minded criticisms of the laws already made (Kant, 1784/1963: 3, 9–10).

So, for Kant, “the freedom to make public use of one’s reason at every point” (1784/1963: 4–5) was not necessarily incompatible with a strong, central authority. This very point was apparently quite evident in the attitude and actions of Andrew Bent, one of the first Australian larrikin journalists (see below).

In a similar fashion, it seems that a larrikin spirit can be discerned in the texts that Cryle says contributed to the development of Australian journalism’s sense of public responsibility.
For example, Milton’s *Areopagitica* (1644/1952) expresses a way of thinking that contains a rather larrikinesque defiance of authority, including some mockery of its then theocratic pomposity:

Many that be that complain of divine providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, He gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions (1644/1952: 394 – 395).

It was in defiance of Parliament’s 1643 Licensing Order, making censorship official, that Milton published his *Areopagitica* in 1644. Arguing for equality and freedom of opinion, he declared:

Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making (1644/1952: 406).
So, according to Milton, freedom of opinion, and freedom to discuss it, leads to knowledge, understanding and ‘truth’. Truth, says Milton, “needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensing to make her victorious; those are the shifts and defences that error uses against her power: give her but room and do not bind her where she sleeps” (1644/1952: 409). Truth and knowledge, according to Milton, emerge naturally through diversity of opinion including, on an equitable basis, ‘wrong’ opinion (1644/1952: 409). Such discourse may not be as closely argued as Kant’s What is Enlightenment? (1784/1963), but Milton’s theme and tone here are nevertheless a recognisable product of the Enlightenment emphasis on freedom of thought.

For this inquiry, ‘Enlightenment thinking’ will be understood in an orthodox fashion as thinking marked by the belief that humankind is inherently reasonable and, as such, should be trusted on an equitable basis, to freely make rational judgments about reality, including judgments about power and how it is exercised. For example, we have seen how
Kant (1784/1963) argued that - in the face of authority - individuals must have the freedom to “make public use of their reason and to publish their thoughts” (Kant, 1784/1963: 9). Indeed, in Enlightenment thought, the equitable and “free use of one’s reason” (Kant, 1784/1963: 5) is regarded as so innate to the human condition that to disregard it would risk being somewhat oxymoronic.

Milton, for instance, thinks freedom-denying press laws are vulnerable to the charge of containing absurd implications; corollaries that would render them not only illogical, but unenforceable in practice:

If we think to regulate printing, thereby to rectify matters, we must regulate all recreations and pastimes, all that is delightful to man. No music must be heard, no song be set or sung, but what is grave and Doric … And who shall license all the airs and madrigals that whisper softness in the chambers? The windows also, and the balconies, must be thought on; there are shrewd books, with dangerous front pieces, set to sale: who
shall prohibit them, shall twenty licensors? (1644/1952: 394).

Foreseeing the repression of all forms of expression, Milton called for a mass—"all the lutes, violins and guitars"—and clandestine defiance of authorised censorship laws (1644/1952: 394). Such rebellion against authority would, however, appear to require the larrikin’s preparedness to exceed legal and social limits. Indeed, in Milton, “rejoicing and praising” all opinion deemed as ‘wrong’ by authority, arguably connotes a larrikinesque defiance of authority; even a call for transgression.

Here, Milton can be read as his own ‘transgressive Adam’, a larrikin type who continuously and compulsively strives towards freedom, despite society’s conviction that his actions are delinquent criminal and accordingly deserves punishment. Throughout the Areopagitica, and his own life, Milton argued that the contemporary ‘transgressive Adam’ was ultimately of benefit for

A more temperate expression of Kant and Milton’s point about the press, society and individual freedom would apparently later feature in the First Amendment to the United States’ Constitution (1787):

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the rights of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Such Enlightenment-informed thinking, related to the relationship between press freedom, questioning of authority and individual freedom, would later manifest in Mill’s *Liberty of the Press* (1825) and *On Liberty* (1859). In the latter, Mill argued key ideas he had presented in the former. Calling for a critique of convention, Mill
argued in *On Liberty* that the “tyranny of the majority” could be “generally included” among the “evils against which society must be on its guard” (1859/1962: 68). Milton too projected dire warnings over slavish adherence to conventional values, “fearing yet” the “iron yoke of outward conformity” that leaves a “slavish print upon our necks; the ghost of linen decency yet haunts us” (1644/1952: 410). Here, the concern of Milton, like Mill, is that ‘wrong’ opinions, at least those deemed as such by the majority, are open to suppression.

However, by the time Mill published *On Liberty* (1859) a belief had already taken root in Britain that journalism required freedom to function as a facilitator of opinion, even those against governments and authority. Thus Mill wrote:

> The time, it is to be hoped, has gone by when any defence would be necessary of the ‘liberty of the press’ as one of the securities against corrupt or tyrannical government. No argument, we may suppose, can now be needed, against
permitting a legislature or an executive, not identified in interest with the people, to prescribe opinions to them, and determine what doctrines or what arguments they shall be allowed to hear (1859/1962: 78).

Elsewhere in *On Liberty*, Mill is arguably larrikinesque insofar as he mockingly defies the somewhat pompous mindset that so often marks government efforts at managing public opinion:

> To refuse a hearing to an opinion because they are sure that it is false is to assume that their certainty is the same thing as absolute certainty (original italics). All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility. Its condemnation may be allowed to rest on this common argument, not the worse for being common (1859/1962: 79).

Furthermore, for Mill, it is not “enough” in a liberal democracy to merely defy the power of the “magistrate” (1859/1962: 68). Because power in a liberal democracy is bestowed upon those who represent the largest number of people, the system
creates what Mill terms, an “ascendant class”. And it is this group who interprets and defines ‘acceptable’ norms and practices that are, in modern liberal democracy, perpetuated through the media. Wherever there is an “ascendant class”, according to Mill, a large proportion of the morality of the community emanates from its class interests and its feelings of “class superiority”. Therefore, as Mill argues, we “need protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling, against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them” (1859/1962: 68).

Here, Mill’s emphasis on class difference, in relation to ideas and their public communication, is significant for The Larrikin Paradox insofar as he – just like the larrikin – defiantly identified with those not from the “ascendant class” in the name of a more widespread freedom.

Even so, it is important to note that neither Mill nor Milton advocate complete freedom. Mill, in
particular, recognises that without some form of state interference, freedom could collapse into anarchy. Here, Mill argues, it is not the state itself that poses the greatest threat to freedom, but the spirit of the people that mandate authority. For Mill, this spirit needs to recognise that while freedom is paramount, individual freedom must not encroach on the freedom of others:

The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others ... the only part of the conduct of anyone, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others (1859/1962: 73).

This social context for individual liberty shall be regarded here as the moral alloy that tempers larrikin irresponsibility when it comes to the theory and practice of larrikinism in journalism and the Australian media industry. Here even apparently irresponsible media professionals may
still function as socially useful animators of democracy insofar as irresponsibility (for example, ABC TV’s *The Chaser*, filming and broadcasting their mock ‘Canadian’ motorcade containing ‘Osama bin Laden’ at the APEC forum in 2007) can serve as a useful means to the end of informing citizens by, in that case, exposing the ‘Emperor’s new clothes’ of hyper-security.

Furthermore, although Mill, Milton, Kant and other carriers of Enlightenment thought were circulating freely by the 19th century, this may only be noteworthy here if such ideas manifested, in a recognisably larrikin manner, in the free Australian journalism influenced by that way of thinking. Here we must note that while the origins of free Australian journalism appear to be decidedly larrikinesque, the larrikin as journalist and democratic figure can only hope to emerge from a more detailed historiographical analysis of larrikin references and allusions in Australian journalism history.
With this in mind, we can now suggest that Australian journalism may benefit from reflecting upon the possibility that a larrikin spirit freed colonial journalism from the restraints of undemocratic authority, thereby establishing a tradition of public sphere journalism in Australia.

With this contention in mind, we note that the founding fathers of journalism in Australia apparently enacted several larrikin characteristics while upholding freedom in that fledgling nation’s public sphere.

In 1816, ex-convict Andrew Bent established The Hobart Town Gazette (Goc, 2001). At the time, journalism in Australia was designed specifically as a vehicle for government publicity and propaganda. For example, when Australia’s first newspaper, The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, began publication in 1803, it publicly renounced all political discussion and its pages were subject to strict censorship by Governor King’s own hand (Walker, 1976: 4). Like The Sydney
Gazette, Bent’s publication also functioned as a government organ, both subject to government censorship and edited by government appointees (Goc, 2001).

However, in May 1824, Bent expressed one of Australian journalism’s earliest outward shows of larrikin defiance when he audaciously dismissed his government appointed editor, and replaced him with one of his own selection, editor and lawyer, Evan Henry Thomas (Goc, 2001). Less than a week later, Lieutenant-Governor, George Arthur, whom biographer, Nicola Goc describes as an “uncompromising military disciplinarian” and a self-confessed enemy of the free press, sailed up the Derwent to take over the colony of Van Dieman’s Land (Goc, 2001). Within a month, Governor Arthur declared The Hobart Town Gazette government property.

Meanwhile, two young British lawyers, William Charles Wentworth and Dr Robert Wardell, arrived in Sydney and, despite risking severe punishment from authorities, brazenly began publishing The
Australian without authority (Walker, 1976: 6). Biographer, Robin Walker, points out that the pair probably escaped penalty because the newly instituted legislative council was not yet functioning (Walker, 1976: 6 – 7). Even so, once freedom from prior restraint was granted in Sydney, it could hardly be denied to Bent in Tasmania. So, when Bent, again defying Governor Arthur, appealed to then Governor of New South Wales, Sir Thomas Brisbane over the political takeover of The Gazette, word came back that the Sydney authorities agreed Arthur was not acting within his legal rights in his efforts to muzzle Bent (Goc, 2001).

The consequences of this larrikin’s successful defiance of authority were to echo down the years; helping establish a larrikin tradition in Australian journalism. As Goc comments:

Bent was responsible for the introduction of three principles which today are accepted as never to be challenged: private ownership of the press, the expression of opinion in the
form of editorials and the establishment of correspondent’s pages through letters-to-the-editor. It was indeed Bent’s stand against Arthur that precipitated interest and concern with the principle of freedom of the press in Australia (Goc, 2001).

From this we get the impression that what can now be termed a ‘larrikin sensibility’ was a key factor in the initial creation of an Australian free press. And, if that is so then the larrikin journalist may hold more democratic significance than previously thought.

As Horne says, the ability to think freely about “what is happening, why it is happening and what should be happening next” is an “essential feature” of any liberal democratic community (in Schultz, 1994: 7 – 8). In the Age of Enlightenment, the free flow of ideas and opinions occurred in coffee houses and taverns, and through publications by the antecedents of today’s model journalists, the philosophers of free reason. Thus, in modern liberal democracy, where
individuals have little chance of coming together to form a ‘public sphere’, it is the media, particularly the news media, that forms the locale for public discussion and debate.

In the United States, freedom in the public sphere is enshrined in its Constitution’s first amendment, written by Thomas Jefferson in 1787. Although Australia has no such constitutional guarantee regarding freedom of speech and opinion, Australian culture still expects its media to provide and protect the public sphere – an expectation given substance in 1992, when the Australian High Court discovered an implied right of freedom of speech within the Australian Constitution (in Schultz, 1994: 189).

Although today’s Australian authority may agree with journalism’s public responsibility in principle, this agreement does not necessarily translate into practice. Because dissenting opinion can cause hazards for authority, it is compelled to place limits on journalism’s ability to fulfil its public responsibility. This may be
done overtly, as in the 2003 amendments to the ASIO Legislation Act, which effectively prohibits media exposure of active ASIO operations for up to two years (even if the operation violates international human rights conventions). The legislation does not recognise public interest as a defence (MEAA, 2006: 3). Or it may be attempted covertly, such as increasing time delay and cost (and widening exempt document categories) for those accessing information under the 1992 Freedom of Information Act (MEAA, 2006: 3). Such boundaries limit journalism’s capacity to facilitate and protect the public sphere; hindering equality of access, diversity of opinion and transparency of authority within it. In order to circumvent such boundaries, journalism arguably requires the larrikin’s anti-authoritarianism and nonconformity to exceed such limits.

For example, the clash between journalism and authority over the protection of sources arguably illustrates journalism’s need for larrikinism. This was recently highlighted in the Western Australian police raid on The Sunday Times in
Perth on April 30, 2008 (Ziffer, May 2, 2008: 6). Here, news gathered from anonymous sources was said to contain disparaging information that may be harmful to the very community journalism purports to protect. However, Australian journalism insists that the use and protection of anonymous sources is essential to fulfil its responsibilities (see MEAA, 2005).

Journalism’s attitude towards source protection provides a useful example of the industry’s need for the larrikin’s defiant character and tendency to exceed limits. While it is illegal to refuse to divulge the name of an anonymous source in a court of law, Australian journalists are ethically obliged to remain silent (see MEAA, 2005). So deep is this obligation that journalists have risked imprisonment, and have gone to prison, rather than divulge anonymous sources of information. At the time of writing, Herald Sun journalists, Michael Harvey and Gerard McManus have been fined $7000 each and narrowly avoided jail for refusing to reveal a key source for an article that embarrassed the then Federal Government and its
plans to knock back a $500 million boost to war veterans’ pensions (Jones, June 28, 2007: 3). The suspected source, senior public servant, Desmond Patrick Kelly, had found himself in a pre-trial hearing at the county court in 2005, where Harvey and McManus refused to give evidence. In committing Harvey and McManus to trial, Chief Judge Michael Rozenes (a legal authority) described journalism’s willingness to breach the law as “intolerable” (Berry, February 13, 2007: 3). Yet, without confidence in source anonymity and ready access to information, journalism cannot fulfil its public responsibility.

As Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance President, Christopher Warren reiterated in 2005, a free media “never emerges as a gift” from those in authority:

It needs to be fought for. It never attains a state of perfection, but rather sits on that uneasy fault line of power between government’s desire for control and continuing pressure from society. Above all, it depends on the
preparedness of the media, itself, to push back that line away from governmental regulation and towards a freer media (MEAA, 2005: 3).

In 1859, John Stuart Mill argued that the “struggle” between liberty and authority was “the most conspicuous feature” throughout history (1859/1962: 65). As contemporary attempts to control journalism demonstrate, Mill’s comment is as pressing today as it was in 1859 Britain.

Even so, the matters sketched out in this Introduction can only take shape once:

a) the inspiration for our Thesis Statement has been explained through the Literature Review on Australian journalism culture (see Chapter One)
b) the Cultural Historiography for testing our Thesis Statement has been outlined (see Chapter Two)
c) a Larrikin Axiology has been derived from scholarly literature on larrikinism (see Chapter Three).
Thereafter we will be able to formally explore our Thesis Statement by undertaking:

1) a history of larrikinism in Australian journalism (see Chapter Four)

2) a critical comparison of source material (oral history and industry-specific publications) concerning larrikinism in journalism in two distinct socio-political contexts: the (Edward) Gough Whitlam (1972 – 1975) and John Winston Howard (1996 – 2007) eras (see Chapter Five).

Finally, with the interpreted evidence of Chapters Four and Five in mind, we can, in our Conclusion, offer a critical appraisal of the cogency — or otherwise — of the suppositions in our Thesis Statement.
Chapter One

Literature Review: Australian journalism culture.

By appraising research into Australian journalism culture, the following Literature Review will delineate where The Larrikin Paradox sits within the current body of knowledge related to the micro-culture of Australian journalism. Literature on larrikinism in the Australian macro-culture will be examined in Chapter Three, where the term’s semiotic-cultural history is evaluated.

A review of the current body of research into Australian journalism culture suggests that the Australian journalism community has become increasingly anxious about the state of journalism’s foundational values and beliefs. Despite this, larrikinism as a means of vouchsafing a work culture that upholds journalism’s declared responsibility has been left largely unexplored. Indeed, it seems that Australian journalism’s desire to prove itself a
responsible entity has given rise to suggestions that certain connotations of larrikinism, such as criminality and irresponsibility, are unhelpful for contemporary professional journalism culture. However, it could be that it is precisely the larrikin’s very irresponsibility that makes him, or her, a key enacting agent of Australian journalism’s declared public responsibility. That, in a nutshell, is the larrikin paradox.

The tension between Australian journalism’s larrikin tradition and its desire to demonstrate respectability reflects the parallel worlds in which journalism operates. In one of these worlds, journalism needs public approval to survive commercially, gain information from sources and, most significantly, counter arguments for external regulation from authority. In the world parallel to this, journalism’s responsibility to scrutinise and criticise all social groups on an equal basis suggests that even public approval can be construed as journalism’s failure to fulfil its public responsibility. Australian journalism functions within this paradox, yet its
implications for the Australian public sphere remain poorly understood.

One reason for this could be the degree of public distrust stemming from the commercial environment in which journalism exists. A common analysis of this syndrome argues that journalism is shackled by proprietorial and advertising expectations, and the audience’s desire for ‘infotainment’. And this argument does have some merit. Canadian Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Windsor, James Winter, articulates this concern succinctly:

Far from being independent-minded professionals, most journalists are employees who do the job the boss wants in exchange for a pay cheque. They have virtually no professional protection akin to that of a medical doctor, a nurse, a teacher or a lawyer; none of the academic freedom afforded to professors … some are well intentioned and daring, some are excellent journalists, but most are not. Even the outstanding among them are severely limited
by economic and organisational constraints (Winter, 1997: 139 – 140).

However, as media commentator Margaret Simons points out, in the modern technological world of user-generated content, the business model of journalism is changing (Simons, 2007). In her recent publication, *The Content Makers*, Simons argues that the “bonds” between “media business” and journalism are “loosening” (Simons, 2007: 20). This assumes, however, that media and journalism can be separate entities – a useful distinction when examining how the relationship of journalism to its wider media structure may intersect with the Australian journalism larrikin tradition.

In the current context, Simons argues, journalism is supported by and “enmeshed with” the wider media culture. Yet this is not necessarily detrimental to journalism:

There is nothing strong, independent or edifying about penury ... If experienced journalists are to be employed, to find things
out, if journalists are to be developed and trained, if institutional cultures are to be built to support them in their dirty, vital work, then there must be money (Simons, 2007: 17).

Here, Simons suggests that “affluence and consumerism” are not necessarily “bad” (or unhelpful), even when they are “not enough” to maintain a work culture that ensures journalism’s public responsibility and professional practice:

“We need more,” says Simons. “We need values - and meaning” (Simons, 2007: 20).

In other words, the business model is changing; constituting a threat to traditional journalism’s commercial viability, yet also presenting an opportunity for the profession to reinvent its work culture. **The Larrikin Paradox** will suggest that a reinvention of Australian journalism’s larrikin culture may provide some moral ballast for the new business model now sailing into being, powered by traditional news media in concert with
user-generated content and social networking (Shirky, 2008).

Until relatively recently, professionalisation has dominated Australian scholarly discourse on reconnecting journalism’s foundational ideals to its markets and work practices. Professionalisation is seen as having the potential to free journalism from external pressures brought to bear by proprietors, managers, advertisers and changing audience uses. However, an evaluation of literature on journalism culture indicates that professionalisation may pose more problems than it rectifies. Consequently, The Larrikin Paradox will suggest that Australian journalism’s tradition of larrikinism may be a more useful vehicle for vouchsafing a work culture that can uphold Australian journalism’s declared public responsibility.

To put the current body of research into Australian journalism culture into context, it is interesting to note that the first studies on it
preceded overseas research into other Western journalism cultures. This is interesting because Australian journalism research has otherwise tended to lag behind that of Britain and the USA.

In 1961, visiting American journalism professor, Willis Sprague Holden, published the first profile of people who made up the Australian journalism profession. Holden interviewed editors employed on Australian metropolitan dailies in 1956 and 1957, resulting in the 1961 edition of *Australia Goes to Press* (Holden, 1977). This was followed by Henry Mayer’s research and later publication, *The Press in Australia*, which critiqued common attitudes of both press readers and metropolitan journalists (Mayer, 1964). The research of Mayer and Holden was empirical and statistical. Although their profiles do not provide extensive illumination on journalism’s values and beliefs, they exist today as two complimentary studies of Australian journalism in the 1950s and 1960s, leaving a legacy of definitive empirical data for future Australian journalism cultural historians.
It was not until the 1970s that comparable studies into British journalism culture started emerging, with Jeremy Tunstall’s *The Westminster Lobby Correspondents* (Tunstall, 1970) and, later, *Journalists at Work* (Tunstall, 1971), both of which concentrated on the attitudes of specialist print correspondents. Later, in 1978, Philip Schlesinger published the results of his direct observation of journalists at work in British television newsrooms, in *Putting ‘Reality’ Together* (Schlesinger, 1978). Meanwhile, in the United States, Michael Schudson was completing his dissertation on a comparative analysis of the history and sociology of the journalism and legal professions, resulting in his 1978 publication, *Discovering the News* (Schudson, 1978). Rather than critiquing journalism’s product and its influences on audiences, Tunstall, Schlesinger and Schudson were among the first to explore how and why the product arrived in its final form. These early scholars saw that, in order to explain news values (agenda, story selection and presentation); it is first necessary to gain an understanding of internal journalism culture.
Then, in the 1980s, John Henningham introduced the significance of journalism culture to Australian scholarly discourse. He was among the first to argue that professionalisation could provide journalism with the ability to resist undue external influence on its public responsibility and work practice. Henningham has regularly monitored the profile of Australian journalism, leaving a legacy of useful data about the demographics of the profession. For example, in his research *Looking at Television News* (Henningham, 1988), Henningham found that journalists were, in general, young (average age of 32); predominantly male; of middle class background; Anglo-Saxon; relatively well educated; and overall satisfied with their job. But of most significance to *The Larrikin Paradox*, Henningham concluded that journalists perceived themselves to be “professional”, and thus could be regarded as having a “professional outlook” (Henningham, 1988: 86 – 87).
Later, in his 1989 article, ‘How and Why Should Journalists be Professionalised’, Henningham expanded on his argument for professionalisation:

Academic achievement of professionalism is not just a means of improving media standards, [it is also] a strategy for journalists resisting unwarranted proprietorial interference … Achievement of professionalism involves a clear understanding and acceptance of journalists’ autonomy in areas of their professional expertise. Journalists themselves must have a clear notion of the boundaries within which outsiders … can not properly intrude (Henningham, 1989: 27 – 28).

Henningham believed that “professional consciousness” could be developed through journalism education, and compulsory membership of professional associations. He argued that members of traditional professions, such as law and medicine, have tertiary degrees in their respective disciplines. “There is no reason why journalism should be any different,” says Henningham (Henningham, 1989: 27). However,
Henningham’s blind spot here is that journalism is different; it involves facilitating and protecting diversity in the public sphere. The homogenising effects of structural professionalisation actually runs the risk of taming, rather than training journalists in facilitating and protecting the public sphere, and ensuring diversity and transparency of authority within it.

Furthermore, although journalism education contributes greatly to the knowledge and skill of journalism, it is not open to all. Entry to journalism education is limited to a select few who have the resources to access increasingly full-fee paying courses. Further, not only can this ‘professional’ education limit the diversity of people entering journalism, but it can also limit their spectrum of knowledge. Graduates may have learnt about some practical, ethical, theoretical and sociological aspects of journalism, but they do not thereby necessarily attain an understanding of other relevant aspects such as history, politics, literature, or science. In short: making a tertiary qualification in
journalism mandatory for entering the industry risks limiting the general knowledge and diversity within journalism culture.

Similar risks bedevil compulsory membership of professional associations, although Henningham insists on them by arguing that the alternative – once the Australian Journalists Association (AJA), and now the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) – can neither adequately focus on professional, nor support individual members:

Professional people need the continuing reinforcement of professional associations ... A professional association which doubles as a trade union can not fulfil these functions (Henningham, 1989: 28).

Currently, Australian journalism is represented by the MEAA, an organisation that functions as both a union and professional organisation. Founded in 1910, the MEAA, and its predecessor, the AJA, has proven to be an important institution for facilitating the Australian journalistic
Community, and providing it with an organised peer support base and lobby group. It also provides ethical guidelines by which journalism can judge its behaviour. However, unlike other professions such as law and medicine, the MEAA is not subject to statutory control, and has limited powers in punishing ethical misconduct. Further, there is no compulsion for individual journalists to become members.

Henningham argues in favour of making professional organisation membership compulsory for journalists, just as it is for doctors and lawyers. This would mean that any journalist acting outside its ethical guidelines could be effectively ‘disbarred’. This, however, risks opening the way for individuals with particular agendas and self-interests, to be in a position to determine who is permitted to publish. Further, similar to mandatory tertiary education, compulsory membership may limit the diversity of people who are eligible to practice journalism, particularly if the professional association in question behaves in a manner that is unacceptable
to some. In effect, the notions of freedom of the press and journalistic independence would be somewhat imperilled by such compulsory measures.

Despite the problems associated with the professionalisation of journalism, much scholarly discourse continues to argue it is as appropriate for journalism as it is for other professions. For example, in his comparison between law and journalism, Mark Pearson argues:

If journalism is taught as a profession, by professional tertiary educators, then the products of that education should be able to view themselves as professionals (Pearson, 1991: 107).

Pearson and Henningham are among those who see parallels between professions such as law and medicine, and journalism. The Larrikin Paradox, however, contends that journalism is different, with unique challenges facing the fulfilment of its complex public responsibility. It is apparently vital for protecting liberty against
authority yet, if that is done well, it can attract neither public praise nor institutional support.

Because of journalism’s peculiar and unique anomalies, the Pearson/ Henningham model of professionalisation is arguably unhelpful. It is partly for this reason that Julianne Schultz argues that the professionalisation of journalism is “far from complete” (Schultz, 1994: 35). For Schultz, it is a “paradox” that while journalists are demonstrating commitment to professional values, they are held in low and declining public esteem (Schultz, 1994: 35). As Schultz points out, the somewhat narrow notion of ‘professionalism’ is not appropriate for journalism. Consequently she argues for a “new definition of professionalism in journalism”, which could be attained by “reaching out to the public as citizens”, rather than as “merely consumers, victims or talent” (Schultz, 1994: 50). The achievement of this may still involve education and professional associations, but not in the mandatory professionalisation sense propounded by Henningham and Pearson.
Here, Schultz’s ‘Paradox of Professionalism’ can be read as an anticipation of The Larrikin Paradox. The larrikin is egalitarian and, as Gorman (1990) notes, s/he has a penchant for social engagement. Indeed, our historiographical analysis of biographical and autobiographical material (see Chapter Five) suggests that larrikinism within Australian journalism encompasses particular alliances between journalism and the public. Larrikinism, then, may even have the potential to realise Schultz’s “new definition” of professionalism in journalism.

On the other hand, traditional professionalisation, as Schultz points out, can result in arrogance and insularity (Schultz, 1994: 37), removing journalism from the very public it is designed to serve. Columbia University’s School of Journalism Professor, James Carey, made a similar argument in his 1980 critique of professionalism in general. Selecting the professionalisation of journalism for particular condemnation, Carey said:
The great danger in modern journalism is one of professional orientation to an audience: the belief, usually implicit, that the audience is there to be informed, to be educated, to be filled with the vital information and knowledge whose nature, production and control rests with a professional class. The knowledge is defined, identified [and] presented based upon canons of professional expertise over which the audience exercises no real judgement or control. And in this new client-professional relationship that emerges the same structures of dependency are developed that typify the relations of doctors, lawyers and social workers to their clients (Carey, 1980: 6).

Australian journalism scholar, Dr Michael Meadows complements Carey’s argument by pointing out that traditional professionalisation “assumed” that the “very existence” of professionalism “empowered” journalists to make appropriate decisions: “This assumes an unproblematic interpretation of professionalism” (Meadows, 1998: 10).
In his 1998 article, 'Making Journalism: The Media as a Cultural Resource', Meadows argues that interpreting journalism as a set of cultural practices, using cultural theory, is a more useful way to understand journalism. Meadows identifies “important common practices” required to “make journalism”. These appear quite similar to larrikinism’s anti-authoritarianism and unconventionality in light of the public sphere. Hackett and Zhao state that:

Journalists have a common interest with labour, the alternative media, non-governmental organisations, and critical social movements in revitalising a culture of publicness, in placing the issue of media structure on the political agenda, in supporting public policy that would counterbalance the negative impacts of unimpeded market logic on communication, and, above all, in developing new institutional bases for journalism oriented towards public interest (in Meadows, 1998: 12).
Further, as Adam notes in Meadows’ article, journalism is a “form of expression”, the “templates of which have been invented and developed” in the lap of the Enlightenment movement – a time when, as noted earlier, the larrikin spirit of figures such as Milton and Mill, helped establish the free press culture. Here, Adam saliently notes that journalism “resides in the cultural storehouse where we put the procedures and techniques for creating public consciousness. It is the aspect of culture that inspires and directs the work of every journalist” (in Meadows, 1998: 14).

Meadows usefully underlines the ability of cultural studies to develop a template for journalism education. A similar approach can be used to interpret the semio-historiographical evidence for Australian journalism’s larrikin tradition – the shifting and/or stable meanings in texts capable of informing Australian journalists about their profession’s declared public responsibility. This suggests larrikinism may have the potential to be, in Adam’s terms, an

Indeed, since the early 1980s, there has been a rise in the use of cultural theory to conceptualise journalism, with John Hartley’s *Understanding News* (1982) being one of the most prominent early efforts. But resistance to cultural theory has also emerged, in part, because traditional notions of journalism and objectivity reject the view that reported reality can be analysed as ‘constructed’. Keith Windschuttle distils the argument against journalism as semiotic-cultural constructivism by insisting on ‘empirical facts’ as a normative journalism concept. Journalism, Windschuttle argues, is “first committed to reporting the truth”:

> Journalists go out into society, make observations about what is done and what is said, and report them as accurately as they can. They have to provide evidence to verify and corroborate their claims and they have to
attribute their sources. Journalism, in other words, upholds a realist view of the world and an empirical methodology. Second, the principal ethical obligations of journalists are to their readers, listeners and viewers. Journalists report not to please their employers or advertisers, nor to serve the state or support some other cause, but in order to inform their audiences (Windschuttle, 1998: 11).

However, as Oakham points out, the Windschuttlian version would mean that journalism practice is carried out in an “economic, political and cultural vacuum” (in Tapsall and Varley, 2001: 74):

Clearly modern journalism does incorporate to some extent all of the above - expression, consensus formation, and a commitment to reporting the truth - but none of these perspectives engages with the rampant commercialisation that now drives journalism (in Tapsall and Varley, 2001: 74).
In 2001, Oakham developed, what she describes as, ‘ethno-Marxism’, or the incorporation of journalistic perspectives and everyday journalistic practices into the political economy of journalism. It means recognition of journalism’s commercial context, but also the “professional ideologies, beliefs, ways of doing, and ways of making meaning that operate among the practitioners of journalism” (in Tapsall and Varley, 2001: 75). The salient point here is that “professional ideologies” do shape practices previously thought of as either predetermined by political economic structures (for example, Windschuttle, 1984), or in the post-Marxist Windschuttle (1998), as adhering to an Empiricist epistemology that can somehow render reportage largely theory-neutral. Oakham demonstrates how ‘ethno-Marxism’ can “shuttle” between journalism’s two levels of “abstraction”: its commercial context, and the “world views” formulated by journalists. The Larrikin Paradox will suggest that larrikinism, formulated as a “world view” can also function as a “shuttle” between journalism’s
public responsibility and its commercial obligations.

Both Meadows and Oakham have been prominent in the debate about the significance of journalism culture. With the growing acknowledgment that journalism’s professional ideologies help frame the language in which it works, as well as the final news product, Australian journalism scholars are now in a more informed position to appreciate the value of cultural historiography which can foreground significant, yet neglected, semiotic-cultural forms such as larrikinism.

In 1998, Julianne Schultz published her dissertation, *Reviving the Fourth Estate*. Schultz gives a detailed account of the Fourth Estate’s historical and sociological background: its establishment and legitimisation; its changing doctrine; its ‘ideal’ function; perceptions of it; and its institutional legitimacy. However, of most relevance for *The Larrikin Paradox* is Schultz’s empirical study of journalists’ attitudes towards the Fourth Estate. Schultz found that journalists
of the late 1990s continued to believe in the Fourth Estate function. However:

Almost all Australian journalists surveyed considered the Fourth Estate to be a desirable ideal. [But] Australian journalists recognise that the ideal is constrained by the commercial reality (Schultz, 1998: 134).

Although many find the term ‘Fourth Estate’ useful to describe journalism’s role in scrutinising and criticising those in authority, such terms arguably align journalism with power, distancing it from the very public it is supposed to inform and serve. ‘Fourth Estate’ implies that journalism has institutionalised power equal to, or more than, society’s other three bodies of authority, originally represented as the monarchy, clergy and parliament (Schultz, 1998: 48). Although initially used as a derogatory term (according to Thomas Carlyle, Edmund Burke had described journalists as “those bastard members of the Fourth Estate” in 1787), modern Australian journalism often justifies its professional practices by using the
term, claiming it reflects accountability of the executive, parliament and judiciary (Schultz, 1998: 48). Although an advocate of the term, Schultz does point out that the concept has “always attracted the pompous and self-important” (Schultz, 1998: 49). Further, adopting the ‘Fourth Estate’ role does not guarantee journalism any greater recognition or influence (Cryle, 1997: 5). As Schultz points out:

“Now it [the ‘Fourth Estate’] is best considered as an ideal, consisting of elements of truth, multiple meanings and lashings of ambition” (Schultz, 1998: 49).

Despite problems with the term, ‘Fourth Estate’ does indicate journalism’s role in scrutinising and criticising bodies of power on behalf of the public. Therefore, Schultz’s findings do suggest that journalists continue to value their foundational public role. However, journalists also agree that the wider, commercialised culture surrounding it makes fulfilling this role increasingly difficult (in Schultz, 1998). The Larrikin Paradox will suggest that a larrikin
sensibility, marked by defiance, egalitarianism, mocking pomposity, exceeding limits and idealism, has the potential to translate journalism’s Fourth Estate principles into socially-useful practice.

The Larrikin Paradox is thus similar to Schultz’s Reviving the Fourth Estate in its concern with Australian journalism’s values and beliefs; how these may or may not be similar to those of the past; and the impact that they may have on Australian journalism’s sense of public responsibility. But where Schultz is concerned with the Fourth Estate, The Larrikin Paradox is concerned with the semio-historical larrikin and its ability, or otherwise, to be reconstructed as a democratic figure with contemporary relevance.

Schultz does not explore in-depth the cultural vehicles by which Fourth Estate ideology may have been passed from one generation to the next. The Larrikin Paradox does just that with larrikinism—through biographical and autobiographical material, industry-specific texts and oral history
gleaned from subjects who were young journalists in 1974 and 2003.

In *Reviving the Fourth Estate*, Schultz’s subjects of research are senior journalists. *The Larrikin Paradox* uses journalists who were impressionable juniors in their respective eras, because it is they, we assume, who can best recall the impact – or absence – of larrikinism as a cultural form in their workplaces and practices; a form that may be able to redefine the meaning of journalism to the public sphere.

In 1998, Suellen Tapsall and Carolyn Varley undertook their ‘Definition: Journalist’ project (Tapsall and Varley, 2001). This involved a quantitative survey of journalists working for Queensland daily news organisations and qualitative interviews with reporters and editors on major television, radio and print news in Sydney and Melbourne. Tapsall and Varley noted that little attention had been paid to the underlying principles of journalism, despite the fact that the profession was undergoing “rapid
evolution” (Tapsall and Varley, 2001: 4). Tapsall and Varley’s project sought to determine if journalism’s principles were also evolving, aiming to develop a philosophy of journalism by discerning roles, values and attributes within the profession. Such a philosophy is “essential”, they argued, if journalists are to make informed decisions on issues such as professional practice, ethics, education and technological change (Tapsall and Varley, 2001: 4 – 5).

The Larrikin Paradox is also concerned with journalism’s underlying principles and philosophy, and the implications of their change or continuity. And similar to the authors of ‘Definition: Journalist’, The Larrikin Paradox argues that such a philosophy is needed to better understand journalism’s public responsibility and professional practice. Of most relevance to this enterprise is Tapsall and Varley’s contention that the “essence” that distinguishes journalists from other information brokers is the “commitment to the public good” and the notion of “responsibility that goes beyond self and employer” (Tapsall and
Varley, 2001: 17). Where The Larrikin Paradox differs, however, is in its concern with larrikinism, and how this semio-cultural phenomenon impacts on journalism’s “commitment to public good” as a key principle.

Jeffrey Brand and Mark Pearson’s research report for the Australian Broadcasting Authority, Sources of News and Current Affairs (Brand and Pearson, 2001) was also concerned with journalistic principles. This report developed a ‘map’ of the organization and structure of the news and current affairs industry. Brand and Pearson surveyed 100 news producers and interviewed 20 media experts, and found several ambiguities within the industry, including the lack of clear definitions between ‘news’ and ‘current affairs’, and of distinctions between ‘news’ and ‘comment’. Brand and Pearson noted the implications of these ambiguities for news producers; production processes; agenda setting; syndication; ethics; accuracy and credibility; and ownership and control (Brand and Pearson, 2001: 5 – 15).
Journalism industry profiles such as Brand and Pearson’s thus help test Tapsall and Varley’s “crisis of identity” claim (2001: v) by recording current values and beliefs. The Larrikin Paradox is interested in values too, but it is more interested in comparing the recalled values and beliefs of Australian journalists from quite different generations – i.e. those who were junior journalists in the Whitlam (1972 – 1975) and Howard (1996 – 2007) eras to test whether larrikinism, as a micro-cultural value, changes or remains consistent under distinct socio-political contexts.

Consequently, we need to evaluate a further area of journalism scholarship: the studies that explore Australian journalism culture of the past. Such studies constitute a small but growing body of literature concerning Australian journalism historiography.

Among the earliest of these are Robin Walker’s twin and complimentary studies of the development of journalism in New South Wales. In The Newspaper

Walker’s twin publications are useful in their documentation of Australian journalism history, and for the identification of prevailing press issues and problems; including “capitalist oligopoly” (Walker, 1980: 225) and sensationalism (Walker, 1976: 260; 1980: 227). He offers two theoretical paradigms through which to view early Australian journalism: the ‘manipulative model’ and the ‘commercial laissez-faire model’ (Walker, 1976: 257). Although Walker is significantly seminal for the development of Australian journalism historiography, his focus is not on the efforts and attitudes of individual newsroom floor Australian journalists, or how they developed
latent, underlying value and belief systems. It is here that The Larrikin Paradox goes further by using a form of cultural historiography to track the presence and significance of larrikinism in Australian journalism.

In 1984, prominent Australian press historian, Rod Kirkpatrick, published Sworn to No Master: A History of the Provincial Press in Queensland to 1930 (Kirkpatrick, 1984), followed up by A Country Conscience: A History of the New South Wales Provincial Press 1841 – 1995 (Kirkpatrick, 2000). Similar to the works of Walker, these two publications are complementary studies, which usefully document Australian journalism’s historical narrative. Focusing on regional journalism, Kirkpatrick finds there existed a unique relationship between journalism and the public during the profession’s development. This relationship approached symbiosis:

The man who owned, edited and printed a small town news-sheet in mid-nineteenth century Australia operated within the most basic units:
family and local community. Sheer economics and the need for extra hands forced him to turn to family members for assistance; and the nature of gathering news demanded that he talk to as many members of the community as possible, attend their meetings and, often, accept office so that their grievances might be publicised, their resolutions implemented (Kirkpatrick, 2000: xiii).

Kirkpatrick is thus useful for, among other things, highlighting how much journalism has changed. As Schultz also emphasises, the public’s participatory function in journalism has receded in recent years (Schultz, 1994: 50). Even so, The Larrikin Paradox will suggest that a reinvigoration of the larrikin tradition has the potential to reinvigorate journalism’s affiliations with its public. While the larrikin is defined as having “emotional attachment to working class origins” (Rickard, 1998), there is no necessary reason why this attachment could not be extended to any – indeed, all – social groups
who need to redress imbalance of representation on the public sphere.

Kirkpatrick and Walker may be significant for Australian journalism historiography, but their main concern is with the development of media companies, the profile of owners and the impact of regulation, leaving journalists on the ‘newsroom floor’ as lesser players, and thus of little historical significance. The Larrikin Paradox remedies that neglect of individual journalists by acknowledging them as important sources of micro-cultural development (see Chapter Four) and of oral history (see Chapter Five)—a somewhat neglected aspect of Australian journalism historiography.

Indeed, as Ann Curthoys, Julianne Schultz and historian, Paula Hamilton pointed out in 1993, the history of Australian journalism has too often been dealt with “obliquely”, as part of media history, rather than being “located centre stage” (Curthoys, Schultz and Hamilton: 1993: 45 – 46):
“There is indeed a need for a history of Australian journalism, as opposed to a history of media companies, media barons, or media policy” (Curthoys, Schultz and Hamilton: 1993: 45).

As Curthoys, Schultz and Hamilton (1993) argue, the need for a history focused on journalists and journalism itself is particularly important to those working in the field of journalism education, to provide an historical perspective, rooted in lived experience, on the development of news routines, values, and professional practices. This historical perspective needs, they argue, to incorporate individuals, companies and broader political and social movements:

The history of practice, news routines, and professional values is important for understanding what is currently done by journalists and media companies, and especially the way in which current structures, organisational practices and routines shape journalistic practice (Curthoys, Schultz and Hamilton, 1993: 45).
The Larrikin Paradox goes some way towards filling the gap identified by Curthoys, Schultz and Hamilton, by tracking the semio-cultural construction of larrikinism within Australian journalism history, and then investigating perceptions of its practice provided by journalists from two different socio-political eras: the radical Whitlam era (1972 - 1975) and the neo-conservative Howard era (1996 - 2007).

Since Curthoys, Schultz and Hamilton (1993), there has been other research that has contributed significantly to filling the gap in the current body of knowledge on Australian journalism’s history of practice, news routines and professional values. In 2001, Sybil Nolan submitted ‘Themes in the Editorial Identity of The Age Newspaper’, as her Masters thesis (Monash University, 2001). Nolan looks at how The Age’s identity was constructed, particularly as it was represented in and developed through the journalists’ oral accounts of the news outlet during Graham Perkin’s 1966 - 1975 editorship. Nolan concludes that these representations of The
Age produced a “remarkably consistent” account of the paper. “So coherent and unified,” says Nolan, “that it can be described as ‘The Age story’” (Nolan, 2001: 1). Nolan found that the dominant features of ‘the story’ were The Age’s independence and liberalism, particularly as embodied in its 19th century owner, David Syme, and its later 1966 – 1975 editor, Graham Perkin.

Nolan’s interest in journalistic perceptions and portrayals of their own industry’s micro-culture is significant for The Larrikin Paradox. But where Nolan is concerned with the culture of “independence and liberalism” at The Age specifically, The Larrikin Paradox is concerned with Australian journalism culture in general, and the impact that its larrikin tradition may have on professional practice and public responsibility.

