

Rethinking the 'community' function of community radio online – an ageing punk perspective

Charlotte Bedford

Abstract

The social, cultural and political significance of community media lies in its community development function (van Vuuren 2006), constructing and strengthening community identities through participation in the organisation, production and distribution of content (Meadows et al 2007). Traditionally, these have been primarily communal functions, based on the collective action of communities of interest or locality. However, as increasingly affordable and accessible digital technologies transform media production and distribution, radio making and listening practices are becoming more individualised and dispersed.

Developing over almost half a century, the Australian community broadcasting sector has always been a space of change, disruption and innovation. Currently, stations are redefining their services to reflect the changing ways in which radio is made, distributed and listened to in the digital age (Dubber 2014), developing online reach through website live stream, listen again, and social media platforms. Through autoethnographic reflections on the production of a small sub-metro weekly alternative music program over an eight-year period, this paper discusses the changing ways in which broadcasters are engaging with audiences and considers the implications for how we understand the 'community' function of community radio online.

Keywords: community radio; ageing; DIY punk; autoethnography; digital disruption

Introduction

The social, cultural and political significance of community media lies in its community development function (van Vuuren 2006), constructing and strengthening community identities through participation in the organisation, production and distribution of content (Meadows et al 2007). Traditionally, these have been primarily communal functions, based on the collective action of communities of interest or locality, but as affordable and accessible digital technologies transform media production and distribution, radio making and listening practices are increasingly individualised. Where program production once required studio space, editing and research facilities, content is now easily made by individuals at home to be shared and uploaded to the station schedule. Similarly, where radio listening was once dependent on the live experience, listeners are now able to access seemingly infinite audio content choices through a range of online on-demand platforms.

The community media sector in Australia is one of the most established in the world, with more than 450 non-profit services legislated to provide opportunities for community engagement and participation. Developing over almost half a century, the sector has been a space of continual change, disruption and innovation. Currently, stations are redefining their services to reflect the changing ways in which radio is made, distributed and listened to in the digital age (Dubber 2014), developing online reach through website live stream, listen again, and social media platforms. In an environment of increasingly individualised and dispersed audio production and listening practices, this paper discusses the changing ways in which broadcasters are engaging with audiences and

considers the implications for how we understand the ‘community’ function of community radio.

Practitioner reflections on the production of a small sub-metro weekly alternative music program over an eight-year period provide a case study for exploring the participatory impact of community radio online. It is an autoethnographic approach that recognises the depth and social relevance that personal experience can bring to both the communication research process (Lindgren 2017 and Adams 2012) and the interrogation of cultural practices (Holman Jones, Adam and Ellis 2013). As Mia Lindgren (2017) outlines in her account of audio journalism and identity, combined elements of ethnography and autobiography allow researchers and producers to reflexively explore their creative process, personal experiences, and interactions with others ‘as a way of achieving wider cultural, political or social understanding’ (Pace 2012, 2).

As such, this paper brings together two interlinked and enduring themes that have influenced my creative practice, my academic research, and my life in general – community radio and Do-It-Yourself (DIY) punk culture. Focusing on the production of a current community radio program, and drawing on almost three decades of media activism, I set out to examine the impact of digital technologies on my own radio involvement. It is a process that has caused me to reflect on the changing ways in which radio connects with my own concept of community, and how it continues to facilitate DIY punk friendships, allegiances, and creative and political collaborations around the world. The primary function of community media remains the ability to provide opportunities for local participation in the organisation and production of independent media. Yet as community radio extends online, I consider the role it plays in building and sustaining alternative and countercultural communities internationally.

The ‘localness’ of global community radio

Local content and participation are central to the value and purpose of community media. Within a media landscape dominated by global corporations, the struggle to retain local services is more vital than ever. The recent announcement of new localness guidelines by UK regulator Ofcom (2018) provides a timely example, paving the way for the removal of local programming quotas for FM commercial radio, allowing for increased national syndication, and raising significant concerns for the future. In contrast, community radio exists explicitly to involve local communities. For instance, Australian licence obligations require stations to demonstrate the ability to serve, represent, and engage with a specified community. To support this, the community broadcasting participation guidelines issued by sector regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA 2010), highlight the need to encourage participation and represent community interest through a range of initiatives and measures. Recent changes to the Broadcasting Services Act and the subsequent update of the B66 licence application and renewal forms demonstrate the continuation of this commitment by emphasising localness and including increasingly specific questions on participation (Friedlander Liddicoat 2018).

