

## Precarity in community journalism start-ups:

### The deep story of sacrifice

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Around the world, local news provision is in crisis. Once thriving local and regional daily newspapers have closed shop, with some major titles now only retaining an online presence. In the UK, where this study is based, more than 300 UK local newspapers closed down between 2005 and 2015 alone (Turvill, 2015).

Against this backdrop, the present chapter focuses on the experiences of community journalism start-ups. These small-scale news organizations are sometimes viewed as a potential solution to the crisis in local news provision (e.g. Beckett, 2010, p. 11). Occasionally referred to as “hyperlocal” news organizations, they are small, independently owned print or online publications which represent a specific geographic area and publish locally relevant news and community focused content (e.g. Kurpius et al., 2010, p. 360, Metzgar, Kurpius, and Rowley, 2011). While a variety of terms have been used to characterize this new type of journalistic practice (e.g. Hess & Waller, 2016), this chapter describes them as community journalism start-ups to capture their status as entrepreneurial and recently established small businesses (see also Deuze & Witschge, 2020). They are

widely viewed as a potential savior of local journalism because they frequently step into the gap left behind by the closure of local newspapers or the consolidation of coverage provided by regional titles (Harte, Howells and Williams, 2018).

The chapter, based on in-depth interviews with 57 community start-up journalists in the UK, focuses on their experiences of precarity, with a particular interest in how they cope with financial insecurity and the deprivation and challenges that come with it. It takes a closer look at the stories that these journalists tell about themselves to explain their work and their motivations in the face of difficult circumstances. The chapter argues that many of the practitioners share a “deep story” (Hochschild, 2016) of sacrifice. According to this story, the sacrifices they have made to start a community news organization – in terms of financial security, comfort and life style – are justified by their passion for local journalism.

#### Contextualizing the crisis in local news provision

The decline in the fortunes of newspapers has accelerated over the past two decades. As a result of digital transformations, we have seen the rapid erosion of income from sales, subscriptions and advertising. In the UK, where this study is based, newspaper print circulations have halved and advertising revenue has fallen by 75 per cent since 2005 (Mayhew, 2020). Newspaper chains tend to concentrate their remaining journalistic workforce in urban centers. While major metropolitan areas continue to be well served by news organizations, outside such areas, provision has declined dramatically. For example, in the US, the number of journalistic jobs outside cities declined by 25% between 2004 and 2015 – with the total number of reporters and correspondents down from 52,550 to 42,280 (Tankersley, 2015). Local newspapers that have stayed in business tend to retain just a skeleton staff.

The collapse of local journalism has serious consequences for the health of local communities and, more broadly, democratic societies. Citizens require information not just about what is going at the national level, but also about what happens in their local communities. The local newspapers that continue to operate now publish less political news in terms of both quantity and substance, informing concerns about political engagement in local communities (Hayes and Lawless, 2018). Research has also found that the collapse of local newspapers is correlated with a decline in electoral participation (Shaker, 2014) and accountability in local politics (Darr, Hitt & Dunaway, 2018). More broadly, knowing what happens in your backyard is central to local engagement, participation and social life. Historically, local newspapers have played the vital civic role of sharing that information in the community, (e.g. Carson et al., 2016). The closure and consolidation of titles makes it difficult for the local journalists that remain to cover routine news events— such as council meetings, development plans, sports events and social issues – the stories that have for so long been the bread and butter of local journalism.

Community journalism startups: The precarious saviors of local news?

In the face of the grim outlook, the crisis in UK local journalism has opened up a space for the rapid expansion of community journalism. Although a handful of the organizations studied for this chapter have operated for more than 20 years, most have been established since 2010, in large part due to the opportunities afforded by technological transformations. The launch of blogging platforms such as WordPress made it easy and inexpensive to set up a slick news website, thus reducing entry barriers (Chadha, 2016). These technological transformations were instrumental in broadening access to a new generation of journalistic

entrepreneurs (see also Harte et al., 2016; Harte et al., 2018). For observers who celebrate these new entrants, their promise is often articulated in normative terms, “as an innovative, bottom-up, technology-led, alternative to the institutionalized model of news production” (Harte et al., 2016, p. 234). Community journalism sites have been seen a vital to fostering new, locally based forms of participation and holding councils accountable (Williams et al., 2015). There are now more than 400 such outlets in the UK.

Most community journalism outlets are small in terms of their geographic and population reach, focusing on areas ranging from small towns to neighborhoods in major metropolitan areas. Collectively, however, they reach significant proportions of the population – recent data indicates that community news providers in the UK reach 14.9 million people online, or more than one in five of the total population (Burrell, 2020).