Despite larrikinism’s masculine connotations (Rickard, 1998) we see no reason why female journalists cannot contribute to the development and reinvigoration of larrikinism as a democratic force within the public sphere.
Indeed, in 1998, Sharyn Pearce published *Shameless Scribblers*, a case study approach to investigating Australian women’s journalism stretching from the 1880s to the 1990s. Pearce places seven female journalists within the context of the social, political and economic ideas of their time, examining their philosophical and cultural engagement with their society and focusing on the ways in which their journalism reflected or challenged accepted attitudes of their time towards women (Pearce, 1998: vii). The relevance for *The Larrikin Paradox* of Pearce’s stories of Louisa Lawson, Mary Gilmore, Dulcie Deamer, Elizabeth Webb, Charmian Clift, Anne Summers and Adele Horin, is that all of these are documented for their larrikin characteristics, confirming that larrikinism is as applicable to Australian female journalists as it is to their male counterparts. As Pearce writes of early Australian female journalists:

Like their counterparts elsewhere, Australian women journalists needed to be strong
individualists and women of formidable character who were prepared to work hard, live in relative obscurity, jeopardise their good reputations, and be paid considerably less than their male peers. And yet, despite these considerable drawbacks, journalism was a deliberate choice for most of the nineteenth-century women professionals (Pearce, 1998: 6).

In what can be considered a separate, yet complimentary anthology, Denis Cryle published his historical case study of Australian Colonial journalism in 1997. In Disreputable Profession, Cryle finds that journalism in Australia was founded upon a mixture of Enlightenment thought, and Protestant evangelism (Cryle, 1997: 12). Colonial journalists saw their function as agents of Enlightenment ideals, overtly propounding deregulation, diffusion of knowledge, liberal debate and the “weakening of error” (Mill in Cryle, 1997: 12). Colonial journalism held a “quasi-religious” commitment to Enlightenment philosophy and public good (Cryle, 1997: 16). Indeed, as Cryle says:
“Unless this vision of journalism as a form of public service is acknowledged, their career changes cannot always be accounted for” (Cryle, 1997: 10).

Cryle supports this with evidence of journalists’ penchant for involvement in various forms of the public sphere – local committees, cultural organisations and political movements.

The diversity of the public sphere, combining writing, political organisation and social interaction, is reflected in the careers of journalists like Edward Hawksley and George Loyau who dabbled in literature, history, pamphleteering and press work as part of their enduring commitment to public life (Cryle, 1997: 11).

Nevertheless, this also meant they often subscribed to the Millsian principle that “it is impossible ... to prohibit invective without prohibiting all discussion” (Mill in Cryle, 1997: 12); resulting in an aggressive and abusive style
of journalism that may be understood as the ‘dark’
side of these larrikin journalists.

As a result, grave official doubts were voiced
about Australian journalism’s ability to behave
with responsibility (Cryle, 1997). Cryle notes an
entrenched perception that colonial journalists
were “erratic” and prone to “bouts of drunken
irresponsibility”. This resulted in the widespread
opinion that journalists could be bought, or
otherwise corrupted by patrons (Cryle, 1997: 8).
Here, there was a “persistent” and “disparaging”
official mentality towards Colonial journalism,
which allowed authorities to dismiss their writing
as products of personal spite on the part of
alienated individuals:

The enduring myth of the convict editor remained a
powerful weapon in the hands of political elites
and was used not only to stigmatise opponents but
to deny them favours or entry to government
offices (Cryle, 1997: 8).
The result, according to Cryle, was a "wholesale dismissal" of journalism as a "personalised vendetta"; thereby tending to demonise journalists - regardless of the public good that their larrikinism helped secure (Cryle, 1997: 8).

Colonial journalism’s stigma of being, in Cryle’s words, a “disreputable profession” also arose from common themes of career discontinuity and uneasy status (Cryle, 1997: 3). As he notes, many of Australia’s early journalists turned to newspapers after experiences as failed writers, failed politicians and failed businessmen (Cryle, 1997: 8).

Of further relevance to The Larrikin Paradox is Cryle’s noting of how Colonial journalism’s lack of status played out in a collective mentality, or as he describes it, a “pathology of journalism” (Cryle, 1997: 8). This perpetuated a convict attitude of resentment directed at the more well off classes in society. This pathology, according to Graeme Turner, has in more recent times, become
internalised and used to justify professional and ethical abuses:

Paradoxically, as public confidence in journalists declines ... journalists’ confidence in the myths of their own trade seems to grow stronger. Indeed the low regard in which journalism is held can be a source of ‘meticulous satisfaction’ (in Cryle, 1997: 9).

With such cynical accusations, it would be surprising if Australian journalism didn’t try to ameliorate the stigma of irresponsibility and its ‘convict’ mentality. However, as The Larrikin Paradox will suggest, larrikinism, and its values of defiance, exceeding limits, mocking pomposity and other axiological elements may reconstruct irresponsibility as usefully synergetic with Australian journalism’s declared public responsibility.

Consequently, Cryle’s book is significant for The Larrikin Paradox. Through his case studies of Australian Colonial journalists, Cryle discovers
change and continuity in the very foundations of Australian journalism culture. One of the continuities is a “pathology”, which attaches Australian journalism’s forefathers to certain larrikin values. Even so, Cryle’s binary assessment of Colonial journalists as “idealists” and “misfits” (Cryle, 1997: 10), fails to link larrikin characteristics and practices to Enlightenment thought, especially its challenge to authority. Cryle’s failure constitutes a ‘larrikin-sized’ hole in Australian journalism historiography, which The Larrikin Paradox endeavours to fill by understanding larrikinism as an Australian cultural form that may be of more public sphere significance than hitherto discerned.

Given journalism’s current “crisis of identity” (Tapsall & Varley, 2001: v) in the face of “rampant commercialism” (Oakham in Tapsall & Varley, 2001: 71); negative public perceptions; social expectations for infotainment and attempts by authority to thwart journalism’s public responsibility, The Larrikin Paradox is arguably
overdue. Since the 1990s, journalism research has flourished, with several investigations into Australian journalism’s profile, its history, and its underlying professional values and beliefs. Yet there is an absence of work on larrikinism as a means of vouchsafing a work culture that can uphold Australian journalism’s declared public responsibility.

This absence is a significant gap in the literature considering that Cultural Theory sees tradition as a dominant influence on values and beliefs (see Chapter Two). Indeed, it is an oversight magnified by Cryle’s otherwise significant recognition that Australian journalism has an extensive tradition of anti-authoritarianism born from Enlightenment thought. By exploring the prospect of a nexus between Enlightenment thought, Australian journalism’s larrikin tradition and its public role, The Larrikin Paradox aims to fill this gap, and thereby enhance our understanding of the larrikin journalist as a democratic figure. It is with this
in mind that The Larrikin Paradox again poses its Thesis Statement for further systematic testing:

In Australian history, larrikin journalists have been responsible for facilitating and protecting democratic freedom in the public sphere from authority. Because this freedom is in a state of vulnerability, contemporary Australian journalism still needs its larrikin tradition to vouchsafe a work culture capable of maintaining its declared responsibility to ‘inform citizens’ and ‘animate democracy’. 
Chapter Two

Theory and Methodology for a Cultural Historiography of Larrikinism in Australian Journalism.

In this inquiry, the Thesis Statement will function as an informed, yet provisional, statement of theory; posited for testing using a historiographical methodology that can generate questions and evaluate evidence in order to confirm, refute or clarify the statement. The Thesis Statement therefore functions as a distinct possibility, pragmatically posited, so that evidence relevant to larrikinism and Australian journalism’s public role may be identified and evaluated. In this way, the Thesis Statement helps to generate findings about the democratic significance, or otherwise, of larrikinism within Australian journalism micro-culture. In short, the Thesis Statement will act as both a guide towards evidence, as well as being tested by evidence.

This ‘thesis-guided’ approach derives from, but is not synonymous with, the “a priori imagination”,
noted by renowned historian, Robin George Collingwood (1946/1993: 240 – 249). In The Idea of History (1946/1993), Collingwood notes the historian is well advised to begin with “mere theory”, albeit a theory informed by “indications” and capable of being tested:

The hero of a detective novel is thinking exactly like an historian when, from indications of the most varied kinds, he constructs an imaginary picture of how a crime was committed, and by whom. At first, this is mere theory, awaiting verification, which must come to it from without (Collingwood, 1946/1993: 243).

Furthermore:

The historian’s picture of his subject, whether that subject be a sequence of events or a past state of things, thus appears as a web of imaginative construction stretched between certain fixed points provided by the statements of his authorities; and if these points are frequent enough and the threads spun from each to the next are constructed with due care,
always by the ‘a priori imagination’ and never by merely arbitrary fancy, the whole picture is constantly verified by appeal to these data, and runs little risk of losing touch with the reality it represents (Collingwood, 1946/1993: 242).

Here, the “authorities” noted by Collingwood are the documents and other source materials used by the historian to test the cogency of his or her “a priori” thesis.

Collingwood’s method is useful in light of the theory of culture developed by British cultural studies scholars Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams. Collingwood, Hall and Williams, together, provide useful insights into how to discern, develop and test theories using the cultural and micro-cultural factors embroiled in the study of history. The cultural theory of Hall and Williams is particularly useful for showing how an understanding of micro-cultural forms emerges from, and is shaped by, interpretations of historical evidence.
This approach is helpful insofar as it enables *The Larrikin Paradox* to move, with Hall and Williams, beyond Ferdinand de Saussure’s somewhat narrow linguistic theory of meaning (1916/1974) into an appreciation of contexts and communities of meaning within macro-cultural and micro-cultural spheres; or in *The Larrikin Paradox*’s case, Australian journalism as a micro-culture. In doing so we assume that investigating this micro-culture via historiography can illuminate the democratic implications of the larrikin tradition in Australian journalism.

Here, we understand “tradition” as Williams (1977: 115) conceptualises the term: the construction of cultural power during historical periods, marked by particular macro and micro cultural ideologies and discourses. It is important to note here that “tradition” does not necessarily equate to ‘historical accuracy’ in a positivist sense, but is rather, the norms and practices that members of a community recollect and inherit, or what historian Eric Hobsbawm (1998) describes as
“memorial narratives”. These narratives are constructed by communities around shared experience from the existing verifiable facts (Hobsbawm, 1998: 354 – 355). A “memorial narrative” affirms the value or meaning of an event, individual, institution or idea by heightening its more celebrated aspects, while downplaying others.

Williams critically clarifies the methodological implications of this approach in his ‘Introduction’ to Keywords (1976). His critique helpfully informs the prospect of testing, through historiography, our ‘a priori imagination’, as a key ‘memorial narrative’ concerning larrikinism within Australian journalism:

Because ‘meaning’, in any active sense, is more than the general process of ‘signification’, and because ‘norms’ and ‘rules’ are more than the properties of any abstract process or system, other kinds of analysis remain necessary. The emphasis of my own analyses is deliberately social and historical. In the matters of reference and applicability, which analytically underlie any
particular use, it is necessary to insist that the most active problems of meaning are always primarily embedded in actual relationships, and that both the meanings and the relationships are typically diverse and variable, within the structures of particular social orders and the processes of social and historical change (in Burke, Crowley & Girvin, 2000: 79).

Williams’ view on culture and history is akin to Collingwood’s constructivist historiography; thereby helping to generate a methodology that may be fairly called cultural historiography. Williams and Hall focused on the semiotic ‘construction’ of everyday life and the subsequent influence on cultural formation in socio-historical context. Wrestling culture from elitist assumptions (that culture could only be interpreted as ‘high culture’) the ‘Birmingham School’ of cultural studies examined, in Williams’ words, the “ordinary” (in Gray & McGuigan, 1993: 5). When Williams spoke of the “ordinary”, he meant key elements of cultural communication or values foregrounded in, for example, newspapers, music,
clothes, hairstyles and architecture. In other words, those values that enjoy a consensus concerning their significance, thereby exercising a powerful, yet often unquestioned, influence on cultural consciousness.

Here, culture (and consciousness of it) may be understood as synthetic in character - i.e., not necessarily produced through natural processes, but socially constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through explicit and implicit meanings in cultural products and practices. The sub-groupings of cultures within society and the assumption that culture is constructed suggests that Australian journalism’s value and belief systems are not necessarily pre-determined by political-economic structures alone.

Consequently, there is reason for reservation about standard Marxist media theory, at least as it has been articulated by the likes of Michael Parenti in Inventing Reality (1986):
More than a century ago Karl Marx observed that those who control the material means of production also control the mental means of production. So in every epoch the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class. Indeed, it seems so today. Viewpoints supported by money have no trouble gaining mass exposure and sympathetic media treatment, while those offensive to moneyed interests languish either for want of the costly sums needed to reach a vast public or because of the prohibitions exercised by media owners and management. In a word, the mass media are a class dominated media—bound by the parameters of ownership in a capitalist society (Parenti, 1986: 32).

However, as more recent cultural theorists argue, journalism does not necessarily have such a fated future. For example, Graeme Turner (1996b) argues that deterministic forms of Marxism merely assume that pre-existing and commonly external political-economic conditions fix the destiny of society as a whole, neglecting the power of human agency and the influence of contextually bound culture (Turner, 1996b: 23). With the aforementioned
Enlightenment model in mind, journalists can be considered as autonomous human beings, who may be influenced by, yet apparently have the ability to shape, their culture’s internal values and beliefs. Given such a model, it is quite possible that larrikinism may indeed help vouchsafe a critical attitude that usefully informs journalism’s capacity to animate democracy.

Thus, we shall assume that Kant’s demand for “freedom to make public use of one’s reason at every point” and his call to have the “courage to use your own reason” (Kant, 1784/1963:3 & 4 - 5) helps underwrite journalism’s capacity to renegotiate cultural values. If this be so, then when it comes to Australian journalism culture, the larrikin type can perhaps be reinvigorated, as a democratic figure, through a renegotiated consensus within the cultural consciousness of Australian journalists.

Within Williams’ general semiological definition of ‘culture’, we shall understand ‘Australian journalism culture’ as what Romano (2003) calls
“micro-culture”. In Culture and Society (1966), Williams defines culture in the following way:

Culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values, not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture (Williams, 1966: 57).

In The Larrikin Paradox, the “particular way of life” under investigation is Australian journalism sub-culture or, in Romano’s (2003) terms, Australian journalism “micro-culture”.

Here, The Larrikin Paradox assumes that journalists can be conceptualised as a micro-cultural group within the wider media culture, as well as within broader Australian macro-culture, or society itself. Further, as media commentator Margaret Simons argues, the delineation of journalism from the wider media culture may even be crucial to journalism’s public role:
Media and journalism are not the same thing ... ‘Media’ is the business of selling audiences to advertisers ... News and drama have older and more important purposes than media. [However in] the modern world they are supported by and enmeshed with media (Simons, 2007: 20).

The socialisation process of micro-cultures in general has been articulated by many, and particularly well by Stuart Hall in *Policing the Crisis* (1978). Yet it is only relatively recently that this notion has been applied to Australian journalism and its crucial ‘distinction’ between it and media.

These distinctions between ‘media’ and ‘journalism’ are furthered by Romano’s understanding of journalists as interpretive communities in her study of Indonesian journalism (and its changing culture) during that nation’s political shift from dictatorship to a more democratic system (Romano, 2003). According to Romano, the idea that journalists are interpretive
communities arises from the theory that journalists’ work is “imbued with a distinct sense of journalist collectivity”:

Journalists have a strong sense of social identity, so that there is commonly a uniformity of opinion among them about their role in society … Such self identity is based on their horizontal relationship with their colleagues who work at the same level, rather than from vertical management or pressure from editors, managers or other figures more senior to them within the newsrooms’ hierarchical chain of power (Romano, 2003: 9).

Romano further points out that journalist’s function informally as a community, even when the formal mechanisms of professional affiliations are “moribund” (Romano, 2003: 9). In other words, when studying journalism, it is wise to not only analyse the formal, standardised patterns of professional association and interaction, but also the “cultural discussion”, or how journalists monitor the appropriateness of their own behaviour
through interaction with other journalists (Romano, 2003: 9).

Brand and Pearson (2001) help corroborate this theory of journalism as a micro-culture by observing a “herd, pack or club mentality” among journalists. According to Brand and Pearson, this is a result of journalists “mixing” with each other in social networks or while covering the same news events. Although journalists remained competitive, “often strongly so”, Brand and Pearson identified a “strong common cultural mindset” (Brand and Pearson, 2001: 10–11).

Barbie Zelizer also foregrounds the phenomenon of journalism as micro-culture when she argues that reporters, in particular, absorb “rules, boundaries and a sense of appropriateness about their actions without ever actually being informed of them by their superiors” (Zelizer, 1993: 221). Similarly, John Hurst also recognises the existence of a journalistic micro-culture in his anthology of Walkley Award winners:
“They’re [journalists] an interesting tribe, with their own strange totems and taboos, a close fraternity apart from, yet part of the crowd” (Hurst, 1988: 6).

The Larrikin Paradox will study the cultural construction of this “interesting tribe”, through an interpretation of a particular “strange totem” within it. In short, The Larrikin Paradox will use a form of cultural historiography to analyse Australian journalism’s most neglected “strange totem” (the larrikin figure) in light of his or her “taboos” (such as subservience and conservatism or, in Kant’s terms, “self-incurred tutelage” (1784/1963). Here, biographical and autobiographical material will be regarded as historical documents that provide opportunities to test the Thesis Statement by exploring the axiological import of the larrikin figure within Australian journalism history.

For this enterprise, The Larrikin Paradox begins with The Oxford English Dictionary (1993) and its definition of axiology, which is simply:

The Macquarie Dictionary (2005) offers a little more detail:

“The branch of philosophy that deals with value systems, including ethics, aesthetics and religion” (2005: 95).

But it is The Bloomsbury Concise English Dictionary (2005) that offers a definition of axiology with clear use-value for our inquiry:

“The study of the nature, types and governing criteria of values and value judgments” (2005: 94).

In our axiological approach to the larrikin tradition, it is assumed that at least some key criteria for the “value” of larrikinism can be identified through a careful excavation and interpretation of references to the term, and its derivations, in scholarly and other research into larrikinism in Australian macro-culture (see Chapter Three). In short, we think a larrikin axiology can be gleaned from that material. As a type of ‘compass’, the axiology can then be used to inform our investigation into the history of
larrikinism in Australian journalism. The history will be drawn from those salient sources of journalism as a micro-culture: biographies and autobiographies by, or about, Australian journalists. Here we assume that our axiological ‘compass’ can help us seek out the larrikin elements in those micro-cultural sources; thereby identifying manifestations of larrikinism within almost 150 years of Australian journalism history (see Chapter Four).

Once that cultural history has been clarified, we will then critically compare other source material - oral history (open-ended interviews) and industry-specific publications (The Journalist and The Walkley Magazine) - concerning larrikinism in journalism in the Whitlam (1972 – 1975) and Howard (1996 – 2007) eras (see Chapter Five).

Here we acknowledge that the unreliability of memory risks being a key factor in differences that may emerge between the two cohorts of interviewees (Berger, 2000: 124). However, by using Minichiello’s “recursive model” of open-
ended interviews (1995: 80), we can minimise that difficulty (see pages 248 – 252) and thereby make the comparison more useful than problematic.

Comparing such material, in light of the axiologically-informed history, is a useful way to test whether the larrikin tradition enjoyed continuity or discontinuity, in the self-expression of journalists from distinctly different socio-political eras. Furthermore, such a history may help indicate whether the main contention of our Thesis Statement (i.e. that the larrikin journalist can be useful for democracy) can still hope to resonate in the professional practices of contemporary Australian journalism.
Chapter Three

Larrikinism in Australia: Towards a Larrikin Axiology.

Our axiological strategy for exploring our Thesis Statement begins by assuming that at least some key criteria for the value of larrikinism can be identified through a careful excavation and interpretation of references to the term, and its derivations, in texts relating to larrikinism in Australian macro-culture. In short, we maintain that a larrikin axiology can be gleaned from the term’s textual history (or a history of that term as it has been interpreted within Australian culture).

Discerning the larrikin’s meanings is, however, problematic, for it is ambiguous in character. The larrikin is riddled with contradictory elements and resists reductions to ‘hero’ or ‘villain’. Because the larrikin is a paradoxical figure, identifying both general and specific criteria for the concept is difficult.
For instance, there is even some doubt over how and when the larrikin came into being. Ethel Turner (1896/1978) gave the traditional explanation in *The Little Larrikin*, when she told the story of an Irish police officer bringing two or three youths before an Australian magistrate and saying their offences consisted of “just larkin’ around” (in Rickard, 1998: 79). However, this story is now largely discounted, with ‘larking’ or similar words being traced to various different British counties (Baker, 1966: 8–9). According to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2001), ‘larrikin’ is from English dialect - probably derived from a given name (Larry’s + kin), or from pronunciation (Larking). There are also some claims that it may have derived from the Cornish word ‘larican’, meaning to make mischief (Gorman, 1990: xi). The larrikin may have also been one of the ‘larky boys’ (or troublemakers), mentioned in *The Sydney Gazette* on July 21, 1825 (Baker, 1966: 119).

Despite uncertainty surrounding the term’s origins, larrikinism does have two assurances.
The first of these is the fact that it is a word peculiar to the current Australian lexicon (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2001; Hughes, 1989; Baker, 1966: 119). The second is that when larrikinism gained its currency in the Australian English language, it did not carry the positive connotations that it does today. The original larrikins were members of street gangs, violently spreading their own brand of tyranny throughout Melbourne and Sydney during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They were hard drinking, hard fighting, with little regard for authority (Rickard, 1998: 79 - 80). The larrikins were working class and, despite their aggressive and often cruel behaviour, they also had a gentle side towards their own, sometimes raising funds for neighbours who had fallen on hard times (Gorman, 1990: xi).

The larrikin of the nineteenth century identified himself by his dress - distinctive high-heeled boots and bell-bottomed trousers. The boots, finely cut and pointed, were designed to assist their wearer in fights. The trousers, flared over
the boots, were tight around the thighs and buttocks. Jackets were short and loose and hats were black, round and firm. In an age when beards and whiskers were the norm, the larrikin was defiantly clean-shaven (Rickard, 1998: 79). With this appearance went a certain swaggering walk and leery look. The whole ensemble, with its suggestion of violence and flaunting sexuality, mocked the image of the respectable bourgeois (Rickard, 1998: 79).

In the wake of World War I, the larrikin seemed to enter a decline, but was soon revived after World War II, when the ‘bodgies’ and ‘widgies’ took to Australia’s streets (Rickard, 1998: 81). Thereafter, the larrikin tradition continued in Australian Rockers, Surfies, Jazzers and Mods (Baker, 1966: 120). The larrikin found its artistic manifestation in the Australian Bohemian, which included journalists among its ranks of literary writers and artists (Baker, 1966: 121). The Bohemian evolved into the Beatnik that, in Australia, included young radical intellectuals such as Clive James, Robert Hughes, Les Murray,
Bob Ellis, Germaine Greer and Barry Humphries (Negus, ABC TV, 2003).

Today, the historical larrikin of violence and bullying has disappeared, to be replaced by a figure representing anti-authoritarianism, egalitarianism and audacity. And it is this larrikin that has become somewhat emblematic of Australian culture. Here, Wild Men of Sydney author, Cyril Pearl’s 1958 comment indicates larrikinism’s evolution into its modern meaning:

The larrikin as a social and sartorial type ... has disappeared [but] many of his characteristics – cheeky aggressiveness, contempt for authority, strident masculinity – are still ingredients of the Australian make-up (Pearl, 1958: 8).

However, when searching for an axiology of larrikinism, we often encounter derogatory terms. For example, in his 1966 publication on Australian language, Sidney Baker defined the larrikin as a “street tough or hoodlum; a boisterous youth”
(Baker, 1966: 119). Furthermore, according to the Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary (1992), a larrikin is a “hooligan” or “one who acts with apparent disregard for social or political conventions”. Here, it would appear that Sydney’s Cronulla riots of 2005 contained larrikin elements of this type.

The subtext running under these definitions is that larrikinism is not a desirable trait. Yet, as Pearl pointed out in 1958, Australia has long held a “perverse hero-worship” of the powerful larrikin.

“In Australia, time and again, men in high places, exposed as scoundrels, have continued to enjoy public office and esteem” (Pearl, 1958: 8). He - and it’s important to keep in mind that although the larrikin is often male, this does not preclude females from assuming this ‘masculine’ persona - flouts the law; exploits the community; and even defiantly escapes punishment. Yet the larrikin also symbolizes courage, resolution, independence and empathy with the underdog (Pearl, 1958: 8).
Even so, discerning larrikinism within generational contexts can help us identify the figure’s broader meanings, rather than its literal definition, as illustrated in *Australian Words and Their Origins* (Hughes, 1989: 303). Tracing larrikinism through its historical uses, Hughes demonstrates the concept’s changing meaning in the Australian vocabulary.

*Australian Words and their Origins* defines the larrikin as a “mischievous or frolicsome youth”, and goes back to 1868 when W. Cooper in *Colonial Experience* describes “one of the most accomplished swindlers ever imported to the colonies” as an “infernal old larrikin” (Hughes, 1989: 303). This quote suggests the larrikin skirts the periphery of the law, something that is later emphasised when *Australian Words and Their Origins* quotes J.H.L. Zillman from *Past and Present Australian Life* (1889):

> There is now a bush larrikin, as well as a town larrikin, and it would be difficult sometimes
to say which is the worse. Bush larrikins have
gone on to be bushrangers (Hughes, 1989: 303).

But when Hughes quotes The Bulletin’s report on
Gough Whitlam’s now famous 1975 speech on the
steps of Parliament House, the larrikin becomes
somewhat more appealing:

Whitlam, under the shock of dismissal, revealed
some of those characteristics which seem to lie
so close beneath his urbane exterior. The
larrikin came out in an unseemly attack on the
Governor General (Hughes, 1989: 303).

This quote suggests the larrikin has connotations
related to an openly anti-establishment political
sensibility; a meaning that is enhanced when
Hughes identifies the “Larrikin Class”, by quoting
an unsourced 1879 newspaper article:

“Sympathy and admiration for the [Kelly Gang] … by
the larrikin class are not barely disguised in
some cases, but openly flaunted in others”
(Hughes, 1989: 303).
Here the larrikin is defined as not only independent from, and rebellious against, authority, but doing so in an open manner. A political sensibility is again implied when Hughes quotes J. Vicars in an 1877 edition of *The Tariff, Immigration and the Labour Question* as saying:

> The hourly and daily surroundings, and the circumstances in which this larrikin element is placed, exert a very great deal of influence in molding their habits and modes of life (Hughes, 1989: 303).

Not only does this quote, arguably, imply political leanings, but it also suggests independence from social expectations.

Independence is again the subtext when Hughes goes on to quote an 1891 edition of Sydney’s *Truth*:

> Jackaroos ... are such fun, and vary, from the sensible one, in a fair way for promotion, to the larrikin, who will either sling station life or hump the swag (Hughes, 1989: 303).
The suggestion of solitary independence is very different from the gang mentality noted by Rickard (1998: 79 – 80).

*Australian Words and their Origins* also suggests political critique is associated with the larrikin, when it quotes a 1984 article on Germaine Greer in *The Sydney Morning Herald*:

“She … grins and accepts cheerfully enough the description of being an Australian intellectual larrikin” (Hughes, 1989: 303).

We can usefully compare this 1984 representation of larrikinism with the ‘Larrikin Push’ signification in an 1890 edition of *The Braidwood Dispatch*:

“The larrikin pushes are about again. On Friday night a gang of them assaulted a young lad” (Hughes, 1989: 303).

Here larrikinism is again associated with gang violence - a quite different meaning to “intellectual larrikin”, although, in their contexts, both uses arguably share anti-authoritarianism connotations.
Indeed, with Greer in mind, it is important to note the larrikin figure can be male as well as female. In *Australian Words and Their Origins* the female larrikin is bestowed the title of “larrikiness”. Defining the term as a “female associate of a larrikin”, the publication quotes an 1871 edition of *The Collingwood Advertiser and Observer*:

“Evidence was tendered as to the manner led by these larrikinesses” (Hughes, 1989: 303).

Furthermore, J.E. Webb in his 1956 publication, *So Much for Sydney* notes:

These children of the new slums are natural recruits for the strange legion of 1955 – 56 larrikins and larrikinesses called ‘bodgies’ and ‘widgies’, and they know enough to realize that they have little to fear from a labour regime which has abolished the hangman (Hughes, 1989: 303).

Webb bestows the larrikiness with similar characteristics as the larrikin - nonconformity, rebellion, working class and skirting the periphery of respectability.
It is these characteristics that have apparently made the larrikin so endearing to the Australian consciousness. According to Manning Clark, Australian love for the larrikin is a result of our history marked by tyranny and oppression (in Gorman, 1990: 38). Clark claims that all Australians possess a streak of larrikinism as a result of resentment left over from a convict past and rebellion against the moral conservatism of dominant religions and British ‘Wowserism’:

This faithless and often mindless wowserism has caused a backlash of protest, which in turn has joined forces with other wellsprings of larrikinism to reinforce our image of ourselves as a people engaged in an act of defiance (in Gorman, 1990: 38).

Clark goes on to argue that larrikinism was “epitomised” in World War I, when Australian soldiers refused to salute officers:
The conflict between being a soldier, subject to discipline, but refusing to display that subjection, is an apt metaphor for much of the ambivalence in the Australian character. When laws do not reflect common sense but merely creedless moralism, however, there will inevitably arise larrikins who rebel against those laws, and against the tyranny of opinion that supports them (in Gorman, 1990: 37).

Indeed, Peter Weir’s celebrated film, Gallipoli (1981), where the Australian soldiers display complete disregard for their British authorities, is heavily encoded with Australian larrikinism. The characters played by Mel Gibson and Mark Lee manifestly exhibit anti-authoritarianism, mockery of pomposity and exceeding limits.

Clem Gorman (1990) further notes that larrikinism may have evolved from Australia’s Irish heritage – a “spirit of resistance to English perfidy and pomposity” – and he certainly sees British, and later, American, cultural dominance as contributing factors:
Undoubtedly, the fact that Australia is a small nation overshadowed by the giant English speaking empires of Britain and America has contributed to our sense that, since nothing we say or do can influence the world, we might as well enjoy life and have a laugh at the expense of those who wield the power … Some people think that larrikinism is no more than immaturity lingering on in grown-ups. Suffice to say that we find ourselves with a strong streak of irreverence, a love of satire, a resentment of privilege and a marked ambivalence towards power and class (Gorman, 1990: x).

While one can dispute Gorman’s determinate use of “we” here, in relation to “power and class”, his key point about larrikinism – as a value – is well made. Indeed, Australian love for the larrikin has resulted in many popular culture products that have romanticised the term. In 2003, the cinematic version of Ned Kelly, starring big names such as Heath Ledger and Orlando Bloom was released. Researchers noted how the figure of Ned was portrayed as a larrikin-esque hero arising from
police persecution and squatter harassment (Jordan, 2003). Yet, as historian, Doug Morrissey noted, Ned Kelly was also “an aggressive professional stock thief spreading his own brand of fear and intimidation” (Morrissey, 1995: 29). In the sign of Ned Kelly, it seems, we have all the ambiguities of larrikinism in connotation.

Indeed, larrikinism’s infiltration into Australian popular culture can be traced back to the 1880s, when – despite open bourgeois disapproval of the larrikin – contemporary cartoonists and writers were depicting his anti-social behaviour as symptomatic of colonial culture (Rickard, 1998: 79). Ethel Turner’s 1896 “Little Larrikin”, a six-year-old orphan, is an incorrigible rascal, but not a mean-minded criminal (1896/1978). Edward Dyson’s Chiller Green is a “sinister man” at first sight, but is in fact a “jaunty, companionable youth” (1906/1963). Clarence James Dennis’ larrikins in The Sentimental Bloke (1915/1981), and particularly his character, Ginger Mick (1916/1976) are a natural progression from the character of Chiller. But, as John
Rickard argues, setting the larrikin to verse “immediately takes him into the realm of myth” (Rickard, 1998: 81).

From this it appears that a larrikin axiology may be recoverable through Australian cultural historiography. Nevertheless, very few scholars have recognised the value of investigating the larrikin figure’s public significance for Australian macro-culture in general, let alone for Australian journalism micro-culture in particular.

Cyril Pearl’s 1958 biography on John Norton, William Crick and William Willis, Wild Men of Sydney, does however come close. Although Norton et al. dabbled in journalism practice, it is for their media empires and political forays that they are most remembered. Pearl’s investigation uses Norton et al. as case studies of larrikinism within Australian consciousness, and finds that:

They were aggressive and accomplished demagogues who made little or no attempt to conceal their complex villainies. But the
frequent exposure to these villainies served only to consolidate their position as public heroes (Pearl, 1958: 7).

Pearl acknowledged the contribution his work made to the “full story” of Australian “roguery”. This story, according to Pearl, runs throughout Australian history, from the rum racketeers of the First Fleet to the beer racketeers of World War II, from land swindlers to mine swindlers:

The dramatis personae will be well assorted—red-coated English officers and wide-hatted Australian squatters; Tories and Socialists; knights and nobodies; politicians, policemen, aldermen; racing men and brewers; and every state will provide a scene or two (Pearl, 1958: 7).

However, when reading *Wild Men of Sydney*, it must be kept in mind that Pearl was writing during a time when larrikinism was a term much maligned. So negative was the term ‘larrikin’ that, at the time, Norton’s surviving relatives made moves to
have the book banned (Munster in Pearl, 1958: 1-6). Hence Pearl’s incredulity when he says:

Certainly [the ‘Larrikin’s] components [are] of the idealised Australian legend; but in a different framework, they are also the components of the gangster who courageously and resolutely sets himself against the law. It is all a question of ethics and our morals do not seem to have kept pace with our merinos! (Pearl, 1958: 8).

In the final analysis, Pearl’s work can be seen as primarily biography, charting the life and works of historical figures; yet somewhat devoid of a developed theory on larrikinism.

And yet, in his first edition of *The Australian Language* (1945) Sidney Baker devotes an entire chapter to larrikinism. Using historical documentary evidence as a research tool, Baker defends the larrikin. In contrast to Pearl, Baker talks of larrikinism and its impact on Australian culture in positive terms:
“If an Australian boy or youth does not have a little of the larrikin in him, then he is scarcely worth his inheritance” (Baker, 1945: 112).

Although Baker recognises the larrikin’s violent origins, he counters this connotation with a quote from P. Cunningham speaking in 1826:

“Our currency lads are noted for their spirit and courage as well as for great clannishness” (Baker, 1945: 113).

Although Baker acknowledges that the larrikin does not “as a rule belong to the well-to-do classes”, he suggests that the larrikin is egalitarian insofar as s/he “speaks with a representative voice and a good deal of what he has said has sunk its roots so deeply into our language that it will never be torn out” (Baker, 1945: 115). One of the larrikin’s linguistic legacies, according to Baker, is a “deliberate speaking down”, or an “avoidance of anything suspected of being highbrow in thought or word”:

“The effect of this tendency towards lowbrowism is to make larrikin slang far more typical of
Australia than we might anticipate” (Baker, 1945: 115).

Baker concludes that the larrikin has a strong desire to be regarded as a “hard doer or good doer or just a doer, a hard case, a hard thing, a finger or a dog … all of which show that he is appreciated by his fellows – tough maybe, but sometimes with the saving graces of sharp humour and bravado” [original italics](Baker, 1945: 114).

Baker made a useful contribution to the body of knowledge on larrikinism, but it was written for dictionary definition purposes only, and was published more than 60 years ago. Because larrikinism is an organic concept, we assume the term may have developed different connotations since Baker’s 1945 assessment.

In 1990, Clem Gorman edited an anthology of Australian writers examining the Australian larrikin legend (Gorman, 1990). In his preface to The Larrikin Streak, Gorman interrogates the term by defining what larrikinism is not, as opposed to
what it is. According to Gorman, a larrikin is “certainly not” an eccentric; “eccentrics are vague, unfocused and expect to be indulged”. Nor is the larrikin a rat-bag; “Rat-bags lack the cunning calculation that distinguishes the true larrikin”. Gorman goes on to argue that while Bohemians use iconoclasm as a “badge”, the larrikin uses it as a “tool”. He also dismisses Delinquents, No-Hopers, Lairs, Yahoos, Ockers, Bodgies and Galahs. However:

Soaring over them all is the larrikin; almost archly self-conscious, too smart for his or her own good, witty, rather than humorous, exceeding limits, bending rules and sailing close to the wind, avoiding, rather than evading responsibility, playing up to an audience, mocking pomposity and smugness, taking the piss out of people, cutting down tall poppies, born on a Wednesday, looking both ways for Sunday, larger than life, skeptical, iconoclastic, egalitarian yet suffering fools badly, insouciant and, above all, defiant (Gorman, 1990: ix - x).
Gorman’s rich characterisation here is formed by 20 anecdotes on larrikins, written by some of Australia’s most celebrated writers and commentators. Although the anecdotes clearly show a relationship between larrikinism and Australian culture, not one documents the relationship between larrikinism and journalism. The range of subjects, however, is useful in its suggestion that there is a complex diversity of larrikin characteristics. Those daubed with the title larrikin range from Harry ‘Breaker’ Morant to Dawn Fraser, Mary MacKillop to Errol Flynn and Barry ‘Bazza’ McKenzie. The characters in these stories come from different backgrounds, and hold different claims to fame. But there are certain common characteristics that make them larrikins: an outward show of exceeding limits, mocking pomposity and “above all” defiance.

Gorman’s collection implies that larrikinism has always been part of the Australian character, but not as a static part of national history. The number and range of anecdotes suggests that while larrikinism may be a key element in Australian
cultural heritage, it evolves and changes as it moves from generation to generation. Yet, despite this elusiveness, it is arguably a perpetual “streak” in the Australian character, which can be found in an array of different individuals. Gorman suggests that the larrikin’s violent and tribal streak has fallen away, to be replaced by common themes related to mocking pomposity, exceeding limits and defiance.

Gorman’s collection of larrikin stories formed the basis for John Rickard’s study into the defining line between ‘larrikinism’ and ‘ockerism’ (Rickard, 1998). Conducting a textual analysis of the larrikin’s representations in history and literature, Rickard argues that the archetype is now:

socially acceptable as its aggression is tempered with humour, gusto and gregariousness... the larrikin functions as more of a carefree, mischievous character with no intentional meanness (Rickard, 1998: 78).
Ockerism, on the other hand, is a term of “cultural abuse”:
“While he retains the loud-mouthed, performing elements of the larrikin, the ocker is also boorish, bigoted, a bit of an Alf Garnet in fact” (Rickard, 1998: 82).

Rickard goes on to identify six main qualities associated with the larrikin:
1. aggression, whether physical or verbal;
2. criminality;
3. a “censorious edge” (“the larrikin can not only take the piss out of people, but stand in judgment over them”);
4. humour;
5. emotional innocence and
6. a “romantic attachment to working class origins”.

However, Rickard concludes:

It is though there is something incomplete about the larrikin. Even as we are drawn to the performance, we are wondering at the risks he is taking – from alcoholism to suburban domestication. For the larrikin defies
domesticity even while surrendering to it. He is a masculinity whose strength and charisma mask a core of inner uncertainties (Rickard, 1998: 84 – 85).

Here, Rickard’s description of the larrikin as an “emotional innocent” with a “core of inner uncertainties” appears incompatible with his or her “aggression” and “criminality”. However, when looking at the very brief assessment of larrikinism that Kevin Childs (2006) provides in his collection of profiles of Colonial “rebels, rogues and ratbags”, Rickard’s category of the larrikin’s “emotional innocence” becomes more clear. Although Childs does not use the term ‘larrikin’, his protagonists, collectively, display a typology remarkably similar to the larrikin. According to Childs, several of the “rogues” appearing in his book rebelled “only because society made life intolerable”, implying a natural steadfast belief in humanity underneath an externality made tough under mitigating socially constructed circumstances.
“Like everyone,” Childs says, “they have human failings”, but achieve the epitaph of “rebel” for their “immense courage” and “great foolishness or zeal” (Childs, 2006: ix). The characters in Childs’ collection are “hailed by admirers of the national spirit” because of their “self-belief” and “refusal to be broken by harsh circumstances” (Childs, 2006: ix). In other words, the larrikin refuses to renounce his or her ideals, despite a contrary social reality.

Childs’ collection ranges from indigenous leader and artist, William Barak, to Brothel keeper, Madame Brussels; from kidnapped cricketer, Billy Midwinter to bushranger Frank Gardiner. All, according to Childs, were “daring, rebellious, brave or outrageous” (Childs, 2006: ix). However, although these characteristics have apparently been “woven into our national fabric”, not one of Childs’ protagonists achieved fame through journalism. With the exception of Pearl’s 1958 publication, the absence of journalists is a constant throughout the literature on larrikinism.
Even so, it is these distillations of larrikin characteristics that provide *The Larrikin Paradox* with some base criteria for understanding larrikinism within Australian journalism micro-culture. Using the combination of: Childs (2006); Rickard (1998); Gorman (1990); Hughes (1989); Baker (1966) and Pearl (1958), we can develop an axiological ‘compass’ to explore larrikinism’s history within Australian journalism micro-culture. It is at this point that Hall and Williams’ theory of semio-cultural construction comes to the fore, in light of the larrikin as a democratic figure.

As historian Manning Clark says, the larrikin is a cultural construct, a personification, signifying an imagined set of characteristics derived from Australia’s colonial past of repression and rebellion against the British authorities (in Gorman, 1990: 39). Looking carefully at the criteria provided by those who have researched larrikinism, the glimmer of a larrikin axiology relevant to Australian journalism public responsibility can be discerned.
Defiance, particularly against authority and convention, apparently shapes all other larrikinisms. As Rickard points out, larrikinism, by definition, holds “little regard” for those in authority (Rickard, 1998: 78), while Gorman insists that larrikinism is, “above all” defiant (Gorman, 1990: x). This defiance is not silent; it is overt and, more often than not, aggressive. When conceptualising larrikinism, defiance can be seen as pivotal, from which all other characteristics cascade.

If the larrikin exists to defy those who are in authority, then s/he will also tend to hold affiliation with those who are not. Rickard makes this suggestion with his criterion, “emotional attachment to working class origins” (Rickard, 1998: 84), although the ‘working class’ is not necessarily devoid of political or social authority. Gorman comes closer to interpreting these affiliations when he describes the larrikin as “egalitarian” yet “suffering fools badly” (Gorman, 1990: x), implying intolerance of any
behaviour indicating pomposity. For the larrikin cannot stomach pomposity, and will, according to both Rickard and Gorman, express his, or her, disdain through mockery. Rickard drives this point when he describes the larrikin’s ability to both “take the piss” as well as to “stand in judgment” (Rickard, 1998: 85).

Mocking pomposity is an expression of both defiance and the larrikin’s tendency to exceed limits. The larrikin will exceed both legislated limits (“criminality”), as well as unwritten limits of social convention, such as exceeding the limits of alcohol consumption (Rickard, 1998: 85).

Although the larrikin is aware of the consequences of his/her actions, a steadfast belief in his/her ability to render change in what Childs describes as life made “intolerable” by society (Childs, 2006: ix) compels the continuation of risk-taking. In this way, the larrikin self-legitimises his/her own, often dubious, actions (even Breaker Morant claimed murdering Boer prisoners of war and a German missionary was ‘just’). As Rickard says,
this self-justification, and the belief that the rest of the world should concur, renders the larrikin an “emotional innocent” (Rickard, 1998: 85). As Childs’ says, the larrikin is identified by “immense courage” that borders on “foolish zeal” (Childs, 2006: ix). With such a resolute sense of personal idealism, the larrikin is determined to continue defying authority and exceeding limits, and apparently willingly accepts the penalties as some sort of secular martyrdom. Here we are reminded of the larrikins at Gallipoli who were prepared to die so willingly at places like the Nek, yet refused to salute British officers!