Equally however, the role of the academic researcher is to investigate the global impact and significance of community media. As Kerrie Foxwell (2012, 142) argues, ‘While community radio practitioners may be primarily concerned with serving a local community or representing a marginalised group, community media researchers draw attention to the impact of these media to challenge neoliberalism and the political

economic order'. The diversity and scope of local community media is demonstrated by the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC 2018), listing almost 4,000 members and associates in 150 countries. Where models differ worldwide, the sector is broadly defined by its non-profit status and a focus on community participation and accountability (Jolly 2014). Such principles stand in stark contrast to the profit motives of global mass media. Increasing concentrations of corporate ownership have colonised mainstream media, reducing the numbers of voices heard, limiting the diversity of media products available, and decimating the public sphere function of media as a site for informed political debate. As a response, a range of non-commercial, alternative and community media have continued to flourish (Waltz 2005).

Kerrie Foxwell (2012) outlines the rise of community media as a significant global movement which challenges mainstream media power. Dominated by global media corporations, mass media and communications play a fundamental role in reinforcing and perpetuating the global capitalist agenda. While commanding the audience sizes necessary for public sphere debate, mass media limits the range of available discourses to those that reinforce dominant neoliberal values. In contrast, community radio participants are subverting mainstream media organisation and practices through the production of their own media, 'replacing the homogenising tendencies of mainstream media with a positive cacophony of voices and interests, representing diverse interests and places' (Foxwell 2012, 138).

Foxwell's analysis is helpful for establishing the counterhegemonic status of community media. Far from being grounded in progressive politics or social issues, activity is driven by varied objectives and motivations, organised, regulated, funded and operated in different formats worldwide. In Australia, the origins of the community broadcasting sector lie in a sustained collective campaign by diverse interest groups including classical music enthusiasts, multicultural groups, universities and colleges, and radical political groups (Forde, Meadows and Foxwell 2002). As an established permanent sector, it is relatively conservative in organisation and content. Susan Forde, Michael Meadows and Kerrie Foxwell (2002) note a further shift to the right of the political spectrum in recent decades, coinciding with a growth in regional areas and an increasing commitment to commercial goals. Yet, whether or not it is participants' explicit intention, the very existence of an independent media sector is subversive, challenging the power of commercial forces to colonise media production and distribution.

As Christian Fuchs and Marisol Sandoval (2014) identify, the key definitions, values, ideals and aims that characterise the sector include collective organisation, non-commercial financing, and content-related and structural participation. Such factors depend primarily on practical, localised involvement. Yet as community radio services extend online, so does the potential for social impact, relating not only to local participation, but to the geographically diverse communities that it is able to develop, build and support, based on shared values, tastes and beliefs. Tanja Dreher's (2017) discussion of political listening as media participation is useful for exploring this notion further. Increasing practical pressures to justify access to public funding and the broadcast spectrum are underpinned by conceptual challenges involving the appropriation of a discourse of community in mainstream and social media. She argues the need to reclaim and reassert the core concepts of 'social', 'participation', and 'listening' in order to capture the social impact of community media in the digital era.

The celebratory claims of media participation and democratisation that surround the growth of digital technologies and social media incorporate and dilute key terms historically associated with community media. Used in relation to social media, 'participation' is a prime example, becoming 'overstretched' and 'potentially meaningless' (Dreher 2017, 23). In contrast, the term is foregrounded in community and alternative media theory and practice, and recognised as 'shaping and becoming part of the political process' (Rennie 2002, 7). To illustrate this, Dreher (2017) draws on Nico Carpentier's (2016) analysis of participatory media processes. Distinct from broader concepts of access, engagement and interaction, Carpentier formulates a political definition of participation which focuses on 'the equalization of power relations between privileged and non-privileged actors in formal or informal decision-making processes' (2016, 72). Through an emphasis on power, democratisation and social change, participation is reframed as 'power-sharing'.

The alternative and community media disruption of mainstream media power extends beyond practical and structural decision-making to include the choices made in media consumption. As Dreher argues, an increased focus on the politics and practices of 'listening' can contribute to greater understanding of the opportunities and barriers to full participation (2017, 25). The ability to post and share content through commercial social media platforms has served the causes and interests of a wide variety of groups and individuals, but where the diversity of voices available has increased, the question of which voices are heard remains.