Like other start-ups, their financing is frequently uncertain, and their existence under continuous threat. As Van Kerkhoven and Bakker (2014, p. 297) have pointed out, community news organizations are characterized by “a high degree of entry and exit and they require a heavy reliance on volunteer work and individual entrepreneurship.” In their study of Dutch hyperlocal sites, they found that securing financial sustainability is the major challenges to these news organizations. Many UK community journalism outlets report a revenue of under £25,000 per year, with several turning over less than £100 a month, and just a few turn more than £250,000 per year (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020). In the vast majority of cases, they are run by a single person, who serves as the editor and sole reporter, as well as being responsible for managing the commercial operations of the outlet.

However, like other enterprising businesses, they are agile and flexible because of their small size. They can therefore rapidly innovate and change their ways of working. While not all of the organizations studied here aim to turn a profit, some have developed successful business models. These business models vary greatly, ranging from advertising revenues and partnerships with local business to membership schemes and donations from readers (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020). This diversity in business models is consistent with community journalism practices elsewhere. For example, studies of community news sites in the US have found that revenue sources include foundation support, advertising, small donations, self-funding, sponsorships, selling content and providing services (Hess & Waller, 2016; Kurpius, Metzgar & Rowley, 2010; Remez, 2012). At the same time, governments and corporate donors have stepped in to support the sector in recognition of its importance. In the UK, the Welsh and English governments have set up funding schemes for innovative projects in community journalism, while the Public Interest News Foundation has recently launched the COVID-19 Emergency Fund for independent news publishers affected by the coronavirus pandemic (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020).

Community journalism startups are particularly interesting to study because they provide insights into the precarious conditions for entrepreneurial endeavors in the journalistic field. In taking an interest in these actors, the study is aligned with a growing body of scholarship that examines a new trend of “small news companies outside the legacy media” (Deuze and Witschge, 2020, p.9). For example, Hepp & Loosen (2019) have studied what they refer to as “pioneer journalists,” seeing them “as a particular group of journalists that incorporates new organizational forms and experimental practice in pursuit of redefining the field and its structural foundations.” (Hepp & Loosen, 2019, p. 1; see also Hepp, 2016, p. 920). For Hepp

and Loosen, the idea of the “pioneer” involves practices of transformative re-figuration – of changing the field of journalism as forerunners.

While there is no doubt that community journalists contribute to pushing at the boundaries of the field and its practices, this chapter is less interested in the forms of technological and stylistic innovation they represent, instead examining the conditions for their work. It focuses on experiences of financial uncertainty associated with the entrepreneurial practices of community journalism startups. In doing so, it takes an interest in a particular set of concerns within the broader problems associated with increasing precarity in the journalistic profession (Örnebring, 2018). It thereby sheds light on the concrete experiences associated with “existential, financial and social insecurity exacerbated by the flexibilization of labor markets” (de Peuter, 2011, p. 419).

Paradoxically, most of the community journalism startups studied here have emerged *as a result of* the precarity characterizing the journalistic field. As the chapter discusses in more detail, many of those who have started community journalism outfits previously worked as journalists for larger local, regional or national news organizations, but were laid off or found the changes to their working conditions increasingly intolerable. At the same time, the decision to start their own news organization has brought about new forms of precarity, in the form of financial uncertainty and deprivation.

As Örnebring (2018, p. 110) points out, precarity is “not only the formal arrangements of employment (and unemployment) but also about how living under these conditions makes you think and feel.” In this context, I take a particular interest in how community journalists talk about and make sense of their experiences of financial uncertainty. I draw on Arlie

Hochschild's (2016) concept of the "deep story." A "deep story" is a narrative resource that individuals draw on, and that are often shared amongst members of particular social groups, which explains your condition in a way that *feels* right (Hochschild, 2016). The deep story of community journalism practitioners, I argue, is one of noble sacrifice for the normative purpose of serving the community through the provision of local news. This sacrifice, in turn, was emotionally anchored in interviewees' articulation of passion and love for their work.