Clark articulates the salience of larrikinism for the broader Australian macro-culture quite succinctly. These larrikin qualities, he says, may not describe all, or even any, Australians. However:

Despite the fact that larrikinism no longer depicts us as we truly are, every tribe must have a myth by which it defines and justifies
itself. Larrikinism, no doubt, is ours (in

Clark is referring to the Australian macro-culture
in general. However, the same can be said for
Australian journalism micro-culture specifically.
Indeed, Australian journalism’s need for the
larrikin tradition is arguably even more profound,
given its public responsibility to protect freedom
from authority. Because this freedom is in a
constant state of vulnerability, journalism could
draw on the larrikin tradition’s inherent ‘anti-
authoritarianism’, ‘egalitarianism’, ‘and
exceeding of limits’ to help it fulfil its public
duty.

However, as we noted earlier, larrikinism, with
its blatant anti-authoritarianism, disregard for
social boundaries and lack of concern about the
repercussions, suggests irresponsibility.
Journalism, in its quest for credibility as a
profession (and, by implication, a responsible
entity), has apparently endeavoured to downplay
its larrikin tradition. Yet, paradoxically, the
larrikin’s very irresponsibility can be seen as the enacting agent for journalism’s public responsibility.

Despite increasing concern among both industry practitioners and scholars about reconnecting Australian journalism professional practice to its public responsibility, larrikinism is yet to be considered as a means to achieve this.

Consequently, we now propose the following axiology as a distillation of some key ‘governing criteria’ for larrikinism as an Australian cultural value. Excavated from Childs (2006); Rickard (1998); Gorman (1990); Hughes (1989); Baker (1966) and Pearl (1958), this catalogue of larrikin criteria will hereafter be used as a tool for investigating the larrikin figure in Australian journalism history.
## A Larrikin Axiology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Sources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Defiance; nonconformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Emotional attachment to working class origins; egalitarianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mocking pomposity; wit; taking the piss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Aggression</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This larrikin axiology shall hereafter be used as a ‘compass’ to identify the larrikin elements in biographical and autobiographical sources relating to Australian journalism (see Chapter Four). By doing so, we aim to achieve a deeper understanding of the larrikin’s axiological import within Australian journalism history; thereby illuminating his/her potential as an animator of democracy.
Chapter Four

Larrikinism in Australian Journalism: A History.

Now that we have formulated the larrikin axiology, we can investigate whether its criteria are manifested within Australian journalism history and, if so, whether larrikin journalists protected democratic freedom in the public sphere from authority, as the Thesis Statement supposes. Here, the axiology of larrikinism is useful as a framework to interpret biographical and autobiographical material specifically related to Australian journalism. We thereby hope to clarify the larrikin as an Enlightenment figure; including his or her contribution to Australian journalism’s public role.

By the time journalism began in Australia (recorded as 1803), freedom of the press had already been recognised as instrumental to the Enlightenment movements’ firm ideological commitment to political, social and economic reform (in Tanner, 2002: 2 – 6). In the United Kingdom, for example,
an emerging literate and relatively affluent audience was demanding news through papers and the more sophisticated journals, such as The London Times and Daniel Defoe’s Spectator which, in the words of press historian Clem Lloyd (in Tanner, 2002: 4), “audaciously blazed the way” for the expansion of press independence. Even so, the state effectively had the power to intervene using licensing laws and other legislative instruments (in Tanner, 2002: 3). Nevertheless, in the United States, a revolution had been fought, at least in part, for Enlightenment ideals, including freedom of the press, which had emerged victorious in the Constitution’s first amendment in 1787.

The Enlightenment and its legacy, pertaining to the 17th – 20th centuries, were marked by radical reform, where intellectual freedom, widespread education, individual rights to a public voice and participatory governance were strived for and even achieved. In the United Kingdom, the United States and Continental Europe, journalism had already started developing as a profession to help service these aims.
However, as Lloyd points out, although influential, Enlightenment ideals had no imprimatur from the State (in Tanner, 2002: 3). Australian journalism history illustrates this, underlining the unique difficulties freedom of the press faced in the penal colony of Australia. University of Tasmania journalism scholar, Nicola Goc, points out the Colony was, after all, mainly populated by criminals who had forfeited many freedoms (Goc, 2001). Press historian Robin Walker notes that, in a society of 7000, with a mere 1000 making up free persons, a newspaper could hardly have survived, as a free enterprise, without state sponsorship (Walker, 1976: 4). Yet, isolation, incarceration and fiscal impossibility did not stop the development of an ideological commitment to Enlightenment ideas, or the larrikin spirit within them. Thus, it can be discerned very early in Australian journalism history, the nexus between Enlightenment thought, larrikinism, and Australian journalism’s ability to play a public role.
If recalling the details of Andrew Bent (1790–1851) and The Hobart Town Gazette’s break from Publication by Authority in 1824, (see Introduction), we can argue that a larrikin spirit contributed to Australian journalism’s early defence of freedom in the public sphere. Here, in light of criterion one of our axiology, it is useful to recall Goc’s salient interpretation of Bent’s contribution to Australian journalism and our wider liberal democratic system:

Bent was responsible for the introduction of three principles which today are accepted as never to be challenged: private ownership of the press, the expression of opinion in the form of editorials and the establishment of correspondence pages through the Letters to the Editor. It was indeed Bent’s stand against Arthur that precipitated interest and concern with the principle of freedom of the press in Australia (Goc, 2001).

Even so, the genesis of the nexus between Enlightenment thought, larrikinism and Australian journalism’s sense of public responsibility cannot
adequately be appreciated without also recalling William Wentworth (1790 – 1872) and Robert Wardell’s (1793 – 1834) audacious production of *The Australian*, October 14, 1824. The pair arrived in Sydney from England and, despite risking severe punishment from the authorities, began publishing the colony’s first newspaper without official restraint (Walker, 1976: 6 – 7). In the details of this seemingly simple act of neglecting to tell the authorities about *The Australian*, we detect a larrikin tendency. Indeed, as biographer Sandy Blair suggests, *The Australian* was apparently “infused” with a larrikin spirit of anti-authoritarian “reform”:

“The Australian began as it intended to go on; outspoken, independent and *not at all respectful of authority*” (in Cryle, 1997: 22, emphasis added).

As Walker points out, the pair probably escaped penalty because the newly instituted legislative council was not yet functioning (Walker, 1976: 6 – 7). Even so, as we have noted, once freedom from prior restraint was granted to publications in Sydney, it could hardly be denied to Bent in
Tasmania (in Curthoys and Schultz, 1999: 12). Consequently, the press in a remote place of exile now had newspapers with somewhat more freedom than in Mother England, thanks to a deep desire for journalistic independence underpinned by a larrikin spirit of anti-authoritarianism and nonconformity, rather than to an organised decision made by authority.

However, despite the fact that the Australian press was no longer subject to official censorship, the Colonial authorities continued to set many, sometimes quite bizarre, boundaries around journalism’s ability to facilitate and protect the emerging public sphere. Evidence suggests that such measures attended the emergence of larrikinism as a professional value. Indeed, defying, and exceeding, legislated limits at times seemed a necessary means to one end: maintaining journalism’s capacity to keep operating in the public sphere.

One of the earliest examples of this syndrome features Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur and Andrew Bent. According to Goc (2001), Arthur’s rage
over Bent’s publication of letters criticising his regime manifested in the setting up of a competitor to *The Hobart Town Gazette* using an identical masthead, but filled with pro-Arthur sentiment. In defiant reaction, Bent branded the new *Gazette’s* owners as “pirates”, and published a scathing attack alleging the Governor’s previous misdeeds. Bent was sued for libel, sentenced to six month’s imprisonment and fined 518 pounds. A year later Arthur passed an Act requiring an outrageously expensive license to print or publish a newspaper. “Naturally,” says Goc, “Bent was refused a license to print” (Goc, 2001). Struggling financially, Bent lost his newspaper, now renamed *The Colonial Times* but kept his printing press and, skirting around what he seemed to see as mere legality, established a monthly news magazine that was not subject to licensing laws (Goc, 2001). From this it seems that Australian journalism had, very early on, established a practice of defying authority in order to facilitate and protect the public sphere.

Thus, by the 1830s, Gilbert Robertson (1794 – 1851), whom Goc describes as a “wild and
headstrong” Tasmanian, was also publishing revealing copy about Arthur’s alleged cronyism and corruption in his True Colonist. Charges against Robertson were inevitable. As Goc says:

*The True Colonist became a political voice in vigorous opposition to Arthur and it must be said that moderation was not high on Robertson’s news agenda (Goc, 2001).*

Robertson was charged with three counts of libel and sentenced to 13 months gaol, with another 12 months for a further charge of libel in 1835 (Goc, 2001). Bent, again in defiance of Arthur, volunteered to print *The True Colonist* during Robertson’s incarceration (Goc, 2001). Robertson wrote of his gratitude to Bent:

*When we experienced some difficulty in getting our Journal printed at any office, our ‘Tasmanian Franklin’ immediately threw open gratuitously the use of his office, type and press to us (in Goc, 2001).*
Despite Bent’s assistance, Robertson could not bring the paper out from prison daily, and after March, 1835, it reverted back to a semi-weekly, then weekly publication. Robertson’s defence against the alleged libels was always the ‘public good’, in the hope of an inquiry into the colony’s affairs. The last issue of The True Colonist appeared on 26 December, 1844, when Robertson left for Norfolk Island (Australian Dictionary of Biography, online, http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au 2006). Despite the end result, Bent and Robertson’s relationship exemplifies the need for Colonial journalists to manifest larrikin characteristics such as defiance of authority and exceeding legal limits in order to maintain the public sphere’s integrity, and its ability to ensure some level of governmental transparency.

If a larrikin is “above all”, defiant of authority (Gorman, 1990: x), then Robertson and Bent’s repeated manifestations of this axiological criterion would appear to qualify the two Tasmanians as among Australia’s first larrikin journalists.
The first of a diverse bunch, it seems, if we regard as larrikin the attitude and actions of Edward Smith Hall (1786 – 1860), who set up The Monitor in Sydney, May 19 1826. According to Cryle, journalism was at the time regarded by many as a “disreputable profession” (Cryle, 1997). This resulted in official justifications for press control through license fees, regulations and legislation. But Smith Hall, it would appear, was almost destined to defy authority. For example, when Smith Hall and his bevy of daughters were excluded from their usual rented pew in Sydney’s St James Church, he defiantly stepped over the locked pew door. And when the authorities later boarded over the pew, he seated himself and his progeny on the chancel steps, illustrating his attitude towards authority (Walker, 1976: 15). Smith Hall’s attitude was also prevalent in his editorial policies. Motivated by the central belief that government should, at all times, be accountable to the people, Smith-Hall was also outspoken and aggressive. His celebrated choice of masthead, an aggressively glaring eye to ‘look out’ over the
colony, is an enduring symbol of journalism’s obligation to challenge authority to 
accountability.

In 1829, finding himself incarcerated for his persistent scrutiny of authority, Smith Hall relentlessly continued writing from his cell (in Cryle, 1997: 27). He was convicted of seditious libel against Governor Darling and criminal libel against the Commandant at Port Macquarie and was sentenced to 12 and three months imprisonment respectively. Yet, from the security of Parramatta Gaol, Smith Hall continued to edit The Monitor and pen further criminal libels, which brought additional sentences of 22 months. As Walker describes the event, the editor and his “giant unwinking eye” were prepared to defy the rest of Darling’s governorship from behind prison bars (Walker, 1976: 16). It would appear that a larrikin spirit, shaped by Enlightenment ideals, informed Smith-Hall’s heart, as well as his masthead.

Meanwhile, A.E. Hayes, who had taken over editorship of The Australian, was fined and sent to
gaol for six months for seditious libel against Governor Sir Ralph Darling, whom he declared (on account of his ignorance and disregard for the law) was unfit to rule over any British colony. Judge Dowling ruled that it was seditious to suggest corrupt motives or wilful misrule or oppression. “Thus,” says Walker, “the pens of two incarcerated editors bitterly scratched away together in Parramatta Gaol” (Walker, 1976: 16).

It was during the incarceration of Hayes and Smith Hall that we find one of the earliest pieces of evidence concerning larrikin journalists “taking the piss” to protect the press’ integrity in the public sphere. In an attempt to silence Smith Hall and Hayes who, at the time, were still writing from their Parramatta gaol, Governor Darling passed a new law, making it mandatory for the court to impose a sentence of banishment on any person convicted for seditious libel for the second time. Consequently, Wentworth and Wardell were forced to delete editorials from The Australian. Yet they continued to mock authority. Larrikin-like in audacity, the pair published an image of a military
officer chaining a printing press, with the printer hanging by the neck from a metal spike. Smith Hall also mourned this ‘death’ of a free press by publishing an illustration of a coffin with an appropriate epitaph in Latin in place of the usual leading article (in Cryle, 1997: 28). The cartoon, connotating authority’s threat to democratic freedoms, may be interpreted as an overt call for freedom’s protection; a call not dissimilar to Kant’s demand to make “free use” of “one’s reason” (1784/1963:5), and to have the “courage to use one’s own reason” (1784/1963:3).

Indeed, we know from Cryle (1997) that Australian Colonial journalism was both aware of, and embraced, such Enlightenment ideas. As biographer Sandy Blair explains, a common motivation underpinning the aggressive anti-authoritarianism of Australian Colonial journalism was the aspiration to create a nation of free men. To larrikin spirits such as Bent and Smith Hall, this meant ridding the Colony of its authoritarian masters, and gaining basic rights for convicts, ex-convicts and small property owners. Such positions
would appear to reflect the fundamental Enlightenment ideal of egalitarianism. One can see here how the larrikin characteristic, as defined in Rickard’s words, as “emotional attachment to working class origins” (i.e. axiological criterion two) appears to fit those journalists who, in current journalistic lexicon, were ‘championing the underdog’.

Like Smith Hall and Hayes in Sydney, Bent in Van Dieman’s Land also displayed a larrikin’s penchant for egalitarianism. He insisted on publishing letters from ‘working class’ ex-convicts and small landholders; all criticising what Goc describes as Lieutenant Governor George Arthur’s “autocratic regime” (Goc, 2001). In 1825, Bent even overtly stated his class affiliation when he attacked Arthur’s treatment of the ‘working class’ with this blunt appraisal:

It is much better that a few supine, ignorant and extravagantly-hired public officers should be galled for their misconduct than that a
whole community be crushed, enslaved and subdued (Goc, 2001).

The Bent narrative suggests that the apparent affiliation between Australian journalism and the ‘working class’ was mutual. For example, when Bent was sued for libel in 1824, many members of the public saw it as persecution of their champion by a tyrannical governor, and held a public meeting to form “Friends of Liberty of the Press”, raising 250 pounds for Bent’s court costs. Later, when Bent was refused a licence to print, 50 leading citizens signed a petition claiming that the restrictions were “needless, unconstitutional and debasing - an insult to the Colony” (Goc, 2001). Here, community action galvanised by Bent’s journalism, appears to be an instance of egalitarianism enacted in the public sphere, shaped, at least in part, by larrikin values.

Indeed, a relationship between Australian journalism larrikins and the ‘working class’ is also quite evident in the historical narrative surrounding early Sydney journalism. Biographer
Sandy Blair even describes Smith Hall as a “belligerent activist of working men’s rights”. According to Blair, Smith Hall had a “deep hatred” for the confinements of Colonial society, with its “current of cruelty, anti-intellectualism and military rigour”. As a result:


In return, Sydney’s ‘working class’ openly declared affection for its champions. For example, when London Crown Law Officers suspended New South Wales’ restrictive stamp duty in 1827 there was, as Blair interprets, an “uproarious state of excitement” (in Cryle, 1997: 25). Public celebrations even extended to the outlying towns of Parramatta, Windsor and Liverpool. For instance, at Campbell Town, a small settlement some distance to the west, houses and businesses were illuminated, guns were fired and celebrations continued well into the night. Here, it may be significant that in taverns and public houses, drink flowed, with toasts being raised with heated enthusiasm to

The larrikin practice that marked the journalism of Smith-Hall, Wentworth and Wardell, and others is also apparent in a case that seems to exemplify criteria one and two of our axiology. Indeed, Chief Justice Spigelman even describes the case of Privates Joseph Sudds and Patrick Thompson as forming the “foundations of freedom of the press in Australia” (2003: 9).

In 1826, New South Wales’ Governor, Ralph Darling, sentenced two privates in the 57th regiment, Joseph Sudds and Patrick Thompson, to seven years on a chain gang for the relatively small misdemeanour of stealing a bale of calico. Further, Darling devised a set of special chains for each prisoner, made of an iron collar furnished with two six-inch bars, two chains descended to leg basils clamped above
the ankles and joined together with iron links. The whole thing weighed more than 13 pounds. Sudds died in gaol five days later, and Thompson was dispatched to a road gang where he wore the iron collar for the next three months (Spigelman, 2003: 9).

On the day Sudds died, The Australian commenced, what Spigelman describes as a “blistering attack” on the Governor and the system that had allowed such cruelty, and raised serious doubts about the legality of the punishment (Spigelman, 2003: 10). The Monitor also defiantly took up the cause, campaigning against state brutality towards convicts. The media critique in the wake of Sudds’ death rendered the incident a symbol of the injustices perpetrated on residents of New South Wales by Governor Darling, in the absence of due legislative process and trial by jury (Spigelman, 2003: 10).

Darling, shaken by the publicity, belatedly sought legal advice, including an advisory opinion from the Supreme Court, then a mere two-years-old. In a
joint opinion, Sir Francis Forbes and Justice Stephen ruled against Darling’s sentence as unconstitutional. Thompson was released and sent back to his regiment (Walker, 1976: 10), and the colonists were granted a renewal of the 1823 constitution that had secured them rudimentary popular rights (in Cryle, 1997: 25). Here, Australian journalists had, very early in their history, arguably championed egalitarian values through a public expose of authoritarian tyranny, marked by a larrikin defiance of Darling’s authority.

To this point, the evidence suggests that a culture of larrikinism developed in Australian Colonial journalism as its practitioners resisted authoritarian efforts to curb their freedom to make public use of their reason in the public sphere. The emergence of larrikinism from this tension between freedom and authority soon became apparent during the Victorian gold rush of the 1850s. Indeed, Argus biographer, Keith Dunstan, describes the gold-seeking population as “swelling” the ranks of the “working class”, and regards The Argus as
“championing the cause” of the new gold-seeking migrants (in Porter, 2001: 15).

In fact, it could be argued that the 1854 Eureka rebellion was a further opportunity for Australian journalism’s larrikin-esque egalitarianism to manifest. Believed to be the only civil rebellion on Australian soil (Kirkpatrick, 2004), Eureka has come to represent the downtrodden underdog rising to seize liberty from, what Kirkpatrick describes as, an “arrogant and uncaring” authority that “demanded exorbitant” licence fees, and used “heavy-handed police tactics” to obtain them (Kirkpatrick, 2004: 31). However, it is the narrative surrounding the press’ role in the aftermath of this event that is significant for our inquiry into the larrikin tradition in Australian journalism. As Kirkpatrick says, Eureka has “much to say about courageous editorial leadership on behalf of an oppressed people” (Kirkpatrick, 2004: 31).

The chain of events began when Sir Charles Hotham (1806 – 1855), who had replaced Charles Joseph La
Trobe (1801 – 1875) as the newly formed Victorian community’s Governor, instituted twice-weekly searches at the Ballarat gold-digging camp that was already deeply dissatisfied with the licensing system. After botched investigations into the deaths of two diggers, one on the fields, and another after a night of drinking, riots broke out at Ballarat’s Eureka Hotel, followed by fighting at the makeshift ‘Eureka Stockade’.

As a bloody battle that left five soldiers and 24 diggers dead, Eureka has come to symbolise conflict between liberty and authority in Australia. Yet, it is incompletely understood as one of the earliest manifestations of larrikin values in Australian journalism. According to Kirkpatrick, *The Age, Argus, Geelong Advertiser* and *The Ballarat Times* condemned the administration “as though with one voice” (Kirkpatrick, 2004: 34). As the local paper, *The Ballarat Times* was particularly partisan on behalf of the diggers. Editor, Henry Erle Seekamp (1829 – 1864) is remembered as one of the key animators of public opinion in the licensing debate. His wife is recorded as saying that if
“Peter Lalor was the sword of the movement, my husband was the pen” (in Kirkpatrick, 2004: 32). Indeed, it is in Seekamp’s somewhat hyperbolic pen that we may discern criterion four of the axiology (i.e. tendency to exceed limits, not to mention a penchant for defying authority in the spirit of egalitarianism).

For example, Seekamp charged that the twice-weekly licence searches of diggers’ tents was akin to sport among camp gentry, describing it as “hunting the digger” (in Kirkpatrick, 2004: 32). It seems Seekamp was a crusading editor, “angry” on behalf of the “suffering” diggers up against “the corrupt tools of a tyrannical government” (Kirkpatrick, 2004: 31). And yet this larrikin’s “forthright” editorialising “ensured that agitation and the press were spoken of in the same breath” (Kirkpatrick, 2004: 34).

In fact, as a result of his larrikin journalism, Seekamp was jailed for sedition during the ensuing trials. However, similar to Bent and Smith-Hall, Australian journalism culture constructs him, not
as a criminal, but as a crusading spirit, who martyred himself to protect democratic liberty against authority. Here Ballarat historian, Peter Mansfield, allows us to suggest that our Thesis Statement was effectively anticipated, even instantiated, by Seekamp:

Seekamp and other newspapermen ensured that the political background was much larger and subject to public scrutiny – a process we now take as a natural right (in Kirkpatrick, 2004: 41).

Furthermore, it is in wife Clara Seekamp (c. 1819 – 1908) that we discern an early instance of feminine larrikinism. When her husband was gaoled for sedition, Clara Seekamp apparently had no qualms about taking on editorship of the Ballarat Times, arguably a larrikin-like act in itself insofar as journalism during her time was an aggressively masculine pursuit. Indeed, Kirkpatrick suggests Clara Seekamp readily took on a larrikin persona, and quickly won notoriety for outspokenness. For example, Kirkpatrick describes her editorials as
“startling in tone” and “energetic” in their “free use” of anti-authoritarian rhetoric such as ‘sedition’, ‘liberty’ and ‘oppression’ (Kirkpatrick, 2004: 37).

Although Australian journalism during this era was aggressively masculine, as Clara Seekamp found, this did not preclude female journalists from defying convention. This is evident in the story of pioneer female journalist, Catherine Helen Spence (1825 – 1910), who initially wrote under her brother’s name because neither editors nor readers were prepared to tolerate news stories written by a woman. But in 1876, she ‘came out’, resolving to discipline her mind to “manly virtues, manly strength and manly studies”, so she could “live without leaning on anyone” (Pearce, 1998: 5): a clear declaration of nonconformity in a time when female independence, particularly financial independence, was widely considered ‘disreputable’.

At this point it seems that the axiological ‘compass’ is allowing the tracking of an emerging Australian journalism culture that was prepared to
exceed limits and defy authority to ensure accountability in the public sphere. Does this mean that larrikin elements shaped an Australian journalism culture that can be said to house a ‘democratic sensibility’? In other words: is the a priori imagination of the Thesis Statement being sufficiently ‘clothed’ by the “threads” and “indications” of evidence (Collingwood, 1993: 243) needed for a cogent history? Apparently; but more “threads” are needed before we can say ... evidently. Here, the larrikin ways of Scottish Immigrant and Argus founder, William Kerr (1812 - 1859) can help by providing further “threads” to assess.

Kerr founded The Argus in 1846 (Porter, 2001: 13). In his chapter on The Argus’ origins, biographer, Keith Dunstan suggests Kerr’s anti-authoritarianism manifested itself in his “fiery independent temperament” and “combative stance” towards the authority of the day, Charles Joseph La Trobe’s Port Phillip administration (in Porter, 2001: 11, 13). In 1848, Kerr sold The Argus to like-minded contributor, Edward Wilson (1813 - 1878) and his squatting partner, James Stewart Johnston (1811 -
1896), while staying on as editor. Under Kerr and Wilson’s joint editorship, The Argus ran defiant nonconformist campaigns in support of land reform, and against the introduction of convict labour (in Porter, 2001: 13). Dunstan’s description of The Argus as “radical and partisan” (in Porter, 2001: 13), suggests its determination to maintain the integrity of its content, and to agitate for those with little access to the public sphere.

Indeed, The Argus’ name itself, taken from a fabled monster in Greek mythology with a hundred eyes and thus an all-seeing capacity, suggests the publication’s willingness to scrutinise both authority and Mill’s ‘tyranny of the majority’ of the day. This was coupled with a defiant motto, quoted from reformer John Knox, on its masthead: “I am in the place where I am demanded of conscience to speak the truth, and therefore the truth I speak, impugn it whoso list” (in Porter, 2001: 12).

In fact, it is in The Argus’ campaign against La Trobe that we discern evidence of axiological
criterion three in Australian journalism history (i.e. the larrikin tendency to defy authority by mocking its pomposity). For example, in the crises leading up to the Eureka rebellion, The Argus mocked La Trobe’s inept governorship with a simple insubordinate, ‘piss-taking’ Classified Advertisement:

“Wanted, a Governor. Apply to the people of Victoria.”

According to Dunstan, there was such a relentless persistence in the advertisement’s tone that the diggers believed it to be genuine (in Porter, 2001: 15) - an indication that The Argus understood the irony in larrikin mockery better than the problem of a text’s reception.

However, post-Eureka, The Argus’ editorial policy on gold seekers veered towards the more powerful side of the squatters and away from the land reformists (Sayers, 1965: 46). Nevertheless, The Argus’ early egalitarian tone and larrikin penchant for ‘taking the piss’ out of authority mark it as a journal of record that helped to ‘inform citizens’
and ‘animate democracy’ in Australia’s somewhat less than democratic pre-Federation times.

When *The Argus* began catering to a more conservative audience, its rival *The Age* quickly filled the void. Established in the same year as the Eureka rebellion (1854), *The Age* arguably embodied axiological criteria one and five insofar as its journalists’ stories were defiant and aggressive in promotion of policies challenging established squattocracy (in Cryle, 1997: 63). *The Age* filled *The Argus*’ previous role, not only in an ideological sense, but also in terms of human resources. The fact that many of *The Argus*’ staff, including the “natural and instinctual radical”, Ebenezer Syme (1826 – 1860), felt disaffected enough to join its rival paper (Porter, 2001: 19) says much about the nonconformist ideology of newsroom-floor journalism at that time.

The Thesis Statement has so far guided this investigation towards source material on the larrikin tradition’s development within early Australian journalism from Tasmania to New South
Wales, and onto Victoria. Here, our a priori imagination has guided this investigation to source material suggesting that larrikin journalists of South-East Australia effectively served as the enacting agents of journalism’s public role during this Colonial period. Was this the case elsewhere in Australia? Some sources suggest that press larrikins may have played a decisive role in the labour movement on the Queensland goldfields of the 1880s. At the time journalism was both defiant and aggressive as part of an “outspoken” and “radical” labour movement on the Queensland Goldfields. And, according to Kirkpatrick, it had a “most dramatic impact” (Kirkpatrick in Cryle, 1997: 103).

Thadeus O’Kane’s (1820 - 1890) *Northern Miner*, for example, upset so many groups in Charters Towers that an association of “respectable men, Catholics and Protestants united” was formed. This group swore “not to enter or frequent any house in Charters Towers or elsewhere” in which O’Kane’s *Northern Miner* was known to be read (in Cryle, 1997: 103).
O’Kane admitted *The Northern Miner* had its enemies but, demonstrating some insight into the larrikin paradox, claimed public disapproval proved the publication’s “geniousness”. Indeed, O’Kane confessed that he could not help “knocking against the bigots, the brainless, the swindlers and the rogues” (in Cryle, 1997: 105); thereby articulating the defiance, aggression, and willingness to exceed limits, that help mark him as a larrikin journalist.

Furthermore, as larrikins at *The Monitor* and *The Australian* had done before him, it was “common” for O’Kane to conduct his “knocking” through a humour that ‘took the piss’ (in Cryle, 1997: 113). For example, when he was served with a writ of 2000 pounds for libel against a former town clerk by the name of Doyle, whom he had accused of embezzlement, O’Kane’s mockery dripped with ‘piss take’ irony:

> We were almost disposed to let judgement go by default, as 2000 pounds and five guineas costs would be simply a flea-bite to us, but on second thoughts, decided to defend the action.
We sincerely trust Mr Doyle will receive from an intelligent jury verdicts for the amounts sued for. He will then be able to return to India and assume his proper position as Maharaja, and we shall be happy to accompany him as private Secretary and receive instructions in the art of ‘how to do it’ in a civilized country and amongst white men (in Cryle, 1997: 113).

Disdainful in tone and style, O’Kane’s editorial was a mocking attack on what he assumed was the arrogance of a “Maharaja” seeking to block transparency of authority in the public sphere by misusing legislation.

Here, similar to his Tasmanian and New South Welsh journalism counterparts, O’Kane manifested the larrikin’s penchant for exceeding the limits of legality in order to hold the local authorities to public account. Kirkpatrick describes O’Kane as having “trouble tempering his language”, resulting in several simultaneous writs against him, and new actions triggered by his comments on the initiation
or conclusion of earlier actions. Indeed, one of O’Kane’s contemporary colleagues commented in 1881: “The Northern Miner, far from being depressed by impending actions, is more trenchant than ever” (in Cryle, 1997: 112).

According to Kirkpatrick, O’Kane was “sued constantly” and consistently charged with criminal libel by the local lawyers and businessmen whom, it appears, he could not help offending (in Cryle, 1997: 103 & 105). O’Kane even admitted that his public-spirited larrikinism cost him dearly: “The more we strive for the public of Charters Towers, the more we are punished … the kicks and halfpence are on the one side” (in Cryle, 1997: 103).

Even so, Kirkpatrick tells us that O’Kane fashioned The Northern Miner into a weapon to fight for the cause of the miners, “the oppressed and the injured” (in Cryle, 1997: 106). According to then townsman, R.H. Smith, O’Kane’s Northern Miner was a “power in the land”: 
“Owing to his coming down here we are now placed in a better position to obtain our just rights than we were before” (in Cryle, 1997: 106).

Similar to Andrew Bent and Edward Smith-Hall, O’Kane’s relationship with his readers appears to be consistent with criterion two of the axiology: ‘emotional attachment to the working class’ and ‘egalitarianism’. And it seems the affection O’Kane felt for the ‘working class’ was mutual. Demonstrating their allegiance, the miners supported O’Kane by subscribing to a fighting fund, which paid for his court costs in various libel cases (in Cryle, 1997: 111).

Such details persuade us that O’Kane helped perpetuate the larrikin tradition in Australian journalism – i.e. the tradition posited as both historical and normative in the Thesis Statement. In O’Kane, it seems, we have a clear instance of a larrikin journalist who defiantly displayed “the freedom to make public use of one’s reason” (Kant, 1784/ 1963: 4-5); a freedom that seems to have
informed citizens and animated democracy, even as it exceeded limits and defied authority.

The class-political dimensions of O’Kane’s larrikinism may be implicit in some of his details, but it was not until Frederick Charles Burleigh Vosper (1869 – 1901) entered the public sphere that we see larrikin journalism with an overtly political face. Vosper, The Australian Republican’s “fiery Cornishman”, is remembered for “swearing” to “defend workers and trade unionism” (in Cryle, 1997: 106). And it is in Vosper that we can begin to discern how colonial journalism’s penchant for egalitarianism may be read as an aggressive style of early republicanism; albeit one marked by axiological criterion six (i.e. emotional innocence). For example, in his introductory editorial of The Australian Republican, Vosper declared:

We shall devote our columns to merciless attack and exposure upon, and of, all kinds of political and social shams and abuses; while corruption and error in our public men will be
vigorously denounced without respect to place, person or party; the just cause of Labour ... the cause of all mankind ... shall have our hearty and unwavering support ... Above all, the great cause of the Future Republic ... the coming United States of Australia will be kept steadfastly in view (Kirkpatrick, 1984: 132).

Here, Vosper is arguably ‘emotionally innocent’ insofar as his emphasis on “the cause of all mankind” echoes the Enlightenment’s optimism regarding humanity’s capacity to moderate self-interest via versions of what Kant’s muse, Jean Jacques Rousseau, called a “social contract” (or cooperation) derived from our shared rationality (Cassier, 1954: 52). Vosper may have been ‘emotionally innocent’ after the manner of Enlightenment thinkers like Kant and Rousseau, but were other larrikin journalists also ‘innocents’ in that sense? In light of the evidence so far, we are inclined to say: yes. How else can we explain the pattern of willing sacrifice in the public sphere that is emerging from our source material? Here, in light of Vosper, we note Goc’s assessment of Bent
as a “willing martyr to the cause of the free press”:
“This was a man of principle who took on the authorities and suffered the consequences” (Goc, 2001).

And here we can also note O’Kane’s vision of journalism; a vision apparently inspired by the Enlightenment in general, if not Milton’s _Areopagitica_ (1644) or Mill’s _On Liberty_ (1859) in particular. Journalism, in O’Kane’s view, held “higher and wider functions than ever the pulpit possessed” (in Cryle, 1997: 104). The pulpit, according to O’Kane, had always proved itself the “sycophant of the courts”, the “ally of tyranny”, and the “enemy of knowledge and progress”. The press, however:

has been the greatest defender of liberty and consciousness, of toleration, of the speed of education and diffusion of knowledge, the foe of tyranny, of superstition, of blind and brute obedience to authority, of belief in religious hypocrisies and impostures … The Press is the
great Lay Pulpit of the present – it addresses the universe and speaks the language of universal Humanity, Brotherhood and Freedom (in Cryle, 1997: 104).

In Colonial times, it seems, such fervour was required, to fulfil journalism’s public responsibility and to also survive the hard practicalities involved in early newspaper production. Here, we note Andrew Bent’s assessment of his early struggles in establishing the Hobart Town Gazette:

Our type was so limited that we could not compose at once more than is contained in one of our present-sized columns. There was no printing ink in the colony, but what we necessitated to manufacture in the best possible manner for ourselves, and common Chinese paper, no more than half the size of foolscap, and of which two sheets were consequently obliged to be pasted together for each gazette, cost two guineas sterling per ream! (Goc, 2001).
Given this, it is somewhat surprising that Bent decided to print Gilbert Robertson’s True Colonist, during the latter’s incarceration in 1835 (Goc, 2001). Bent’s demonstration of good will towards Robertson (a competitor) suggests a shared ideological commitment to journalism in the public sphere; perhaps even indicating that criterion five of the axiology (aggression) was slow to develop as ‘aggressive competitiveness’ in colonial journalism.

The first evidence we find of such aggressive competitiveness in Australian journalism is in Arthur Reid’s autobiography, Those Were the Days (1933). In his reminiscences of life on the Western Australian goldfields during the 1880s, Reid speaks of how he rode all night on his camel, Gunga Din, to beat a competitor to a story about a big gold find at Bayley’s Reward. Hearing about the discovery while drinking in a Coolgardie hotel at 10pm, Reid was so “anxious” to report the story that he left immediately (Reid, 1933: 18). The sense of urgency escalated when he realised that a colleague had left for Bayley’s Reward earlier that
day. Riding overnight, Reid overtook his competitor who, unaware that Reid was after the story, was spending the night in a hotel. Reaching Bayley’s Reward at 2am, Reid dispatched his report from a telegraph office before 9am.

Browne [the competitor] arrived at 9 o’clock, and was as disgusted to find the telegraph office closed as he was surprised to see me. I returned to Coolgardie next day. That was a profitable trip, apart from the kudos I got (Reid, 1933: 18).

Reid’s autobiography also yields some evidence of links between alcohol consumption and larrikinism within the source material. Here it is prudent to recall that alcohol consumption has been identified as part of the ‘exceeding limits’ criterion (criterion four) in the larrikin axiology. There is, however, insufficient evidence in the source material on colonial journalism to claim that the larrikin’s penchant for exceeding limits was necessarily associated with alcohol consumption.
Nevertheless, Cryle does mention that “intemperance and drunkenness” were “common complaints” in many colonial newsrooms (Cryle, 1997: 9) and, according to Lloyd, traditions of hard drinking and irregular lifestyle “lingered” from earlier days in turn-of-the-century journalism (Lloyd, 1985: 25). Furthermore, we know from Kirkpatrick that Ballarat Times editor, Henry Erle Seekamp died from excessive drinking in 1865, aged 35 (Kirkpatrick, 2004: 40). Although these dates are inconsistent with the Australian Dictionary of Biography’s (copyright 2006, updated continuously) claim that Seekamp died in 1864, aged 45, the fact that he died from excessive alcohol consumption remains.

We also know that late Colonial journalist, the Sydney Truth’s John Norton (1858 – 1916), was “often drunk – very drunk”, sometimes so much so, that he could not stand to deliver his political speeches (Pearl, 1958: 9). Here, Norton’s manifestly larrikin-esque exceeding of limits may be taken as an example, albeit an extreme one, of the ‘larrikin paradox’ – i.e. the larrikin journalist’s
Then again, in an era when the British monarchy enjoyed overwhelming popularity in Australia, it is tempting to interpret Norton’s frequent attacks on it as the alcohol-addled nadir of larrikin practice in Australian Colonial journalism. In what biographer, Michael Cannon describes as a “fairly typical foray”, John Norton described Queen Victoria as “flabby, fat and flatulent” and her son, the Prince of Wales as a “turf-swindling, card-sharping, wife-debauching rascal” (Cannon, 1981: 10). Norton, manifesting all six criteria of our larrikin axiology in this case, even succeeded in getting himself charged with sedition in 1896 (Cannon, 1981: 9). At the trial, the jury failed to reach agreement; the Crown decided to drop the trial and Norton allegedly became the hero of every radical, republican and working-class person in Australia (Cannon, 1981: 10).

Norton ended up being elected four times as a member of Parliament and three times as an
alderman. As Pearl notes:

He had been publicly denounced many times as a thief, blackmailer, wife beater and an obscene drunkard, without ever refuting the charges [but] people remember him as a fearless reformer (Pearl, 1958: 10).

According to Pearl’s 1958 portrayal, Norton’s drunkenness was part of an immoral personality. His later biographer, Michael Cannon, is more kind. In That Damned Democrat, Cannon writes that we “can not be certain whether the nation lost more a genius than a blackguard” when Norton died in 1916 (Cannon, 1981: 3). After all:

Much of Norton’s best work was carried out under the almost intolerable pressure of newspaper deadlines, which still cause many journalists to flee to the bottle (Cannon, 1981: 3).

Despite Cannon’s more sympathetic account, That Damned Democrat makes it clear that Norton’s life
was full of “too much journalism, domestic strife and drunkenness” (Cannon, 1981: 4).

Then, as now, there were community concerns about alcohol abuse. Nevertheless, there was a certain romanticisation of alcohol’s role in Australian journalism culture. This can be especially discerned in autobiographical material from earlier eras. Reid’s 1933 autobiography is a useful example of how sources of journalism history tend to portray alcohol use through a frame of larrikinesque romanticism.

For example, Reid talks of drunkenness among his larrikin colleagues with affection and nostalgia. His characters include: Billy Clare, a “courteous, imperturbable and bohemian” journalist, who “took a lot to ruffle, but when roused knew how to handle himself” (Reid, 1933: 20); Alf “Smiler” Hales of the Mining Review, “always a bellicose chap”, and “continually in trouble”, but whose “rough exterior and bitter tongue covered a warm heart” (Reid, 1933: 20). Furthermore, there was P.K.M. “Pekoe Crow” Crozier, “always cheerful” with “infectious
bonhomie” (Reid, 1933: 45); the “always chirpy” Vic Lincoln, whose “exuberance of spirits and conversation made him popular”; and Vic Risely who had “disregard for personal appearance” and a “hankering after convivial company” (Reid, 1933: 45).

Alcohol and journalism is similarly treated with whimsical affection in Claude McKay’s (1878 – 1972) autobiography about late 19th century journalism, *This is the Life* (1961). McKay talks about his first editor, *The Kilmore Advertiser*’s George Goode, who could not make it past the pub on his way back to the office from the bank on payday (McKay, 1961:3). Jules Francis Archibald (1856 – 1919), founder of *The Bulletin* with John Haynes (1850 – 1917) in 1879, also recalls his drinking colleagues during this era with fondness. He remembers one of his first editors, the renowned larrikin, Daniel Harrison, who used to get “well inked” on press nights, leaving the junior staff to write and sub the leader (Lawson, 1983: 9).
It is therefore unsurprising to find Archibald quoted as saying:

“If I must die, let me die drinking at an inn” (in Lindsay, 1973: 19).

According to biographer, Sylvia Lawson, Archibald’s “last bills” were for “whisky and newspapers” (Lawson, 1987: x).

The Bulletin, indeed, is one of the richest sources of evidence concerning the role that alcohol has played in Australian journalism culture. If we listen to contributor Norman Lindsay’s recollections, we can discern alcohol’s role in facilitating a sense of journalistic community. The Bulletin, says Lindsay, was the “established meeting place” on Saturday payday for those in Sydney literary, artistic and journalistic circles: “With the pleasant jingle of coins, the ritual of payday was always terminated by a departure to the pub next door” (Lindsay, 1973: 4).

Nevertheless, if we look more closely at the narrative surrounding The Bulletin and its role in the development of Australian journalism, we can
see how larrikin elements other than alcohol use contributed significantly to its growth as a self-aware micro-culture, or interpretive community, within the wider public sphere.

For example, at the point of The Bulletin’s inception, we find evidence of Australian journalism’s larrikinesque tendency to utilise mockery as a tool of defiance. Indeed, we can even find Archibald himself articulating the effectiveness of satire as a news-policy in holding authority to account. Archibald and editor John Haynes (1850 – 1917) didn’t want to model The Bulletin on The London Times or Punch, but on the New York papers, with their bitingly satirical images. As Archibald himself diarised:

“Heaps of things wanted rectifying, and the cartoonist and the smart paper were to my mind the only remedy for the abuses of the hour” (Lawson, 1987: 66).

Considering Archibald’s idea of journalism, it is unsurprising to find evidence that The Bulletin was one of the few dissenting voices among major media
outlets concerning Australian support for Britain in the looming Boer conflict in South Africa (in Porter, 2001: 147). This larrikin-like nonconformity was at least partially derived from Archibald’s strong belief in nationhood and independence from Britain (Lawson, 1987: x). In fact, *The Bulletin*’s editorial policies were based on Archibald’s Enlightenment-informed disdain for a London portrayed by Dickens and the pamphleteers of poverty, and his admiration for the cunning, insurrectionary press, defined by the Paris of novelists Gustave Flaubert and Emile Zola (Lawson, 1987: x). He also looked to the American press and its messages about resistance to imperialism, and cut his teeth in journalism on the radical press of Far North Queensland. Given such influences, it is reasonable to regard Archibald as an ‘Enlightened larrikin’ who raised the torch of journalism-for-democracy, lit by Bent and fanned by Smith-Hall, the Seekamps, O’Kane and Vosper. Archibald challenged old orthodoxies, which he regarded as “murderously oppressive”, and propounded an alternative “just and free” national order through *The Bulletin*’s pages (Lawson, 1987: x).
Not unlike O’Kane’s *Northern Miner*, Archibald’s *Bulletin* equated egalitarianism with affiliation to the working class, and nationalism with republicanism. However, as Lawson points out, The *Bulletin*’s support for the (white) working class, “paradoxically”, sacrificed egalitarianism, and possibly created public animosity towards more ‘underdog’ groups than it championed. Notes Lawson:

The internationalist humanism, enacted so brilliantly in the journal’s range of reference and its open pages policy, was denied in its racist argument; it was also undermined and disfigured perennially in much of The *Bulletin*’s discourse on women (Lawson, 1987: x).