The theorisation of listening is a response that focuses on the choices involved in media consumption, representing 'the other side' of participation and voice (Dreher 2017). Crucially, Ellie Rennie, Leo Berkeley and Blaise Murphet (2012) add the concept of ethical choice to the discussion. Exploring the relationship between broadcast and online community media, they recognise that the unique value of the sector is no longer defined by access. Instead, they encourage 'a movement around informed and ethical consumption of media, by highlighting the values and qualities that make community media distinctive' (30).

An ageing punk perspective

My involvement with community media began in the mid-1980s with an indie music show on a small, seaside, temporary Restricted Service Licence station in the United Kingdom. It sparked a commitment to the cause that has inspired a career of media teaching and research, survived a move to Australia a decade ago, and impacted on my children as they grew up, in what I hope are primarily positive ways. Having experienced a variety of volunteer and staff roles involving production, presenting, training, fundraising, governance, and management, I continue to be inspired by radio's ability to give a voice to the most excluded, underrepresented and misrepresented people in society.

In addition, DIY punk politics and values have been an ongoing influence throughout my life, stemming from involvement in the 1990s anarcho-punk scene as a fanzine producer, gig promoter and ska-punk band member. In an era of anti-capitalist protest and direct action, including hunt saboteurs, squatters and travellers' rights, the free party movement, road protests, and anti-fascism (McKay 1998), shared political beliefs and values were more defining than specific music style and genre. DIY punk rejects capitalist, consumerist culture through self-organisation, built through a network of local

and global scenes, and connected by an 'ethical code' generally associated with anarchist and left-wing ideology (Griffin, N. 2012). A growing field of punk scholarship highlights variances in the code and how it is enacted within different punk communities (Gordon 2015, Griffin, N. 2012, Glasper 2006). However, as Ian Glasper (2006, 9) states in his history of early anarcho-punk, 'bands were bound together more by their ethics than any unwritten musical doctrine ... influences taken from everywhere from meandering folk via raging hardcore to arty noise and back again. "No rules!" was the only real mantra, after all'.

At the time, I considered my punk activism and community radio production reasonably separate, independent activities. As my involvement with both has continued to develop organically over the decades, they have become increasingly interdependent, grounded in a commitment to anti-capitalist, social justice values. Although there is a distinct lack of academic study establishing an explicit link between the two, there are clear parallels between the evolution of radio and punk culture. As Sue Carpenter (2004, 164) states in her account of pirate radio involvement in the United States, both are concerned with issues of individual freedom, expression and identity. Equally, the history of both has been shaped by DIY practice to bypass and counteract institutional, commercial and corporate control.

The core principles on which the community radio sector was founded are interchangeable with those of DIY punk activism; both are based on diversity, inclusivity, independent organisation, and collective action. These counterhegemonic non-mainstream aims fit well with those of autoethnographic inquiry. Recognising the multiple, complex intersectionalities of identity that influence our daily lives (Boylorn and Orbe 2014), the narrative first-person examination of the self is used as a starting point to interrogate cultural practices (Holman Jones, Adams and Ellis 2013). It explicitly rejects the knowledge claims of traditional 'canonical' research methods (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011) to facilitate alternative perspectives and 'give voice' to previously silenced and marginalised experiences, answer unexamined questions about the multiplicity of social identities, instigate discussions about and across difference, and explain the contradictory intersections of personal and cultural standpoints' (Boylorn and Orbe 2014, 15).

Personal experience is an increasingly recognised addition to the study of music, politics and culture, able to provide a nuanced history of countercultural movements. Retrospective accounts of music-related scenes and movements tend to rely on populist interpretations supplied by journalists, musicians, and others in the media spotlight. Yet as Andy Bennett (2013) argues, the voices of those involved are crucial for understanding the political dimensions of punk. Furthermore, the personalised narrative has been shown to be useful for capturing the ethos, philosophy and complexities of DIY and anarcho-punk involvement, such as Naomi Griffin's (2012) experience of prevailing sexism in local scenes or Alastair Gordon's (2015) vivid account of animal rights activism, "'To end up on your table, and shat out of an arse": stinky front rooms, cabbages and animal rights in anarcho-punk'. As Sarah Attfield (2011) shows, the 'punk attitude' of the insider researcher provides authentic insight into punk cultures.