## Methodology

The chapter is based on in-depth interviews with 57 community journalism editors, carried out over between June and September 2020. In all but a handful of cases, they were the sole individuals producing content for the outlets. Of these interviews, just 12 were women, reflecting the gender imbalance in the profession.<sup>i</sup> Interviewees represented all nations and regions of the UK, with one interviewee based in Ireland. They account for a significant proportion of the 123 members of the Independent Community News Network (ICNN), the main organization representing the interests of the independent community news sector in the UK. The network is hosted by the Centre for Community Journalism (C4CJ) at Cardiff University. Interviewees were recruited with assistance from C4CJ and were offered a £40 incentive for their participation. The interviews explored the following areas: (1) the interviewees' professional backgrounds, (2) their route into the community journalism sector, (3) their financial conditions, (4) their news coverage, and (5) their experiences during the coronavirus pandemic.<sup>ii</sup>

Interviews lasted between 59 minutes and 1 hour 20 minutes. Due to the restrictions on face-to-face interaction imposed by the coronavirus pandemic, all interviews were carried out over Zoom, Skype or phone. Interviewees were given the option of being identified or remain

anonymous either for the interview as a whole, or in particular parts. The vast majority of respondents (50 out of 59) wished to be identified. In cases where respondent wished to remain anonymous, they have been given pseudonyms and any details which may reveal their identity have been removed for the purposes of this chapter. Interviews were transcribed with the assistance of otter.ai transcription software and were then analyzed for attention to recurring themes. I have provided detailed accounts of some of the interviewees' accounts to illustrate key themes, indicating the extent to which they are representative of the sector as a whole.

#### The deep story of sacrifice: Normative and emotional justifications

Many of the editors had come into the role from long, varied and often distinguished careers in local and national journalism. For those editors, the decision to leave start up community news organizations often came from a passionate attachment to local news, combined with the increasing struggles of working within established news media. For example, Andy Vallis, of the *Wells Voice*, started his paper after a career spanning 30 years in local journalism, culminating in a senior editorial role at the *Bristol Evening Post*. During the eleven years of his work for established local titles, he was laid off twice. The first time he was made redundant, in 2006, he used his payout to write a science-fiction novel. While he eventually decided that the novel was “rubbish,” taking the time to write it fulfilled a life-long dream. The second time he took redundancy, in 2017, it was in response to a consolidation in the local newspaper group for which he worked. The consolidation meant a reduced emphasis on local news coverage and an increased drive to maximize clicks from web content. On this occasion, he decided to step away from increasingly insecure and



unsatisfactory working conditions in the local newspaper industry. Instead, he used his expertise in local news to start monthly news magazine and website in Wells, an affluent and picturesque small city in the south-west of England. His decision to start the *Wells Voice* was shaped by his commitment to the community. At the same time, Vallis recognized that the consolidation of local newspaper titles meant that there was now little local coverage of news in the city, and therefore a gap in the market. The decision to start up the *Wells Voice*, however, involved significant financial risk and uncertainty. Even though he was, and remains, the sole employee of the outlet, he still needed to cover his own costs:

I could only start [the *Wells Voice*] because I'd been made redundant and had my redundancy money, which was about £6000. And for the first six months or nine months, I wasn't making money. [...] I used up all my redundancy money, all went in the *Voice*, and my mum and dad were giving me money to help me survive. And, yeah, I was having to pay upfront for the printing costs. I was having to pay the deliverers as I recruited them, and they were doing the delivery. So there were upfront costs before I was getting money in from the advertising. Each month, I was paying out more than I had, I didn't have the money in the bank. It might have been 12 months before I had a little bit of money that I built up in the bank, so that I was able to keep a cushion there each month, and then it's maintained an upward trend ever since.

For Vallis, taking “redundancy has had a sort of silver lining” by giving him the opportunity to explore long-standing ambitions. At the same time, Vallis stressed that he was able to start up, and continue running, the *Wells Voice* because he managed to pay off his mortgage, enabling him to live on a reduced income – in his case, a third of what he earned when he worked in a senior role in regional newspapers.:<sup>iii</sup>

As soon as I paid [off the mortgage], the financial burden sort of lifted off my shoulders because then [...] it didn't matter earning a much smaller income. And so, I feel comfortable now, with the amount that I earn and it's perfectly enough for me to live on. So yes, it's a pay cut, but through other factors really, it's really perfectly enough to get by with.

In Vallis' case, then, the broader conditions of precarity in the journalistic profession had pushed him to start his entrepreneurial career as a community news provider. But this decision was justified in emotional terms, by his professed love for the local community and in commercial terms, through the recognition of a gap in news provision. He was able to pursue his passion and get by financially through a combination of economic *privilege* and *sacrifice*: While his long-standing career in journalism and family support provided him with financial stability to start up his paper and pay off his mortgage, he continued to earn a reduced income, though “perfectly enough to live on.”