Despite such perpetuation of patriarchy, many women were determined to enter the masculine fray that was journalism. Indeed, one of Australia’s most outstanding female journalists, Dame Mary Jean Gilmore (1865 – 1962), was a contributor to The *Bulletin*’s literary Red Page, earning herself a mention in the publication’s catalogue of
significant writers. Somewhat of a larrikin, Mary Gilmore defiantly chose a journalistic career over a more ‘feminine’ literary one in 1908, with her choice of forum being the new ‘Women’s Page’ of what had previously been an exclusively masculine domain, The Worker. Here, the ‘underdogs’ that Gilmore championed belonged to the rising numbers of working class and underprivileged women (Pearce, 1998: 43), suggesting that Gilmore can be classed as one of those larrikin journalists who sought, like Clara Seekamp, to address a broader readership; thereby expanding the public sphere.

Furthermore, the “shameless scribbler” and “formidable” mother of Henry Lawson, Louisa Lawson (1848 – 1920), is further evidence that feminine larrikinism linked to egalitarianism was present in Colonial journalism. When Lawson set up her own national women’s magazine, The Dawn, in 1888 (Pearce, 1998: 14), she publicly challenged dominant opinions on the position of women in Colonial society. Lawson’s attacks on the excesses of female fashion and the frivolous and superficial way the contemporary press presented women’s issues
(Pearce, 1998: 16) arguably mark her as a larrikin nonconformist determined to diversify the public sphere by reforming opinions about women. Here, she may even be read as contributing to growing concern about the disenfranchisement of women in the incomplete democracy of Colonial Australia.

At this point, it seems fair to say that axiological criteria for Australian larrikinism were more or less personified in the likes of Lawson, Archibald, O’Kane, Vosper, Smith-Hall, Norton, the Seekamps, O’Kane and Bent. Consequently, it seems that the “larrikin tradition” supposed in the Thesis Statement did, in fact, exist – at least in the attitudes and practices of individual journalists – and, furthermore, that it was at least partially responsible for facilitating and protecting democratic freedom in the public sphere from authority, just as the Thesis Statement supposes (recall, for instance, the Sudds/Thompson case of 1826).
If this is so, then it would appear that the adoption of Collingwood’s research instrument – i.e. the *a priori* imagination of a Thesis Statement – is beginning to bear fruit as Cultural History. Even so, we cannot determine the final merit of the Thesis Statement without testing it further in light of larrikin practice in the rigorous context of the five conflicts that embroiled Australia in the 20th century – i.e. The Boer conflict, World War I, World War II, the Cold War and the Vietnam conflict. A useful entry point for this is Monty Grover’s (1870 – 1943) larrikin defiance of both popular and official expectations concerning patriotic reportage of the Boer conflict (1899 – 1902); a pivotal point in the history of larrikinism in Australian journalism in the post Colonial period.

According to biographer Michael Cannon, Monty Grover felt “contemptuous indifference” (Grover, 1993: 16) towards authority and, despite *The Sydney Morning Herald’s* support for the looming conflict in South Africa, was prone to openly challenge Boer War jingoism. For example, as an expression of
larrikin defiance against both his jingoistic employer and popular pro-war opinion, Grover insisted his name be put on his anti-war poem, ‘I Killed A Man At Graspan’ (published in The Coo-ee Reciter, 1901). It was truly a larrikin’s work, expressing egalitarian solidarity, even sympathy, for the Boer foe; unconventional feelings couched in a latent critique of those who had ordered the war:

“And a man I’d never quarrel with
Was spread on the boulders dead”
(Grover, 1993: 17).

Here, Grover’s attitude towards the Boer conflict may be interpreted as a continuation of the link between anti-authoritarianism, non-conformity and defiance, instigated earlier by Andrew Bent and other larrikin journalists.

Grover’s actions when he was later employed by The Argus grounds this impression in a specific event that exemplifies the significance of the larrikin spirit; especially its role in protecting freedom
of inquiry in the public sphere from authorities threatened by it, and threatening of it.

In February 1902, two Australian Bush Veldt Carbineers, Harry ‘Breaker’ Morant and Peter Joseph Handcock were executed for killing Boer Prisoners, and their colleague, George Witton, was sentenced to life imprisonment for the same crime. The British military authorities, however, failed to inform the Australian Government and the families of the three offenders (in Porter, 2001: 142). The legend of ‘Breaker’ Morant has come to represent one defining moment in Australia’s wider national identity as it emerged from the apron strings of Mother England. However, not unlike our earlier example of the Eureka legend, reportage by The Argus of the Morant affair also holds significance for Australian journalism’s micro-cultural larrikin identity.

The Argus’ John Sandes (1863 – 1938), acting on an anonymous leak – thought to be Prime Minister Edmund Barton – broke the story on March 26, 1902 (Grover, 1993: 17). Three days later, Grover
gathered the first eyewitness account, taken from a returning soldier. In the following editorial, *The Argus'* tone was both magisterial and somewhat mocking as it pointed out the fragility of what we now call the public sphere:

We could sincerely wish that the British military authorities were not as reticent as they actually are on these matters, because rumours are apt to leak out and the reports are apt to appear in the first place in a more or less biased form (in Porter, 2001: 146).

Furthermore, *The Argus* congratulated itself on the competitive advantage it had obtained:

"but for the vigilance of *The Argus*, nothing would have been known of the incident here" (in Porter, 2001: 146).

In *Hold the Front Page* (1993), Grover implies that it was only the determination and cunning of himself and Sandes that tore open the British military veil of secrecy (Grover, 1993: 17). It is in *The Argus'* editorial, and in Grover's assessment
of the Morant story – “one of the best scoops in Australian press history” (Grover, 1993: 111) – that we also see evidence of the larrikin’s aggressive streak – a quality that was increasingly turned upon professional competitors as much as against evasive authorities.

For example, Lauchlan Mackinnon’s Argus journalists were notorious for aggressive competitiveness, particularly against those working for David Symes’ The Age. Conversely, when Symes renovated The Age’s façade, he commissioned an elegant bronze statue of Mercury, messenger of the Gods, which was installed on a pedestal in front of the building. However, the statue was not only a symbol of the conveyance of information. As biographer, Sybil Nolan points out, in classical mythology, Hermes – the Greek equivalent of the Roman Mercury – slew Argus, a giant with one hundred eyes (in Porter, 2001: 79). Thus the newly erected statue was apparently symbolic of the aggression between journalistic competitors. Cooperation between journalists (recall Hayes and Smith Hall; Bent and Robertson) became, it seems, increasingly competitive, as
Australian journalism moved further into the 20th century.

The rivalry between The Age and The Argus for circulation supremacy spilled over into the interpretive communities of each outlet. Indeed, the aggressive competitiveness of larrikin journalists arguably imperilled Australian journalism's trade union formation in 1910. According to Australian Journalism Association biographer, Clem Lloyd, the relationship between the journalists working for the two outlets was so combative that it inhibited “good fellowship” in the union’s establishment in 1910 (Lloyd, 1985: 30). As Nolan points out, the two publications’ “mutual” opposition became part of the Melbourne tradition of journalism and, indeed, a “cornerstone” of Melbourne journalism history (in Porter, 2001: 79).

Journalism’s larrikin-like aggression played out in each outlet’s respective newsroom practices. For example, when the famous Melbourne landmark, the Young and Jackson’s Hotel, caught fire, The Argus’
Monty Grover was first on the scene. His exclusive story the next morning revealed that the provocative nude painting, Chloe, usually hanging in the Young and Jackson bar, had been found safe in St Paul’s Cathedral across Swanston Street. So fiercely competitive was the young Grover that colleagues, particularly Claude McKay, suspected that he had carried the painting to safety, just so he could keep the story for himself (Grover, 1993: 16).

Further, in his autobiography, Grover explains how he ferreted through the lining of a hat owned by a man suspected of murdering his wife, behind the policeman’s back, in order to gather details of the victim. Although apparently tampering with evidence, Grover describes this act as “the only thing” to his “credit during the whole case” (Grover, 1993: 75), indicating how a larrikin journalist’s aggressive competitiveness tended to “exceed limits” (criterion four of the axiology); with excess even proceeding to the point of criminality.
Indeed, one of Grover’s Argus colleagues, Billy Salter, developed a reputation for being, in Grover’s words, “the noblest roundsman” in the city (Grover, 1993: 74), by being willing to exceed the limits of legality and accepted morality. For example, in his autobiography, This is the Life, Claude McKay describes how Salter was first on the scene of a suburban railway smash in which the engine driver was fatally injured. The victim was carried to a cottage nearby and Salter sat beside the lifeless form. When doctors and reporters from other dailies arrived, Salter told them the man had died. But next morning his paper carried the exclusive interview with the engine driver who, it seemed, had briefly regained consciousness (McKay, 1961: 33).

It was not only in Melbourne that the larrikin’s tendency to ‘exceed limits’, even into ‘criminality’, manifested in journalistic practice. Sydney’s Dulcie Deamer (1890 – 1972), for example, has gone down in Australian journalism history as, in biographer Sharyn Pearce’s words, a “daring and unconventional female journalist” (Pearce, 1998:
Deamer is probably best known as the first female boxing reporter in Australia, after covering a middle-weight championship for The Sun in 1910 (Pearce, 1998: 69). She also once spent a night in a Surry Hills women’s shelter to gain insight into the plight of homeless people. But her most larrikin-esque venture was the way she disguised herself as a male South American vet in order to gain access to a Sydney slaughterhouse which, at the time, was closed to women (Pearce, 1998: 69). Here, Deamer’s defiance of convention and willingness to skirt the limits of both legality and respectability resulted in uncovering corrupt practices in Sydney abattoirs. This was arguably in the public interest insofar as it informed citizens, brought poor management to light and pushed for abattoir reform. Deamer’s attitude and practice in this case may be taken as further confirmation that the supposed animation of democracy by Australian larrikin journalists can, in fact, be grounded in historical evidence.
Indeed, the public role of larrikin journalists becomes even more evident when source material is considered in light of post-Federation politics.

The first flush of post-Federation enthusiasm led Monty Grover to leave The Argus and take up a position revamping Sir Hugh Robert Denison’s (1865 – 1940) failing Australian Star newspaper, which, in 1910, disappeared to be replaced by a bold new broadsheet, The Sun. In Grover’s first editorial, he declared The Sun’s anti-authoritarian philosophy by insisting it would be “fiercely democratic” and “free from party ties” (Grover, 1993: 21). The effectiveness of this nonconformist news philosophy can be seen in the success of its campaigns against conservative politics and social attitudes, one of which resulted in the abolition of restrictions on mixed bathing and outmoded swimming attire on Sydney’s beaches (Grover, 1993: 22).

Considering Grover’s earlier attitude towards the Boer conflict, it is unsurprising that he also resisted popular patriotic fervour in the lead up to World War I. This defiant nonconformity worried
Sir Denison so much that he promoted the more conservative journalist, Herbert Campbell Jones, to managing editorship and gave him the power to veto Grover’s ‘radical’ ideas (Grover, 1993: 21). A showdown came in 1916, when Denison insisted on supporting the conscription campaign, resulting in Grover stepping down from daily editorship.

According to Cannon, Grover’s outlook encompassed strong views on “championing” equality for those devoid of political and economic power, including those making up women’s and Aboriginal social groups (Grover, 1993: 33 – 34) and, in The Sun, during the conscription dispute, concerning those forced by authority to fight in a war they didn’t agree with.

Later on, Grover’s tendency to manifest axiological criterion two (egalitarianism), was apparently recognised in his appointment, in September 1931, as foundation editor for the Australian Workers Union’s daily publication The World. Filling the void left by the demise of The Evening Sun, The World was published by Labour Papers Ltd, a company
largely controlled by the Australian Workers’ Union. The idea was to use members’ subscriptions to start their own daily paper in opposition to the capitalist press (Grover, 1993: 32).

A larrikin, however, is “above all” defiant of any authority (Gorman, 1990: x). And so it was that Grover resigned when The World’s ‘advisory editor’, Labor M.L.C., John F Higgins, insisted the rambling speeches of his fellow politicians and union mates be published. According to Cannon, Grover and two other journalism colleagues “walked out in a body” in protest (Grover, 1993: 33). This is a significant incident insofar as it indicates that Grover’s famous egalitarianism was non-aligned; thereby affirming his larrikin non-conformity.

Here it is quite likely that Grover’s larrikin spirit had been buoyed by reading the highly larrikin-like Smith’s Weekly. After all, in 1920s Australia, both the macro-culture of society and the micro-culture of journalism could hardly ignore Smith’s Weekly’s distinctly Australian interpretation of the Enlightenment tradition.
Indeed, in Smith’s Weekly, it was as if Milton’s ‘free press’ policy in the Areopagitica (1644) had been adopted as editorial practice:

Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making (Milton, 1644/1952: 406).

Just months after World War I ended, Smith’s Weekly had come, in the words of biographer, George Blaikie, “jazzing from the inky womb of the press, roaring full toot, doing back flips to make people laugh and offering to fight any man” (Blaikie, 1966: 1). Developed by Clyde Packer (1879 – 1934) and our already acknowledged larrikin journalist, Claude McKay, and with the backing of Sir James John Joynton Smith (1858 – 1943), Smith’s Weekly was full of rallying rhetoric on the theme of developing a nation fit for war heroes. For Smith’s Weekly the ‘underdog’ was the influx of returning ex-servicemen, for whom the publication “demanded justice”. Blaikie states:
At any one time it [Smith’s Weekly] was seeking to be a number of things – the Public Conscience, a crutch for the fallen, the champion of the underdog ... a belter of hell out of the mean, the wicked, and the pompous, the voice of the Digger (Blaikie, 1966: 2).

Smith’s Weekly was, in many ways, very like The Bulletin of the 1880s in its determination to defy the ‘tyranny of the majority’. This was apparently so much so that a 70-year-old retired Jules Francois Archibald once walked into the proprietor’s office and demanded a job (McKay, 1961: 130). Like The Bulletin, Smith’s Weekly held no qualms about “kicking almost all sacred cows fair in the udder as a matter of simple principle”, and “if the cow dared squirt back in anger or self-defence, out would come the pole-axe” (Blaikie, 1966: 1). Furthermore, editor Claude McKay’s news theory epitomises the publication’s underlying anti-authoritarian philosophy; a rationale that would appear to be based on criteria one and two of the larrikin axiology:
We weren’t interested in what then passed as important news ... Give us injustices! Give us not the murders or violence, but cases of economic cannibalism. We want the facts about injustices, unfair sackings (McKay, 1961: 130).

*Smith’s Weekly*, indeed, was so concerned with “the facts” about “economic cannibalism” and “injustices” that it tended to exceed all limits to get such information. In fact, *Smith’s* newsgathering techniques were highly larrikinesque in their excessiveness, even criminality, including smuggling opium into the country, peddling cocaine to gather proof of drug rackets, and selling white girls by auction to Chinese merchants to uncover a lively white slave trade in Australia (Blaikie, 1966: 2).

*Smith’s* style – an echo of its pre-war counterpart, *The Bulletin* – was not only larrikinesque in its willingness to ‘exceed limits’, but also in its use of mockery as a tool of defiance. *Smith’s* official editorial policy, “speaking out” for white-collar
workers, pensioners and the returning diggers, was conducted through “gags, dreams, bulldust and satire” (Blaikie, 1966: 1). As Blaikie says:

The paper was irreverent towards established ways of life that savored even faintly of pomposity. It was critical, raspberry firing, fast punching and capable of smelling a sacred cow from afar off against the wind (Blaikie, 1966: 1).

Smith’s Weekly was not, however, a lone larrikin voice in postwar Australian journalism. The larrikin’s propensity to ‘take the piss’ (criterion three of the axiology) was quite apparent in the career of Brian Penton (1904 – 1951). In 1921, Penton, described by biographer Patrick Buckridge, as a “young brash and sarcastic 20-year-old” obtained a job on The Brisbane Courier. According to Buckridge, this was the beginning of Penton’s 25-year career, “deliberately scandalising Australian respectability” (Buckridge, 1994: vii). For example, when Penton was sent to do a dockside interview with the newly arrived New South Wales
State Governor, Sir Dudley de Chair, he marched unannounced into the dignitary’s cabin. The encounter apparently caught Sir Dudley unattired, allowing Penton to begin his story with reference to the Governor’s “verbena underpants” (Buckridge, 1994: 56). In another story, written for The Sun, Penton described the Governor General, Lord Stonehaven, being taken for a joy-ride in a RAAF Widgeon seaplane over Botany Bay. When published, the story had a “deliciously ambivalent tone” (Buckridge, 1994: 57), representing authority figures as somewhat absurd. In the story’s slapstick finale, two officers, meeting his Lordship on his return, fall out of their boat (Buckridge, 1994: 57).

Penton’s larrikin-esque skill at mockery was notorious, and found its way into most of his journalism, including his literary column, ‘For Your Dustbin’. A deliberate exercise in destructive criticism, ‘For Your Dustbin’ was a 750-word review making a mockery of best-selling books. As Buckridge comments, to qualify for the ‘bin’, the book needed to possess “that peculiar
blend of pretentiousness, dullness and doodlepoppery”. The ‘bin’, apparently, produced some of Penton’s “wildest and funniest diatribes” (Buckridge, 1994: 181). Beverley Nichols, the upper-class English novelist, was a favourite target, for both effeminate cultural snobbery and pro-Fascist leanings:

Well, well, if it isn’t our little friend Bevy again, all agog with something new and nice. Oh, he’s come Down the Garden Path to Cry Havoc once again – but this time it’s ever so much more exciting. It’s all about England going to the doggies, and what shall we do about it dears? Our Bevy, you see, must keep up with the times (in Buckridge, 1994: 182).

In 1934, Penton embarked on what was to become one of his most memorable journalistic endeavours - The Telegraph’s ‘Sydney Spy’ column. It was a deliberate challenge to prevailing political orthodoxy – particularly on sensitive social issues. It propounded the evils of censorship; Australia’s colonial mentality; the anomalies of international capitalism; feminism and the dangers
of Appeasement (Buckridge, 1994: 126). As a larrikin, Penton may have been “scandalous” (Buckridge, 1994), but he also contributed to the establishment of mockery as an effective means to challenge authority and the ‘tyranny of the majority’; thereby encouraging diversity of opinion in the public sphere.

Penton’s story suggests that the larrikin’s ‘emotional attachment to working class origins’ (criterion two) had, by the mid-1920s, started to manifest as an identifiably leftist ideology, even a Communist one.

Here, the founding of the Australian Communist Party in 1920 assumes some significance in light of a Milton-informed reassessment of Wilfred Burchett (1911 – 1983) as the enlightened larrikin ‘writ large’. For instance, even Burchett’s Marxist-inspired errors (see Manne, 2008) arguably generated ‘truth’ in the Public Sphere via what Milton in Areopagitica (1952:391) calls “trial by what is contrary” (see below). However, before we continue our cultural history of larrikinism by
analysing Burchett as the arch larrikin of Australian journalism, we must first contextualise him in light of what became known as the Cold War.

Australian social and political life in the years leading up to World War II were marked by prevailing anti-communism (via censorship laws), Appeasement (of dictators such as Hitler) and what Ward (1969:145-147) calls “a strong tendency towards isolationism” with “conciliatory and appeasing noises towards Fascism” sounding through the public sphere.

In short, the Appeasement of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan had tacit public support, with both Labor and the United Australia Party politicians (e.g. Robert Menzies) assenting to that mood (Ward 1969:147-148). At the time, however, several non-conformist journalists criticised Appeasement; making their work seem anti-fascist, even pro-communist. Writer and journalist, Alan Moorehead (1910 – 1983), for example, noted that “nearly all” of his Sydney Morning Herald colleagues were left wing in this inter-war period:
We glowed with hate for Mussolini and the up-and-coming Hitler ... some of us joined the Writers League which had affiliations with the Communist Party (Moorehead, 1970: 36).

The sources also indicate that this ideological penchant coincided in some journalists with manifestations of axiological criteria one (defiance), two (egalitarianism/ emotional attachments to the working class) and three (mockery of pomposity).

The larrikin streak running through the micro-culture of Australian journalism (i.e. the “threads” and “indications” being charted with our axiological ‘compass’) appears to have developed an ideologically Communist dimension as such ideas spread from revolutionary Russia after the 1929 stock market crash and subsequent Great Depression.

In this inter-war period, some journalists took political defiance (arguably implicit in the larrikin form) into the public sphere as worldwide
debate over the appeasement of fascist regimes ran parallel with a brewing ‘Cold War’ between pro-communist and anti-communist elements.

For example, writer and journalist George Johnston (1912 – 1970) may be regarded as a larrikin (criteria one and three) insofar as he defiantly refused to conform to the Australian penchant for Appeasement. Johnston’s biographer Garry Kinnane suggests that he “loved to take the mickey” out of Appeasers, particularly if it involved “deflating their pomposity” (Kinnane, 1986: 32).

Today, Johnston’s journalism on Japanese expansionism (e.g. its occupation of China in the 1930s) stands out for its grasp of Japan’s military competence at a time when many underrated it as a threat to Australia (Kinnane, 1986: 32 – 34). As such, Johnston undoubtedly helped to ‘inform citizens and animate democracy’ at a time when the United Australia Party (UAP) Government actively supported the pre-war shipping of Australian scrap iron to a militarising Japan. Robert Menzies, the Attorney-General at the time, even threatened to

Elsewhere, a defiant and ‘piss-taking’ Eric Baume responded with larrikin flair to the British Government’s policy of Appeasement of Hitler at the Munich Conference (1938). In his autobiography, Baume notes how he was “unceremoniously” turned off Sydney radio for his mocking prophesy that the British Empire would “have to fight” Germany, “despite God, Munich, ‘There’ll always be an England’, and the Heavenly Halifax”:

The greatest tragedy of these appeasement years was in the 1920-39 decadence of England - decadence which today she, as a regenerate soul, should never count among her blessings (Baume, 1941: 10).

As a larrikin non-conformist on this issue, Baume displayed considerable aggression (criterion five), while expressing his contempt for those “nasty little class-conscious snobs” who he saw as
supporting Appeasement (Baume 1941:27). The larrikin tendency to ‘exceed limits’ (criterion four) is also discernable in Baume’s hyperbolic references to “slobbering bunches of socialites” and “virtuous young literary prigs” as the next generation of out-of-touch power-holders, determining the course of events to the detriment of the public (Baume, 1941:57).

Further evidence of Baume’s larrikin perspective on pre-war life in Sydney can be discerned in his piss-taking description of himself and his wife attending a “daddy of all fetes” – a “thousand pound dinner” given by John Woolcott Forbes (“the new Midas”) as owner of the Primary Producers’ Bank:

The affair was like a page out of some Roman Emperor’s private diary ... The champagne was the finest ever seen in Australia but even champagne was not good enough for John Woolcott Forbes (Baume, 1941: 149).
He finishes his anecdote by noting how he and his wife could only vomit up “that dinner!” (Baume, 1941: 149).

The creeping politicisation of larrikinism in 20th century Australian journalism is, however, most evident in the career of Baume’s contemporary, Wilfred Burchett. Described by Robert Manne (2008: 22) as “the most controversial and influential communist in Australian history”, Burchett may be regarded as a particular kind of larrikin - a partisan larrikin whose defiantly non-conformist egalitarianism (criteria one and two) tended towards an exceeding of limits (criterion four) because it was marked by an emotional innocence (criterion six) grounded in what he came to regard as the superiority of Communism (Manne 2008:26-27).

Burchett - famous for his manifestly larrikin (i.e. defiant, non-conformist and anti-authoritarian) news gathering, in 1945, of the A-Bomb aftermath in Hiroshima (see below) - joined Johnston and Baume before the war in speaking out against the
Appeasement of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan (Burchett & Shimmin, 2005: xiv).

Burchett seems to have been anti-Appeasement because of his leftist convictions; a political penchant that appears to have manifested quite early in his journalism. For example, while reporting on British India in the inter-war period, Burchett recalls thinking it would be “interesting” to take time off to study a Colonial system at the “peak of its decadence” and heading for a “catastrophic” fall. “But it was degrading to seem part of it,” he notes of a land where Indians were made to feel “inferior ... just by the way the Westerners treated them” (Burchett & Shimmin, 2005: 177).

Furthermore, Burchett’s descriptions of the ruling class in pre-war India contrasts their rich-mannered ways with the suffering of the poor; thereby arguably manifesting criterion two of the axiology:
It was the same ‘dress for dinner, business as usual, stiff upper lip’ atmosphere ... Dinner jackets or uniforms were obligatory for males, and evening gowns for the mem sahibs in the restaurant of the Great Eastern Hotel ... A four-course breakfast was almost mandatory, although Indians were literally dying of starvation in the streets (Burchett & Shimmin, 2005: 176).

Given such evidence, it is unsurprising that recent research has largely confirmed that Burchett spent most of his career actively reporting from an ideologically biased (i.e. Marxist) point-of-view (see Manne, 2008). For instance, now there is evidence (Manne 2008:29-30) that Burchett, while reporting the Korean War, helped North Korean and Chinese interrogators extract false confessions, on alleged American germ warfare, from captured U.S. pilots (1952).

Burchett’s ‘emotional innocence’ as a Communist larrikin appears to be tacitly acknowledged by Manne (2008:29) when he writes that it would be unreasonable to “suggest that Burchett’s germ-
warfare journalism was consciously mendacious or insincere":

“In ideological politics”, Manne concedes, “people generally believe what suits them” (Manne, 2008: 29).

On balance, Manne’s account of Burchett’s life and times seems to be a significant reassessment of the man as a Cold War ‘agent of influence’ who sought to use journalism to advocate Communism.

Manne’s expose, however, cannot erase Burchett’s cultural significance as a larrikin journalist. In fact, it could even confirm him as Australian journalism’s arch-larrikin. After all, even Burchett’s ‘errors of judgment’ in Korea (arguably grounded in axiological criterion six) may well have ‘informed citizens and animated democracy’ during those Cold War times, insofar as they helped Australians to approach what Milton (1644/1952:391) calls “the confirmation of the truth” via contests of freely expressed ideas, unrestrained by censorious authority, or: “trial by what is contrary”. 

Here, we note that although Milton’s *Areopagitica* was primarily concerned with defending the free expression and unrestrained publication of non-conformist (even heretical) religious doctrines (Milton 1644/1952:390-396), his key argument (i.e. truth emerges in contestation with its contrary) can be usefully applied to Burchett’s defiant non-conformity, as a Communist journalist, in the somewhat conservative public sphere of the Australian 1950s.

Here, we are inclined to think that something very like Milton’s ‘Freedom of Thought’ principle helped persuade a majority of Australians to reject, in the 1951 referendum, a Menzies-driven proposal to amend the Australian Constitution so that it would allow The Australian Communist Party (and suspected Communists like Burchett) to be declared illegal (Ward 1969:164-166).

Indeed, Milton’s larrikin advocacy of non-conformist Freedom of Thought would not have been out of place in the arguments used, by Burchett and
others, (see Ward 1969:165-166) against the Menzies proposal in the 1951 referendum:

Though all the winds of doctrine be let loose to play upon the earth, Truth is in the field and we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter? (Milton 1644/1952:409).

Burchett’s practice of this principle is perhaps most renowned in his reportage on Hiroshima for the London Daily Express (1945). At the time, Burchett’s colleagues were rushing to cover the signing of the Japanese surrender on the US Naval vessel, The USS Missouri. But Burchett, ever the non-conformist and, seeing the possibility of what he himself described as a “scoop” (Bradbury, 1980), defiantly took a dangerous 22-hour train journey to the A-Bombed Hiroshima – a city from which all westerners had been banned (Bradbury, 1980). Burchett, with photographer Henry Keys (1911 – 1986), was the first journalist to report on
Hiroshima’s devastation, producing a front-page story that even Manne (2008: 32) regards as “of world historical importance”. In short, without Burchett’s manifestly larrikin approach to the Hiroshima coverage, it is doubtful whether he could have contributed so significantly to the (international) public sphere with his ‘scoop’ that began:

“I write this as a warning to the world”.

Thus, in Burchett, we find quite specific evidence of the relationship between larrikinism and Australian journalism’s capacity to fulfil its public responsibility.

This is particularly evident in Burchett’s performance during a press conference after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. An “uninvited” Burchett, just back from Hiroshima, refused to let go of a line of questioning about the A-Bomb’s “atomic plague” effects. The conference was held by an American scientist dressed - in contrast to the “grimy, unshaven and dishevelled” Burchett - in a Brigadier General’s uniform. In Burchett’s account
of this, we can discern manifestations of axiological criteria one (defiance), three (mockery of pomposity) and six (emotional innocence), as the uniformed figure (striving to officially record just one version of events), and the larrikin journalist (insisting on his eye witness account of Hiroshima) contested the ‘truth’ in a free and open encounter marked by the larrikin’s defiance of the military scientist – apparently a type akin to Milton’s “instructor that comes to me under the wardship of an overseeing fist” (Milton, 1952: 398):

He [the scientist] remained standing, and I [Burchett] remained standing. [According to the scientist] those I had seen in the [Hiroshima] hospitals were victims of blast and burn, normal after any explosion … Eventually the exchanges narrowed down to my demand for an explanation as to why fish were dying in the stream that ran through the city centre … The spokesman looked pained. ‘I’m afraid you’ve fallen victim to Japanese propaganda,’ and with that Parthian shot he sat down (Burchett & Shimmin, 2005: 246).
Like Burchett, Osmar White (1909 – 1991) is celebrated within Australian journalism history for his larrikin-esque reportage during World War II. Most noted for his coverage of the Allied ‘liberation’ of Nazi Germany, White is remembered for his anti-authoritarianism and non-conformity, which he used to ensure transparency of authority and diversity of opinion in the public sphere. Defying authority again and again, White refused the military’s demands to gloss over the failings of the Allies. For example, White publicised his unconventional scepticism concerning supposed German war-guilt and, at press conferences and in print, expressed disgust at General Patton’s preoccupation with corpses (White and McDonald, 1996: ix).

Furthermore, it was Osmar White, with Australian journalism larrikins, Damien Parer and Chester Wilmot, who took up the cause of Australian troops in New Guinea in 1942, despite the fact that journalists were expected to simply propagate an image of brave and courageous Allied soldiers. For
example, despite tight military censorship, the three correspondents exposed the Australian military’s inadequate training in jungle warfare and defiantly lobbied the army to adopt green uniforms – significantly non-conformist acts at a time when journalists were expected to act as compliant propaganda cogs in the Australian war machine (White & McDonald, 1996: ix).

Given these sorts of pressures, it is perhaps unsurprising that our sources also point to many manifestations of criterion four in World War II journalism – especially exceeding the limits of alcohol. Burchett implies that imbibing was an extension of journalistic newsgathering practice. According to Burchett, war correspondents were often billeted with army officers, who held rations of alcohol for their guests, the imbibing of which was a method of gaining information. Suggesting that alcohol consumption was one means of building a journalism community, Burchett himself boasts of being a “good drinker” – as “colleagues who have encountered me on five continents and innumerable
islands can testify” (Burchett and Shimmin, 2005: 431).

In one instance, Burchett claims that alcohol was even used as a collective sign of anti-authoritarianism. General Ridgeway had issued a ban on “fraternisation, consorting and trafficking” between correspondents and Communist journalists during the Korean conflict. The morning after it was issued, the “whole press corps”, as an expression of defiance, made an “extra ostentatious display of fraternisation, including some drinking of alcoholic beverages” (Burchett and Shimmin, 2005: 386).

Excess and alcohol also seem to have played an informal role in industry training at The Age during this wartime period. For example, according to one of George Johnston’s colleagues, Greeba Jamison:

He [Johnston] would burst into the big reporters room ... and the whole place was turned on end ... everyone, men and women, would cluster
round and George would tell us with tremendous
gusto ... of his exploits in the war ... Usually we
would repair to the Duke of Kent hotel across
the road in La Trobe Street and the story would
continue over many rounds of beer (Kinnane,

Post World War II, another larrikin, The Argus’
great non-conformist, Peter Russo, joined Burchett
in being branded ‘Communist’. Although The Argus
had become increasingly conservative, Russo’s
column, ‘Behind the News’, was described by the
more leftist Meanjin as having a “comparatively
independent” editorial policy (in Porter, 2001:
121). Russo, who had spent his pre-war days in
Japan, held deep empathy for Asian culture and
contempt for attempts at Western colonisation. In
‘Behind the News’, Russo, ‘playing Devil’s
advocate’, expressed scorn for Western foreign
policy towards Asia. During the final throes of
China’s civil war in 1949, Russo openly declared
Western policy was “perilous”, and attempts to stem
Asian nationalism demonstrated “dangerous
ignorance” (in Porter, 2001: 121). When the Korean
War broke out in 1950, Russo extended these criticisms, picking out American action in particular (in Porter, 2001: 122).

In 1955, Anti-Communist Australian Labour Party member, William Bourke declared in federal parliament that The Argus was a “biased newspaper, the bias being brought about by the fact that it is dominated by a man named Peter Russo” (in Porter, 2001: 115). Bourke’s attack was not an isolated incident. Anti-communist Labour party members defamed Russo on two other occasions, in federal parliament in 1951, and in the Victorian legislative assembly in 1956. Each time he was portrayed as a Communist sympathiser, if not a card-carrying member of the party itself. However, Prue Torney-Parlicki’s close reading of Russo’s material indicates that he eschewed all ‘isms’, and his frequent criticisms of Western foreign policy did not indicate sympathy for communism, but rather contempt for those who interpreted Asian independence movements as communist inspired and formulated simplistic approaches to deal with the complex upheavals (in Porter, 2001: 119).
This was an era of Cold War paranoia, however, and the relationship between larrikinism’s egalitarianism and journalism’s public sphere role was interpreted as left-wing ideology and as having Communist sympathies. Indeed, there is some evidence that this perception was not totally misconceived.

For example, according to journalist David McNicoll, “as with most newspaper staffs”, The Telegraph during the 1950s contained a “preponderance of Labour supporters” (McNicoll, 1979: 130). This appeared to worry proprietors, who tended to be at the other end of the political spectrum. Soon after World War II, Keith Murdoch wrote to Frank Packer, warning him about his staff’s political affiliations. Murdoch was shocked to discover The Herald and Weekly Times had been nurturing ‘Reds’ in its bosom. He claimed publicity and pressure had flushed most of them out of Melbourne’s Flinders Street, leaving them to go to Sydney to work for Packer’s outlets, such as The Telegraph (McNicoll, 1979: 130).
John Pilger’s account of post World War II Australian journalism concurs with McNicoll’s. According to Pilger, when he joined The Telegraph as a cadet in the 1950s, proprietor Frank Packer was Menzies’ “most powerful press patron” and, accordingly, his publications were “extremely right wing”. However, according to Pilger, the majority of Packer’s journalists were “vociferous supporters” and members of the Labour Party (Pilger, 1986: 41).

Even so, the Cold War context in which they operated saw intensified pressure on Australian journalists to conform to anti-Communism driven by then Prime Minister, Robert Menzies. Here, despite Australian journalism’s larrikin streak, many media outlets conformed to the Menzies’ line (Ward, 1969: 165). Within this testing climate of prevailing social conservatism, larrikin journalists like Burchett and Russo may have had a democratic effect insofar as their manifestations of axiological criteria one, two and six constituted a form of journalism that dared to think for itself; thereby
arguably protecting freedom in the public sphere from authority in a manner consistent with the Enlightenment tradition. As Burchett described this period, “initiatives for independent investigation on matters affecting policy were discouraged; objective reporting became more difficult” (Burchett and Shimmin, 2005: 272).

Burchett, in fact, was so intent on “independent investigation” that he continued his practice of reporting from the ‘enemy’ side by moving to North Vietnam in the 1960s. During the Vietnam conflict he reported from the National Liberation Front (‘Viet Cong’) areas in the South; “supported”, according to Manne, “by two battalions and accompanied by two bodyguards” (Manne, 2008: 28). Burchett was atypical in this – most Western journalists who covered the conflict did so with Government of South Vietnam soldiers (ARVN) or US troops.

About 68 Australian correspondents covered the Vietnam conflict (Finn, 1998: 93). One of the most well-known of these was cameraman and journalist,
Neil Davis (1934 – 1985). Described by biographer, Tim Bowden as a “lovable larrikin” and a “seemingly fearless” war correspondent, Davis was anti-authoritarian and non-conformist in his determination to film the war from the South Vietnamese soldier’s viewpoint (Bowden, 1988: ix). Davis’ reasoning here was that he had to correct the American official version of events, thus redressing the imbalance of opinion in the public sphere. As Davis himself diarised:

The unfair thing was that from the time the Americans came into South Vietnam in force in 1965 until they announced a limited withdrawal in 1968, the impression was given to the world that the Americans were doing almost all the fighting, while the inefficient and cowardly ARVN were sitting back and doing nothing. This was not true … that is why I was determined to cover the ARVN fighting effort (Bowden, 1988: 121 – 122).

Davis – like Burchett – also filmed the Viet Cong; believing it was his duty as a journalist to report both sides:
Most Westerners tended to forget that the Vietnamese soldiers on both sides were nice, simple people with ordinary human thoughts and desires. I [Davis] tried to bring out the human element whenever possible (in Bowden, 1988: 267).

In these comments from Davis, we discern the presence of axiological criteria two (egalitarianism) and six (emotional innocence), together with elements of criterion one (defiance and nonconformity). This suggests Bowden’s characterisation of Davis as a “larrikin” may be quite correct (Bowden, 1988: ix).

There is also evidence to suggest that Davis manifested some aspects of criterion four (exceeding limits), not only in his forays into ‘enemy’ territory, but also in his use of alcohol. According to colleague, Brian Barron, Davis had a great capacity for booze and could drink his way through the night if necessary:
Davis could spend a night drinking beer, topped with a dozen pipes at Madame Choum’s Opium Den, and still make it to the front line by first light the next day (Bowden, 1988: 261).

It could be argued that the excesses of Vietnam correspondents like Davis were perhaps exceptional responses to what Bowden calls a “constant overdose of human suffering and despair” (Bowden, 1988: x). We, however, discern that these manifestations of criterion four were simply acute expressions of what this inquiry is uncovering as a ‘larrikin sensibility’ in Australian journalism culture.

Indeed, Mungo MacCallum (1941 - ) has noted the centrality of alcohol in the Canberra Press Gallery’s culture during the 1960s and 1970s; even alluding to its use as a tool of news gathering:

We ... seldom started our serious drinking sessions much before lunch time. But drink we did; during non-sitting weeks... our brisk working lunches frequently dragged on towards sunset. The time, we assured each other, was
not wasted; much valuable information was exchanged and many profound insights mused upon. It was all thoroughly worthwhile, or at least, it would have been if anyone had remembered any of it later (MacCallum, 2001: 165).

According to biographer Keith Dunstan, early attempts at setting up the Melbourne Press Club were solely concerned with circumventing Victoria’s “grip of wowserism and 6 o’clock closing” (Dunstan, 2001: 1). It was not enough for post-war Melbourne journalists to have the Phoenix and Astoria – known as The Herald and Weekly Times’ watering holes; or the Hotel Australia, Hosie’s and the Graham – similarly known as The Age’s watering holes. Melbourne journalists during this era wanted a “permanent club” (Dunstan, 2001: 1), and were, according to Dunstan, “obsessed with getting a liquor licence” (Dunstan, 2001: 3). This obsession resulted in the establishment of the Melbourne Press Club in 1971, and which, at the time of writing, continues as an important social meeting
place for journalists around Victoria and interstate.

At the time of the Melbourne Press Club’s founding, there were “unofficial clubs” which provided peer support. Herald journalists met every day for the first drink at the back bar of the Oriental at 11:30am. This was known as the “Morning Tea Club” (Dunstan, 2001: 4). Sun sub-editors had their own well stacked fridge in the subs’ room. They went into “action” immediately after the first edition. This was known as the ‘Midnight Tea Club’ (Dunstan, 2001: 5).

Indeed, manifestations of this aspect of criterion four could even be integrated into the very journalism produced by some larrikin reporters, apparently as a way to intensify the expression of criterion three (mocking pomposity). For example, when the ABC’s This Day Tonight had just finished reporting on an incident in which a pen on Harold Holt’s desk turned out to be a concealed microphone, host Bill Peach finished the program by saying:
“If you have things on your desk, they should do things they’re supposed to.”

The phone on Peach’s desk then rang. He picked it up, poured beer out of it into a glass and wished the audience good night (Peach, 1992: 50).

MacCallum credits This Day Tonight, an “irreverent” current affairs program, for pushing Australian journalism into a more liberal era (MacCallum, 2001: 106). Typically larrikin-like in its anti-authoritarianism, This Day Tonight would openly tell its audience when politicians and other public figures refused to appear on the program over sensitive issues – an unprecedentedly disrespectful move at the time (Peach, 1992: vi). It has since been taken up by journalism as an effective way to ensure that politicians cannot easily elude scrutiny in the public sphere. As host Bill Peach points out:

TDT took the attitude that politicians were the servants of a democratic nation ... if they refused to appear, we said they had refused to appear. We indicated the empty chair where the
minister would have been sitting ... The missing parties found themselves the subject of sarcasm from their Canberra colleagues, who told them, ‘that was a very good non-appearance last night’. It wasn’t long before the ministers discovered that their other engagements weren’t so pressing (Peach, 1992: 44).

Such “threads” and “indications” would appear to “clothe” the a priori imagination of the Thesis Statement with some cogency; thereby suggesting that larrikin journalists were indeed democratic figures in the sense the Thesis Statement supposes.

Given This Day Tonight’s larrikin penchant (recall the beer-telephone), it can be assumed that its ‘name and shame’ policy was at least partially informed by: a) axiological criterion one (defiance); two (egalitarianism) and three (mocking pomposity), and b) by an understanding of the larrikin journalist’s role in the public sphere.

This Day Tonight is possibly most remembered for its coverage of student protests against the
Vietnam conflict, particularly for the now famous 1969 footage of young Australian journalist, Simon Townsend, resisting arrest and struggling against police who were bundling him into the back of a divisional van (Peach, 1992: 64).

That same year, another This Day Tonight journalist, Stuart Littlemore, demonstrated the democratic utility of manifesting axiological criteria one (defiance) and three (taking the piss), when he challenged the integrity of then New South Wales Premier, Robert Askin. During a television interview, a rather pompous Askin had denied that the removal of Police Identification Numbers was common practice in his state. Littlemore then cut to footage of N.S.W. police breaking up a Vietnam War protest after removing I.D. numbers from their uniforms. Askin was embarrassed, there was a public outcry and the practice quickly became less common (Peach, 1992: 100).

Given the central, yet sensitive role of police authorities in democratic societies (accountable
law enforcers and protectors of civil liberties), Littlemore’s telling expose is a good example of how a larrikin-informed work culture (This Day Tonight) and one journalist’s practice of it came together to ‘inform citizens and animate democracy’ - just as the Thesis Statement supposes.

And yet, only a few years earlier, the series of Oz magazine’s Australian court cases (1964 - 1967) had displayed the vulnerability, to legal authority, of three larrikin student journalists who apparently manifested axiological criteria one (defiance), three (taking the piss) and four (exceeding limits) in their desire to make public use of their reason.