Similarly, the insider perspective is central to the study of alternative and community media. Chris Atton's (2015) influential theory acknowledges the role of researcher as active participant, providing opportunities for 'critical thinking that is situated in the real

world' (10). Recognising that no study of alternative media can be definitive or comprehensive, he argues that all instances of independent cultural practice can be considered only in relation to historical, cultural, economic and political context, calling for reflexive engagement through direct involvement (2015).

Beyond active participation, autoethnography draws on the personal life and emotional experiences of the researcher. Broadly defined as cultural analysis through personal narrative (Boylorn and Orbe 2014, 17), the approach recognises the significance of lived experience for exploring the multidimensional and intersecting nature of cultural life. This makes it particularly effective for exploring issues of identity and belonging, in this case for understanding the diverse communities of community radio. Rather than merely recounting experiences, it involves analysis and reflexive critique of those experiences. As Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) explain, autoethnographic research can be 'rigorous, theoretical, and analytical and emotional, therapeutic, and inclusive of personal and social phenomena' (p. 283). Describing it as the 'methodology of choice' for exploring issues of culture, power, and communication in society, Robin Boylorn and Mark Orbe (2014, 16) highlight 'the explicit objective to resist unidimensional treatments of complex phenomenon'.

Just as I have introduced the political dimensions of DIY punk and community radio participation, autoethnography is increasingly associated with politics of resistance, examples including the black feminist experience (Griffin, 2012) and queer fat activism (Cooper 2012). Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) describe autoethnographic research as a political, socially just act. Established ways of conducting social research privilege the white, male, heterosexual, Christian, middle and upper class, able-bodied, perspective. In contrast, the autoethnographic focus on lived experience challenges rigid definitions of what constitutes meaningful research, opening up a wider lens on the world (275). Again, there are clear parallels with the community media aims of increasing marginalised voices and empowerment through self-representation (Meadows et al. 2007).

DIY punk radio

For the past eight years, I have presented a two-hour program with my partner on a small sub-metro community radio station close to where we live. Every Tuesday evening we have trudged around to the station without fail, through thunderstorms and heatwaves, dragging ourselves away from the cosy couch no matter how challenging the day has been, and only rarely missing a show due to sickness or an occasional holiday. By the time the headphones are plugged in, the music cued, and the mics turned on, the stresses of daily life briefly disappear. When we began producing the show, we were both old hands at community radio from back in the UK. After a move to Australia, it started out as a way of doing something together, away from work, children and domesticity. Some middle-aged couples take up salsa dancing; our joint leisure activity is making radio. What began through a love of radio and music soon became a way of staying in touch with friends around the world, engaging with our community of people who share similar tastes, values and interests.

The music content is eclectic with a strong emphasis on punk and 'alternative', including folk, reggae, ska, jazz, funk, northern soul, techno, and even the occasional prog-rock track thrown in. Combined with our own particular music choices at any time, the playlists are heavily inspired by listener comments and suggestions on social media. The audience interaction format has evolved over the years. Past examples include matching

songs to weekly themes, the most memorable of which was ‘trauma’, resulting in a diverse selection ranging from ‘Hamburger Lady’ by Throbbing Gristle, and ‘Well Fancy That’ by Fun Boy Three, to ‘Two Little Boys’ by pre-conviction Rolf Harris. Overall, the structure and tone are improvised, mildly humorous, rambling, and overwhelmingly chaotic.

Broadcast live on FM within a 10-kilometre radius, and streamed through the station website, the program has maintained a steady listenership over the years. Initially, friends and family in the UK would listen in when we posted about the show on social media. After we had abandoned them for the southern hemisphere, they were able to hear us bickering in their kitchens again as if we had never left. As the novelty subsided, a regular audience evolved based on connections with music scenes around the world, one that I would broadly characterise as an ‘ageing punk diaspora’. Originating with people we actually knew, the audience has expanded through their own contacts and recommendations. The result is a suitably diverse group of people from across Australia, Europe, and the US, whose commonalities are a generation of music and a leaning towards ‘alternative’ punk values and politics.

While middle age is not a prerequisite for participation, we are mostly in our 40s and 50s. With the notable exception of one person in his 50s who has steadfastly committed to the green Mohawk, the style statements of our younger years have been replaced largely with more practical and comfortable options, but the non-mainstream, countercultural values prevail. As the increasing focus on ageing in punk scholarship shows, the tendency to equate music with youth is problematic (Herrmann 2012); it fails to acknowledge the enduring nature of subcultural identities throughout our lives. Works such as Bennett’s (2006) investigation of punk music fandom highlight a continuing significance for an older generation, a position that can be applied equally to the active participation of the DIY punk perspective. Representations of older scene involvement have been critiqued as simplistic, portrayed as a refusal to grow up (Hodgkinson 2013). Instead, Peter Hodgkinson (2013) argues the need to examine the relationships between continuing participation and other aspects of developing adult life, all intertwined with career, family and even the ageing body.