His story was typical of the interviewees. For example, Kathy Bailes, editor of the *Thanet News* in the east of England, the decision to start her own news site was the result of worsening work conditions at the local paper, the *Isle of Thanet Gazette*, where she had worked for 15 years. Towards the end of that period, the paper underwent a major reorganization, which dramatically changed her role. A number of local titles were consolidated into one regional site – *Kent Live* - and editors of these titles were either made redundant or offered curatorial roles as “content editors.” That new role took her away from covering local news, and she therefore decided to leave the organization and start out her own news site, which launched in 2017:

Bailes: There was definitely a gap where we weren't covering local news. I didn't feel like we were doing stories that kind of really mattered to people living in the

community. I know; I live there. So, we, we were just being told not to do stories that I knew mattered. And I didn't like it so I thought I would do it myself. So I did. So, that's what the site does. [It's] local news but it covers lots of areas, so news, education, opinion columns, [...] tourism, and leisure is a big part of what we're about.

Bailes, then, explicitly recognized that covering local news – in her case, ranging from a centenarian birthday to the renovation of a beachfront bandstand – served a valuable normative purpose because it “really mattered to people living in the community.” And for Bailes and other community journalism startup editors, this was a purpose worth making sacrifices for. As a result of starting the site, she had seen her income cut in half and her workload tripled. Bailes now works 12-hour days, seven days a week. Like many other community journalism editors, she is the sole employee of the news site and responsible for all aspects of its running. She had her first weekend off since the site’s launch in June 2020, after receiving a council grant to support businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic, which enabled her to hire a former colleague to cover the local community and create content for her news site .

The discussion of economic and personal sacrifice in the service of normative goals was widespread amongst interviewees. One editor represented a particularly extreme case. Chris Robertson<sup>\*iv</sup> had a long and varied career with several high-profile and well-remunerated positions prior to starting up his community news organization. He was the Executive Producer for the website for the inaugural edition of Big Brother in the UK, overseeing the first live streaming of television content in the country. He subsequently trained as a crime scene investigator and worked as a crime scene photographer for national newspapers. As a long-time resident of an impoverished community in East London, run by what he saw as a

corrupt council, he decided to set up a local investigative journalism site to hold the local council accountable for what he saw as systematically corrupt practices. His site, which is characterized by slick design, publishes investigative reports and local news stories on a daily basis attracts. It significant audiences, with daily visits ranging from 5,000 to 20,000+. For Robertson, the decision to prioritize his news site had significant personal consequences:

At the time I was a contractor doing user experience design, for which I was paid a minimum of £400 a day. So, I had quite a nice life actually. But it's not something I've believed in. When I got into doing this [producing news website], it was a perfect mix of my skills. It just totally took me over. And I neglected my day job, because I was using that to subsidize [the community news site]. I would do a contract for a couple of weeks, and that gives me enough money to do into that stuff for two or three weeks or longer. But [I got] so involved in it that I didn't pay enough attention to my day job, I ran out of money, had to leave where I was living, and there was nowhere to go to. I had a choice. I can move somewhere else, but I wouldn't have any friends; I certainly couldn't do the work I'm doing hundreds of miles away, because you have to be here on the ground and stay consistent in the work. I chose to stay, to camp out. I slept in a teeny weeny little tent, a tent not much bigger than me.

Robertson lived in the tent, pitched in a local park, for two years. Every morning, he would leave the tent and take his laptop to a local café, where he would work throughout the day on his site, using the café's WiFi. Three years ago, his social worker found a place for him in a homeless hostel, where he still lives today, and gets by on benefits and small-scale donations from readers. For Robertson, the importance of the work justified this sacrifice. At the same

time, he acknowledged that the choices he had made may not be sustainable in the longer term:

Robertson: I might be a keen enthusiast, but I'm not a martyr. It certainly is affecting my health. And, yeah, sorry but there's a limit. [...] On one level, it's just a matter of, you know, changing the main page to, you know, we are not here anymore. And that's it. So that's something you need to do and then you just go off and do something else.

While Robertson's sacrifice was extreme, it dramatized the tension between interviewees' attachments to local journalism on the one hand, and the profound difficulties of making community journalism sustainable on the other. Robertson viewed his role as one of helping to "restore some semblance of democracy to the borough" by serving as a watchdog on the council's abuses of power and money. While the motivations varied amongst our interviewees, they consistently foregrounded the importance of serving the local community as a normative justification that rendered their sacrifices worthwhile. Columba O'Hare, editor of *Newry.ie*, a news website in a town in Northern Ireland, near to the Irish border with Ireland, pays himself just above minimum wage from his work on the site, occasionally supplementing his income with work as an event photographer. His involvement was shaped by his desire to improve the community, and he described his long and successful campaign to establish a local park as his most significant achievement: "I have to say I do like what I do, I do like to be involved in the community. And I like to feel that even in a small way you can make a little bit of a difference."