Edited by Sydney University students, Richard Neville, Richard Walsh and Martin Sharp, Oz set a precedent in political satire and dealing with taboo social issues. The Oz magazine’s whole reason for being was to ‘take the piss’ out of Australian society, particularly its prevailing wowserism. Poking fun at all Australian sacred cows, Oz provided a platform for a diversity of opinion on the police force, religion, censorship, the White
Australia policy and the mainstream media (Neville, 1995: 37 – 45).

Oz was a self-consciously larrikin organ, as Neville points out in a salient analysis of its role in the Australian public sphere at the time:

In Australia one was responding satirically to the daily diet of pomposity, intolerance and suicidal idiocy, employing, like most satirists, a frame of reference obvious and acceptable to all (Neville, 1970: 139).

For its efforts in introducing a broad diversity of ideas into the public sphere, Oz was found to have a “tendency to deprave, corrupt or injure” national morals (Neville, 1995: 37) and its editors were taken to court in Australia and charged with obscenity. Despite the drawn out court case, Neville, Walsh and Sharp defiantly continued producing their magazine.

According to MacCallum, this was a watershed case, with a serious backlash in favour of the student
editors, “even from the establishment media”, who were “sufficiently far-sighted” to realise the antediluvian laws might threaten their own interests if pursued to their logical conclusion (MacCallum, 2001: 106).

Arguably, the non-conformist sensibility that animated Neville, Walsh and Sharp’s Oz magazine is akin to the larrikin spirit that informed Burchett’s non-conformity, Deamer’s defiance of convention or the free-press passion of Bent, Smith Hall and Hayes. If so, then larrikin forms (or axiological criteria) would appear to have enjoyed some continuity of manifestation in the micro-cultural practices of different generations within the “interesting tribe” (Hurst, 1988: 6) known as Australian journalists.

Mungo MacCallum, an ‘elder’ of that tribe and self-confessed “smart arse” larrikin (MacCallum, 2001: 111), apparently had one eye on that very tradition in this account of his weekly satirical column for The Australian – a column that generated regular political fallout for his editor, Adrian Deamer:
I used it increasingly to take the piss out of the government in general, and the Prime Minister in particular. Murdoch continually asked Deamer to pull the column. Deamer replied spiritedly that he would not indulge in political censorship (MacCallum, 2001: 159).

Coincidently, Mungo MacCallum, a contemporary anti-authoritarian and non-conformist larrikin, also happens to be the great-great grandson of one of Australia’s first larrikin journalists: The Australian’s William Wentworth (MacCallum, 2001: 1). Given the axiological manifestations we have noted, we are tempted to see this link between the contemporary MacCallum and the colonial Wentworth as symbolic of a more general larrikin genealogy within Australian journalism history.

Furthermore, we believe that the foregoing history of larrikinism in Australian journalism provides sufficient evidence to support the cogency of the Thesis Statement’s initial supposition:
In Australian journalism history, larrikin journalists have been responsible for facilitating and protecting democratic freedom in the public sphere from authority.

The evidence for the democratic significance of the larrikin can be summarised using the following taxonomy of Form (axiological criteria), Function (democratic role) and Face (examples).
### A Larrikin Taxonomy for Australian Journalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form (Criterion)</th>
<th>Function (Democratic Role)</th>
<th>Face (Examples)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defiance; nonconformity</td>
<td>Facilitate and protect the public sphere; hold authority to account; ‘playing the Devil’s advocate’</td>
<td>Bent; Wentworth and Wardell; Grover; Burchett; White; Oz editors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional attachment to working class origins; egalitarianism</td>
<td>‘Championing the Underdog’; “reaching out” to the public.</td>
<td>The Seekamps; The Bulletin; Gilmour; White, Parer and Wilmot; Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mocking pomposity; wit; taking the piss</td>
<td>Diversity in the Public Sphere; holding authority to account</td>
<td>The Argus; Penton; Baume; MacCallum; Peach; Oz editors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeding limits; criminality; (alcohol consumption)</td>
<td>Holding authority to account; (Training and peer support)</td>
<td>Smith-Hall; Deamer; Burchett; Peach; MacCallum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression;</td>
<td>Commercial/ professional viability; competitiveness; hard-work ethic</td>
<td>Reid; Argus/ Age; Johnston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional innocence</td>
<td>Justifies professional practice; passion for the profession</td>
<td>O’Kane; Burchett; Davis.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

This taxonomy of evidence appears to indicate that Australian journalism regularly paid a ‘democratic dividend’ into the public sphere, thanks to its larrikin practitioners. Even so, in order to consider the cogency – or otherwise – of the Thesis
Statement’s second part, we need to discern whether larrikinism can still be a professional value in 21st century journalism.

This taxonomy was constructed in an effort to sketch the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘who’ of why larrikinism in Australian journalism may be read as an animator of democracy. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that the spirit of dissent which marked those ‘enlightened larrikins’ will necessarily persuade contemporary Australian journalists that public sphere larrikinism is worth cultivating.

However, in the forthcoming comparative analysis of larrikinism within Australian journalism from two distinct socio-political eras, we hope to discern whether that spirit of dissent can be said to have a professional future in Australian journalism culture.
Chapter Five
The Larrikin at Work: Continuity and Discontinuity

To this point we have demonstrated that an axiology of larrikinism can be: a) recovered from a history of that term as it has been interpreted within Australian culture and b) used to confirm the existence of larrikinism as a micro-cultural value in Australian journalism, at least, up to the early 1970s. However, in order to complete testing the Thesis Statement, it is necessary to ask whether the larrikin tradition enjoyed continuity or discontinuity among Australian journalists in more recent years.

Thus, in this chapter, we shall use the taxonomy of larrikinism to interpret primary and secondary sources from two distinct eras in Australian political and social history; eras that can be termed the Whitlam (1972 – 1975) and Howard (1996 – 2007) eras. The sources used are:

a) Oral history transcripts derived from 10 interviewees who were junior journalists in 1974,
and 10 interviewees who were junior journalists in 2003.


Before proceeding, it is necessary to detail the contexts for the interviewees' recollections and the industry-specific publications. Because this phase of The Larrikin Paradox is concerned with testing for change and continuity across eras, it is important to understand the socio-political contexts of the sources under scrutiny.

**Contexts: the Whitlam (1972 – 1975) and Howard (1996 – 2007) eras.**

The Whitlam era (1972 – 1975) was one of social radicalism, with both cultural and political role models speaking out against conformity. In Australia, after more than 20 years of conservative regimes, a left wing government had been voted in and was embarking on a series of radical
legislative changes that affected almost all social groups (Macintyre, 1999: 231). The New Left-wing Government had come to international prominence on university campuses in 1968 and, as University of Melbourne historian, Stuart Macintyre points out, there was a pervading rejection of consumerism, careerism and conventional morality:

This new radicalism was iconoclastic in its rejection of respectability, theatrical in its use of language, gesture, clothing and persona appearance; ambitious in its attempt to mark out a counter-culture that extended to all aspects of personal relationships; romantic in its expectation that the removal of all barriers to intimacy would create harmony (Macintyre, 1999: 229).

At the same time, artistic influences in popular culture were advocating non-conformist cultural ideals. John Lennon had left the teeny-bop scene and, with wife Yoko Ono, had embarked on a series of ‘bed-ins’ as an anti-war demonstration in 1969 (Solt & Egan, 1988: 250), and Marc Bolan, lead singer of rock band T-Rex, was telling the world it “won’t fool the children of the Revolution” (1972).
Academics and entertainers such as Germaine Greer, Clive James and Barry Humphries had migrated in frustration at Australia’s previous conservatism. Those that did stay at home, such as *In Melbourne Tonight’s* Graham Kennedy (Blundell, 2003: 297) and playwright David Williamson, continuously expressed non-conformity against conservative cultural norms and practices (Turner in Williamson, 1978: x – xi). Although the Whitlam era was a time of uncertainty, it was also characterised by a pervading optimism about change. As Macintyre says of this period: “With the baby-boomers’ rejection of their parents’ way of life, the conservative order crumbled” (Macintyre, 1999: 228).

The Howard era (1996 - 2007) was also a time of uncertainty, but it was also distinguished by a pervading sense of conservatism and what social critic Robert Manne describes as “the rise of the neo-conservative right” (Manne, 2005: 3). Journalist and political satirist, Guy Rundle says this era was marked by the “demonisation” of ‘left-liberalism’, which was seen as “inherently traitorous” and ‘un-Australian’ (in Manne, 2005: 2005: 3).
29). Only two years before, an attack on New York’s World Trade Centre had scared the western world into formulating a ‘war on terror’ and forming the ‘coalition of the willing’ against the ruling Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq, with then US President, George W Bush at the helm.

This conservatism merged into popular culture. Former cinema celebrity, Arnold Schwarzenegger, became California’s Republican Governor; music idol, Britney Spears publicly announced not only her personal conservative morality, but also her conservative political ideology. In Australia, when Big Brother contestant Merlin Luck made non-conformist political protests live on that reality TV show, host Gretel Killeen publicly stated that the highly popular program was “not the right forum” for such ideological statements.

There had also been massive changes in news rooms: the gender ratio among journalists had moved from being predominantly male in the Whitlam era to predominantly female in the Howard era; technology
had moved from typewriters to computerised word processing; news gathering technique had gone from face-to-face contact, tip-offs and, literally, basic footslogging to the internet, email and even SMS messaging. Most journalists in the Whitlam era had entered the news room straight from high school, and were aged in their mid-to-late teens. Meanwhile, in the Howard era, most young journalists had completed, or were completing, a tertiary degree, and entered the news room in their early-to-mid 20s.

Overall, although the power of media conglomerates in the Howard era had grown to encompass all forms of communication - daily internet media/news, on top of the traditional mediums of print, radio and television - the number of conglomerates had shrunk, meaning more power was held by fewer groups who, furthermore, appeared to think journalism’s public responsibility was subservient to its commercial obligations.

Conversely, young journalists during the Whitlam era were apparently indoctrinated into a culture
whose heroes included the Australian’s irreverent Mungo MacCallum; the Oz magazine’s defiant Richard Neville and the perpetual risk-taking Vietnam correspondent, Neil Davis. It was cultural icons such as these that arguably gave the term ‘larrikin’ such positive connotations. However, by the Howard era, high-profile journalist ‘larrikins’ such as Jana Wendt and Mike Willesee had been labelled as unprofessional and self-interested ‘prima-donnas’. The television satire, Frontline, had even parodied larrikinism, with episodes such as ‘The Siege’. Furthermore, ABC’s Media Watch had criticised journalism for using larrikin qualities to justify fraudulent ends. In other words, the Howard era culture may have given the term ‘larrikin’ some negative connotations.

Before we can confirm such impressions, we need to understand the industry-specific publications also under consideration, particularly considering that they constitute significant texts for the working contexts recalled by our sources of oral history (i.e. the 20 interviewees).
The Journalist and The Walkley Magazine

The Journalist, produced by the industry’s union and professional association, then the Australian Journalists’ Association, was originally known as The Australasian Journalist and had its first run in 1913 (just three years after the industry’s unionisation). This meant that by 1974, the publication had a 60-year history, becoming an Australian journalism institution. In 1974, The Journalist had 8,000 readers, ranging from predominantly general print and broadcast reporters, photographers, artists and senior editorial staff, to some public relations practitioners and journalism educators (Lawrence, January 1974: 3).

In 1992, The Australian Journalists Association amalgamated with Actors’ Equity and the Australian Theatrical and Amusement Employees’ Association to become the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance. The consortium was later joined by the Symphony Orchestra Association and the New South Wales Art workers’ Union. A professional sports branch was
created, and the Screen Technicians’ Association was reconstituted under the MEAA banner. Although membership now constituted a vast array of media, entertainment, sports and arts professionals, journalists were covered by a specific media section, which produced *The Walkley Magazine*. In 2003, *The Walkley Magazine* had up to 36,000 readers (MEAA, 2005).

The MEAA functioned and, at the time of writing, still functions, as both a professional association and union. As such, in 1956 it was delegated the duty of bestowing what is known as “Australian journalism’s most coveted prize”, the Walkley Awards (Hurst, 1988: 4).

As publications of Australia’s dominant union and professional association, *The Journalist* and *The Walkley Magazine* were major conduits of common cultural values and beliefs among Australian journalists in the Whitlam and Howard eras respectively.
Consequently it is assumed these industry-specific publications can help track the presence, or otherwise, of larrikinism in Australian journalism micro-culture from each era under consideration. However, clearly, these publications cannot be relied upon for understanding the views of individual journalists outside the texts. Consequently, we also gathered oral histories from journalists who were juniors in each of the eras under investigation.

**Oral History Interviews**

Open-ended interviews were particularly useful for helping testing the Thesis Statement because they allowed us to actively plumb the interviewees’ recollections, regarding their value and belief systems. Interviewing allows for flexibility when dealing with individual characteristics, and can extract useful responses to sometimes-sensitive personal, professional and workplace issues. Obtaining oral histories through interviewing was done on the assumption that it would assist us in reaching a useful understanding of how the
axiological import of larrikinism manifested in each era.

Combined with the evidence gathered from industry-specific publications, it is assumed that the oral history material could enhance the overall comparative investigation into whether larrikinism was deemed relevant by journalists from different eras, and whether they used it to interpret public responsibility and professional practice in the Whitlam and Howard eras.

Here, we wondered whether there would be continuity or discontinuity (in perceptions of larrikinism) once those sources from the two eras were compared.

Because The Larrikin Paradox is interested in how young journalists receive their values and beliefs (or how the axiological elements of larrikinism may pass from one generation to the next) all interviewees were required to be of a certain age in each of their respective eras. So, because many journalists in the Howard era did not start their careers until the early-to-mid-20s, subjects in
this group were limited to people who were under 25-years of age in 2003. In the Whitlam era, journalists typically began their careers in the mid-to-late-teens, so subjects from this group were required to fall into this age range in 1974. Further, because print was the most common medium in which young journalists began their careers in both eras, selection of interviewees was limited to general reporters on newspapers.

Females made up about one-fifth of journalists in the Whitlam era. As a result, two of the 10 subjects from the 1974 cohort were required to be female (indeed, it was very difficult to find any female interviewees from this era). Meanwhile, in the Howard era, about half of young journalists were female. This group’s gender ratio, therefore, was five male and five female.

To vouchsafe a degree of objectivity, the researcher remained remote from the interviewee selection process. Melbourne journalism’s professional association, The Melbourne Press Club was invited to become involved in the selection of
subjects. Melbourne Press Club administration sent an email to all members, inviting voluntary participation in the project. Although this exempted those who did not have access to Melbourne Press Club communication, this process did ensure minimal researcher influence. (Even so, it must be remembered that the vast majority of Victorian journalists are members of the Melbourne Press Club.) The Melbourne Press Club passed on the details of those who responded to the researcher, who then contacted the first appropriate volunteers and set up interviews (see Appendix).

Before the interviews began, we reflected critically on the discrepancy in age between the two cohorts. The first cohort – those who were young journalists in the Whitlam era – had, of course, 30 years more to gain confidence in dealing with an interviewer, while those in the Howard era were in their first full-time job and may have felt more anxious in answering questions. Equally as important was the fact that those from the Whitlam era were being asked to recall life 30 years
previously and could, quite conceivably, glorify or romanticise their past.

We mitigated these problems by integrating extra comments or questions into the interview schedule. The open-ended nature of the schedule also meant that the interviewer was able to reassure and encourage those who seemed reluctant to speak. Because the interviews were not formally structured, there were flowing conversations between interviewer and interviewees and better quality data. Although several transition questions were kept in mind to maintain focus, a “recursive model” of interviewing (Minichielo, 1995: 80) was considered necessary to understand how young journalists received their values and beliefs in each era under investigation.

Furthermore, to ameliorate these source problems in a formal way, the six criteria of the larrikin taxonomy were deployed as a clear interpretive framework; beginning with that cornerstone of the larrikin form: defiance.
Defiance at work in Australian Journalism

*Sworn to no Master, of no sect am I*

*(Sydney Herald motto, 1831, taken from Alexander Pope, 1734)*

The inquiry into Australian journalism history found defiance to be a significant larrikin element throughout over a century of Australian journalistic practice. Evolving from an Enlightenment spirit of freedom of thought, anti-authoritarianism and non-conformity, the Australian journalism tradition of defiance was found to be a significant spur for the enacting of journalism’s public responsibility to facilitate and protect the public sphere.

Consequently, the researcher was unsurprised to find that 1974’s 12 editions of The Journalist contained connotations of defiance against a wide range of institutional authorities, from proprietors and managers, through to a major celebrity. This defiance conveyed a positive, rallying sense of solidarity and common purpose to hold authority to account within the journalism
community, and legitimised this public responsibility to its allied unions. According to the findings, journalism in 1974 defied all groups in authority except, of course, the group made up of journalists themselves, indicating a sense of strength through unity and fierce defensiveness of its public responsibility and professional practice.

However, before seeking the presence of defiance in *The Journalist*, an outline of context, through detailing relevant 1974 events, is first necessary.

In 1974, the Australian Journalists Association (AJA) was seen as increasingly apathetic towards working conditions, which was neglected in the drive for higher salaries in the 1960s. It was having difficulties in getting the flow-on increases from the partnership with the public service, which the Commonwealth had given a 7.5 percent pay increase in mid-1972. The Metropolitan Daily Newspapers award was due for renewal in 1973, and there were questions regarding penalty rates for shift and weekend work. Campaigning in favour
of industrial policy emphasising penalty rates, John Lawrence defeated George Godfrey for the general presidency, and secured a sufficiently generous offer from proprietors. Although the federal conference recommended it be accepted, the membership rejected the offer, and decided to go to arbitration (Lloyd, 1985: 274).

In mid-1973, amid a national wages explosion, the AJA asked the Commission to reopen the award and give a 30 percent salary increase. Commissioner Muriel Heagney awarded 15 percent in December 1974. A few months later, the Commonwealth introduced wage indexation, which halted further salary or condition improvements. As AJA biographer, Clem Lloyd notes, the decision ended a “remarkable period” of industrial activity, more than any other, in the AJA’s history (Lloyd, 1985: 274).

Not surprisingly, then, more than a quarter of The Journalist’s components are concerned with these industrial fluxes, all of which hold defiant connotations of pride and strength. For example:
Meetings of members have reacted angrily to the rejection of the AJA claim for immediate pay rises by a refusal to reopen the Metropolitan Daily Newspapers Award (November, 1974: 1).

Not only has The Journalist selected to use fierce rhetorical images of collectivity, such as ”meetings” of “angry members” and “refusals” of those in authority to comply with AJA claims as a front page lead, but the entry is also dominated by a headline that exclaims the union’s “‘Disgust’ over discrimination against AJA” (November, 1974: 1). Indeed, all 12 of The Journalists’ 1974 front page ‘splashes’ express defiance against the offered pay and conditions, pitching Australian journalism against managers, proprietors and the media’s commercialisation of the time.

“In their own interests, managements should realize the patience and forbearance of AJA members were exhaustible,” declares the December headline (December, 1974: 1) and suburban newspaper publishers are “able to pay up” but are too “stubborn” accuses the March page one lead (March,
1974: 1). The AJA federal executive “condemns” the closure of The Canberra News without “any” consultation with unions, describing it as a “shameful blot on proprietors” on page one in August, and April’s edition demands “wage justice in the suburbs” (April, 1974: 1).

Yet, this fierce rhetoric is designed not only to rally journalism against proprietors for reasons of personal financial gain or status. The underlying subtext suggests that equality of pay and conditions between occupations recognises journalism’s public responsibility to facilitate and protect the public sphere, and legitimises its professional practice, not only within the wider community, but also within Australian journalism culture itself. This is made more explicit in President John Lawrence’s inaugural speech to the Adelaide Press Club in 1973:

I believe the essential role that AJA members play in the community must be recognized by more adequate salaries and conditions,” Lawrence said. “The cause of professionalism is
not advanced if inadequate salaries and conditions are driving many of the best people out of journalism. Nor is it advanced when these conditions prevent many intelligent and worthwhile people from entering the industry (January, 1974: 3).

Lawrence’s speech, transcribed in the January edition of The Journalist, appeared as a full page article on page three. The import of its messages of defiance to the journalism community is not only suggested by its size and position in the publication, but also by the large, five-column photograph that accompanies it. Depicting AJA President, General Secretary, South Australian district president with then SA Premiere, Don Dunstan in relaxed pose over drinks, the photograph suggests the union’s political clout, as well as its affiliation with an outspoken, radical and popular political leader (January, 1974: 3).
While industrial relations dominates the 1974 editions of *The Journalist*, its 2003 counterpart is, not surprisingly, more interested in war. Just two years earlier, the seemingly impossible had happened when the epitome of Western capitalist values, New York’s World Trade Centre, was attacked. Australia and the US had similarly conservative governments and, as an ally, Australia actively supported the consequent American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. At the time, Australia’s Howard Government had been in the midst of a controversial toughening up of its immigration
policy, arguing that the nation was in a war-like situation to protect its borders from asylum seekers, many of who were Afghanis fleeing the regime that was held responsible for the Trade Centre attacks. As journalists David Marr and Marian Wilkinson point out, the Howard Government could now link the terrorism in New York to the Muslim asylum seekers “forcing their way” to Australia:

“September 11 seemed to make sense of that fierce rhetoric” (Marr and Wilkinson, 2003: 145).

The ensuing concern with war and, what many saw as a new, inhumane immigration policy, bore out interest in the accompanying political rhetoric, and its ability to manipulate the integrity of the public sphere. Many of The Walkley Magazine’s articles with connotations of defiance are against words, their changing meaning and their use as tools of control and propaganda by authority. The Walkley Magazine subjects the media’s use of phrases such as ‘War on Terror’, ‘The Coalition of the Willing and ‘Either With Us or Against Us’ to almost analytical treatment. Using feature-writing
methodology and large colour images, The Walkley Magazine implicitly critiques journalism for neglecting its public responsibility to adequately protect the integrity of the public sphere.

In his Winter editorial, president Christopher Warren makes this critique more explicit when he declares that the 'War on Terror’ is a “war where what people think is happening is more important than what is actually going on ... a war where the major participants have treated the media with contempt” (Issue 21, 2003: 4). Further, according to Warren, this “contempt” is “now distorting the role of an independent media in a free society”. Invoking journalism’s Enlightenment antecedents, Warren argues:

It is no longer: ‘I disagree with what you say, but will fight to the death your right to say it’. Instead it’s now ‘I disagree what you say so I’ll go out of my way to frustrate your work’ (Issue 21, 2003: 4).
Warren points to bars being raised “against the messengers” because “someone doesn’t like the message”, authorities “cajoling and threatening” journalists, and the dubious integrity of official briefings:

In the midst of all this, we should be proud of the ability of most of the world’s media – the Australian media – to cut through the fog to keep people informed (Issue 21, 2003: 4).

The implication that many areas of journalism have neglected its public duty is made more explicit in Warren’s admission that “there’s been mistakes”, and his condemnation of journalism for “accepting briefings in good faith” because they “turn to be false” (Issue 21, 2003: 4).

In his two-page feature, ‘Prisoners of Words’, journalist Jonathan Este also accuses journalism itself for neglecting its public duty. He slams “24-hour revolving news networks constantly hungering for fresh material” for adversely affecting journalism’s commitment to maintaining
authority’s public accountability (Issue 21, 2003: 8 – 9). He uses an audiotape of Osama bin Laden as an example. According to Este, newsrooms “around the world” were provided with the “White House spin” on the tape “hours before” the tape arrived. The spin, apparently, said the tape was “direct proof” that bin Laden was “in cahoots” with the Iraqi regime:

That the contents of the tape appeared to suggest the direct opposite was not deemed a problem, as the US spin had already been doing the rounds of bulletins for hours (Issue 21, 2003: 8).

Este goes on to point out Donald Rumsfeld’s ‘coalition of the willing’ was “pounced on” in newsrooms and, by the end of the day, stories were prepared so the phrase’s words had been given upper-case importance. When Bush speechwriter, David J. Frum, “came up with” the ‘Axis of Evil’, he made comparisons between Iraq and Nazi Germany. However, as Este points out:
That there was no alliance between Iraq, Iran and North Korea didn’t matter. Axis of Evil stuck and both Iran and North Korea are nervously wondering if they are next.

Este, blaming the US “propaganda machine” and the media’s willingness to use it, warns ominously “we appear ready to move into Orwellian territory where reason and logic are ... on the endangered list” (Issue 21, 2003: 9), implying journalism’s neglect in holding US military and political authority to account.

Although The Walkley Magazine’s dominant anxiety over war and propaganda is very different from The Journalist’s main concern with industrial relations, the two groups of texts do have several common themes.

The coverage of Lawrence’s inaugural speech, for example, indicates the AJA’s growing concern with what is now a major issue in Australian journalism, concentration of media ownership, after Sir Frank Packer sold his Consolidated Press newspapers to
Rupert Murdoch’s News Limited in 1972 (Lloyd, 1985: 272). Although a mere 12 of The Journalist’s components are concerned with ownership issues, it is obvious that journalism was anxious enough over the implications that this commercialisation would have on its public responsibility to drum up defiance against proprietorial influence on the public sphere.

The report on Lawrence’s 1973 speech, headlined the “power and influence” of cost accountants “threatens” to “undermine the independence” of editors and the professional skills of journalists, rallies communal defiance against commercialism: “Many of these people have little understanding of the role the media should play in the community,” Lawrence says (January, 1974: 3).

Lawrence goes on to argue that commercialisation results in cost-efficiencies, such as syndication, “operates to stifle a variety of opinion” (January, 1974: 3), articulating journalism’s need for defiance against proprietors to fulfil its public responsibility.
In May, *The Journalist* covered Victorian courts reporter, Columb Brennan’s speech in which he “blames” media “barons” for the “gradual erosion” of press freedom in covering court cases (May, 1974: 3). Brennan, pointing out the dangers to the public sphere, claims large metropolitan newspapers were “cautious not to criticise majorities or significant minorities or to take any stand which would place their circulation in jeopardy”. Journalists, Brennan says, are “enslaved by circulation” and produce “only” what they feel the average reader wants to read.

The suggestion that defiance against proprietors is a journalistic obligation to protect the integrity of the public sphere also appears in the March edition. Duncan Graham’s outraged letter-to-the-editor, supporting the AJA’s call for a Royal Commission into media control, describes the “intimidation” of journalism from “big and powerful monopoly groups”, and the impact this has on its public responsibility and professional practice:
Presumably, the point behind the inquiry is to demonstrate that the public is not receiving all the available news; that bias taints news because of monopoly control, that news is manipulated ... The other side of the coin involves more subtle controls – the intimidation of journalists by managements, politicians, public relations and advertising" (March, 1974: 3).

Pointing out journalism’s responsibility to defy such influences, Graham concludes his letter ominously, stating that “the onus” is on “us” to ensure the community “gets the news straight” (March, 1974: 3).

But, of course, ownership issues did increase between the two eras. So much so that by 2003, the major broadcast outlets were owned by three players and the major metropolitan print outlets by two, except for in Adelaide and Canberra (Simons, 2007: 333 – 397). Further, at the time, the Australian Federal Government’s Media Ownership bill was proposing to abolish cross media rules and foreign ownership restrictions. It is little wonder that
The Walkley Magazine holds a sense of resigned futility over media ownership, commercialisation and the effects it has on journalism’s public responsibility.

In one editorial, for example, MEAA president Christopher Warren claims the “major challenge” to “independent and diverse” journalism is increased concentration of media ownership (Issue 22, 2003: 4). He paints a depressing picture of media conglomerates “around the world” pressuring governments to change laws that would “enable a few big companies to get bigger”. Warren points out that in both the United States and the United Kingdom foreign ownership and cross media rules had been “freed up” and, in Australia, a Media Ownership bill was “seeking” the same.

Warren’s rhetorical images are of “significant” media companies “enthusiastically supporting” the changes, in order to “get bigger” and “sell themselves at a premium”, and governments “conceding” to these companies to “buy support”. In a disheartened tone, Warren concedes the
“inevitable result” will be fewer owners and less
diversity and, “equally likely” outlets within each
corporation will be “under increasing pressure” to
“speak with a single voice”. Implying dark
consequences for journalism’s public responsibility
to facilitate and protect the public sphere, Warren
concludes:

“It’s unfortunate that when the media owners speak
with one voice, they can drown out the millions of
ordinary people who disagree with them” (Issue 22,
2003: 4).

Neither was The Walkley Magazine upbeat about the
future of public broadcaster, ABC. Under the Hawke
and Keating Governments of the 1980s and 1990s, the
ABC had been significantly downsized (Simons, 2007:
434 – 462). However, as Quentin Dempster points out
in ‘Once more unto the Breach, dear ABC friends’,
the 2002-2003 cuts under the Howard Government has
“for the first time” had a “deep impact” on ABC’s
journalism (Issue 23, 2003: 8).

Dempster describes the funding pressures as “low
blows” from both government and management, the
“lowest” of which is the removal of the cadet journalist intake, “destroying the ABC’s capacity for energy and renewal” and “shrinking creative and career opportunities” in broadcast journalism. Making ominous predictions about ABC’s future, Dempster argues that the ABC is “no longer” a “big institution”, and puts the onus on the public, rather than journalism, to “fight” for a “viable public broadcaster”. All journalists can do, says Dempster, is “wait” for leadership from a management that he sees as “ensconced in a comfort zone” (Issue 23, 2003: 8).

The sombre mood of self-criticism again surfaces in the journalism culture’s treatment of female members. Although statistics are hard to find on numbers of female Australian journalists in the 1970s, anecdotal evidence suggests that women made up about a fifth of Australian journalism’s population. By 2003, however, women made up almost 50 percent of journalism’s workforce (Issue 20, 2003: 20 - 21). The workforce’s ‘feminisation’ created a whole new cohort with valid grievance against the traditionally masculine culture.
As Desiree Savage points out in ‘Our Dirty Secret’ (Issue 20, 2003: 20 – 21), the journalism industry of 2003 was not “interested” in uncovering the “prejudice” that women “journos” face throughout their careers, implying hypocrisy within an industry that prides itself in uncovering the same among other social institutions.

The struggle for women in the media is too often brushed aside ... Although about half of Australian journalists are women, in the profession once almost entirely reserved for men, male preference for top jobs continues (Issue 20, 2003: 20).

Although the ABC and Fairfax had introduced gender equality policies, “what you still won’t see are many women in the senior positions or in opinion pages,” says Savage (Issue 20, 2003: 21). The clear implication of Savage’s message is that inequality on the news room floor is not only hypocritical, but also detrimental to diversity on the public sphere.
Quoting senior female journalists, such as Claire Miller, Jill Singer and Farah Farouque, Savage suggests “discrimination” extends from the news room floor, through to the higher echelons of management. Further, using statistics from an International Women’s Media Foundation study, Savage points out the inequality between genders was a problem in journalism worldwide.

Feminisation of Australian journalism in 2003 resulted in a large cohort aggressively critiquing its own culture. But in 1974, Australian journalism was congratulating itself on representing an emerging female work force during a time when the leftovers of patriarchy still dominated the political, social and economic spheres.

In hindsight, some of these self-congratulations would be considered not only pathetic, but also downright offensive. For example, imagine how Savage and her sources would react to *The Journalist’s* report on 20-year-old West Australian newspaper cadet, Kaye Murphy, entering the Miss
Australia quest (June, 1974: 1). Although Ms Murphy’s photograph appears on page one, its accompanying headline, “Cadet hopes for top assignment”, is unrelated to her public responsibility or professional practice as a journalist.

Yet, The Journalist also suggests that the 1974 Australian journalism culture’s affiliation with the-then stridency of the first-wave feminist movement. For example, in April, The Journalist reported on the first woman to be “elevated” to the South Australian AJA executive ranks (April, 1974: 3). Ann Franklin appears as lead article on page three. Accompanied by a large photograph, the article’s location suggests the import of Ms Franklin’s “strong belief” in work equality. The article goes on to detail this “go-ahead young woman’s” career achievements, and mentions other female representatives within the AJA.

When US singer and celebrity, Frank Sinatra, arrived in Australia describing female journalists as “hookers”, and their male counterparts as
“bums”, “idiots” and “parasites”, the Australian journalism community was equally as outraged on behalf of its female membership as it was on its male (August, 1974: 4). The AJA, unapologetically imposed bans on covering the singer, who subsequently imposed bans on the press. Sinatra’s photograph with then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam – taken by a non-AJA member – later appeared in the publications of two Sydney newspaper groups. Sinatra’s lawyers then delivered a “peace handout” to the AJA and associated unions (August, 1974: 4).

The Journalist describes the statement as a “back down”, which follows the Victorian District’s “decisive action” on the criticisms. Members were “demanding action” from the Association, which was “already protesting” about the singer’s bodyguards “assaulting” two other members. The report covering the stoush is aggressive in style and, structured within the hard new framework, again creates an ‘us and them’ message, with the journalism community pitched against both a major celebrity and proprietors.
As the encoding process of defiance in *The Journalist* suggests, the 1974 Australian journalism community was anti-authoritarian against proprietors, managers and even a powerful celebrity. The encoding process of defiance creates a sense of journalistic community, in conflict with external agencies. In comparison, *The Walkley Magazine* suggests that Australian journalism’s defiance was against anomalies within its own community. *The Walkley Magazine’s* messages relating to defiance were despondent self-critiques about journalistic complicity in perpetuating political propaganda, internal inability in dealing with political assaults on the national broadcaster’s independence and systemic hypocrisy in its inability to remove inequality within its own community.

The journalistic community of 2003 quite clearly held much higher expectations of itself, reflected in *The Walkley Magazine’s* concern with defying internal cultural anomalies. This is not to say that Australian journalism culture in 1974 did not have similar anomalies; it is more an indication
that Australian journalism perceived itself as independent from the wider media structure which, by 2003, had grown to be a highly influential social authority that required the same scrutiny as other bodies of power. Meanwhile, *The Walkley Magazine* clearly suggests that Australian journalism was increasingly anxious over its closer relationship with the wider media structure, perceiving itself as part of a powerful institution that warranted scrutiny and criticism.

The finding that the larrikin axiom of defiance within Australian journalism culture had altered from fiercely proud and collective anti-authoritarianism and non-conformity in 1974 to intense self-criticism and a lack of self-confidence in 2003, is reflected in the evidence gathered from the two groups of in depth interviews. As subjects from 1974 point out, the wider anti-authoritarian and non-conformist counter culture was a pervasive and powerful influence on young journalists’ own positive interpretations of defiance.
In 1974, young Australian journalists were living in a time of change. After more than 20 years of conservative governments, a new, radical regime, riding on policies of social change, had taken office. Troops had been sent home from the Vietnam conflict and women were making headway in the workplace, buoying public confidence in ‘people power’. Subject 4:74 describes the social context succinctly:

OK, Vietnam was very hot, Hair was the musical of the day; flower power was strong in San Francisco and circulating quickly through Australia, so the hippy culture was well and truly alive. The whole era was one of peace and flowers. But it was an era of contradictions, of wanting to change the world and wanting to be adventurous. Wanting to stop the war and sit down in front of trams in protest (4:74).

Young journalists of 2003 were also living in a time of contradictions. However, a pervading sense of conservatism and anxiety over security distinguishes the two eras. The 2001 attacks on New York had alarmed the west into believing that
'Weapons of Mass Destruction', including biological warfare, were being developed, resulting in demands for global security from the leaders of the time.

The differences in social and historical context could explain the discrepancies in connotations of defiance between the two groups. Defiance is heavily encoded in the 1974 cohort's general rhetorical style, including coarse aggressive language usually reserved for more combative situations. This group's body language, in itself, suggests a defiant nature, including defiance against the interviewer. They tend to lean forward, maintain intense eye contact and combat difficult questions with ones of their own. Subject 10:74, provides a useful example:

“What’s ethics?”, subject 10:74 demands:

I’ll tell you what fucking ethics is ... it’s getting a PR release, then getting on the phone and telling them ‘that’s bullshit’, that’s what ethics is (10:74).
In comparison, the body language and rhetoric of the 2003 cohort appears deliberately toned down, each one yielding very little, if any profanity. Their body language suggests deference, rather than defiance, inclined to sit straight and avoid eye contact. At least four openly asked if their answers were appropriate.

The divergence between the two groups’ aggressive rhetorical style and body language could be a result of their differing ages. Those who were young journalists of 1974 had, of course, 30 more years to gain confidence in dealing with an interviewer. Meanwhile, those of 2003 were in their first or second fulltime job and may have felt intimidated in an interview situation. However, using the more flexible methodology of in-depth interviews, the question schedule could take this into account, and remind subjects to remain as close to the ‘truth’ as possible. With this in mind, divergences between defiance in the two eras under consideration mirror the inferences made in the analysis of The Journalist; that defiance in 1974 was an expression of journalism’s independence
from the wider media authority. In comparison, the analysis of The Walkley Magazine suggests defiance in 2003 was more an indication of journalism’s anxiety over becoming enmeshed in an increasingly powerful media institution, and its network of relationships with the business and political communities.

In 1974, entering the journalism occupation, in itself, was seen as an act of anti-authoritarianism. A common theme among the 1974 cohort was misbehaviour and delinquency during secondary school and occupations prior to cadetship, and rebelliousness against filial and social expectations:

My parents weren’t keen on it much. They didn’t want me to be a journalist. They wanted me to be something academic. Lucky I never listened to them (5:74).

“My Grandmother was rather appalled,” subject 6:74 says. “My father and mother had no notion at all
what [journalism] was like, so I never told THEM what was going on.”

“My dad wanted me on his dairy farm, and I thought ‘bugger that’, so I applied for a cadetship,” subject 7:74 says.

Subjects 2:74 and 7:74 claim journalism was a deliberate act of rebellion against the education sector’s 1974 agenda to “push” students into banking and teaching.

In comparison, the 2003 cohort describe themselves as “very serious” (1:03), “very sensible” (5:03) and “very sedate and conservative” (4:03) as family members and students. Subject 10:03 openly says she came from a family that “expected” her to “take studies seriously, go to university and do well”. She had come from an all-girls private school, where “everybody was very focused” on career. “So, yeah, I wanted to do well” (10:03).

Yet, according to the 1974 cohort, “doing well” meant being part of journalism’s systemic defiance against authority. As the analysis of The
Journalist suggests, defiance was built into the 1974 Australian journalism culture, with the publication creating a sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’ between members and social institutions, including the powerful American celebrity system. In support of this finding, the 1974 cohort of interviewees suggest defiance was encoded within the internal organisational structure, and actively encouraged by editorial management. Certain senior journalists, particularly Graham Perkin, Les Carlyon, Keith Dunstan, John Hamilton and Harry Gordon, recurred in the 1974 cohort’s recollections of journalism’s systemic cultural defiance. According to subject 1:74, “in those days” investigative journalism was “very seriously and actively pushed and pursued” as a means of holding authority to account:

I mean, that was just the culture in those days
... if you go back all those years – the Royal Commissions and stuff – forced on state governments, and I mean, that went on through the ‘80s. They no longer have Royal Commissions, unless you know what the answer
According to subject 3:74, the culture of aggressive defiance came directly from senior editorial staff:

The editors influenced my whole working ethic and the whole way structure by which I do the job today... people like Graham Perkins and Les Carlyon, created a professional scepticism, determination and suspicion, and a real unwillingness to bend to pressure, in fact resist pressure to the point where it became counter-productive (3:74).

According to the 1974 cohort, however, journalism culture was “very much groundbreaking”, which they defined as “fantastic journalism”:

“Environmental stuff, investigative stuff, great medical reporting. Everyday it seemed one of the staff would have this terrific story” (1:74).
Despite recurrent harassment from public officials and, sometimes, management, journalists of 1974 prided themselves on “never” being “intimidated”, and were determined to “create pressure” for governments and “expose misdemeanours”:

We were really challenging society, poking and prodding, and challenging institutions. We were revealing things that had never been revealed before, we were the pests, we thought we were holding people to account … other institutions had to watch out for us, ‘cause we were gunna get ‘em (7:74).

It was a very exciting time in Australia, and journalism was definitely about reform, because news is about change, I mean, the status quo just isn’t a story, so, you know, journalists and journalism is, by definition, about reform (8:74).

The defiance of 1974 extended beyond external organisations, and spilled over into resisting pressure from the internal media structure. Many in the 1974 cohort, implying a similar sense of
editorial community pitched against management as to that of the 1974 editions of The Journalist, spoke of acts of defiance against management. This was particularly evident in the “quiet” (2:74), but organised revolts against death knocks, or approaching relatives of the recently departed for interviews:

I used to go out with a photographer, and I would go up and stand at the door for a minute or two, and then I would come back and say, ‘we knocked on this door, didn’t we?’ and the photographer would say ‘yep’. And I would say ‘and no one was home, were they?’, and he’d say ‘nope’. Then I’d say, ‘well, that’s it for the day, let’s go back and get the shipping news’, and there’d be no more questions (6:74).

Subject 10:74 openly admits that he would “play dead” on a story, or claim inability to gather information when it called personal ethics into question:

Well, we all played dead on some stories, ‘specially death knocks, you know, not pursuing
it to the very end degree, we all knew we could say ‘look, this was the best I could do,’ or ‘I wasn’t able to get hold of him or her or whatever’ … and you wouldn’t get ribbed by your colleagues (10:74).

Journalism’s collective defiance in 1974 is again suggested in the anecdote about a police reporter, which had been retrenched for drunkenness:

The police rounds troops said, you know, they were going to withdraw their labour if Nick wasn’t reinstated. And I hardly knew the bloke, but I didn’t think twice about joining the strike … it was us against them (2:74).

Collectivism is again the theme in an anecdote about attempted advertising influence on editorial content. A building company had poured a slab of concrete in the wrong area:

They were big advertisers … and we got hold of the story, but management went to water, so we weren’t allowed to run it (9:74).
A decision was made in a hurried editorial conference to give the story to a rival paper:

They were the competition, but that used to go on if we thought staff were being pushed around by advertisers, and that was our act of defiance ... the staff held no qualms about putting pressure on the bosses from time to time (9:74).

However, according to the 2003 cohort, collective defiance was not a feature of Australian journalism culture during the Howard era:

I’d be happy enough to say to my boss, ‘sorry, but I couldn’t get the story’, but I don’t do that ‘cause then I’d spend the whole day worrying about if someone else got it, ‘cause that would mean a lot of heartache for me. A lot of the time you’re forced to push the boundaries ... do things that aren’t going to show up well in the public light, ‘cause no one’s gunna support your refusals to do things (8:03).
Similar to the findings in the 2003 editions of The Walkley Magazine, the lack of peer support is reflected in the 2003 female cohort’s complaints about journalism’s masculine culture. This finding is interesting, considering that women had gone from making up about a fifth of the workforce in 1974, to making up at least half of the Australian journalism population in 2003. Because of the changes in gender ratios, it would make sense that the 2003 journalism culture would be more accommodating of its female workforce than that of 1974.

However, despite the ‘feminisation’ of the workforce, all five female members from the 2003 cohort complain of gender discrimination:

Oh yep, there’s sexual harassment, especially when I was in sport, from both colleagues and sources … I’m not one who gets all funny, I just handle it, you know, ‘yeah, whatever’, and give a smartarse comment back… other girls are a lot more sensitive to it, and gone and made a complaint, but nothing’s ever done about it … I
have kept a list of things that I can bring out if I need to (1:03).

There’s so much discrimination against girls … It’s so ridiculous that women have to choose between the news room and being a mum, when every other occupation looks after its women workers. If journalism wanted to change the blokey culture, put some childcare places in the building. Women who’ve made it just don’t have kids, and that’s so sad … it shouldn’t be that way, because journalism’s losing all that great talent … it’s just so boysy (5:03).