These questions are complicated further in relation to DIY punk, a movement that emphasises the ‘doing’ aspect of involvement. In previous research, I explore the aims and motivations of DIY punk radio producers after identifying a growing number of online programs and formats made by original participants of 1980s and 1990s anarcho-punk (Bedford 2016). Throughout interviews with individual producers, radio is described as an extension of wider DIY punk creative practice including bands, distros, promotions and fanzines. For the ageing punk, radio becomes a flexible and low-maintenance creative platform that can be easily balanced with multiple work, family and social commitments. As argued by my co-presenter, producing live radio is comparable to the experience of playing gigs in the 1990s, only without the late nights, tedious rehearsals, and exhausting touring.

Among the audience described here, the degree of original involvement and creative participation varies dramatically, yet similar themes remain. This includes an instinctive, generational connection with the medium of radio. As long-standing fanzine producer and co-presenter of *Under the pavement* radio show, Richard Cubesville (personal communication, 18 December 2015) states, ‘punks get radio’. For the DIY punk radio

producers interviewed, this is linked to the BBC Radio DJ John Peel. Although he represented the establishment BBC, his show gave a platform to punk and alternative artists that acted as a gateway:

John Peel has a lot to answer for - he made radio a vehicle for introducing a large audience to obscure and DIY music. Part of what we do is in that tradition hardly anything we play comes from major labels and much of what we do is rooted in the local DIY scene.

Cubenville (personal communication, 8 December 2015) describes a ‘questing spirit’ amongst those with obscure music tastes, with radio intimately connected to the discovery and sharing of new music. This is reflected within our program community of music nerds, examples are a mission to source bargain bagpipe vinyl for a collector friend in the US and my fortuitous introduction to the Columbian electronic ‘tecnocumbia’ genre.

‘Social’ media

The local impact of community radio participation extends beyond the production of a weekly show. Throwing myself into the politics of a small station and volunteering in roles such as training new presenters, attending monthly board meetings or helping out at the fundraising ‘sausage sizzle’, has immersed me in the local community I moved to a decade ago. Simultaneously, through live stream and a social media group, community radio online, has enabled me to retain and build connections with a transnational community across Australia, the UK, the US, Eire, France and Spain. An established subsector of ethnic community broadcasting licences demonstrates the significance of services that facilitate retention of cultural identity and connection with migrant communities in Australia (Forde, Foxwell and Meadows 2009). Equally, the use of digital communication technologies and the internet is recognised for enabling diasporic groups to connect to their homelands, reinforcing their collective identities (Andoni and Oiarzabal 2010).

Conventionally, diaspora refers to a shared country of origin, focusing on ethnicity as an explanation for displacement. Yet the concept of digital diaspora can equally be applied to the transnational nature of DIY punk culture, as Wendy Fangyu Hsu (2013) shows in her fascinating account of the South Asian American, Muslim-affiliated ‘Taqwacore’ punk music culture. Defining Taqwacore, she cites Michael Muhammad Knight (2004), who coined the term to reclaim a space for an alternative practice of Islam inflected with the punk anti-status-quo ethos. Hsu (2013) analyses the web production and social media engagement of one band to illustrate a DIY scene embedded in a global digital media network. Her conceptualisation of digital diaspora ‘foregrounds the Internet as a productive site of social interactions and community formation around and across the boundaries of nation, ethnicity, race, and religion’ (394). The conventional relationship between home and diaspora are reconceptualised, with the band creating a new social home in a digitally generated and hosted community.

Subject to time zone changes and a stable internet service, the live stream of our one small suburban radio program can reach audiences around the world. However, in a media environment of seemingly infinite choice, the qualities that encourage people to listen and interact regularly with community radio programming require ongoing examination. For us, a closed Facebook group has become the basis of the program

community through multiple conversations during the live two-hour broadcast and sporadic posts throughout the week. Radio has become an increasingly multi-platform venture, where social media use is an expected extension of any programming. However, rather than being a one-dimensional promotional tool, the evolution of our online community is based on shared musical tastes and political values.