Some of the editors managed the financial uncertainty of community news production by supporting their work through other forms of employment, frequently in areas unrelated to journalism. Such a strategy is symptomatic of the growing frequency of portfolio careers, premised on leaving employment in established organizations and instead striking out on their own, often working in a free-lance capacity for a variety of different clients (e.g. Granger, Stanworth & Stanworth, 1995; Mallon, 1998). It is particularly prevalent in creative and cultural industries. For example, in the music industry, technological change has made it more difficult to make a living from recording and performing music, and musicians therefore increasingly rely on a portfolio of work to get by (Bartleet et al., 2012). These include music teaching, technical support and administration, but also extend to sectors outside the music industry.

Similarly, many of the interviewees engaged in paid employment related to, but clearly distinctive from, journalism. Alan McIntosh of the *Broughton Spurtle* subsidized his work on the site through his paid employment as an editor for a major academic publisher. Julian Calvert of *Lochside Press* and Una Murphy of *View Digital* both supported themselves financially by teaching journalism at university level. Lynne Thomas of the Cardiff-based *Inksplott*, covering the deprived neighborhood of Splott, juggled her editorial duties with a full-time job on Cardiff University's engagement team. Her work on *Inksplott*, while entirely separate from her "day job," was informed by the ethos of community engagement and empowerment that underpinned it.

However, even for those editors who ran their sites as a hobby, doing so frequently entailed significant sacrifices. They were able to make a comfortable living from their "day jobs" and their financial security was not under threat. Yet running a community journalism outlet on

top of paid employment meant the sacrifice of leisure and family time. John Barron, editor of *West Leeds Dispatch* in the north of England, had previously worked as a community coordinator for *The Guardian*, as part of a project through which the newspaper sought to expand local coverage in cities including Cardiff, Glasgow and Leeds. When he was made redundant from the role as a result of cutbacks at the newspaper, he decided to try his hand by setting up the *Dispatch*. Barron receives minimal compensation for his work on the site, supporting himself by doing a “day job” as a part-time marketing coordinator for Bramley Baths, a local swimming pool, run as a social enterprise. As a result of his career change, his salary halved:

If you could you go back 10 years when I was working for the Guardian, and if you'd said, “You're going to move from the *Guardian* to working for Bramley Baths,” I probably wouldn't have believed it, with all due respect to Bramley Baths. I mean, my income has halved, over 10 years, just to allow me to come to do *West Leeds Dispatch*, and hopefully get that into a position where we are at least semi sustainable. And it has been a sacrifice. Yeah. And you know the toll that that takes on your family. In terms of, you know, family life; you come home from work and you've got another five hours of work on *West Leeds Dispatch*.[...] You know where there are times it's not been easy.

Ben Black, a former reporter for the regional newspaper, the *South Wales Argus*, started the site, *Cwmbran Life*, while working full-time for the local housing authority. For Black, his work on the site meant giving up evenings and weekends, but he justified it as a labor of love: “And everything I do with *Cwmbran Life* is all done in my spare time. [...] But I love it, I love to do it, I love it, I can't explain how happy it makes me just doing it.” Black's repeated

invocation of “love” represented a particularly fierce articulation of the emotional investment of community journalism startup practitioners. However, it resonates more broadly with the sentiments expressed across our sample, with several interviewees referring to “feeling passionate” (female editor, England) about local news.

In this sense, the articulation of strongly positive emotions of “love” and “passion” underpin the deep story of noble sacrifice. That is to say, while interviewees consistently pointed to the difficulties of making a living through community journalism startups, these sacrifices were worthwhile not only because of the normative justifications addressed above, but also in emotional terms, because of their love and passion for local news.