But in 1974, it was this very masculine culture that made journalism an attractive occupation to women:

The news room was very male, and it was just fantastic … it was tough and vigorous and predatory and that was equal for women as well – oh yes, absolutely – and I loved it… But was I discriminated against professionally? Not one little bit! Was I the subject of – you know, what feminists would call sexual harassment?
Constantly! But I never felt disadvantaged, and
I was never intimidated (6:74).

Back then the women were tough too,” according
to subject 5:74. “I mean, women journalists
just are fairly tough, equally as tough as the
guys, that was just part of journalism during
my era ... So if you competed with them, and
fought twice as hard to get the good stories,
being female was never a disadvantage (5:74).

Comments from the male cohort of journalists
support the contention that the news room provided
more reason for defiance from female members of
staff in 2003, than it did in 1974. One 2003 male
journalist went as far as to say that there was an
“unwritten rule” to assign ‘soft’ stories to female
journalists, while ‘harder’ stories, on politics
and crime, were assigned to males:

I’m not saying I agree with that, ‘cause
certainly women do a great job at hard news,
and blokes are great at soft news, but you
know, I think there is ... that is definitely
that rule in the background (9:03).
However, similar to The Journalists’ suggestions about associations between journalism and first-wave feminism, the male cohort from 1974 say journalism, at the time, was highly supportive of both its female workforce, as well as its female readership (8:74):

In the ‘70s, we started doing some really good stuff on women’s issues, and not just stuff on fashion and cookery, you know, equal opportunity stuff, and we wanted women to write them, so we started seeing female journalists come into the news room (9:74).

While Australian journalism of 1974 saw itself as affiliated with other radical and defiant social groups, the 2003 cohort consider these traits as nothing more than false perceptions. Subject 1:03 “supposed” journalism “liked to think” it was anti-authoritarian and non-conformist:

“But that’s only how it’s perceived, or how it likes to be perceived, but that’s not how it is” (1:03).
And according to subject 3:03, journalism culture was “nothing extreme”:

We’re just a group of people. Conservative, yes, conventional, yes. But definitely not radical ... the stereotype is that we’re a bunch of socialists, but I don’t see that at all, I mean, we’re not a bunch of commies (3:03).

Subject 10:03 actually described 2003 journalism culture as “PC” [Politically Correct]. However, “it’s a false PC, and it’s doing things to be safe, rather than doing things on merit” (10:03).

One of the major problems the 2003 cohort has with journalism’s “political correctness” was the rise of the public relations industry and its influence on journalism’s product. While public relations in 1974 was in its infancy, in 2003 it had evolved into an enormous industry that was not only focused on building positive relationships with journalism, but sat beside it as part of the media itself. This
fact created anxiety among the 2003 cohort of interviewees.

Subject 5:03, for example, “hates” the influence public relations has on journalism practice:

They [PR] just don’t know what they’re talking about,” she said. “I mean, I understand they’ve got a job to do, and I have a job to do, but what really upsets me is they don’t know what they’re doing … they just don’t know what they’re talking about (5:03).

Subject 2:03 says he was “always working against the PR machine”:

I find I really have to battle them to find things out, they’ll do anything to keep the boat steady … but they have a job to do just as we have. It’s not personal … a story is a story is a story, and it’s not personal at all.

Yet the rise of the public relations industry, and its practice of building relationships with the
media also resulted in close associations between its practitioners and journalism. Subject 6:03 even goes as far to say that “some” of her “closest friends” were practising public relations, the relationships from which were established during university. “But,” she says, “sometimes that’s good, ‘cause they’ll give you stories before anyone else.”

Subject 3:03 claims that she “sometimes” interacted socially with public relations practitioners as part of the news gathering process:

They’re approachable people who are happy to help ... I see it as a really important thing to do, ‘cause when shit hits the fan, they’ll come to you (3:03).

All social authorities in 2003 employed a contingent of public relations officials. The fact that journalists of 2003 consider the public relations sector as part of the news gathering process says much about the era’s anti-authoritarianism. Compare the above comments to that of the 1974 subject at the beginning of this
chapter who defined “fucking ethics” as telling authority that its public relations is “bullshit” (10:74). Yet, as this section suggests, such expression of defiance was a cultural value built into the journalism system of 1974. Actively encouraged by senior journalism staff, defiance against proprietors, social institutions and advertisers created collectivity within the journalism community.

Yet, in 2003, there was no such confidence in peer support, leaving a sense of futility over journalism’s ability to use defiance in its professional practice as a means of achieving its public responsibility against authority. This finding is not surprising when comparing it to the implied messages conveyed in the 2003 editions of The Walkley Magazine, which clearly suggests that Australian journalism was increasingly anxious over its closer relationship with the wider media structure, perceiving itself as part of a powerful institution that deserved to be held publicly accountable.
Working Class Origins and Egalitarianism at Work in Australian journalism

The job of a newspaper is to comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable
(Finley Peter Dunne, journalist and political commentator, 1898)

The changing nature of journalism’s relationship with the wider media structure between the two eras reflects in the self-perceptions about its affiliation with the working class. The previous historical analysis finds affiliation with the working class underpins journalism’s egalitarianism, derived from the Enlightenment philosophy that no authority can be justified on the basis of birth or supposed ordainment from God.

Traditions of emotional attachment to the working class evolved through the crusades Australian journalism’s antecedents enacted on behalf of the convict and mining communities. This relationship, evolving into institutional discourses attached to championing the underdog, was a two-way partnership, with the public championing the journalism’s cause for freedom on the public sphere
against authority. As the historical analysis suggests, these discourses translate into Australian journalism’s public responsibility to ensure equality of representation on the public sphere.

Emotional attachment to the working class is heavily encoded within the 1974 editions of The Journalist. However, The Walkley Magazine portrays journalism as more akin to professional classes, such as the medical and legal communities.

This is no surprise considering the relatively recent expectation for journalists to be tertiary educated and hold strict adherence to codes of ethics, which the Australian Journalism Association had spent considerable effort overhauling during the early 1990s. As role models, gone were the images of Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein as symbols of journalism’s public responsibility and professional practice. In their place were other role models: manicured figures such as Naomi Robson; the beautiful and highly sought after Jana Wendt; the powerful Kerry
O’Brien and the politically influential John Laws and Alan Jones. As Mandy Oakham and Barbara Alyszen indicate in their 1995 research, such popular cultural figures heavily influence student journalists’ perceptions of the industry they are striving to enter (Alyszen & Oakham, 1996: 39 - 51).

The Walkley Magazine’s very structure and style mirrored journalism’s changing profile. A glossy magazine-style publication, The Walkley Magazine implies an up-market readership. Its more sophisticated literary techniques, encompassing social, political, economic and historical contexts, suggests its target audience – journalists of 2003 – is educated, sophisticated and analytical. The implied readership of The Walkley Magazine sits comfortably with Henningham (1989) and Pearson’s (1991) concept of “professional journalism” as akin to the legal or medical occupations, which value the formation of relationships with clients, rather than the public.

Meanwhile, The Journalist, as an eight-page non-colour newspaper, implies a much less demanding
reader that expected none of The Walkley Magazine’s cosmetics. With its very simple, inverted pyramid-style of articles, The Journalist’s implied readership is comfortable with short, sharp bursts on information. The implied readership of The Journalist could fulfil Julianne Schultz’s concept of journalistic professionalisation, which sees journalists as “reaching out” to its public, rather than treating it as “clients, victims, or talent” (Schultz, 1994).

The differing concept of journalism’s self-identity is made clear in the dissimilar types and styles of advertising between each group of texts. While advertisements in The Walkley Magazine indicate values revolving around the self and personal achievement, those in The Journalist indicate journalism as a united collective, affiliated with other social groups, and striving towards a common cause. Mainly made up of promotions for hotels and public service announcements, situations wanted and situations vacant, The Journalist’s advertising emphasises its readership’s interest in community development and employment.
The Journalist does advertise some financial products, suggesting a concern with capital gain. However, the emphasis of these advertisements is on collectivism and communal benefit, rather than self-advancement. The advertisement for the ABC staff association is a case in point:

“All financial members of the Australian Journalists’ Association are now eligible to join the ABC Staff Association Credit Union,” (April, 1974: 2). Implying a sense of unity, the advertisement suggests all journalists working towards a common purpose, whether in public or private employ. Similar implications are encoded within the advertisement for AMP – or “The Australian Mutual Provident Society” (original emphasis):

“Mutual is a comfort word; it means dependence and sharing and security. Mutual is a word you can trust. It’s a middle name we like” (May, 1974: 5, February, 1974: 6).

In comparison, The Walkley Magazine’s advertising comprises mainly of institutions selling financial
products, tertiary education, technology and legal services. Most of these appear as ‘sponsors’ for the Walkley Awards, rather than as straight advertisers. These products suggest that The Walkley Magazine’s readership is concerned with self-advancement, such as financial growth and protection, furthering career prospects and consumerism. But equally as important, the advertisements’ rhetoric and images also imply journalism’s values revolve around the self.

“Looking for higher ground,” announces the advertisement for inviting sponsors for the 2004 Walkley Awards (Issue 20: 2). The words, accompanied by a dramatic Walkley-Award-winning photograph depicting a lone silhouette striving towards a storm-ravaged sky, implies continuous endeavour towards personal achievement against natural elements. Note too, that the image represents individual effort, rather than the collective.

dreams,” implying that ‘credible journalism’ is but an ideal.

“Just as the Walkleys encourage Australian journalists to achieve excellence, American Express helps card-members in realising their dreams,” implying the advertisement’s audience is concerned with personal, rather than communal, ambition (Issue 23: 45). American Express conjures images of the lone self, ambitiously, “achieving excellence” and realizing “dreams.”

Even so, some advertisements in The Walkley Magazine evoke Australian journalism’s working class origins as a means of product promotion. Indeed, the Australian Museum overtly associates journalism with the gold-digging rebellion of 1854: “Eureka!” announces the half-page advertisement (Issue 20, 2003: 25), suggesting that members of the 2003 journalism community not only understand the term’s meaning, but also feel endearment towards it.
The advertisement for JUST Super similarly appeals to journalism’s traditional emotional attachment to the working class:

“When it comes to retirement planning, give the ‘big commissions’ a big miss” (Autumn, 2003: 29, Winter, 2003: 34). The advertisement clearly suggests that “people working in the media, entertainment, arts and IT industries” prefer financial services that cater to working class, rather than elitist, concerns.

Yet, as Ian Warden suggests in ‘The Invisible Reporter’, Australian journalism of 2003 found traditional perceptions of affiliation between journalism and the working class as highly offensive (Issue 20, 2003: 5). “Why do members of the press get ignored at speeches and events,” Warden laments. “Is it because we’re considered second class citizens?”

The rhetorical question sets up Warden’s clear ironic intent when he claims to “rather enjoy” his “working class status as news gatherer,” and makes his bitterness audible when he recalls a recent
publicity event, where speakers acknowledged “every level of mankind”, and “even dogs and cats”, but not journalists:

“The press, as usual,” he complains, “didn’t get a Guernsey.”

Subliminally suggesting journalism of 2003 considered itself to be, in Warden’s words, a “class above” social authority, the article’s subtext can be interpreted as a rejection of affiliation with both the working class and the ‘underdog’.

Compare this to the working class connotations found in *The Journalist*. The AJA’s strident affiliation with the working class is highlighted in a proposed union anthem, the chorus of which went as follows:

Then leisure and pleasure will be free
And hunger and hardship will go
When the worker has his place at the top of the tree,
And the bludger is somewhere down below, below, below
And the bludger is somewhere down below

According to The Journalist, this rallying worker’s anthem was already being sung to closed sessions of the AJA Federal Council (April, 1974: 4).

A vast majority of The Journalist’s content is concerned with industrial activity – a fact immediately connecting journalism of 1974 with trade unionism, and made clear in The Journalist’s coverage of the stoush with Frank Sinatra. The AJA entered into “hurried conferences” with the Musicians’ Union and the Theatrical Employees’ Union, which also claimed to have members who had been assaulted by Sinatra’s bodyguards (August, 1974: 4). When Sinatra attempted to leave the country before peace was settled, the Transport Workers’ Union refused to fuel Sinatra’s plane, rendering the plane disabled and the singer grounded.

“Messages of support came from most other districts,” The Journalist reports. “Letters, telegrams and phone calls of congratulations
flooded in from overseas, interstate and from the general membership.”

The AJA’s collective stridency could be interpreted as nothing more than professional self-interest. Yet, on close reading, the sense of collective unionism also functions to facilitate and protect the public sphere, and ensure equality of representation upon it. For example, in January 1974, the AJA “protested” against the banning of two Australian journalists from Papua New Guinea (January, 1974: 2). The Journalist reported that president John Lawrence’s cable to PNG Chief Minister, Michael Somare demanded that he “urgently reconsider” the decision, and told Australian minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Don Willesee that the AJA “deplored” the “discrimination against its members”. Both messages underlined the AJA’s motivation for outrage:

“[The] Association firmly believes freedom of the press and freedom of expression should not be abridged on account of race, colour, sex, creed or political belief” (January, 1974: 2).
But the AJA was not only hostile towards authority on behalf of its own membership. Creating a sense of global journalistic effort, it also championed the universal right for journalists to facilitate and protect the public sphere overseas.

In March, for example, The Journalist reports that the AJA Federal Executive had “protested” to the Soviet ambassador over the expulsion of author Alkexander Solzhenitsyn:

The Australian Journalists’ Association deplores the action of the Soviet Government … we believe the action represents a grave blow to our freedom and express our profound dismay (March, 1974: 1).

In January 1974, The Journalist reported that the AJA was planning to “coordinate” its efforts with the International Press Institute to “intervene” in favour of imprisoned Indonesian journalists. AJA President John Lawrence and Vice-president, Leo Chapman had already made personal representations to Indonesian General Ali Murtopo on the prisoners’
behalf, and IPI director, Ernest Meyer was planning to “intervene on the spot” during his upcoming visit to Indonesia. Describing the prisoners as “our Indonesian colleagues”, The Journalist emphasises the global journalism community’s responsibility to oppose oppression of journalistic freedom (January, 1974: 7).

The sense of a global community of journalism is again made clear in the February report on the closure of several dissenting Indonesian publications, including the paper of the “internationally renowned” Mochtar Lubis. Painting Mr Lubis as an international journalism hero, The Journalist points out that his “muck-raking crusades” against the Sukarno government during the 1950s, has won him “several” journalism awards and, despite “threats and proffered bribes”, he “carried out” publishing “dirt on corruption” by senior officials of the State Oil Company ‘monopoly’, Pertamina for almost four months (February, 1974: 2).
The Walkley Magazine also champions the cause of foreign journalists. Within the feature-writing structure, individual members can convey their personal experiences working with foreign journalists to gain media freedom. However, rather than creating a sense of affiliation between Australian and foreign journalists, these examples suggest the authors were there more as observers, rather than champions. Possibly as a result of this, far from conveying optimism and hope about global media freedom as a collective cause, these stories are pessimistic and offer little sense of Australian journalism’s identification with the global journalism community.

For example, Mike Dobie writes of his two-day seminar in Kabul on behalf of the International Federation of Journalists, where the attendees formed a Commission to establish an independent journalists’ union of Afghanistan (Issue 20, 2003: 16). However, as the article’s headline ominously states: “There are many challenges ahead for the Fourth Estate” post-Taliban (Issue 20: 16). Salla Kayhko reports that Kyrgyzstan, once a “paragon” of
post-soviet democracy, had become a “morass of corruption”. In such a climate, says Kayhko, “voices raised in opposition attract unwelcome attention” (Issue 20, 2003: 17). Jakarta Post opinion editor and president of the alliance of Independent Journalists, Ati Nurbaiti, points out the Indonesian media’s “failure” to give voice to the powerless in Aceh (Issue 22, 2003: 20). And in Spain, the public is “getting tired” of their national broadcaster “toeing the government line” (Issue 21, 2003: 30 – 31).

But it is journalism in the United States that is most often in The Walkley Magazine’s firing line. In ‘The Charge of the Lite Brigade’ (Issue 21: 10 – 12) for example, Stephen Rice points out the insidiousness of patriotism within the American journalism community.

Donald Rumsfeld’s bet that many American journalists would prove more patriotic – and less questioning – than their counterparts in the Vietnam War has paid off,” says Rice. The play on words in Rice’s headline sets up the critique that
is to follow – that despite the wall-to-wall coverage of the Iraq war, in this case, more is less:

The ticker runs reassuring headlines about the Coalition’s progress in the war, interrupted occasionally by the warning: TERROR ALERT: HIGH. It’s working. Fox now outrates CNN (Issue 21: 10 – 12).

Compare this with how The Journalist portrays its US counterparts. In the wake of revelations that the then US president, Richard Nixon, had abused his presidential privileges to rig the up-coming election, and was facing impeachment, the United States’ journalism system was being lauded as the epitome of the media’s function in a liberal democracy.

the scandal as young and tenacious, then goes on to point out that “there is little doubt” that no Australian newspaper would have been able to “break the scandal”, even if it used a “large team of top editorial staff”. He goes on to argue that American law, distinguishing between the private and the public, acknowledges that the media should be as “free as possible”. Comparing the American Constitution’s protection of American journalism with that afforded to its Australian counterparts, Dr Hayes suggests that journalists are “shackled” within “narrow boundaries”.

Celebrations of American journalism are again the suggestion when The Journalist covered Time Magazine’s selection of the 10 “best newspapers” in the United States (October, 1974: 2). The selections, including The Boston Globe for being among the first to run the Pentagon Papers, were made “on the basis of editorial excellence”, rather than commercial success. The criteria for being “the best”, including “brashness”, taking “risks” and a willingness to publish “dissenting opinion”, 
indicates these were Australian journalism’s cultural values during the Whitlam era.

The Journalist, celebrating expressions of media freedom and fiercely championing the cause of those struggling for it overseas, conveys a sense of global journalism community striving for a collective cause to achieve the right to facilitate and protect the public sphere. Although The Walkley Magazine too published the cause of global media freedom, it did so with less patriotism and more pessimism about hope for change, resulting in a mitigated sense of identification with its foreign colleagues operating in unfamiliar media systems.

The mitigated sense of affiliation with external groups could also be discerned in The Walkley Magazine’s connotations of championship of the underdog. This is not to say that Australian journalism of 2003 did not value championing the underdog; it is more an indication that the journalism culture of the time did not identify itself with the ‘underdog’.
For example, in 2003, Just Super took out a half-page advertisement for its annual Social Equity Media Dinner, in which “an esteemed line-up” of Australian journalists, artists and performers were raising funds for the advocacy group, Real Rights for Refugee Children (Issue 23, 2003: 2). In the same edition, The Walkley Magazine ran a three-page spread about Burmese refugees “fighting to maintain their culture” (Issue 23, 2003: 26 – 28) as well as a full-page article about the International Federation of Journalists’ global campaign to raise awareness about the rights of children, particularly in “sounding the alert” on the sexual exploitation of children for money (Issue 23, 2003: 29). All these, however, implied championing the underdog as a journalistic favour (from an “esteemed line-up”), as opposed to a normative journalistic function.

This is not to say that journalism of 2003 did not value championing the underdog. Indeed, social equity is encoded just as much in The Walkley Magazine as it is in The Journalist. The difference however, is The Journalist’s implication that
championing the underdog is a collective journalistic obligation. With its strident allegiances with other social groups, The Journalist creates a sense of identification and affiliation with the underdog, and openly demonstrates the Australian journalism community’s support for any group struggling against authority.

The 1974 editions of The Journalist reflected working class aspirations in both style and structure. The 12 editions’ advertising, promotions for hotels, public service announcements and situations wanted and situations vacant, further emphasize working class concerns with community development and employment. Meanwhile, the 2003 editions of The Walkley Magazine, with its glossy magazine-style structure and advertising for financial products, tertiary education, technology and legal services, suggested its audience’s concern with capital gain and self-advancement. Although both expressed championing the underdog as a journalistic value, The Journalist suggests affiliation with groups pitched against authority,
while *The Walkley Magazine* implies that journalism exists outside the underdog’s realm of experience.

The evidence gathered from the two groups of interviewees supports the contention found in the comparison of *The Journalist* and *The Walkley Magazine*: although emotional attachment to working class origins changed in each of the two eras, a commitment to egalitarianism and championing the underdog to ensure equality of representation on the public sphere remained constant across the two time-frames under consideration.

Almost the entire 1974 cohort came from working class backgrounds. Eight out of the 10 were expected to go into a trade. Out of the two remaining, one had achieved a tertiary qualification, while the other was planning to study law before obtaining a cadetship. The two that were expected to enter an academic occupation were the two females of the group. This is interesting because it reflects the academic expectations of women at the time, and yet, both female subjects suggest journalism was a means of
rebelling against, what would now be considered as, 1974’s oppressive social expectations of women.

The 1974 cohort suggests that journalism, at that time, had a fiercely crusading spirit on behalf of the oppressed:

We believed we knew what was right for the world. And it was very much crusading, you know, on behalf of the people who didn’t have as much as others, because that’s where we had come from (3:74).

According to subject 2:74, journalists of 1974 “saw themselves as social activists”:

“You know, to make a difference, stand up for the little guy” (2:74). And subject 8:74 says he and his colleagues “thought” they were “holding people to account”:

“You know, taking on the rich and powerful, on behalf of the have-nots, you know, the not-so-rich and powerful…” (8:74)
Subject 9:74 claims to have “always acted in the public interest”, which he defines as championing the underdog:

If you’re going to wreck a big company or club or something, it’s gotta be for the public interest, so you’ve got a clear conscience yourself... and that’s because I had, and probably still do have, a thing for social justice, a thing for making sure no one’s being shitted on (9:74).

Again, similar to the findings in the analysis of The Journalist, the oral history evidence suggests that championing the underdog was value that created a sense of collective loyalty to the journalistic occupation. Subject 3:74, for example, says he was “very proud” to be working for an organization that “changed things, and fought for things, and stuck it up the establishment”.

“That was very much the identity and the culture, you know, ‘stuff the big guys’,” he says (3:74).
While the 1974 cohort consist predominantly of individuals from working class socio-economic backgrounds, those of the 2003 group, without exception, consider themselves of a 'professional class'. A major factor contributing to this self-perception is the fact that all had completed, or were completing, a tertiary qualification. It could be inferred that 2003 journalism culture, made up of a more privileged, tertiary educated socio-economic group, would not have the same sense of affiliation with the oppressed. Yet the oral history, similar to the findings of the comparative analysis of industry-specific publications, does not support this contention. However, although both cohorts see championing the underdog as one of journalism’s functions, the divergences in affiliation with working class may explain the 2003 group’s more lacklustre descriptions of this particular role.

Despite the fact that journalism no longer saw itself as affiliated with the 'working class', the 2003 cohort maintain a self-identity that championed the underdog. Subject 6:03 says she
“gets really aggressive” about the fact that “there’s a growing wall between people with power and the public and no one really cares” (6:03). Subject 5:03 says she deliberately worked with “a lot” of groups who are disenfranchised and, because they do not have the same resources as “the big companies”, she would “sometimes” help them gain media attention:

“I just tell them what’s newsworthy and what’s not … you know, kind of explaining how they have a better chance of getting their story in the paper” (5:03).

Subject 8:03 says his “chief ethic” in considering newsworthy material depends on whether “getting it out” was going to “help someone”. However, “every now and then”, he says, journalists “had to do a story” that would “disadvantage someone”. In such cases, he justifies the information “getting a run” by “thinking” that the “more information that is out there, then the better it’s gunna be for the public” (8:03).
Although the 2003 cohort agree that championing the underdog was a journalistic function, this championship is often expressed with less conviction than it was among the 1974 cohort. For example, subject 1:03 “supposes” news could redress the balance between the powerful and powerless. “To some extent, anyway,” she qualifies (1:03). Subject 9:03 “guesses” he “had” to have “some sense of social responsibility to the community” (9:03), and subject 7:03 says he would not be left “unsatisfied” if he “never brought down governments” or “stopped some sort of oppression” (7:03). Subject 3:03 is “more concerned” with newsworthiness, as opposed to “changing anything” or “helping anyone”.

Although this attitude contradicts The Larrikin Paradox’s theory on the relationship between egalitarianism and journalism’s public responsibility, it was, according to the 2003 interviewees, endemic within journalism culture. For example, subject 3:03 openly claims that journalists, far from being assessed on the types of issues they were interested in, were more
“defined by” careers aspirations, and education, rather than a sense of outrage over social injustice (3:03). And subject 10:03 implies that, although she would “love” to “uncover huge scandals and major injustices”, she did not have confidence in the 2003 journalism culture’s support to allow her to fulfil this ambition:

“Those sorts of stories are too expensive ... they [management] just wouldn’t give me the resources” (10:03).

Although both cohorts believe championing the underdog is a journalistic function, those of 2003 have less confidence in their ability to do so. While those of 1974 were indoctrinated into a “crusading” culture, those of 2003 imply journalism culture was not so concerned with creating egalitarianism or championing the oppressed. This finding is in keeping with the comparative analysis of The Journalist and The Walkley Magazine, in which a sense of affiliation between journalism of the Whitlam era and the underdog was identified. Meanwhile, although The Walkley Magazine of the Howard era also held an implied value relating to
championship of the underdog, it also portrayed journalism as an agency external to, as opposed to affiliated with, the oppressed, rendering journalism less capable of championing the underdog.

**Mocking Pomposity and Taking the Piss at work in Australian Journalism**

*Only in satire is there truth*  
(Roland Barthes, Mythologies, c1972)

The divergences in self-perceptions about journalism’s underdog status mirrors comparison of the use of satire in *The Journalist* and *The Walkley Magazine*. The Larrikin Paradox contends the use of satire, or taking the piss, is a key larrikin axiom that functions as an important device in journalism’s facilitation and protection of the public sphere. Derived from Enlightenment philosophers’ use of mocking pomposity as a tool of defiance, taking the piss developed into an Australian journalism tradition. As demonstrated in the previous historical analysis, ‘taking the piss’ has a long tradition as a tool of defiance against
authority, and as a means of expressing egalitarianism.

Taking the piss is a value encoded within Australian journalism’s popular cultural products of both the Whitlam and Howard eras. However, The Journalist of 1974 uses mocking pomposity as a means of, again, expressing defiance against agencies external to journalism and, again, as a tool of creating communal values within journalism culture. Meanwhile, the 2003 editions of The Walkley Magazine tends to mock anomalies within its own journalistic community, creating a sense of despair at its ability to fulfil its own public responsibility.

On initial glance of the two publications, it would appear that mocking pomposity was valued more highly in 2003 than in 1974. However, this can be seen as a result of the two publications’ differing structure and style. The Walkley Magazine, published as a glossy magazine, is filled with satirical images. All lead articles are accompanied by at least one illustration or cartoon
mocking each one’s subject. Further, using feature-writing methodology, The Walkley Magazine is in a superior position to convey subtle tongue-in-cheek tone and irony.

Meanwhile, The Journalist, published as a non-colour newspaper, has very few illustrations and relies on formal photographs to point to its articles’ subject matter. Further, its hard news writing methodology is less efficient at encompassing irony or sarcasm, indicating that The Journalist takes itself more seriously as a means of conveying information. This is not to say that 1974 Australian journalism culture lacked wit. It is more an indication that journalism saw its industry-specific publication more as a vehicle of information, rather than as a forum for jest.

Indeed, the publication’s obituaries and commemorations of resignations are full of pointers to mockery as a cultural axiom. One that stood out, ‘Warm Memories of Ian Smith, editor of ‘Mirror’,’ tells an anecdote of a young journalist “racing to
the phone” to file his story on a speech by Menzies:

“ ‘Jenkins here in Canberra’, I said excitedly. ‘Menzies is up!’”

“ ‘What,’ asked a laconic voice.

‘Menzies is up,’ I repeated. ‘Menzies is up!’

“A slight pause, and then came the query that flattened me.

‘Up who?’

The author, choosing this particular anecdote to pay homage to the article’s subject, not only suggests the value Australian journalism placed on taking the piss, but also implies its status as a right-of-passage in journalism culture during the Whitlam era.

Although there were very few components holding satirical connotations in The Journalist, those recorded suggest that mocking pomposity was communal value required used to hold authority to account. ‘Federal Flush of Frankness Finally is Fizzling Fast’ is a useful example demonstrating 1974 journalism culture’s use of humour as a means of anti-authoritarianism (January, 1974: 4). The
headline’s use of alliteration immediately sets up the proceeding article’s tongue-in-cheek tone:

The Prime Minister was rather startled today when his weekly press conference in Canberra suddenly developed into something of an inquisition on the relatively insignificant question of inter-departmental committees.

The article’s use of rhetorical restraint makes the-then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, and his promise to make government more open to the press, appear ridiculous. The article goes on to overtly state that Mr Whitlam had put himself in a “ludicrous catch-22 situation”, openly criticizing the expectation that government transparency would automatically transpire into less scrutiny and criticism from journalism – an expectation that the article is clearly rallying unity against.

The Journalist’s use of satire to convey a sense of strength through unity is again employed in its campaign for pay and conditions. When artists and photographers were refused salary parity with
journalists, the publication conveyed solidarity among colleagues using satirical illustration. Depicting a scene of mayhem and carnage, the cartoon has a photographer in the middle of the fray, pointing a camera at a burly man wielding a crowbar. The caption reads, “... and they say that a photographer is not worth as much as a journo” (September, 1974: 1). The clear discrepancy between the caption’s words and the illustration’s meaning conveys a sense of irony. The message that photographers are clearly of equal worth as journalists again emphasizes unity within Australian journalism culture during the Whitlam era.
...and they say that a photographer is not worth as much as a journal.
The use of taking the piss creates a similar sense of solidarity when the furore over Frank Sinatra’s comments peaked. The Journalist accompanies its reportage with a cartoon depicting a man – whom the reader presumes represents the journalistic community by his attire and ‘press’ cap – tying up a bunch of rogues with a rope on a map of Australia (August, 1974: 4). One of the thugs is Sinatra, recognizable by the slogan on his shirt, “OL’ SMART ARSE”. Although the rope is hiding the offensive word, “arse”, this is clearly what is meant. Beneath the image are the lyrics from the song that made Sinatra famous:
"And there were times, more than a few, when I bit off more than I could chew."

Mr Sinatra, represented as akin to all the other 'thugs', whom the journalistic community has 'roped' into the same category, has clearly "bitten off" more than he "could chew" when he described Australian journalists as "bums" and "hookers". With the underlying map of Australia, the message is clearly about the Australian journalistic
community’s unified and defiant rebuttal against arrogance and celebrity.

While *The Journalist*’s use of satire is employed to make proud statements about journalism’s strength through unity, *The Walkley Magazine* applies it to lampoon anomalies within its own culture. The glossy-magazine convention of large colour images to illustrate editorial content means that *The Walkley Magazine*’s satire is more pronounced than in the news-paper-style *Journalist*. Further, using the feature writing methodology, *The Walkley Magazine* has more opportunity for irony and sarcasm than in its predecessor’s hard news structure.

*The Walkley Magazine*’s use of satire is an effective means of conveying its complex messages about war, manipulation, media freedom and discrimination. Despite the fact that *The Walkley Magazine*’s cartoons aim to make serious, defiant statements about authority and its impact on journalism, they fulfil this aim using irony, derision and ridicule. The use of satire results in the message not only being delivered with humorous
intent, but also delivered with strength and conviction.

Propaganda and its manipulative effects are again in the firing line in Fiona Katauskas’ illustration depicting a mother and daughter partaking in milk and cookies at the breakfast table (Issue 21, 2003: 13). The pair, clean white and blonde, clearly represents middle America. This is further emphasized in the American flag flying in the background and the daughter’s accent. The daughter asks:

“Mommy, what happened to Osama bin Laden?” to which the mother answers, “No, honey, it’s pronounced ‘Saddam Hussein’,” indicating the sinister effect that the media’s neglect of its public duty to ensure political transparency has on the public.
Este's critique of journalism's complicity in allowing government non-accountability is driven home with satire. Accompanying his article was an illustration of an 'Army Issue Press Kit', in which an anonymous journalist is fitted out with helmet, gas mask and "Full & Open Media Access", represented by a paper bag used for storing mushroom (Issue 21, 2003: 9). The message is clear: neglecting to fulfil the responsibility to question
authority is akin to acting like the proverbial mushroom: kept in the dark and fed on shit.

Savage's damning appraisal of the media's hypocritical treatment of its female employees is made all the more strong with two separate cartoons. The first depicts two women chatting in what is deemed to be a staff room, judging by the water boilers and sink in background. One woman says to the other:
“It’s not about your body of work – if you’ve got breasts, you’re not abreast of things & you’ve gotta have balls to have balls…” (Issue 20, 2003: 20).

The tired, bitter expression on each woman’s face represents a sense of futility in feminising the media’s senior management.

The second cartoon accompanying Savage’s article represents the hypocrisy in the male-dominated
work-place (Issue 20, 2003: 21). With a bill-board selling “mmmm... sexy ice-cream”, and a passing bus advertising “sexy coroner, Tuesday 8:30”, the cartoon illustrates the pervasiveness of discriminatory representations of women in the media. Two anonymous men in the foreground, clearly senior management by their formal attire, complain about grievances felt by women. One, holding a magazine with a scantily-clad, big-breasted woman on the front page, exclaims:

“I mean look at that,” pointing to the billboard. “Women are dominating all sorts of areas - advertising, the media ...”

The discrepancy between the man’s words, and drawn illustrations, conveys a sense of irony about the media’s attitude towards women. The overall effect is frustrated hopelessness at the media’s systemic hypocrisy.
But it is not only The Walkley Magazine’s images that indicate mocking authority as an inherent value in 2003 Australian journalism culture. There were also several written components that suggest taking the piss was a journalistic axiom during the Howard era. The subjects of these again demonstrates 2003 Australian journalism’s concern with media control and war, and the effects these had on journalism’s public responsibility to facilitate and protect the public sphere.
The component titled ‘Press Freedom in the Farmyard’ provides a useful example of how The Walkley Magazine’s written satire functioned (Issue 21, 2003: 6). The article calls for nominations for “the most despicable violations of press freedom”. Invoking dark images of manipulation and oppression, the MEAA had titled its new awards the ‘Orwells’, or the “inaugural press freedom violations awards as voted by the Australian media”. The discrepancy between the article’s celebratory tone, and the malevolent nature of potential nominees again conveys a sense of irony. Indeed, the very idea of congratulating “press freedom violations” - something the whole publication is protesting against - is satirical in itself.

Warden’s grievances over the disdain with which promoters treat journalism is made clear in his tongue-in-cheek tone (Issue 20, 2003: 5). Warden’s disdain for, what he describes as the “toffs”, is almost audible when he equates journalism with “grooming their polo ponies” and “raising plump
partridges for them and their grand city friends”. Yet Warden’s satirical intent in these descriptions is driven home when he goes on explain that the “toffs” attitude makes him, and his colleagues, “gnash” their “few” but “expensively repaired” teeth, implying that journalism is not only well-experienced, but also on the same socio-economic level as those he is criticizing.

Warden’s message is strengthened with an accompanying satirical illustration (Issue 20, 2003: 5). Depicting what is deemed to be a politician in his office preparing for a press conference, the illustration has what is deemed to be his secretary bursting into the room with a look of panic on her face:

“Disaster, the guests are all here but there’s no media for you to ignore...”

With the politicians alarm at this news, the cartoon makes clear statements about authority’s disrespect for journalism, and the fact that its need for the media exceeds that of the media’s need for authority.
Although *The Walkley Magazine*'s components taking the piss are more numerous than those of *The Journalist*, both publications indicate that this was a larrikin axiom used as a tool of defiance in both 1974 and 2003 Australian journalism cultures. However, in 2003, satire was used to critique the internal media structure, journalism's neglect of its public responsibility, the culture's systemic gender discrimination and even its traditional 'working class' affiliations. Meanwhile, satire in
The Journalist in 1974 is far more concerned with portraying journalism as a collective, whose strength through unity could effectively challenge authority, embodied in the Prime Minister, proprietors and celebrity.

As the comparative analysis of the 1974 editions of The Journalist and the 2003 editions of The Walkley Magazine finds, taking the piss was an expression of anti-authoritarianism within Australian journalism culture of both the Whitlam and Howard eras. However, as the comparative analysis also suggests, mocking pomosity in 1974 was a cultural rite-of-passage, handed on to young journalists as a tool of defiance used against external agencies. Almost a proverbial talisman, taking the piss can be seen as further perpetuating a sense of communal values and collectivity within the Australian journalism culture of the Whitlam era. Meanwhile, the pomposity that is mocked within The Walkley Magazine is that of the journalism industry itself, indicating the axiom as a tool of self-criticism, rather than a means of defying authority.
These findings are akin to those emerging from the evidence gathered from the two groups of interviewees. According to the 1974 cohort, taking the piss was prevalent in the newsroom, suggesting - as found in the analysis of The Journalist - a function as a rite-of-passage within 1974 journalism culture. Subject 4:74 says taking the piss was used as a means of coaching young journalists in professional practice. For example, when young journalists missed out on information that appeared in a rival paper, they would be "given buggery" in the office:

Not by the bosses," subject 4:74 says, "but certainly by [colleagues], who would openly say 'ahh, and who got scooped today? Ya wanker', and this would be relentless for days on end... so you learnt very quickly not to let a story go again, and this went on all the time (4:74).

Subject 9:74 says mocking pomposity was inherent in the newsroom atmosphere:
You came straight out of school where you were told to have high respect for people in the community, and then in the newsroom you learnt that politicians and mayors and business leaders spent their time drunk or corrupt, and you just had to take the piss out of ‘em, because these people held in high esteem just weren’t what you were told they were ... and that was just part of the vibes of the office (9:03).

Subject 7:74 says the newsroom’s culture of mocking pomposity functioned as a means of weighing up the potential of young journalists. Further, newsroom culture was “very derisive” of private school or tertiary educated colleagues. “We saw them as being unadventurous and conventional,” subject 7:74 says:

They eventually left to go do law or stock brokering. They were leaving for better jobs, of course, better prospects, but we just thought they were up themselves (7:74).
Journalism’s mockery of pomposity as professional practice stands out in subject 9:74’s anecdote about his debut as a reporter in police rounds.

The cops never took us young journos seriously… there was always this one copper who always used to call me DenArse, ‘hey, how ya goin’ DenArse’, and I got really sick of it one day, and I said ‘yeah, good thanks, JackArse’, and the copper beside him just pissed himself, and the cops treated me with a bit more respect after that… you learnt to stick up for yourself very quickly, otherwise you just didn’t get the story (9:74).

Mocking pomposity as part of professional practice is again highlighted in an anecdote provided by subject 8:74, who was, at the time, working in sport. He was covering the selection of Geelong Football Club’s new coach, the decision for which was being made in a meeting of “all these prominent business types from around town”. In a personal affront, the journalist was required to stand outside the room, waiting for the announcement:
“Wait outside the door? You gotta be joking!” subject 8:74 thought.
At the time, it was common knowledge that Polly Farmer would be appointed as coach, so the journalist was “not surprised at all” when the announcement came:

I must’ve had a flippant manner about me, ’cause one of the big business types said ‘now you be careful how you write this up sonny’, and I said ‘well, I’m only young, so if I fuck this up I can always get a job somewhere else, but you can’t’ [laughs]. But that’s how you had to be, because people were always trying to intimidate you, and you learnt to be defensive and not take any shit, ‘watch out this guy’s gunna put one over you’, sort of thing (8:74).

In comparison, members of the 2003 cohort say they “would never” (1:03) use mockery in professional practice. Four of the 10 said they believed they would like to, but thought they would “get the sack” (9:03), while the remaining six thought mocking pomposity was “unprofessional” (3:03):
“Why would I want to do that,” questions subject 8:03. “That’s just unfair, and you’d never get a story out of them again.”

However, many of the 2003 cohort say ‘taking the piss’ was inherent in 2003 office politics:

Oh yeah, we take the piss out of each other all the time ... the bosses take the piss out of us, and we take the piss out of them, but no more than any other work place, I think. But you know where to draw the line... you don’t set out to really offend anyone (7:03).

However, several of the 2003 cohort did find the newsroom tendency to take the piss offensive, particularly the female members of the group:

They’re always making stupid smartarse comments about breasts and stupid things like that. I mean, I’ve been told that my head shot should be taken from my waist up, and when I mentioned it to my boss, he just said ‘well, what’s wrong with your legs?’ I mean, I can have a good laugh just as much as anyone else, but if you
want to be taken seriously, you’ve gotta put a stop to it (1:03).

Young journalists of 2003 did not see mocking pomposity as part of professional practice. Although the analysis of The Walkley Magazine did find mocking pomposity was a value in Australian journalism culture during the Howard era, this was more an expression of defiance against journalism’s own industry, rather than against social authority. Meanwhile the cohort of 1974 journalists were immersed in a culture that mocked pomposity, which merged into their professional practice. This finding is in keeping with the comparative analysis of The Journalist and The Walkley Magazine, which suggests that mocking pomposity contributed to the portrayal of journalism as collectively in defiance of authority, represented in politicians, police and “big business types” (8:74).

Exceeding Limits, Criminality and Alcoholism at work in Australian Journalism.

If I must die, let me die drinking at an inn
Mocking pomposity can be seen as related to the larrikin’s tendency to exceed limits; an axiom emerging in the historical analysis as foundational to journalism’s ability to gather information that holds authority to account on the public sphere. Enlightenment philosophy actively encouraged such transgressions; Milton himself was incarcerated for exceeding the limits of legality. As the previous history chapter demonstrated, transgressing limits set by authority developed into an Australian journalism tradition of criminality, taking risks with personal safety and alcohol consumption. These larrikin axioms traditionally functioned as enacting agents of journalism’s need to gather information that held authority to account, and to ensure equality of representation on the public sphere.

Although neither The Walkley Magazine, nor The Journalist openly advocate criminality – a highly risqué activity for any publication to do – both implied defiance against legality as a professional
practice in gathering information that would hold authority to account and ensure equality of representation on the public sphere.

When The Walkley Magazine published Bernie Matthews’ first-person experience in exposing life in Queensland’s prison system (Issue 20, 2003: 18 – 19), it illustrated how exceeding the limits of legality is necessary to gather information that holds authority to account and ensures equality of representation on the public sphere. Matthews paints a rhetorical picture of “deadly silences” behind the Queensland Government’s “rigid media blackout” of its prison system. Describing this system as a “killing field littered with bodies and unanswered questions,” Matthews creates a sense of urgency in exceeding the limits of legality to reveal information on life behind the bars. Although the-then new Queensland Corrective Services Act made it illegal to interview or obtain written statements from prisoners, Matthews points out that several journalists were testing this law, three of which were fined and one thwarted in her attempts.
Matthews himself exceeds the limits of the Act. But what must be kept in mind is that Matthews was, at the time, serving a 10-year sentence for armed bank robbery and may have had a personal grievance against the system. Even so, smuggling his diary notes out of the system, and into publication, demonstrates how exceeding limits is required to expose a flawed system. Further, quoting criminologist, Paul Wilson and MEAA president Christopher Warren, Matthews provides authoritative voice to his contention:

In numerous countries including Australia, there have been countless cases where the exposure of illegal and inhumane conditions would not have happened without the scrutiny of the media.

Warren is quoted, impressing on the readership importance on exceeding the bans.