The relationship between community radio and social media is problematic, not least because of corporate appropriation of the social values inherent in alternative and community media practice. As Dreher (2017) highlights, much of the analysis of digitally networked media impact operates within a surprisingly ‘thin’ account of the social. She cites concerns expressed by Nick Couldry and José Van Dijk (2015) that the factors which bind together human interaction have been coopted as ‘a site of new economic value and intense redefinition – when the term “social media” is not a description but an appropriation of the social’ (p. 1). In response, Christian Fuchs (2018) argues the need to socialise anti-social social media, describing Facebook as the epitome of digital capitalism in an environment where, ‘Far-right ideologues and movements will do whatever it takes to achieve their goals, including using digital media in all ways necessary for spreading propaganda and defeating political enemies’ (p. 54).

Developing over eight years, our Facebook group’s social media use demonstrates the small ways in which communities adapt and re-appropriate the most readily available platforms. What began as a program page quickly became a way for us to hold multiple inane conversations over the two hours, with topics ranging from gig stories and second-hand vinyl finds to breakfast choices. Soon it became apparent that friends of friends could become mildly irritated by the volume of unsolicited posts and random comments about veggie sausage sandwiches appearing on their news feeds, and the collective decision was made to create a closed group which has grown to more than 250 current members with around 20 active regular contributors. As well as providing information about the show, the online forum is used collectively to share information on gigs and events, such as the May Day Workers’ Rights Day of Action or the Invasion Day ‘No Pride in Genocide’ protests to change the date of Australia Day.

The tone and content of the online forum reflects that of the broadcast program through a collective endeavour that rejects the established promotional use of corporate ‘social’ media. As Fuchs (2016, 163) critiques, most platforms are:

...mainly focused on individuals who show off who they are and what they do. These are platforms for impressing others and performing identities and fostering individualism; this sets individuals against each other as competitors who accumulate friends, attention, and visibility. Such media could therefore better be called individualistic, neoliberal media, not social media.

In contrast, the program’s most recent current affairs format demonstrates an adaptation and reorganisation of Facebook activity around the established ethics of the group. The basis of the show involves matching member posts of odd, interesting or bizarre news stories to the group to be matched with songs and discussing them on the show. Rather than having set rules, the collective gradually developed informal guidelines that are summarised on the page:

Give us your local, national and international news events (please avoid the Daily Mail and Breitbart (right wing fake news), The Sun (Hillborough, tapping dead kids' phones) and other Murdoch sources wherever possible - it saves us generating them click-income and you having to listen to us go on about them on air!) with associated tunes. Hit us up on the facebook page (or another means) and join in with others' suggestions. Easy.

Although the use of Facebook is problematic in itself, the statement reinforces the collective values and conduct of the group. As Ellie Rennie (2016) argues, the future of community media in the online environment lies in this group position. In the era of individual, autonomous, open access and creative distribution, the relevance of the sector is continually brought into question. Yet the unique strengths and qualities of community media extend beyond the ability to distribute content, to the facilitation of cooperative distribution and sharing based on guidelines, policies and norms designed for groups. However community media continues to evolve in the digital era, the formats that survive will come from the same motive: 'groups wanting a cooperative space to enable the sharing of not just resources, but ideas, information and creativity' (Rennie 2016, 34).

Conclusion

Within the context of global corporate media, digital capitalism, and ever deepening rationalities of individualisation and division, community radio is a last bastion of communitarianism. Through a reflexive analysis of my own community radio participation, this paper considers how these foundational communal values are adapted and expanded in the online space. An autoethnographic approach recognises the diverse cultural experiences, identities and issues of representation and control involved in the production and consumption of alternative and community media. Norman K. Denzin's (2003) powerful call for 'performance' critical autoethnography describes the combination of interpretive methods, democratic politics, and feminist communitarian ethics as tools for countering reactionary political discourse. Grounded in 'insurgent cultural politics', it seeks not only to understand the world but also to lead the way to radical social change (Denzin 2003, 258), factors well suited to investigation of both the counterhegemonic position of community media and the countercultural practice of DIY punk.