While such language is striking, it is not accidental or unique to community journalism, even if the strong positive emotions are specifically and explicitly linked to the context of the local. For one, it calls to mind a widespread discourse among journalists which constructs their work as a “calling” based journalism as a public service and a “noble profession” (Weaver et al., 2009: 58). More broadly, if, as scholars have argued, emerging patterns of labor within the creative industries constitute a distinctive formation of “creative capitalism” (Szaniecki & Cocco, 2015), it is also one that requires continual justification and maintenance. In this context, discourses embedding strongly positive emotions including passion and love are essential for creative workers seeking to explain their attachment to laboring in increasingly precarious and difficult conditions (Duffy & Wissinger, 2017; Morini, Carls & Amano, 2014). While their expressions of love are deeply personal and presented as the motivations for their *individual* choices, they are repeated across the sample,



and clearly cannot be seen as separate from the structural conditions of precarity in the journalism profession.

A significant minority of editors did not rely on income from their news sites or from juggling journalism with a “day job,” either because they were retired or because they were able to draw on their families’ financial resources. In the case of these editors, operating a community news site was not a material or personal sacrifice, but instead a hobby facilitated by financial privilege that provided them with a sense of purpose. Steve Downes, who runs *Inside Croydon*, a local investigative journalism site in England after a long career in news agency and national newspaper reporting was able to fund his work through family wealth. Like Chris Robertson, he was motivated by a desire to use his investigative skills to hold what he saw as a corrupt local authority to account: “Because I am living in the middle of it up to my ears in the crap that we have to put up with here. It has been a really badly run local authority for a very long time, with a lot of corruption, very questionable deals being done in terms of their contract requisitions.” Mike Rawlins, who publishes the community website *MyTuriff*, based in Scotland, explicitly describes his work as “a hobby”:

So if it cost me a few quid it's cheaper than paying for a golf subscription. And that's honestly the way I look at it [...]. I could go and play golf badly. And that's gonna cost me, what, 500 pounds a year. And, well actually I quite enjoy doing that [work on the website] and I think there's a value to it.

As such, community journalism startups rely heavily on volunteer labor,, enabled by economic and social privilege (see also Moore, 2015, p. 78). Indeed, those doing community journalism as a “hobby” or in addition to a day job constituted a significant minority among interviewees. While volunteer labor has always been essential to the sector (e.g. Harte,

Howells & Williams, 2018; Moore, 2016), this study suggests that there is now a growing number of providers able to devote themselves to working full-time on their community news startups. However, as the chapter has shown, financial uncertainty is an ever-present concern which structures the self-understandings and narratives of community journalists.

Conclusion: Making sense of the deep story

In their study of self-employed professionals in the book publishing industry, Granger and his colleagues (1995) identify four types of career categories. These included (1) refugees, or individuals pushed to self-employment who continue to prefer stable, contractual jobs; (2) missionaries, who had left contractual employment voluntarily; (3) trade-offs, who opted for self-employment to enhance work-life balance, and (4) converts, who may have started as refugees pushed out of self-employment but subsequently came around to the lure of autonomy and entrepreneurial ideology (pp. 510-511). ). In the case of the community journalism startup practitioners interviewed for this chapter, most could be described as converts: They had been pushed out of stable contractual employment by the crisis in the journalism industry, and suffered significant financial and personal hardship to pursue a new career as journalism start-up entrepreneurs. Despite the challenges of their experience of these profound structural changes, they claimed agency through the development of the deep story of noble sacrifice in the service of local news. This sacrifice was justified in emotional terms, as fueled by passion and love for journalism and for their local communities.

Although there is no doubting the authenticity of interviewees' proclamations of passion and love, they also represent complicity with a form of emotional labor "that both encourages and disciplines laboring subjectivities for a radically unstable economy" (Duffy & Wissinger, 2017, p. 4664). As such, while they enable the journalists to carry on their hard work, they

ultimately circumvent the troubling and difficult questions of how to create sustainable models of local news in the public interest.

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<sup>i</sup> It is unclear why community journalism is so male-dominated. Some of the women we interviewed reflected on their gendered experience, with two of them describing making a deliberate choice to pursue community journalism because they saw it as a family-friendly occupation which allowed them greater flexibility to juggle care-related responsibilities (Una Murphy of View Digital and one interviewee who wished to remain anonymous)

<sup>ii</sup> The research received funding from the British Academy COVID-19 grants programme. Interviews were carried out by myself, as well as Dr Julia Boelle (project researcher) and Dr Inaki Garcia-Blanco.

<sup>iii</sup> Stories of being able to survive on the income provided by an independent community news organization frequently involved editors being able to pay off their mortgages to reduce their cost of living prior to starting up their outlet.

<sup>iv</sup> The name of the editor has been changed to preserve his anonymity. While the editor agreed to be named in publications – before and after the interview – I subsequently decided that it would be unethical to reveal his identity due to the potential impact on his benefit income.