“... the bans negate the important role the media has traditionally played in exposing these injustices.”
The Journalist also suggests the necessity of exceeding the limits of legality, this time in order to facilitate and protect the public sphere. The Journalist’s coverage of the South Australian government’s proposed privacy bill is a useful example. The AJA President, John Lawrence, its SA president and its trustee were featured in the crowd where the South Australian Attorney General made his public speech defending the bill (November, 1974: 8). The Journalist reports the bill would make “actionable” the publication or televising of any fact that “annoyed, embarrassed or placed into a false light” its subject. Reasons for the AJA’s whole-hearted objection to the bill are made explicit in the report’s third paragraph:

The proposed law would curtail the media from carrying out its function of investigating and disclosing scandal, corruption and incompetence in all walks of public life.

Accompanied by a photograph of three AJA officers, including president John Lawrence, the article
conveys the gravity of the bill’s implications on journalism’s public responsibility. With the caption reading, “doubt, dejection and downright scepticism can be read into the expressions of [those pictured]”, the article implies journalism’s responsibility to provide a unified face in opposing the new legislation.

Both the 2003 Walkley Magazine and the 1974 Journalist were similar in their concern with
emphasising the importance of exceeding the limits of legality. However, there is a discrepancy in the encoding process of exceeding the limits of personal safety between the two publications. While *The Journalist* portrays exceeding limits of personal safety as part of the occupation’s adventurous nature, *The Walkley Magazine* posts warnings about putting oneself in danger.

The concern with danger is pervasive in *The Walkley Magazine*. This is not surprising when taking into consideration the recent deaths of journalists in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. In March, 2003, Australia had its first war casualty, who also happened to be a journalist. ABC cameraman, Paul Moran, was killed on assignment in a car bomb explosion in northern Kurdistan. ABC journalist, Eric Campbell was wounded. Within hours, British TV correspondent, Terry Lloyd was also killed, and his cameraman, Fred Nerac, was missing.

These incidents drove home the risks of journalism. As a result, many of *The Walkley Magazine’s* 2003 components are not only concerned with war, but
also other physically hazardous situations in which journalists find themselves. These are often first person accounts of experiences reporting incidents such as Papua New Guinea’s 2001 general elections, Kyrgyzstan’s 2002 civil unrest, Sydney’s 2002 violent anti-war demonstrations and the 2003 Waterfall train disaster. Using the feature-writing methodology, these recollections are effective at conveying the sense of danger and terror involved with journalistic practice, which could not have been born out in The Journalist’s hard news style.

Using first person experience, and a combination of facts, quotes, anecdotes and descriptions, Alison Carabine communicates her personal story of terror when she found herself in Washington DC on September 11, 2001 (Issue 23, 2003: 22 – 23). Pointing out journalism’s unpredictability and volatility, Carabine explains, “one minute” she was doing “bread and butter stories” and, “a single breath later”, she was filing from the heart of one of the most shocking and defining event since Hiroshima and the end of World War II. Carabine’s article clearly communicates the hazards inherent
in journalistic practice. “As a journalist, you are not an automaton – you have feelings. You share with your audience what it is like to be closely observing cataclysmic events”.

However, “don’t overdo it … because the story is not about you,” suggesting altruistic requirements for carrying out journalistic practice.

Carabine compares her coverage of September 11 with that of the Canberra bushfires, which were “very close” and “very frightening”. Carabine paints rhetorical images of herself, “trying to file stories” while also “trying to safeguard” her home in “fire-threatened” Kambah from a “fireball” which had appeared at the end of her street. Again communicating the hazards inherent in journalism practice, Carabine explains that her main goal was not to save her house, but to be “on the site”, or “on the spot”, filing the “colour which is so necessary”. Although the threat to her house was a “personal distraction”, not covering the fire was “simply not an option”: 
“At the end of the day, regardless of the difficulties and the obstacles, the job has to be done.”


“Australian photographers have been behind the lens capturing action in the lead up to war in Iraq and more often than not, they are finding themselves in the firing line between home and the front,” reads the accompanying caption. The photographs range from children playing around the carcass of an army tank in Iraq to the aggressive expressions on anti-war protestors in Sydney. There is an image of a man, naked from the waist up, wearing a spiked dog collar and being frogmarched away from Sydney’s ‘Books not Bombs’ protest. The image implies anarchy and violence, some of which, as the photograph’s accompanying words point out, was directed at the media. Another, titled ‘Suicide for Saddam’, depicts crowds of masked suicide bombers, waving machine guns at the photographer, to parade their strength.
The Walkley Magazine of 2003 was highly concerned with conveying the very real and inevitable dangers of journalism. In a tribute to Paul Moran, who had died on assignment in Kurdistan, Courier Mail cartoonist Sean Leahy, depicted an Australian flag at half mast, beneath which is the name of the dead journalist and the ABC symbol (Issue 21, 2003: 7). Captioned “in the service of the truth”, the image clearly illustrates the hazards inherent in fulfilling journalism’s public responsibilities to ensure accountability of authority and equality of representation on the public sphere.
Although journalism was recognised as a highly dangerous occupation in 2003, *The Walkley Magazine* is keen to point out the deficiencies in Australian journalism culture in dealing with the trauma suffered by its own members. In 'Bruising Encounters', journalist Phil Kafcaloudes contends the “hard boiled, hard-assed jouno” is a “tough nut” ready to “shatter” (Issue 21, 2003: 16 – 17). His article goes on to argue that some journalists "gorge on violence" and become “addicted to the
adrenaline rush”. But, he points out, constant coverage of car crashes and crime does, over the years, have a psychological effect on journalists. Despite the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder within the journalism community, Kafcaloudes points out the unavailability of training in how to deal with personal trauma, or how to deal with victims of trauma.

The inadequacy of support for journalists suffering from the requirement to exceed limits in their professional practice is driven home in John Rumney’s article ‘Hard Knocks’ (Issue 21, 2003: 19). Rumney says he had witnessed a violent assault in the course of his duties, and was physically threatened himself. However, Rumney found it was a group of unsympathetic colleagues that caused him continuing harm. Rumney, who had run from an angry source while covering a story on the drowning of a child, was met with a “chorus” of ‘gee, you must have good running shoes’ from his colleagues back at the newsroom. Then, senior executives branded him a ‘coward’ for running away and, when Rumney complained about the treatment to his editor, he
was told that he was using the bad experience to get out of covering difficult jobs in the future:

The assault continues to haunt me, not because of the terror and panic that resulted from not being able to help, but because of the alienation I suffered afterwards.

Attitudes towards journalism and trauma changed dramatically between the Whitlam and Howard eras. While *The Walkley Magazine* posts warnings about the occupation’s dangerous nature, and emphasises the culture’s inadequacies in dealing with it, *The Journalist* portrays the occupation as something of a ‘boys-own’ adventure, and openly advertises communal support for its members in need. This is not to say that journalists of 1974 did not suffer trauma, nor does this mean that support was adequate; it is more an indication of personal trauma’s taboo status, and that, what would now seem as pathetic, responses, such as fund-raising, was considered a sufficient show of assistance.
Components holding connotations related to exceeding limits of personal safety in *The Journalist* are minimal compared to those in *The Walkley Magazine*. One of these components comprise of an article about the coverage of the devastating 1974 Queensland floods (March, 1974: 5). The article, one of the very few that could be defined as a ‘feature’, depicted journalists riding with RAAF helicopters, army ducks, small boats and light aircraft, wading through waist-deep water and knee-deep mud to gather information and images. The feature-writing framework allows the article to convey a sense of suspense and excitement:

“Even getting to the office was hazardous, and while most the population huddled in homes, journalists, police and army – as usual – took all the risks,” the article’s subheading declares. “Fortunately, no journalists were killed … But the Queensland editor of *The Australian*, David Evans, went perilously close to death while on a story”. Equating journalism with the army and the police force, suggests that the occupation is physical, exciting and imperative. The article’s accompanying
photograph, of the aforesaid Mr Evans scrambling out of his car's passenger window to escape the rising waters, contributes to an atmosphere of this adventurous quest.

Another photograph published on page two of *The Journalist's* February edition, also portrays journalism as an out-of-the-ordinary, hands-on occupation (February, 1974: 7). The photograph
depicts three journalists. The photographer, standing in the foreground has his trousers rolled up to the knees, and his two companions are on a tractor, up to its hubcaps in water. The driver is wearing army fatigues and sunglasses, while the journalist is perched on the back wheel, reading his notes. Titled 'The things we do for a living', the photograph implies the occupation's exceptional, adrenaline-fuelled nature.
When the floods hit, The Journalist reported on the AJA’s Queensland branch appeal for members who had “suffered damage” in the floods (March, 1974: 5). Although the appeal is for financial donations to assist with material damage, the article’s sense of support and communal concern is clear. Reporting that “many members” had donated, including the Victorian branch, the article goes on to declare:

No one is as important in a disaster as a journalist... as people struggled to find out what was happening, as they looked desperately to radio, TV and newspapers to let them know what to do and how they stood ... I realized how much the media mattered.

And in the May edition, The Journalist reported that funds were “flowing in” (May, 1974: 2). Bad plays on words aside, the article demonstrates journalism’s sense of community during this era. It reported that staff at both John Fairfax and Sons Limited and News Limited had come together to raise money. The AJA General President and treasurer were involved, as were the South Australian and Western
Australian representatives on the Federal executive board.

The same sense of community can be seen in the components that held connotations of alcohol consumption. As already pointed out in the previous analysis of Australian journalism’s historical narrative, exceeding the limits of alcohol consumption is a larrikin characteristic that is part of journalism’s propensity to take risks, and has been used in professional practice, particularly in information gathering and networking with sources. Yet, as The Journalist implies, alcohol consumption was also a dominant means of facilitating and maintaining a sense of journalism community.

The vast majority of The Journalists’ advertisements are concerned with publicising hotels. Although this demonstrates the inherent nature of alcoholism in Australian journalism’s 1974 culture, the emphasis is more on camaraderie among journalists than on the alcohol itself. Note the following mode of address - second person - and
the warmth of tone to create a sense of fellowship within the journalism community:

“When in Brisbane, you’ll meet your fellow scribes at the Hacienda ... Just a shout from the AJA office” (January, 1974: 2).

And “When in Melbourne, join the scribes at Mr and Mrs Smythes Phoenix Hotel” (January, 1974: 2).

Further, “The Evening Star. The Place in Sydney for people from the Telegraph-Mirror-Australian publications and other media around Sydney Town and from far and wide ... You can barbeque your own steak...” (December, 1974: 5). In the same town: “Wal Delany invites you to his County Clare Inn, at 20 Broadway Street Sydney, for the best food and drink and journalistic company” (January, 1974: 7).

Every Australian capital city is represented in the copious advertisements for hotels in The Journalist, suggesting alcohol consumption as a means of bringing the Australian journalism community together and peer support.
In comparison, *The Walkley Magazine* treats alcohol consumption very differently, portraying its dangers and, indeed, its detriment to professional practice. This is particularly evident in the prominence of alcohol consumption in obituaries. Bruce Juddery, for example, a “brilliant but self-destructive” journalist, who was famous for a “quarrelsome nature” when “frequently and increasingly drunk” (Autumn, 1974: 9):

> Nearly everything he touched outside mainstream journalism ... was a disaster for him, as, increasingly, was the chaos imposed on his life by his alcohol abuse.

As the previous history analysis suggests, Juddery’s story is recurrent within Australian journalism culture; a “brilliant and pioneering journalist” whose life is ruined by alcohol abuse – a tragedy to both the person and the profession.

The remaining components holding connotations of exceeding the limits of alcohol consumption in The
Walkley Magazine relate to post-award ceremony celebrations. Depicting members of the journalistic community in blacktie, clasping either a crown lager stubbie, champagne glass or a Walkley award itself, the full page series of 10 photographs implies alcohol consumption’s function as a connecting force between the 2003 journalism collective. This series of photographs, however, is alone in representing the cultural function of alcohol within the 2003 editions of The Walkley Magazine. In comparison, there are 24 components in the 1974 Journalist, suggesting exceeding the limits of alcohol consumption was definitive of journalism, and operated as part of the industry’s self-identification during the Whitlam era.

The Journalist’s portrayal of alcohol implies exceeding the limits of its consumption, which created cultural collectivity in 1974. Meanwhile, perhaps because of heightened awareness of alcoholism’s harmful effects, drinking is barely mentioned at all in The Walkley Magazine. This does not necessarily mean journalists did not drink in 2003; it is more an indication that journalism
culture did not publicly encourage it. The comparative representation of alcohol in each of the two publications reflects the interpretation of the larrikin axiom of exceeding limits in general: The Journalist suggests that journalism in 1974 considered exceeding limits in professional practice as part of its fun and adventurous nature. By contrast, partly because of the very recent deaths of journalists in the Afghanistan conflict, the 2003 Walkley Magazine emphasises the gravity of exceeding the limits of personal safety as professional practice.

This finding is confirmed in the comparative analysis of the interviewees’ (from 1974 and 2003) oral histories. The evidence gathered from the two groups of interviewees suggests that, in 1974, journalism held few qualms about exceeding limits of legality, personal safety and alcohol consumption. But, by 2003, risk-taking was barely a consideration as a professional practice.

In 1974, according to subject 1:74, “dozens” of journalists were “risking jail” (1:74). These risks
ranged from the serious to the mundane: from receiving illegally obtained leaked documents (8:74); refusing to reveal an anonymous source before a court of law (7:74); signing false names to gain access to office buildings (9:74), to speeding (7:74); trespassing (2:74); and lying (10:74). And those who got away with it were hailed as “heroes” (9:74):

“The journalism upbringing was get the facts, and get them right, any way you could,” subject 8:74 says.

“Yeah, yeah, we always broke the law,” subject 7:74 says. “But there’s the law, and then there’s the LAW, we would speed, trespass, do reckless things, but only if we thought the story was worth it” (7:74).

When the National Front held its inaugural meeting at Melbourne’s Southern Cross Hotel in the early ‘70s, subject 1:74 was desperate to cover it. So when an acquaintance offered his invitation, saying organisers would not recognise him, and anyone could easily walk in using his identity, subject 1:74 took the opportunity:
There was a lot of debate about it in the news room, but people basically agreed I should do it ... this was a pretty right-wing group in Australia, and they were holding their first meeting, and it was very difficult to get any information on it at all, so posing as someone else was just the only way (1:74).

When subject 8:74 was offered illegally leaked tapes suggesting state government corruption, there was “never any question” of allowing legality to stop publication:

It was against the law to possess those tapes, because they were illegally taken, but the public interest absolutely overwhelmed the law ... We knew getting leaked documents was technically against the law, but we never even thought about [giving them to the police], because of the public interest, [the tapes] were a good story, and that was our highest obligation.
According to the 1974 cohort, journalism culture drew clear demarcations between law and ethics. While breaking the law was seen as acceptable, even encouraged, breaking one’s ethics was clearly out of bounds. This was despite the fact that the formal ethical codes of 1974 were not widely known. But, as subject 8:74 said, the ‘informal’ codes were “sort of” passed down from one generation of journalists to the next within the news room.

Journalism’s ethics are often in conflict with the law. This situation stands out when journalists are legally required to reveal their sources, but are ethically obliged to maintain confidentiality. All 1974 subjects say “there’d be no question” (8:74) of protecting their source if they were asked to reveal its identity in a court of law:

Your obligation to your source was always your highest obligation, and that was very much emphasised in the newsroom... just by the way the older journos treated their sources and the talk in the office ... you just learnt by example (7:74).
In comparison, all 2003 members claim the editorial hierarchy “would never” (9:03) ask young journalists to push legal boundaries, such as maintaining source confidentiality:

If I was asked, I’d just say no [and reveal the source] and if my job was on the line, I’d just say ‘you’ll be hearing from the union’… journalism just isn’t the be all and end all … it’s just a stage of my life (2:03).

Even when posed with hypothetical questions about breaking the law, all but one of the 2003 cohort claims they would remain within legal boundaries. Subjects 1:03 and 10:03, for example held this attitude:

I’d never do anything I wasn’t happy with, and if it cost me my job, then so be it - there’s plenty of other things to do than journalism (10:03).

No way would I break the law for a story… my priorities aren’t my career ... I wouldn’t risk
jail for a story ... I’m just not that passionate about getting the greatest story in the world (1:03).

Although the one exception says he would not break the law for a story, he “probably” would “think about it”:

I’d never not think about it, but being a cadet journalist you gotta establish your credibility, your reputation, and that’s the key [to journalism practice] maybe in 10 years time, when I’ve learnt the rules, that’s when I can start playing around with them a bit (9:03).

By contrast, 1974 journalism culture actively encouraged “playing with the rules”. For example, in 1974, The Age had a ‘no-drinking’ policy on the news room floor. But there existed a deliberately ignored ‘bog bar’ in the locker room, where staff could imbibe:

But it was a benefit,” subject 3:74 nods enthusiastically. “cause if shit hit the fan,
you had a pile of half drunk subs ready to drag out and we would often rewrite the paper with half a dozen subs who should have knocked off hours ago, and then you had to buy them more beer, but it worked (3:74).

Drinking was an inherent part of 1974 journalism culture. Certain pubs are mentioned often among this cohort of interviewees: the John Curtin Hotel; the City Court Hotel; the Kilkenny Inn Hotel; the Phoenix and the Golden Age Hotel, where journalists could be found both in and out of working hours. “Just so long as you could be found, and were ready to rock’n’roll work-wise, well going to the pub was fine,” subject 2:74 says. But drinking was not really about inebriation. It was more about unofficial training through conversations with those more experienced, and professional counselling among peers:

We talked bullshit. But good bullshit ... how I got this story, how I missed that one, how my wife doesn’t understand me, kids driving me bonkers, that reporter over there is an
arsehole … just bullshit that people need to talk about (10:74).

You’d work pretty hard and get the work out of the way, and then go down the pub and talk about it … you’d do a lot of learning there, I mean some of the really impressive reporters were big boozers – people who been to wars and things – they’d stand up and start talking about it … you picked up on the culture and the tricks … you identified with people who you thought worth learning from at the pub (3:74).

Pubs were about news gathering, they were places where journalists met and mingled with sources such as members of the police, and union and government officials:

Oh, you’d mainly go out with other journalists, but you’d also go for a drink with contacts and sources … the cops were always dropping into the Kilkenny to see what was going on… in fact, it was sort of a second home for the cops (1:74).
Among the older journos, it was very much a boozy culture, and I’d knock around with them, and that’s where the Trades Hall round was done, the John Curtin … the industrial reporters knocked around with union officials at the City Court (3:74).

As the analysis of the 1974 editions of The Journalist found, the pub, according to the 1974 interviewees, was the focal point for socialisation among journalists:

I have a memory of going out drinking at least three nights of the week. Because we did shift work, we were going out just as everyone else would be heading home, so it was natural that the only people we socialised with were other journalists (1:74).

You’d always stick with your own, because everyone else had nine – five jobs, you know, they’re not gunna wanna go out at 11pm and drink, but that’s just what our life was like … if it was a quiet afternoon on the late shift, it’d be ‘oh bugger off to the pub, we’ll call
you if we need to’, and if you didn’t get the call, you’d stay there until you fell down, which I often did … I mean, drinking was just part of it [journalism] (5:74).

But, in 2003, most young journalists had already established their social network. While the entire 1974 cohort gained their basic industry training on the job, all from 2003 group had completed or were completing a tertiary degree. The difference in education meant a corresponding difference in age of entry into the profession. While young journalists of 1974 entered the profession aged between 16 and 20, those of 2003 became journalists between 20 and 24 years. Young journalists of 2003 were also living in a time of consciousness about the hazardous physical effects of drinking and, of course, drink-driving was highly taboo.

This meant the social life of journalists changed significantly from 1974 to 2003. All 1974 subjects say their social group mainly comprised of other journalists. Meanwhile, a mere two of the 2003 interviewees say the same (1:03, 4:03). Although
young 2003 journalists say they “mainly drank” when they socialised with work colleagues, their main group of friends tended to be non-drinking and outside the industry. The 2003 cohort tended to spend more time with their partners, liked to have a “private life” (6:03) away from work or “just go home and crash” (10:03) at the day’s end. Some deliberately tried to have a “good mix” (6:03) of friends, and others were more focused on sport and their sporting colleagues (8:03). Either way, all members of the 2003 group agree that journalism in the Howard era was “definitely not a boozy culture” (7:03).

However, as subject 2:03 points out:

I don’t see how [socialising exclusively with journalists] makes you a better journalist … you become separated from other people and the society in which you live … how are you meant to see what’s going on? I think journalists should get out more – researching things and speaking to people … not just sitting ‘round with other journalists in an office, and then
sitting 'round with other journalists in a pub!

(2:03).

However, what must be remembered is the dramatic change in professional practice in each of the eras. All subjects from 1974 describe the pub and drinking as an important part of newsgathering technique, along with face-to-face interviews, tip-offs and basic footslogging. The telephone tended to be a secondary news-gathering tool. However, in 2003, technology dominated journalism’s professional practice. The internet, telephone, email and even SMS were nominated as the major tools of information gathering. None of the 2003 cohort considered the pub or drinking held any import as part of news gathering technique in the Howard era.

Exceeding the limits of alcohol consumption can be seen as an expression of a propensity to exceed limits in general. However, as subject 2:03 points out, this does not necessarily equate to better journalism. And socialising almost exclusively with one’s own has its pitfalls; after all, journalism
is meant to be about telling the stories of others. Further, there is a problem with daily information being regularly gathered by the inebriated, and edited and presented by a “bunch of half-drunk subs” (3:74). However, exceeding limits can be seen as crucial to gathering information that will hold authority to account and ensure equality of representation on the public sphere. However, as the comparative analysis of oral history demonstrates, journalism culture in the Howard era was just not willing to take the same risks that were so prevalent in the journalism culture in the Whitlam era.

**Aggression at work in Australian Journalism**

“... beat your opposition and leave them choking in the dust”  
(Former 60 Minutes producer, Gerald Stone on media magnate, Frank Packer’s philosophy on journalism)

The recklessness inherent in journalism, extending from exceeding the limits of the law and personal safety to alcohol consumption, is an expression of its aggressive nature. The previous historical
analysis found that the larrikin axiom of aggression underpinned Australian journalism’s traditional competitiveness and hard work ethic. These characteristics are integral to journalism’s financial and professional viability – as Enlightenment philosophy on journalism contends, such viability is a means of maintaining media freedom from state authority. Although some argue that journalism’s competitive nature encourages dubious ethical behaviour, as the historical analysis found, it can also promote a culture of tenacity and determination to gather and publish information that holds authority to account, or ensure equality of representation on the public sphere.

Journalism’s inherent tenacity emerged as systemic in both the 1974 editions of The Journalist and the 2003 editions of The Walkley Magazine.

The Walkley Magazine underlines journalism’s built-in competitiveness on its 2003 spring edition’s front page. Personifying competitiveness in an animal traditionally used for hunting – a hound
dog, the full page colour illustration depicted a “pup’s guide” to “tracking down” scandal. In a series of steps, the dog first “identifies an interesting smell”, alluding to journalism’s skills in recognising news-worthy information. The dog then “negotiates false leads”, represented in a rotting fish and other pungent substances, and “distractions”, personified in the animal’s traditional adversary, a cat. Step four represents the dog’s rivals, with which it “establishes contact” and, in step five, the dog overcomes its competitors to grab the “bone”, illustrating the information. The final image is of the hound dog, drooling over a newspaper with “exclusive” as its headline, and saying smugly, “mine … all mine!”
A PUP'S GUIDE TO TRACKING DOWN A SCANDAL

1. Identify interesting smell...
2. ...negotiate false leads...
3. ...and distractions.
4. Establish contact with pack...
5. Identify 'weak link' in circle
6. Grab the bone and hightail it outta there!

Dry humour and real stories

Andrea F
Philip Ashley-Brow
Frances Wilt
The above example’s messages about journalism’s competitive nature are delivered with humour. Yet there is a more serious side to journalism’s subconscious competitiveness, which can have detrimental affects on the individual. In keeping with The Walkley Magazine’s warnings of journalism’s personal hazards, the magazine published several articles pointing to the industry’s expectations from journalists both on and off the job.

For example, when Nonee Walsh found herself on the train that slammed into the railway cutting at Waterfall while holidaying, her “reporter instincts kicked in over the pain” (Issue 21, 2003: 20). Using feature-writing methodology, Walsh could convey her personal terror and trauma in the crash’s aftermath. Yet, despite being on her own time, her first reaction was to take out a notebook and start jotting down descriptions of the train and the scene, while rescue workers got on with their jobs. Far from lamenting her circumstance, Walsh openly describes her situation as a “true piece of journalistic serendipity”. While
colleagues were barred from the accident site, Walsh contacted the ABC news room, and started filing voice reports:

In that strange nether world of being both victim and a journalist, I was dealing with pain and still somehow collecting information and looking for the drama,” she reports, indicating that journalism’s highest priority, sometimes subconsciously, is the fast and exclusive conveyance of information (Issue 21, 2003: 20).

In journalistic lexicon, publishing exclusive information prior to rivals is described as a ‘scoop’. Sunday Telegraph editor, Neil Breen, makes this particular journalistic discourse on competitiveness explicit in his article on how he revealed the Australian Rugby Union’s cover up of winger Ben Tune and his use of a banned drug (Issue 23, 2003: 14 – 15). Indeed, his story is overtly headlined “scooping the pool”, and his byline describes Breen as a 2002 Walkley Award winner for his “scoop” in the Courier Mail. Implying aggressive competitiveness, Breen claims that
converting a rumour, a “tip-off” or innuendo into a
“major story” – a “Walkley Award-winner” – is the
ultimate journalistic aim. However, to achieve this
takes a hard work ethic:

Converting talk of a major scandal into
something you can publish is a long,
complicated and exhausting process … You hear a
rumour, substantiate the basics of it to avoid
time-wasting, identify those who make up the
protective scandal around the scandal, target
vulnerability in the circle, identify the
clincher… publish it and own it through follow-
ups. And remember, it’s hard work (Issue 23,

Although The Walkley Magazine’s 1974 predecessor,
The Journalist, has far less scope within its hard
news framework to express the same concern with
aggressive competitiveness and hard work ethic, its
advertisements create a pattern implying these
values existed as subliminal guiding principles.
For example, regular advertiser, the GPS, or the
Government Postal Service, promoted its import to
journalists by claiming:
“When others don’t know the answer – or haven’t made up their mind – ask us! GPS 929 4838” (March, 1974: 8) and “We’ve never been shy [with information]” (February, 1974: 7). The Government Postal Service was a key source of information on government proposals and policy. As its advertisements suggest, journalism practice of the day was anxious over efficiently obtaining exclusive information.

And the value placed on a hard work ethic is equally as pronounced in *The Journalist’s* situations vacant classified. In March, the tri-weekly regional Recorder based in Port Pirie, was looking for an “energetic” journalist, with “initiative” and the ability to “seek out stories and write them with speed and accuracy” (March, 1974: 2). The successful applicant would be required to cover local government, police, court, sports and general news. This was on top of duties in subbing and layout. The same demanding work load was required of applicants for the job with Focus News, which was looking for an “energetic and enterprising” journalist to join its news team.
In a tone reflecting the qualities Focus News was seeking in the incumbent, the advertisement declares:

“He will be ... not a tired man looking for a rest. He will be able to write quickly, make advertising sparkle and be hard-working.”

Journalism’s aggressive, hard-working competitiveness is often accused of encouraging sensationalism, abuse of privacy and sometimes downright mistruths. However, these larrikin axioms are imperative if journalism is to pursue and obtain information with the doggedness and tenacity required when authority seeks to remove access to it. Indeed, journalism’s professional association, in conjunction with the commercial sector, actively encourages such qualities in its series of annual awards, the recipients of which are judged on the basis of journalism quality. The Walkley Awards are considered as Australian journalism’s Holy Grail. In both The Walkley Magazine and The Journalist, a pattern of consistent celebrations of the Awards and recipients assisted in the implication that
competitiveness existed as an Australian journalism cultural value in each of the eras under question.

In ‘Who Found the Dogs Out?’, Kate McClymont and Anne Davies provide a useful example of how the Walkley Awards functioned in constructing competitiveness within Australian journalism (Issue 23, 2003: 12 – 13). Their two-page feature article tells the story of how the authors “stumbled” onto the story of Rugby League rorts and big business corruption. The authors spent three entire weeks “digging” through company searches and holding clandestine meetings with sources. When the story was published, the authors suffered threats from both the public and politicians. However: “when you see that Gold Walkley statuette on the bookshelf, you know it was all worth it.”

In 2003, the Walkley Awards were celebrated in style. This can be seen in a full page of glossy colour photographs taken on the night of the 2002 ceremony (Issue 20, 2003: 8). High profile journalists - ABC’s Tony Eastley, Network Ten’s Sandra Sully, and Paul Bongiorno, and the satirical
Chaser Team — are depicted in black tie attire. The impression is one of glitz, glamour and celebrity. The accompanying caption openly states:

The Who’s Who of the country’s media gathered at the Westin, Sydney ... And in true journalistic style they celebrated the excellence of their peer’s achievements (Issue 20, 2003: 8).
Media's Night

The Bulldogs' salary cap scandal won gold for The Sydney Morning Herald's Anne Davies and Kate McClymont, while the rest of Australia's media bowed to the celebration befitting the Walkley awards' tradition.

The Who's Who of the country's media gathered at The Westin, Sydney, on November 29, 2002, to hear the year's winners in the 47th Walkley Awards for excellence in journalism. And in true journalist style, they celebrated the excellence of their peers' achievements, as well as the many talked-about scandals, reports on asylum seekers and the Sars X tragedy featured ghastly among the Silver Walkley winners.

The Alliance has been proud trustee of the awards since 1956. For a full list of the year's winners visit www.walkleys.com
Compare this to The Journalist’s coverage of the same event in 1974, which comprised of two rows of sedate-looking journalists, sitting at a main table. The accompanying caption held none of the chatty style of The Walkley Magazine, but a mere listing of the names, most of which were AJA executive, rather than winners. This is not to say that journalists in 1974 did not celebrate Walkley Award winners as highly as in 2003; it is more an indication that journalistic culture at the time may have been more self-effacing about its members’ competitive achievements.
receive their cheques and "oscars"
Yet *The Journalist* was full of competitive connotations, and stories of success are published in prominent positions. In January, *The Journalist* announced that the annual Photographer of the Year award was “set to continue”, complete with the previous winner’s celebrated photograph. In February, journalists could enter the Australian Medical Association’s National Press Award (February, 1974: 1), and in November, television journalists and cameramen could enter the newly introduced Thorn Award (November, 1974: 1).

When the New South Wales Provincial District’s annual Prodi Awards were presented, winners had their picture dominating *The Journalist’s* back page (December, 1974: 8), and when Les O’Rourke won the 1974 Walkley Award for photography, his piece depicting a member of a guard of honour fainting, featured in page one lead position (November, 1974: 1).

Not only was competitiveness encouraged through the awards system in the Whitlam era. *The Journalist* was also keen to publish increasing circulations of
the media outlets on which AJA members worked. In March, The Journalist declared that “most” big daily newspapers had lifted their sales, and regional dailies had “shown strength” (March, 1974: 8). And in July, The Journalist reported 10 papers had “lifted circulations” and seven “were down” (July, 1974: 3). The rhetoric of this particular report reflected the competitiveness within the journalism community itself. Almost as if it were calling a horse race, The Journalist reports:

The most impressive performance was Sydney’s Daily Telegraph, which lifted circulation by an impressive 11,067 an issue ... Despite its big loss, the Mirror kept in front of its arch rival, the Sun ... the Sun with a circulation of 301,017 is 3,300 behind the Mirror ... the two Sydney afternoons can be expected to improve their positions dramatically when the September figures are taken. The elimination of their Saturday editions, which struggled with circulations well under 100,000 should boost their five-day sales average to around 350,000 (July, 1974: 3).
Competitiveness and a hard work ethic is also celebrated in The Journalist’s obituaries and acknowledgements. When Canberra Times court reporter, Les Channing died, his obituary described his “accuracy” as “legendary” and matched his “diligence on all aspects of his work” (March, 1974: 7). Les Channing’s only “faults” were that he was “perhaps too conscientious and worked too hard”. Similar comments were made of Eric Kennedy, who was a “skilled and hard-working newspaperman” (March, 1974: 7):

“The ideals of hard work and integrity with which Eric Kennedy pursued his career could well serve as an inspiration to all newspapermen.”

The comparative analysis of The Journalist and The Walkley Magazine suggests that the extensions of the larrikin axiom of aggression, hard work ethic and competitiveness, were celebrated as values in both the Whitlam and Howard eras. However, in comparison, the evidence gathered from in-depth interviews suggests that aggression was interpreted very differently in each era under examination.
Journalism in the Howard era was, in subject 9:03’s words, a highly “competitive caper” to enter (9:03). Merely surviving the pre-cadet period required an inherent aggressively competitive nature. For example, all 2003 subjects had completed, or were completing, a three-year degree, had worked voluntarily on local newspapers for up to three years, and been rejected for up to 12 jobs in journalism before gaining a full time paid cadetship. In comparison, although two of the 1974 interviewees had initially been rejected for a cadetship once, none had to work voluntarily for a media organisation. All 1974 subjects, one of which had completed a three-year tertiary degree and five of which had worked in the mail or copy rooms for up to 12 months, had entered the industry relatively young through a three-year cadetship.

But the hardships 2003 journalists experienced in finding a foot in the door did not translate into an embracement of the competitive, hard work culture on the field. Both cohorts agree such aggression is in journalism’s nature. Yet, while the 1974 group describe the hard working,
competitive culture as “fantastic” (10:74) and “exciting” (6:74), those in 2003 found it “invasive” and “annoying” (6:03). Two of the 10 said they kept their mobile phones on “all the time” (9:03, 10:03) so the ‘subs’ could “check” their facts. The remaining eight said they preferred to leave their mobile ‘phones off or leave their contact books at work at the day’s end. The same eight believed when they closed their home’s front door, they had “knocked off” (7:03):

“I don’t bring my contacts book home ‘cause I, you know, want to leave work at work … I don’t want to think about work, when I get home,” subject 7:03 says.

“I’ve always got my mobile on, ‘cept on weekends, then I turn it off ‘cause I’m playing footy … not even work gets in the way of my footy,” subject 2:03 says. “I can go home and focus on other things, and not think about work … at footy training I switch the phone off, otherwise I’d go insane” (2:03).
Three of the 2003 cohort claim journalism’s work demands meant they would eventually follow an alternative career path:

“Yeah, it’s hard work,” subject 2:03 says. “I wouldn’t want to work this hard forever. I’ll do it while I’m enjoying the hard work, and when I stop enjoying it, I’ll go play tennis or something” (2:03)

“The thing is, there are better temptations for work... better wages, less stress,” subject 7:03 says.

“Look, my focus just isn’t journalism,” subject 1:03 says. “I don’t want to be working all hours and stuff ... my husband hates it, and when we have kids...I guess I don’t like it much either” (1:03).

In comparison, all members of the 1974 cohort suggest the work demands motivated an inbuilt dedication to journalism:

It was untiring. You just went on and on, 'cause you were ambitious, your career was like everything, it was just non-stop, and you just wanted to keep going (5:03).
I’d say we were derelict. It’s in our profession … you never gave a thought to your health, and worked all sorts of hours … no food ‘til you got to the pub, and it was just so exciting (6:74).

A common theme among the 1974 cohort is the reluctance to take lunch or dinner breaks, or even a holiday. According to subject 10:74, he left his first job in journalism being owed 23 weeks annual leave:

‘Cause you never took holidays … You were just ‘boom, boom, boom’, and you were never tired. You were hung over, but never tired, and it was fantastic, just fantastic … it was all push, push, push, then go have a drink (10:74).

The differences in approaches to work ethic between the two eras correspond with a disparity in attitudes towards competitiveness. For example, subject 7:74, describing himself as “really pushy, really aggressive”, says he “always put his hand up” for extra work to gain a competitive advantage:
“If somebody called in crook, I always took on their work ‘cause it didn’t do me any harm in the eyes of the bosses,” he says (7:74).

The comments from the 1974 cohort suggest that the sense of aggressive competitiveness was systemic to journalism culture of the Whitlam era, to the point that subjects held no qualms about ‘pinching’ one another’s stories:

The [other cadets] were the ones ya wanted to kill. And that competitive streak got even stronger as you got more experienced, ‘cause it was all very encouraged in the news room” (8:74).

Subject 6:74 describes the 1974 news room’s competitive culture as “just the meat and potatoes of daily journalism”:

It was highly competitive – how prominently you got your story run, how you got it through the subs, in tact or in shreds, how big your byline was … all that stuff was just how journalism was taught (6:74).
Or, in the words of subject 10:74, journalism’s axiology was “fairly simple”:

We wanted to get it; get it first and get it right … getting the front page lead, getting the scoop, being followed up by the opposition. It was just so important … The culture was ‘we’re in journalism, we’re here to break stories, we’re here to get by lines, so ya mum can see ‘em, so ya editor can see ‘em, so everyone can see ‘em (10:74).

While the 1974 cohort describe the journalism culture of the Whitlam era as “young”, “dogged” and “persistent”, which encouraged young journalists to compete with their colleagues, their 2003 counterparts tend to see news gathering as a “team effort” (5:03). One 2003 subject goes as far to say that her work colleagues were “very approachable” who were “more than happy to help” with her stories (1:03). She describes the news room as a “good work environment” and “very relaxed”. The same journalist says she would “never step” on a colleague’s toes to get a story (1:03):
People generally have more a team mentality, ‘cause there’s no point ... at the end of the day, the paper has the story ... we don’t need to be chewing each other for a story (1:03).

According to the 2003 cohort, the dedicated rounds system went some way in mitigating the competitive environment. The news room, says subject 5:03, was not aggressively competitive “cause everyone’s got their own rounds, their own contacts, and we kind of keep to ‘em” (5:03). Subject 3:03 claims similar:

Nah, we don’t compete for stories. We just work on our assigned stories ... I don’t really care what the other cadets are doing, I just concentrate on my story (3:03).

Some 2003 journalists go as far as to say they would work with rivals in the news gathering process. Subject 2:03, for example, says he worked with a competitor to complete a death knock. Each journalist took it in turns to approach the family until an interview was gained for both journalists.
The same subject said he felt “more competitive” with the “PR machine” than with other journalists. And subject 9:03 tells an anecdote about attending a press conference where a rival journalist had found herself with a broken-down dictaphone:

“And I’ll give them the information,” he said. “Cause one day I might find myself in the same situation, and I’ll need them” (9:03).

Unlike the comparative analysis of The Journalist and The Walkley Magazine, which finds a pattern of competitiveness and hard work ethic embedded in both the Whitlam and Howard eras, the in depth interviews clearly suggest that Australian journalism’s aggressive, hard working competitiveness had, compared to 1974, diminished in 2003. In some respects, the moderation of aggression is an advantage to journalism. Reduced work demands allow for improved work-life balance and curbed competitiveness could, potentially, mitigate dubious ethical practices. However, as the previous historical analysis suggests, a culture of aggressive, hardworking competitiveness is also fundamental to journalism’s ability to maintain
both its commercial, and professional, viability. While young journalists were indoctrinated into such as culture in 1974, young journalists of 2003 were less aggressive in committing high numbers of leisure hours to the profession, and competing aggressively with peers.

**Emotional Innocence at work in Australian Journalism**

*A preaching friar settles himself in every village; and builds a pulpit, which he calls a newspaper. There from he preaches what momentous doctrine is in him, for man’s salvation.*

(Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, Book III, Ch VII)

As *The Journalist* of 1974 and *The Walkley Magazine* of 2003 suggest, journalism during both the Whitlam and Howard eras was a highly demanding occupation. However, as conjectured in the historical analysis of Australian journalism tradition, individuals took on the demands of the occupation because of an intensely personal and passionate belief in the profession’s ability to fulfil the Enlightenment ideals of freedom on the public sphere. Such
passion is akin to the larrikin’s resolute, yet emotionally innocent, determination to take risks in order to render equality for his kith and kin. Such emotional innocence underpins journalism’s anti-authoritarianism and risk-taking in the name of a seemingly idealistic public responsibility and professional practice.

Although both The Walkley Magazine and The Journalist suggest ideological belief in journalism’s public responsibility, the 2003 editions held connotations of hard realism about journalism’s ability to facilitate and protect the public sphere, and ensure equality of representation and diversity upon it. This is not surprising considering the complexity of challenges facing journalism of 2003. The use of political rhetoric, although always manipulative, had evolved into a highly efficient industry. The hazards of journalism, although always there, were immediately apparent in the deaths of Paul Moran and Fred Nerac. Media commercialization had become global, and syndication the norm, with News Corporation owning western journalism’s main sources of news.
Cuts to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation was coupled with political accusations of bias, backed up by public opinion. And, with tertiary education backgrounds, journalists themselves held much higher expectations of their own career progress towards more influential and lucrative positions within the media industry.

With popular television programs, such as *Frontline*, satirizing journalism’s anomalies, and *Media Watch* making dubious journalistic behaviour transparent, the journalism community in 2003 was seen as complicit with politics and commerce in manipulating the public for its own self-interested ends. It is little wonder *The Walkley Magazine* suggested a mood of self-criticism.

Meanwhile, in 1974, the political context held a sense of optimism and excitement about change, which had flowed on to the cultural sphere, including within the journalism community. Just two years before, two young *Washington Post* journalists had achieved the epitome of journalism’s function when they revealed abuse of power at the highest
level in the Whitehouse (the ramifications of which, Richard Nixon’s impeachment, were currently underway). Commercialism was seen as a hindrance to journalism’s public responsibility, but not an insurmountable one, and there was confidence in the ability of collective and strident unionism to achieve better pay, conditions, and higher status for journalism’s public responsibility within a commercial framework.

The Journalist is full of expressions of idealistic passion for the journalistic occupation, resulting in a sense of collective confidence in its ability to fulfil its public responsibility. The AJA was not shy in declaring its “disgust” over pay and conditions (November, 1974: 1), and consistently threw threats at managers and proprietors: “In their own interests, managements should realize the patience and forbearance of AJA members were exhaustible,” declares the December headline (December, 194: 1). The AJA federal executive “condemned” the closure of the Canberra News without “any” consultation with unions, describing it as a “shameful blot of proprietors” on page one
in August (August, 1974: 1) and April’s edition demanded “wage justice in the suburbs” (April, 1974: 1).

The same sense of confidence in defiance was made more explicit in Duncan Graham’s letter-to-the-editor, when he declared that the “intimidation” of journalists by managers, politicians and advertisers was “tainting the news”. Pointing out journalism’s responsibility to defy such influences, Graham concludes his letter ominously, stating that “the onus” is on “us” [journalists] to ensure the community “gets the news straight” (March, 1974: 3).

The Journalist, imparting a communal sense of “us” [or journalists], implied strength through collectivity. The newspaper suggested the journalism community of 1974 was a unity, even going as far as proposing a workers’ anthem-like theme song. The Journalist, overtly stating journalism’s empathy with first-wave feminism, implies its cultural affiliation with other anti-
authoritarian social groups, and their allegiance in lobbying for freedom of the public sphere.

The Journalist implies journalism’s sense of global community, and confidence to “protest” to authorities whose actions were detrimental to its public responsibility. When Soviet author, Aleksei Solzhenitsyn was expelled from his country, the AJA Federal Executive wrote to the Soviet Ambassador in passionate tones:

The Australian Journalists’ Association deplores the action of the Soviet Government... we believe the action represents a grave blow to our freedom and we express our profound dismay (March, 1974: 1).