This paper has explored the disruptive effects of digital technology through a case study of one instance of community radio practice. It is a personal reflection that explores the connection between my own community media participation and DIY punk activism, drawing parallels between the principles that have influenced a long-term involvement with both. Focus on the online activity of one small suburban radio show over an eight-year period illustrates the changing ways in which community radio producers are engaging with audiences. Made by people from the local area and including information on local gigs, events, and social activism, the show is definitively local community radio. Equally, it is relevant to people who are interested in different alternative scenes around the world for sharing music tastes and ideas. This suggests the continued wider impact of community radio in a global context for building and maintaining diverse communities of interest not served by mainstream media.

In the post-broadcast era of media over-abundance (Dreher 2017), individual media consumption continues to be driven by informed ethical decisions based on shared

values and cooperative networks (Rennie, Berkeley and Murphet 2012). As Rennie, Berkeley and Murphet (2012) show, and based on the values and priorities of each, community radio online is distinct from social networking media. Online community media organisations differ in that they are ‘community operated and controlled infrastructure that guarantees access and participation’ (24). Through an increasing number of online platforms, the access and participatory impact extends beyond organising and making programs to the act of political listening. Both locally and globally, community radio continues to provide a vital ethical media alternative through collective organisation. As the sector struggles to justify its relevance in a rapidly changing technological and policy environment, the key to its future lies in the recognition, retention and nurturing of these communitarian qualities.

About the Author

Dr Charlotte Bedford is an alternative media specialist with over 25 years’ experience of developing media projects alongside marginalised communities. A Visiting Research Fellow with the Department of Media at the University of Adelaide, her first book was published in 2018, on the history of UK prison radio. She is an ongoing community radio volunteer, project manager for the Community Media Training Organisation, and President of the South Australian Community Broadcasting Association. Email: charlotte.e.bedford@adelaide.edu.au

References

- Adams, T. E. 2012. “The joys of autoethnography: possibilities for communication research.” *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 1 (2): 181-194.
- Andoni, A. and P. J. Oiarzabal (Eds.) 2010. *Diasporas in the new media age: Identity, politics, and community*. Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press.
- Attfield, S. J. 2011. “Punk rock and the value of auto-ethnographic writing about music.” *Portal: journal of multidisciplinary international studies*. 8 (1) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5130/portal.v8i1.1741>
- Atton, C. 2015. *Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). 2010. “Community Broadcasting Participation Guidelines.” Belconnen, ACT: ACMA. Retrieved 19 September 2019, https://www.acma.gov.au/~/_/media/Community%20Broadcasting%20and%20Safeguards/Advice/pdf/Community%20Broadcasting%20Participation%20Guidelines.PDF
- Bedford, C. 2016. ““Old punks don’t die, they stand at the back’ - and make radio.” In Guerra, P. and Moreira, T., *Keep it Simple Make it Fast! An approach to underground music scenes, volume 2*. Porto, Portugal: University of Porto.
- Bennett, A. 2013. *Music, style, and ageing: growing old disgracefully?* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Bennett, A. (2006) “Punk’s not dead”: The continuing significance of punk rock for an older generation of fans. *Sociology* 40(2) 219-235.
- Boylorn, R. M., and Orbe, M. P. 2014. “Critical autoethnography: Implications and future directions.” *Critical autoethnography: intersecting cultural identities in everyday life*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Carpenter, S. (2004) *40 Watts from Nowhere: A Journey into Pirate Radio*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