The same sense of optimism that such defiance could make a difference can be heard in The Journalist’s report that the AJA was planning to “coordinate” its efforts with the International Press Institute to “intervene” in favour of imprisoned Indonesian journalists. AJA President John Lawrence and Vice-president, Leo Chapman had already made personal
representations to Indonesian Major General Ali Murto on the prisoners’ behalf, and IPI director, Ernest Meyer was planning to “intervene on the spot” during his upcoming visit to Indonesia. Describing the prisoners as “our Indonesian colleagues”, The Journalist portrayed a global journalism community opposing oppression of journalistic freedom (January, 1974: 7).

When The Journalist used satire as a tool of defiance, it was a celebration of journalism’s public responsibility, such as its cartoon representing the Australian journalistic community ‘tying up’ a bunch of thugs, including Frank Sinatra (“OL’ SMART ARSE”) on a map of Australia (August, 1974: 4). The message about the Australian journalistic community’s unified and defiant rebuttal against arrogance and celebrity is driven home with delicious irony, with the cartoon’s use of Sinatra’s own lyrics:
“And there were times, more than a few, when I bit off more than I could chew”.
Taking on the powerful was an expression of journalism’s adventurous nature, and The Journalist was very concerned with portraying the occupation as a risky, but exciting quest. The article, for example, about the devastating 1974 Queensland floods (March, 1974: 5), depicted journalists joining the emergency services in RAAF helicopters, army ducks, small boats and light aircraft, wading through waist-deep water and knee-deep mud to gather information and images:

“Even getting to the office was hazardous, and while most the population huddled in homes, journalists, police and army – as usual – took all the risks,” the article’s subheading declares, equating journalism with heroism and honour.

The article completes its messages of valour with this concluding statement:

No one is as important in a disaster as a journalist... as people struggled to find out what was happening, as they looked desperately to radio, TV and newspapers to let them know what to do and how they stood... I realized how much the media mattered (March, 1974: 5).
The Walkley Magazine in 2003 also suggests that journalism held an imperative public function. However, the sense of idealism that pervaded The Journalist had fallen away to be replaced by realistic pessimism about the occupation’s ability to fulfil its public responsibility.

For example, when MEAA President, Christopher Warren wrote his editorial on political propaganda and its manipulative affects, he painted grim pictures of “bars” being “raised” against individual journalists, “from the New York Stock Exchange to the Iraqi Information Ministry”. And, “overnight” sources have started to act as if they are “would-be news directors”.

Everyone, from the Iraqi Information Minister, Mohammed Saeed Al-Sahaf to US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld... [are] encouraging, cajoling and threatening journalists and media organizations (Issue 21: 4).
Far from The Journalist’s rallying cries for communal defiance, Warren’s sweeping claims imply a sense of futility in rising against the official “contempt” that is “distorting the role of an independent media” (Issue 21, 2003: 4).

The same sense of pessimism pervades Quentin Dempster’s critique of the Government’s treatment of national broadcaster, ABC. Arguing that the ABC is “no longer” a “big institution”, Dempster implies the organization has been weakened to the point that it can no longer fulfil its public function, let alone protect itself. The vulnerability of the traditionally outspoken champion of the underdog is driven home when Dempster concludes that the onus is on the public, rather than journalism, to “fight” for a “viable public broadcaster”. All journalists can do, says Dempster, is “wait” for leadership from a management that he sees as “ensconced in a comfort zone” (Issue 23, 2003: 8).

While The Journalist celebrated financial successes of news outlets, The Walkley Magazine projected
dire warning about the growth of media companies. Warren implies overwhelming corporate omnipotence, describing a concentration of media outlets “around the world” in cahoots with governments to “get bigger” (Issue 22, 2003: 4). Similarly, rather than portraying competitiveness as a positive element of journalism, Jonathan Este openly criticizes its intensity, or the “24-hour revolving news networks constantly hungering for fresh material - for “moving” journalism into “Orwellian territory” (Issue 21, 2003 8 – 9).

Industrial inadequacies are again implicated when Desiree Savage points out the media’s systemic hypocrisy in its treatment of its female workforce (Issue 20, 2003: 20 – 21). Compared to The Journalist’s up-beat self-portrayal as affiliated with the passion and stridency of first-wave feminism, Savage’s article implies resignation in eradicating pervasive gender discrimination within journalism culture.

A similar sense of engulfment is felt when The Walkley Magazine reported on journalism’s struggles
for freedom overseas. While *The Journalist* rallies local support for “our colleagues” in other parts of the world, *The Walkley Magazine* portrays “many challenges” in areas that have become a “mass of corruption”. Further, while *The Journalist* celebrates the journalism in what can be considered, at least on paper, as epitome of media freedom – the United States – *The Walkley Magazine* suggests American journalism was the epitome of media detriment.

*The Walkley Magazine*’s use of satire as a tool of defiance contributes to the atmosphere of overwhelming difficulties faced by the media. Rather than lampooning authority, *The Walkley Magazine*’s satire makes dark statements about the media industry itself. This could be seen in the sombre messages conveyed about gender inequality in the workplace and the cartoon accompanying Este’s article, depicting a war correspondent being kitted out with a helmet, gas mask and paper bag.

*The Walkley Magazine* also used cartoonists to make sombre messages about the hazardous nature of
journalism. When journalist Paul Moran was killed on assignment in Afghanistan, *The Walkley Magazine* published a cartoon depicting a flag at half mast, with the dead journalist’s name and his media outlet’s symbol appearing underneath. The whole image is captioned “in the service of truth”, symbolically representing the ‘death’ of journalism’s ability to fulfil its public responsibility. This message is a constant throughout many of *The Walkley Magazine’s* components.

*The Walkley Magazine* suggests journalism culture in the Howard era had insight into the ‘reality’, the anomalies and hazards inherent in a media career. But in doing so, the idealism and belief in journalism’s ability to fulfil its public responsibility is not implied within *The Walkley Magazine’s* pages. Meanwhile, *The Journalist* suggests an emotionally innocent belief that the profession held common feelings of stridency and held unified values related to maintaining Australian journalism’s ability to fulfil its public responsibility.
As the comparative analysis of The Walkley Magazine and The Journalist suggested, passion for the profession was less ardent in the 2003 Australian journalism culture, than in that of 1974. It was almost as if journalism, existing in a much closer relationship with the wider media structure, had moved towards a sense of futility over its ability to fulfil its public responsibility. These results were well supported by the inferences found in the comparison of the two groups of in depth interviews.

Subjects from the 1974 cohort describe journalism as having an all-pervasive, “just fantastic”, culture during the Whitlam era, which was akin to “a type of magnet” (6:74):

“I was completely indoctrinated, in the sense that I was just thrilled to be part of... the vitality of very long hours, and camaraderie,” subject 1:74 says.

“I love the industry, I love the people,” said subject 10:74 “I love the liars, I love the
bullshit artists, and I love the genuine people, you know, it’s just an industry I could never see myself leaving (10:74).

Subject 6:74 goes as far as personifying journalistic practice as a character with which she had “just fallen in love with” (6:74):

I loved it. I loved the work, I loved the process. I loved the news ... I was wildly excited by the social milieu and the culture ... It was so raffish! I was just hooked, completely hooked! (6:74).

Subject 3:74 says Australian journalism culture of the Whitlam era was “very proud”, to the point of being “probably a bit arrogant”:

And I felt very proud to be working on an organization that took people on and changed things and fought for things and stuck it up the establishment (3: 74).

As subject 2:74 describes himself at the time, 1974 journalism was “a bit naïve”, a “bit brash” and
“absolutely obsessed” (2:74) with its public responsibility and professional practice.

Despite the fact that young 2003 journalists had to work harder to enter the industry, this cohort is much more restrained in its expressions of commitment. Three of the 10 say they wanted to start a family, and would “get out” when the time came (1:03, 5:03, 6:03). For example, recently married subject 1:03 says she planned to do a Diploma of Education, so she could enjoy the same more social hours of her husband:

So I’ll do journalism for now, and go and do a DipEd later, especially now that I’m married,” she said. “I suppose career isn’t much of a priority... there’s just a lot of other focuses in my life, which I can’t follow while I’m in journalism (1:03).

Similarly, subject 7:03 says she “always” had a career “plan B”:

I mean, I’ve always been interested in [journalism] but I’ve always thought, ‘oh well,
I could always do something else’ [if journalism didn’t work out](7:03).

Although all claim to “enjoy” (8:03) journalism, eight of the 10 complain of the long work hours, stress and money. Subject 8:03, for example, says journalism was “really competitive,” which was “not the be-all-and-end-all” of his career ambitions (8:03). And subject 5:03 says she felt disillusionment with the preconceptions of glamour and money:

Everyone thinks it’s a totally glamorous job, and you get paid heaps, and you meet people and you get perks and you get this and that, but that’s not the case at all (5:03).

I mean, I love my job, I love the writing side of things... [but] you come out with a lot of criticism as well, and the longer you’re in it, the thicker your skin gets, and I don’t think that’s good for a person at all ... I mean, it’s not a high-paying job ... and the hours are all over the place (5:03).
Subject 10:03 says he would “keep doing” journalism while he was “enjoying it”:

> When I stop enjoying it, I’ll go play tennis or something … The thing is, there’s a lot better temptations for work – better wages, easier ways to earn more money, less stress, less competition (10:03).

Subject 6:03 says she did not “feel like just ‘cause” she had studied journalism at tertiary level, and worked hard to obtain a cadetship, that she “owed the industry or the workplace anything”:

> “And I’d like to do other things, ‘cause there’s so many options out there,” she says (6:03).

Several of the 2003 cohort express disillusionment with the office routine itself. Subject 8:03, for example, says expectations of newsroom “hustle and bustle” could prove disappointing:

> “It’s not very inspiring at all. Everyone gets left to themselves, and you do your own thing… it’s just like any other office – boring” (8:03)

Similarly, subject 2:03 complains that “some days” journalism was “just so mundane, a real chore”: 
“You can be writing on things that you’re not even interested in” (2:03).

It is not surprising that the sense of idealism faded among young journalists in the Howard era. The concentration of media ownership had increased to the point where employing organizations were powerful, unassailable authorities. News Limited owned major metropolitan dailies in five of Australia’s seven capital cities, as well as suburban news organizations. The Packer dynasty’s PBL owned a vast magazine empire, as well as major television stations in both regional and metropolitan areas. Both PBL and News Limited were moving into the increasingly dominant electronic media. Being independent from such authority could easily be seen as overwhelming for the young journalists of 2003.

And yet, the in depth interviews with young journalists of 2003 did offer some hope for journalism’s sense of passionate idealism. For example, subject 3:03 was so passionate about journalism that she had applied for jobs at “every
country newspaper in Victoria”, and had started her career as a humble editor, journalist and advertising representative on a weekly newspaper in “a little country town in the middle of nowhere” before entering a cadetship on a metropolitan media outlet:

“It’s a big adventure every day, and it’s a really big privilege to have this job,” she said (3:03).

And subject 9:03 described journalism as “just like something burning inside”:

“I just felt that I had so much to prove … and I wasn’t going to stop until I got there,” he said. The same subject described journalism as “certainly” a profession “in that it’s an occupation”, but it was also a “craft” because it had “real discipline” and took “real skill” to master. But “mostly” journalism was “art”:

“Yeah, that’s it,” he said. “Journalism’s not a trade or a profession, it’s the art of word smithing… yeah, that’s it, journalism is an art” (9:03).
The comparative analysis of Australian journalism during the Whitlam (1972 – 1975) and Howard (1996 – 2007) clearly suggests there can be marked divergences in Australian journalism’s cultural interpretations of its larrikin axiology according to distinct socio-political contexts. The 1974 editions of The Journalist indicate a committed and aggressive sense of crusading idealism, providing journalism in the Whitlam era with a level of confidence in its ability to fulfil its public responsibility to facilitate and protect the public sphere. In comparison, the 2003 editions of The Walkley Magazine imply this confidence had fallen away to reveal Australian journalism’s anxiety and neuroticism about its ability to fulfil this same professional responsibility. Findings from the analysis of oral history support this contention, with the 1974 cohort of interviewees claiming journalism culture “believed” it knew what was “right for the world”, and strived to “change things”, “fight for things” and “stick it up the establishment”. Meanwhile, journalism culture in the Howard era had a more pragmatic attitude towards its ability to render change. The 2003
cohort of interviewees claim the “ruthless” and aggressive journalist is a mere stereotype, with more potential to harm individual careers than contribute in any meaningful way to journalism’s public responsibility. Australian journalism, in rejecting the larrikin axiology, yet unable to find an alternative value and belief system of equal usefulness, echoes Tapsall and Varley’s contention that Australian journalism is suffering a “crisis of identity” (Tapsall and Varley, 2001: v).

This finding is of significant concern to both the Australian journalism profession and to the nation’s liberal democratic process in general. However, The Larrikin Paradox will now argue (Conclusion: The Larrikin’s Future) there remains the prospect that Australian journalism can reconstruct its larrikin tradition to help vouchsafe a work culture that supports its self-declared public responsibility to “inform citizens and animate democracy” (MEAA, 2005).
Conclusion: The Larrikin’s Future

The Larrikin Paradox began with the assumption that Australian journalism’s responsibility involves protecting democratic freedom from authority in the public sphere. We have seen how Australian journalism’s public responsibility owes much to the Enlightenment philosophies that underpin the Australian liberal democratic system. However, democratic freedom includes public dissent. Although built into the liberal democratic tradition, public dissent is arguably a natural enemy of authority. So, although authority may agree with democratic freedom in principle, this agreement does not always translate into practice, as the 2005 ASIO legislation demonstrates. Because democratic freedom is vulnerable to such contingencies, we say that Australian journalism needs its larrikin tradition to help vouchsafe a work culture that can uphold its public responsibility to “inform citizens and animate democracy” (MEAA, 2005).
The Larrikin Paradox has found that the socio-political contexts of the Whitlam (1972 – 1975) and Howard (1996 – 2007) eras helped generate some discontinuity in the larrikin tradition. This is sobering, because our history of larrikinism found sufficient evidence for a constant larrikin tradition within the micro-culture of Australian journalism. Here, it is useful to recall Raymond Williams’ argument that a culture’s traditions – in this case Australian journalism’s micro-cultural tradition of larrikinism – can be considered as versions of its past, present and even future values (Williams, 1966: 57).

There are, however, some problems with the assumptions of ‘tradition’ and ‘reality’. For example, the truth of Wilfred Burchett as a larrikin continues to be hotly contested cultural ground when it comes to his significance for Australian journalism.

However, when exploring the history of a cultural concept, such as larrikinism, evidence must be carefully interpreted. Here, it is not only
historical ‘accuracy’ with which we are concerned, but also with the common patterns found within cultural narratives that have gained significance over time. These patterns derive their significance from their function as deposits of traditions that have the potential to become embedded in a particular value and belief system, in this instance, Australian journalism’s micro-culture. As Williams theorises, while ‘tradition’, or the construction of power at specific historical moments, evolves from ‘fact’, its progression and embedding into subsequent cultural value and belief systems does not necessarily rely on its original ‘reality’:

“It [tradition] is a version of the past which is intended to ratify the present. What it offers is a sense of predisposed continuity” (Williams, 1977: 116).

The findings of the history chapter suggest that the culture of Australian journalism contains a larrikin tradition of axiological import for Australian journalism’s ability to fulfil its public responsibility.
For example, consistent with the pattern identified by Rickard (1998) and Gorman (1990), Australian journalism history can be said to contain manifestations of defiance as a key larrikin form. Indeed, it was arguably the larrikinesque defiance of Andrew Bent, and William Wentworth and Robert Wardell that initiated Australian journalism’s ability to facilitate and protect freedom in the public sphere from the Colonial authorities (in Curthoys and Schultz, 1999: 12). Later, defiance manifested as a means to protect freedom from proprietorial and managerial interference, as Monty Grover and his colleagues demonstrated when they “walked out” from the news room “in a body” over editorial independence (in Cannon, 1993: 33). The same element evolved into professional practice insofar as defiance was used to gather information that held power to public account. Wilfred Burchett’s compelling interchange with the American scientist post-Hiroshima is an eloquent example of this (in Burchett & Shimmin, 2005: 246).
Australian journalism’s larrikin axiom of defiance further encompasses compulsive rebelliousness against, in the words of both John Stuart Mill (1859) and Manning Clark (1990), the “tyranny of the majority”. Translated into the Australian journalism lexicon as ‘playing the devil’s advocate’, defying the tyranny of the majority is arguably required for diversity of opinion in the public sphere. This was particularly detectable in the narratives surrounding Oz editors, Richie Walsh, Richard Neville and Martin Sharpe, who found themselves in court accused of depravity after publishing socially taboo subject matter (Neville, 1995: 37).

Initially inspired by the works of Enlightenment philosophers such as Milton, Kant and Mill, Australian journalism’s tradition of defiance has a genealogy that apparently informs the journalistic lexicon related to ‘reporting with neither fear nor favour’.

The industry-specific publication of both the Whitlam and the Howard eras – the 1974 editions of
The Journalist and the 2003 editions of The Walkley Magazine – suggest that Australian journalism maintained the larrikin spirit of defiance in each period under question. However, the 1974 editions of The Journalist imply a strident and collective anti-authoritarianism against external agencies, while the 2003 editions of The Walkley Magazine imply a more strangled defiance against the media system itself, from which journalism perceived itself to have lost its independence. In 2003 the media appears to have been seen as an authority equally as manipulative as, and enmeshed with, government, big-business and other social institutional authority. The Walkley Magazine, suggesting that journalism itself was fast becoming part of the wider media authority, connotates a sense of futility in collectively defying the media’s own power.

The Journalist suggests a sense of collective idealism between the Australian journalism community and other social groups that were focused on anti-authoritarianism, such as workers, first-wave feminism and journalism in developing nations.
Meanwhile, in 2003, journalists tended to be older and more educated when they entered the profession. These members of the journalistic community had the capacity to question its anomalies, but they also had higher expectations of the industry they had entered. This may be part of the reason behind The Walkley Magazine’s suggestion that Australian journalism culture was actively working against gender equality, and the global media was detrimental to journalism’s capacity to facilitate and protect freedom in the public sphere. This was supported by the 2003 interviewees’ view of public relations. Although some of the 2003 cohort considered public relations as detrimental to the news gathering process, others were willing to work closely with the sector as part of their professional practice, suggesting a change in relationship between journalism and those who seek to manage it to their own ends.

The in-depth interviews with young journalists of 1974 supported the comparative analysis of The Journalist and The Walkley Magazine, and its implication that defiance was a collective value
among journalists of the Whitlam era, separating their community from social institutions and the wider media sector. As the oral history analysis found, defiance was a cultural value built into the journalism system of 1974. Actively encouraged by senior journalism staff, defiance against proprietors, social institutions and advertisers created collectivity within the journalism community and affiliation with the-then radical idea of gender equality in the work place. Yet, in 2003, there was no such confidence in peer support, leaving a sense of futility over journalism’s ability to use defiance as a means of achieving its public responsibility against authority. As suggested in the analysis of both The Walkley Magazine and the oral history of 2003 journalists, journalism culture of 2003 was seen, by both male and female journalists, as working actively against gender equality in the work place.

This finding may be a result, however, of the differences in the education of journalists between the two eras. All members of the 2003 cohort had completed, or were completing, tertiary degrees,
resulting, presumably, in an ability to question journalism’s anomalies earlier in their careers than their 1974 counterparts. Not only did they have deeper understanding of the profession’s limitations, but they also had higher expectations for their own ambitions, demonstrated in subject 10:03’s open statement that she had come from a social environment where “everybody was very focused” on career (10:03), and her family, “expected” her to “do well”. This was akin to The Walkley Magazine’s implication that the 2003 journalism culture was concerned with the individual, rather than the collective.

The divergences in educational and socio-economic backgrounds of journalists between the Whitlam and Howard eras could also account for differences in, what Rickard describes as larrikinism’s “emotional attachment to [the] working class”. The analysis of the biographical and autobiographical material suggests that Australian journalism’s larrikin axiom of egalitarianism owes much to the Enlightenment’s belief in universal reason and even Milton’s view that all opinion, including ‘wrong’
opinion, underpins the accumulation of knowledge and the progress of civilization. At the time, however, there was most certainly inequality between the rights of various groups to express opinion. In colonial Australia’s case, the inequality was between often harsh authorities and populations made up of convicts, ex-convicts, gold-diggers and small property owners. Indeed, biographer Keith Dunstan openly describes the gold digging population as “swelling” the ranks of the “working class”, and explicitly portrays The Argus as “championing” their “cause” (in Porter, 2001: 15). As the ‘working class’ gained political power over time, journalistic tradition evolved to support any disenfranchised group, including the soldiers of World Wars I and II and, significantly, women and indigenous people within patriarchal or imperialist systems.

Looking closely at the relationship between the ‘working class’ and journalism, we can see how it could conceivably be used to help put into practice Schultz’s theory on ‘professionalisation’, or the
act of journalism “reaching out to the public” (Schultz, 1994: 50).

Indeed, as the narratives about Andrew Bent and Edward Smith Hall reveal, Australian journalism’s traditional emotional attachment to working class origins saw this ‘reaching out’ as a two-way relationship, with members of the public forming lobby groups such as ‘Friends of Liberty of the Press’ and championing journalism’s ability to fulfil its public responsibility.

However, although the interviews found that the young journalists of 1974 were indoctrinated into a “crusading” culture, those of 2003 implied journalism culture was not so concerned with such campaigns, despite the fact that individual journalists understood this to be one of their key functions. Young journalists of 2003 perceived their ability to ‘champion the underdog’ more as a professional ideal, rather than as part of professional reality, as their 1974 cohorts believed.
Such differences in outlook may have been part of the reason behind the marked divergences between the two groups’ attitudes towards the use of satire as a tool of defiance. As both Rickard and Gorman argue, larrikinism relies heavily on a compulsion to “mock pomposity and smugness” (Gorman, 1990: ix). Indeed, Gorman goes as far as to qualify the larrikin’s egalitarianism by pointing out that he also “suffers fools badly” (Gorman, 1990: x). According to Gorman, the larrikin’s “strong streak” of irreverence, “love” of satire, “resentment of privilege” and “marked ambivalence” towards power and class is the result of an inherited “spirit of resistance to English perfidy and pomposity” (Gorman, 1990: x). For the larrikin cannot stomach pomposity, and will, according to both Rickard and Gorman, express his disdain through mockery. Rickard emphasises this point’s significance when he describes the larrikin’s ability to both “take the piss” as well as to “stand in judgment” (Rickard, 1998: 85).

The larrikin’s disdain for power and class may be seen as an Enlightenment argument. Contending that
no power can be justified on the basis of birth or a supposed connection to God, Enlightenment philosophers saw holding such superiority as the epitome of error. The larrikin’s disdain of pomposity can almost be heard in Milton’s Areopagitica:

Many there be that complain of divine providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, He gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions (in Maynard Hutchins, 1952: 394 – 395).

The same scornful tone can be found in Mill’s On Liberty:

To refuse a hearing to an opinion because they are sure that it is false is to assume that their certainty is the same thing as absolute certainty. All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility. Its condemnation may be allowed to rest on this common argument,
not the worse for being common (in Lindsay, 1962: 79).


However, while the comparative analysis of Australian journalism culture suggests that mocking pomposity was a larrikin axiom manifesting in the value and belief system of the Whitlam era, it was downplayed by journalists from the Howard era. Both The Journalist and comments from the 1974 cohort of
interviewees suggest that ‘taking the piss’ was a right of passage that functioned as model of behaviour for young journalists to use in professional practice. Yet, during the Howard era, as the analysis of The Walkley Magazine implies, the media industry itself was seen as the ‘pomposity’ that deserved journalism’s ‘mockery’. What is more worrying, perhaps, is that young journalists during the Howard era rejected mockery as a tool of defiance outright, perceiving it as unprofessional practice.

Because mockery of pomposity is an expression of the larrikin’s propensity to exceed limits, it is arguable that the differences between the two eras’ use of satire implies marked divergences in attitudes towards risk-taking. It seems a professional pity that the 2003 cohort was more risk-adverse than the 1974 generation. After all, if authority perpetually sets limits on journalism’s ability to fulfil its public responsibility, then exceeding such limits (as larrikins tend to do) would appear to be necessary to help animate democracy.
Both Gorman (1990) and Rickard (1998) say mocking pomposity is an expression of the larrikin’s tendency to exceed the limits that society constructs. The larrikin “pushes boundaries”, “bends rules” and “sails close to the wind” (Gorman, 1990: x). The larrikin will exceed both legislated limits (as Rickard points out, “criminality”, or exceeding the limits of the law, is part of the larrikin’s composition) as well as the unwritten limits of social convention. A by-product of this, as Rickard mentions, includes exceeding the limits of alcohol consumption (Rickard, 1998: 85).

The “ascendant class”, or the majority, may be averse to individual excesses against the boundaries that society has constructed. Yet liberal democracy’s architects actively encouraged exceeding the limits authority and convention sets and, indeed, even perceived the rebellion of thought as a social obligation. For example, throughout his work, and his own life, Milton argued that “transgression” was ultimately of
benefit for civilization, rather than to its detriment.

With this in mind, journalism may even be morally obliged to exceed limits, particularly when those limits construct boundaries around its ability to facilitate and protect the public sphere, and maintain authority’s accountability to it.

Not unlike Milton, Andrew Bent was incarcerated in Van Dieman’s Land for expressing freedom of speech, closely followed by Edward Smith Hall and AE Hayes in Sydney, who continued to publish from their cells, earning themselves further time in gaol for libel. Years later, Dulcie Deamer, disguising herself as a South American veterinarian to illegally enter an abattoir, was in a position to write an expose on corrupt practices in this industry (Pearce, 1998: 69). Wilfred Burchett’s perilous journey to Hiroshima after the H-bomb (in Burchett & Shimmin, 2005) arguably illustrates the value of even exceeding the limits of personal safety.
According to the 1974 cohort of interviewees, “dozens” of journalists were exceeding the limits of the law in order to gather information, and those who got away with it were hailed as “heroes” (3:74). But, according to the 2003 cohort, the journalistic hierarchy “would never” ask its staff to break the law and, if it did, only two of the three would be willing to comply. This is very similar to the connotations found in the comparative analysis of The Journalist and The Walkley Magazine, which found that exceeding limits was put forward within a framework of ‘adventure’ and ‘excitement’ in the Whitlam era. But in 2003, journalism’s hazards were treated with more gravity, as if they should be undertaken only after serious consideration.

This is not surprising when looking at Australian journalism’s wider contextual concerns: the 2003 deaths of Paul Moran and Fred Nerac drove home the danger inherent in exceeding the limits of personal safety, resulting in The Walkley Magazine’s dire warnings about avoiding physical hazards. Meanwhile, The Journalist portrayed journalism as
an adventure and a quest worth taking risks for. This may have been influenced by Woodward and Bernstein’s revelations of presidential corruption in the United States, and the impending impeachment of President Nixon.

Divergences in exceeding the limits of alcohol consumption are equally as marked. The analysis of biographical and autobiographical material found a prevalent pattern of excessive alcohol consumption, celebrated within Australian journalism history for its supposed micro-cultural utility. However, as Mungo MacCallum points out, the professional value of exceeding the limits of alcohol consumption is dubious (MacCallum, 2001: 165).

The comparative analysis of journalism culture between 1974 and 2003 suggests that excessive alcohol consumption was a cornerstone of camaraderie during the Whitlam era. However, in the Howard era, journalism considered drinking alcohol as unprofessional. This finding is not surprising considering the increase in social awareness of the hazards involved with overindulgence. However, when
analysing the connotations related to alcohol consumption in 1974, it can be seen that this characteristic was not just about getting drunk. Both the analysis of The Journalist and the interviews with young journalists of 1974 suggested alcohol consumption was more about information gathering technique, professional training and peer support. Although informal, the social gatherings around alcohol consumption was an important part of journalism’s professional practice and creating a sense of journalism community. Although alcohol consumption was not as prevalent among young journalists of 2003, a similar vehicle for personal relationships with both sources and peers had not been developed.

Yet, the camaraderie created by 1974’s communal propensity for alcohol consumption was strangely inverted in the findings related to aggressive competitiveness. As the analysis of biographical and autobiographical material suggests, journalism requires the larrikin axiom of aggression to maintain competitive viability in both its economic and professional roles. This is partly because
Journalism is part of a larger commercial organisation that needs to compete to survive. Traditionally, commercialisation was a means of maintaining journalism’s independence from the state, as demonstrated in Andrew Bent’s efforts in gaining independent ownership. But it is also because competitiveness, on a more micro-level, can result in better quality, and more diverse, information in the public sphere. Although competitiveness can result in dubious ethical behaviour, it can also encourage more effort in uncovering the more difficult information. This could be seen as early as the 1880s, when Arthur Reid undertook an overnight journey by camel to beat a competitor to a story on a new gold discovery (Reid, 1933: 18). The fierce rivalry between The Age and The Argus resulted in the determination of John Sandes and Monty Grover, employees of the latter, to uncover what was described as “one of the best scoops of Australian press history” (Cannon, 1993: 111) – the British military’s secret disciplinary action of Australian Bushveldt Carabineers, Harry ‘Breaker’ Morant, George Whitton and Peter Handcock. Aggressive
competitive was also, at least in part, behind Wilfred Burchett’ hazardous journey to Hiroshima in 1945 (in Burchett and Shimmin, 2005:523).

Although there is a theme of strident unity within Australian journalism of the Whitlam era (via the axioms of defiance, egalitarianism and exceeding limits), contradictory connotations of competitiveness suggest a dog-eat-dog culture. Young journalists of 1974 held little or no qualms about, either overtly or surreptitiously, taking over their peers’ areas of professional responsibility. Meanwhile, the 2003 cohort saw the journalistic process as more of a team effort, with some sharing information from press conferences and one even going so far as to work with a rival to complete a ‘death-knock’. Further, while the 1974 cohort suggests members relished journalism’s demanding work hours and stress, their 2003 cohorts preferred to “just crash” at the day’s end.

The apparent ‘workaholism’ of the 1974 cohort is arguably part of a larrikin-esque ‘emotional innocence’ – one that the 2003 cohort found hard to
appreciate. As Rickard points out, those who do not share the larrikin’s value and belief system often “wonder at the risks he is taking”, yet the larrikin himself often disregards the reality of the personal hazards and anomalies inherent in his behaviour (Rickard, 1998: 85).

This larrikin quality appears to be a necessary element for journalists to self-justify their sometimes seemingly irrational and irresponsible behaviour. How else do we explain Monitor editor, Edward-Smith Hall, and Australian editor, AE Hayes, continuing to pen further criminal libels from the security of Parramatta Gaol in 1829 (Walker, 1976: 16). This axiological element does help explain the behaviour of Ballarat Times editor, Henry Erle Seekamp, as he situated himself as one of the key propagandists of a campaign that led to Eureka in 1859, knowing he could be jailed for sedition.

Similarly, the emotional innocence of the larrikin would explain Neil Davis openly diarising that he may die in the 1975 fall of Saigon, yet remaining determined to film the historic moment.
From Thadeus O’Kane’s belief that journalism held “higher and wider functions than ever the pulpit possessed” (in Cryle, 1997: 104) through to JF Archibald’s description of the profession as a “morphia habit” (in Lawson, 1987: 46), the pattern of emotionally innocent zealously apparently evolved into an ardent passion for the profession. This passion often manifested in enormous self-sacrifice and, as in the case of ‘Death Wish Davis’, martyrdom to journalism (Bowden, 1987: 337).

However, the comparative analysis of larrikinism between the Whitlam and Howard years suggests that the sense of somewhat innocent idealism had fallen away by 2003. The 1974 Journalist, suggesting inspiration through unity, implies micro-cultural confidence in taking on any authority with enthusiasm, because such actions would be backed up by “colleagues” dedicated to a communal cause. This message transpires into a collective sense of “us” against “them”. The 1974 cohort of interviewees support this claim, with comments indicating
journalists “fell in love” (6:74) with a “just fantastic” journalism culture, in which they were “completely indoctrinated” (1:74). The analysis of the 2003 editions of The Walkley Magazine, however, conveys a sense of realistic pessimism about the occupation’s ability to fulfil its public responsibility. It points out, for example, that “everyone”, from the Iraqi Information Minister to the US Secretary of State were “raising bars” against journalism (Issue 21, 2003: 4). More worryingly, however, is the finding that young Australian journalists of the Howard era viewed their profession with pessimism. Three of the 10 said they would “get out” when the time came (1:03, 5:03, 6:03), and eight of the 10 complained about long work hours, stress and money (1:03, 2:03, 3:03, 4:03, 5:03, 6:03, 7:03, 8:03).

Two comments epitomize the 2003 cohort’s attitude towards their chosen profession:

“The thing is, there’s a lot better temptations for work – better wages, easier ways to earn more money, less stress, less competition,” said subject 10:03.
And this telling remark from subject 6:03:

“I don’t feel like just ‘cause I’ve done the [journalism] course [at university] and got into a job, that I owe the industry or workplace anything” (6:03).

The comparative analysis also indicates that Australian journalists’ interpretations of their larrikin tradition differ according to their socio-political context. What must be recognised here, is that larrikinism may, particularly viewed through the ‘professionalisation’ paradigm put forward by Henningham (1989) and Pearson (1991), have negative impacts on Australian journalism’s professional practice. Competitiveness, for example, can (and sometimes does) result in dubious ethical behaviour; passion for the profession can, potentially, cloud one’s judgement, particularly to the anomalies inherent in the balancing act between journalistic ideals and its commercial reality; exceeding legal and social limits can be, no doubt, detrimental to the profession’s reputation and the individual freedoms journalism is designed to protect; socialising almost exclusively with one’s
own has its pitfalls (after all, journalism is meant to be about telling the stories of others). There are also problems with daily information being regularly gathered by big drinkers and presented by a “bunch of half-drunk subs”.

Nevertheless, the history of larrikinism suggests that its axiological elements impact, in a vitally fundamental way, on the professional ability to fulfil its public responsibility. Therefore, the suggestion that larrikinism can lose its axiological import in certain socio-political contexts is arguably worrying to both the profession and the Australian democratic process. For example: diminishing micro-cultural support for defiance poses risks to journalism’s confidence in tackling authority, and its threats to the public sphere; decreased affiliation with the underdog may threaten the micro-cultural conviction in journalism’s role in facilitating equality of access to the public sphere, thus lessening its diversity; a rejection of mockery of pomposity as a tool of defiance arguably removes one of journalism’s most effective methods of ensuring
transparency of authority; decreased micro-cultural support for risk taking may diminish journalism’s ability to gather information that scrutinises and criticises authority; mitigated aggression may reduce journalism’s ability to remain competitively viable; and the fading of emotionally innocent idealism may diminish, what MEAA President Christopher Warren describes as, the media’s “continued preparedness” to “push back the line away from governmental regulation towards a freer media” (MEAA, 2005: 3). Or, in John Stuart Mill’s words, the eternal “struggle” between liberty and authority (1859).

Yet, there is hope. As the cultural theories of Hall and Williams indicate, cultural values and beliefs - in this case, Australian journalism’s micro-cultural tradition of larrikinism - are constructed and, therefore, can conceivably be reconstructed. The synthetic, malleable nature of culture may explain why, despite the larrikin axiology’s endurance throughout Australian journalism history, young journalists of the Howard
era held a somewhat cynical interpretation of its value.

The Howard era, featuring the rise of a wider macro-cultural neo-conservatism, arguably saw a decline of anti-authoritarianism at the micro-cultural level of Australian journalism. The ABC’s Frontline had parodied the larrikin in journalism’s commercial context, while Media Watch had revealed how institutional myths, such as larrikinism, had justified dubious ethical behaviour. Journalists Paul Moran and Fred Nerac had recently been killed on assignment, and many more were facing real life-threatening risks. Young journalists of this epoch tended to enter the industry with marked critical analytical abilities from tertiary education, which perhaps led some to think of larrikinism as naive. Further, journalism culture itself, maybe because of, in Meg Simons’ (2007) words, its “enmeshment” with the wider media’s commercial value and belief system, considered itself part of the business world. If so, then it is little wonder that young journalists were interpreting larrikinism as a naïve and an unhelpful career value.
By comparison, the rise of the Whitlam era’s wider counter-culture pervaded the social context with optimism about change. At a micro-cultural level, journalism had reached its celebrated epitome in exposing the Watergate scandal in the United States. Defiance, affiliation with radical groups, mocking pomposity, risk-taking, competitiveness and passion for the profession were actively encouraged by the Australian journalism system. The tragedy of the Balibo Five, who died later in 1975 when reporting from the crossfire between the Indonesian Military and the Timorese rebels, was yet to come, and journalism ‘heroes’ – such as Wilfred Burchett and Mungo MacCallum, epitomised, in subject 8:74’s words, “sticking it up the establishment”. Mostly straight from High School, the young Australian journalists of the Whitlam era were thrust into, in subject 3:74’s words, “a very much crusading culture” that was “very proud” to “fight for things”, including, presumably, journalism’s independence from the wider media industry. Given this context, it is little wonder young journalists of 1974 interpreted larrikinism and anti-
authoritarianism as integral to the enactment of journalism’s public responsibility.

As a result, journalists of the Whitlam era would arguably have interpreted larrikinism from, what Hall (1980b) calls the “preferred position”. As Hall would explain it, the audience of 1974 took on larrikinism’s connotated meanings “full and straight” and interpreted the message in terms of the “reference code” embedded in the history of its use (Hall, 1980b). In other words, in the social context of the day, journalism of the Whitlam era would have interpreted journalism’s larrikin tradition as the preferred model of journalistic behaviour, because that was how it was designed to be read through micro-cultural products such as biographical and autobiographical material, industry-specific publications and professional practices.

However, in the social context of the Howard era, journalists of the time appear to have interpreted larrikinism from, again in Hall’s words, the “oppositional position”, or understood the
preferred meaning, but “ritualised the message with some alternative framework of reference” (Hall, 1980b: 138). To clarify this explanation, Australian journalists of the Howard era may have seen, for example, larrikinism’s risk-taking as mere stupidity, and its defiant passion as naivety, because the macro-culture of Australian society was then significantly less marked by anti-authoritarianism.

Using Hall and Williams’ theory of culture, we can argue here that Australian journalism’s altered sense of communal values during the Howard era featured some degree of neo-conservative reconstruction. In short, the value of larrikinism, although largely continuous in the biographical and autobiographical material studied, underwent a reinterpretation within The Walkley Magazine and newsroom practices.

As Hall points out, however, in such texts and contexts, meanings can be renegotiated and worked on by their audience. So, if young journalists of the Howard era perceived larrikinism as little more
than a false stereotype, there is no reason why such a reinterpretation can not be modified anew in the future. The importance of the contribution Hall makes to the larrikin paradox theory lies in his demonstration that although moments of constructing and reading a message may appear to be determinate, there remains a range of possible meanings.

So, despite the seemingly pervasive power of the political economic environment in which journalism exists, there is no necessary reason why the tradition of larrikinism cannot be revived to support Australian journalism’s professional practice and public responsibility. The democratic utility of the larrikin tradition lies in the fact that it does not discriminate (as Henningham (1989) and Pearson’s (1991) professionalism model does through compulsory educational and association requirements). Anyone can be a larrikin journalist, provided they understand how anti-authoritarianism, egalitarianism, risk-taking and passion functions in professional practice to help fulfil the trade’s public responsibility. Here larrikinism goes some way towards fulfilling Shultz’s call for a closer
affiliation between journalism and its public. Larrikinism, with its connotations of irresponsibility and criminality, may appear as an inappropriate concept through which to theorise journalism. However, The Larrikin Paradox argues that it is this very irresponsibility that makes the larrikin journalist a democratic figure.

The cultural enigma here includes the problem of how journalism culture can reinvigorate its tradition of larrikinism. If tradition underpins prevailing culture, but contextual concerns have “ritualised” traditional meanings, then we must propose a means of reinvigorating, and perpetuating, what we have found to be the democratic utility of larrikinism. Yet journalism can not hope to function without the support of its employing media organizations and its audiences themselves. So it is not only journalists who need to understand the importance of the larrikin as a democratic figure: its axiological significance needs recognition within the wider media and public macro-cultures as well.
For example, by going back to larrikinism’s relation to Enlightenment philosophy and Australian history, journalism educators could inspire students to think critically about larrikinism’s neglected role within Australian liberal democracy. With the likes of Andrew Bent, Monty Grover, Wilfred Burchett and the myriad of other ‘heroes’ fore grounded, journalism’s public responsibility can perhaps be highlighted in a useful new way.

But this alone may not be enough to alter micro-cultural attitudes. Journalism culture also arguably needs to re-emphasise larrikinism’s function in journalism’s public responsibility in its industry-related publications. The Walkley Magazine needs contributions that not only defy the anomalies within the journalism system, but also remind readers why manifestations of larrikin axiology may be so vital to journalism’s public role.

Finally, and possibly most importantly, larrikinism needs to be encouraged within the practice of journalism itself. Editorial leaders should be
promoting the independence of journalism as a collective whole from the wider media system. Newsrooms need to show support for their young journalists who are willing to take a risk, and encourage affiliations between journalism and the public it is designed to serve. Editorial management itself has a role in recognising the axiological import of larrikinism, and its potential contribution to the product that is news.

This may involve promoting an understanding of larrikinism’s significance to proprietors and managers. Although seemingly discrepant with modern commercial realities, newsroom management should at least understand the cultural narratives of their heritage. Newsroom management should be aware of the cultural contribution of larrikin proprietors such as The Hobart Town Gazette’s Andrew Bent, The Australian’s William Wentworth and Robert Wardell, The Monitor’s Edward Smith-Hall, The Bulletin’s JF Archibald and A.E. Hayes Smith’s Weekly’s Sir Joynton Smith, Clyde Packer and Claude McKay (see Chapter Four). The data gathered from the in-depth interviews could further argue that even as
recently as the 1970s, newsroom management encouraged a level of journalistic defiance not present today (see Chapter Five). However, changes in newsroom management culture, particularly within today’s commercial realities, cannot hope to occur without retrieval of, and demand for, larrikinism on the newsroom floor.

The importance of larrikinism to journalism’s professional practice and public responsibility cannot be emphasized enough. As Mill (1859) said, the “struggle between liberty and authority” is “the most conspicuous feature” throughout history. In a liberal democratic society such as Australia, it is journalism that is charged with the responsibility of protecting liberty against authority. However, as the architects of liberal democracy noted, this freedom is in a constant state of vulnerability. Consequently, we think it is clear that Australian journalism requires larrikinism to vouchsafe a work culture that can uphold its public duty.
Furthermore, as The Larrikin Paradox contends, it is never too late to retrieve this, albeit gradually. As subject 9:03 said, he would “never” discount defying authority:

But... you gotta establish your credibility, your reputation, and that’s the key... maybe in 10 years time, when I’ve learnt the rules, that’s when I can start playing around with them a bit.
Appendix: Sources of Oral History

Sources of Oral History: 1974


3:74: Interviewed at Deakin University, Geelong Campus School of Creative Industries Staff Room, April 2003.


5:74: Interviewed at Channel Seven Studios, Melbourne, April, 2003

6:74: Interviewed at Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s studio, Sydney, April, 2003


*Sources of oral history can not be identified due to RMIT’s Human Research Ethics Committee’s considerations.*
Sources of Oral History: 2003


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