- Carpentier, N. 2016. "Beyond the ladder of participation: An analytical toolkit for the critical analysis of participatory media processes." *Javnost – The Public* 23 (1): 70–88.
- Cooper, C. R. M. 2012. *Fat activism: a queer autoethnography*. Doctoral Thesis, University of Limerick, Ireland.
- Couldry, N. and Van Dijck, J. 2015. "Researching social media as if the social mattered." *Social Media + Society* 1 (2) DOI: 2056305115604174.
- Denzin, N. K. 2003. "Performing [auto] ethnography politically." *The Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies* 25 (3): 257-278. DOI: 10.1080/1071441039025894.
- Dreher, T. 2017. "Social/Participation/Listening: keywords for the social impact of community media." *Communication Research and Practice* 3 (1): 14-30.
- Dubber, A. 2014. *Radio in the digital age*. Oxford: John Wiley and Sons.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T.E. and Bochner, A.P. 2011. "Autoethnography: an overview." *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 12 (1): 273-290.
- Forde, S., Foxwell, K., and Meadows, M. 2009. *Developing dialogues: Indigenous and ethnic community broadcasting in Australia*. Bristol: Intellect Books.
- Forde, S., Meadows, M. and Foxwell, K. 2002. "Community radio, radicalism and the grassroots: discussing the politics of contemporary Australian community." *Transformations* 4: 1-9.
- Foxwell, K. 2012. "The rise of community mass media: Some implications for classic media theory." In Gordon, J. *Community radio in the twenty first century*, 133-152. London and New York: Peter Lang.
- Friedlander Liddicoat, H. 2018. *Changes to the Broadcasting Services Act affecting community broadcasters*. Community Broadcasting Association of Australia, Retrieved 12 September 2018, <https://www.cbaa.org.au/article/changes-broadcasting-services-act-affecting-community-broadcasters>
- Fuchs, C. 2018. "Socialising Anti-Social Social Media." In Mair, J., Clark, T., Fowler, N., Snoddy, R. (Eds.) *Anti-Social Media: the impact on journalism and society*, 58-63. Abramis Academic Publishing.
- Fuchs, C. 2016. *Reading Marx in the Information Age. A media and communication studies on Capital, Volume 1*. New York: Routledge.
- Fuchs, C., and Sandoval, M. 2014. *Critique, social media and the information society in the age of capitalist crisis*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Glasper, I. 2006. *The Day the Country Died: A History of Anarcho-Punk, 1980-1984*. London: Cherry Red.
- Gordon, A. 2015. "'To end up on your table, and shat out of an arse': stinky front rooms, cabbages and animal rights in anarcho-punk." In Bull, G. and Dines, M. (Eds.) *Some of us scream, some of us shout*. London: Itchy Monkey Press.
- Griffin, N. 2012. "Gendered performance performing gender in the DIY Punk and Hardcore music scene." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13 (2): 66-81.
- Griffin, R. A. 2012. "I AM an angry Black woman: Black feminist autoethnography, voice, and resistance." *Women's Studies in Communication* 35 (2): 138-157.
- Herrmann, A. F. 2012. "Never mind the scholar, here's the old punk: identity, community, and the ageing music fan." In Denzin, N. K. (Ed.), *Studies in symbolic interaction, vol 39*, 153-170. Bingley, UK: Emerald.
- Holman Jones, S. Adams, T.E. and Ellis. C. (Eds.) 2013. *Handbook of autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Hsu, W. F. 2013. "Mapping the Kominas' sociomusical transnation: punk, diaspora, and digital media." *Asian Journal of Communication* 23 (4): 386-402.

- Jolly, R. 2014. *Media of the people: broadcasting community media in Australia*. Parliamentary Library. Research Paper Series 2013-14. Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliament of Australia. Retrieved 1 February 2019, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1314/Media?print=1
- Knight, M. M. 2004. *The Taqwacores*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia.
- Lindgren, M. 2017. "Autoethnographic journalism: subjectivity and emotionality in audio storytelling." In Monk, N., Lindgren, M. McDonald, S. and Pasfield-Neofitou, S. (Eds.) *Reconstructing Identity*, 183-206. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McKay, G. 1998. *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*. London: Verso.
- Meadows, M., Forde S., Ewart, J. and Foxwell, K. 2007. *Community Media Matters – an audience study of the Australian community radio sector*. Brisbane: Griffith University.
- McChesney, R.W. 2008. *The political economy of media: Enduring issues, emerging dilemmas*. New York, NYU Press.
- Ofcom. 2018. *Localness guidelines*. Retrieved 10 November 2018, <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/radio-broadcasters/localness>
- Pace, S. 2012. "Writing the self into research: using grounded theory analytic strategies in autoethnography." *TEXT Special Issue No. 13*: McLoughlin, N. and Brien, D. L. (Eds.) *Creativity: Cognitive, Social and Cultural Perspectives* 1–15.
- Rennie, E. 2002. "The other road to media citizenship." *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture & Policy* 203: 7–13.
- Rennie, E. 2016. "Community media: institutions, trust and groups." *Journal of Alternative and Community Media* 1: 33-35.
- Rennie, E., Berkeley, L., and Murphet, B. (2012) Community media and ethical choice. *3CMedia: Journal of Community, Citizen's and Third Sector Media and Communication* 1(6), 17–32.
- Van Vuuren, K. 2006. "Community broadcasting and the enclosure of the public sphere." *Media, Culture and Society* 28 (3): 379-392.
- Waltz, M 2005. *Alternative and activist media*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC). 2018. "World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters." Retrieved February 2 2019, <http://www.amarc.org/>