Reaching their communities: the participatory nature of ethnic minority radio

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Biography: Dr Eleanor Shember-Critchley is Lecturer in Digital Media and Web Development at the Department of Languages, Information and Communication at Manchester Metropolitan University. She recently completed her PhD entitled *Ethnic Minority Radio: Interactions and Identity*. This examined ethnic minority radio stations from across the UK, from public to illegal broadcasters. She worked with the staff and DJs to understand how identity and ethnicity were mediated as part of everyday life within each station and its community. Her research interests revolve around radio, its communities, audiences, identity and developing research methodologies for practitioners.

Abstract: As part of a PhD thesis on ethnic minority radio and identity in the UK, this paper presents an analysis and discussion of the interactions between a station, the DJs and their communities to bring off truly social events. Ethnic minority radio stations have, in particular, developed complex and lively ways to make radio a truly participatory experience.

The paper explores how DJs utilise text message, social networking, answered and unanswered calls, transcribed messages and on-air performance to enable participation. These resources come to life through sophisticated, unspoken rules mutually created between listener and DJ incorporating shared cultural competences cloaked to casual listeners.

Drawing on an analysis of six case study stations the paper takes a qualitative approach utilising interview, observation and programme analysis. Giddens' theory of Structuration (1984) is employed alongside Scannell (1996) and Moore's (2005) work on radio with Karner's structures of ethnicity (2007) to address the two main aspects of the paper:
   1. An examination of the participatory nature of these programmes through the technologies and rules developed by the DJs and listeners.
   2. An exploration of the impact these interactions have for the community and its station.

The analysis demonstrates, however meagre a station's technological resources are, it is the nature and use of the shared contextual rules that enliven the programmes. These daily or unique programme events become stages for a shared identity voiced through interactions that intertwine, mutually reproducing and changing both the station and community structures through the medium of radio.

Keywords: ethnic minority communities, structuration, technology, interaction

Reaching their communities: the participatory nature of ethnic minority radio

1   Introduction

The past thirty years has seen a growth of ethnic minority radio stations. They occupy spaces in the public, commercial, community and pirate broadcasting sectors and are seen to provide valuable services for marginalised listeners. Yet, little is known about the practices of broadcasting within these stations and the role staff and their programmes play within their communities.

This paper is an extract from a doctoral research project that explored the characteristics of the ethnic minority radio stations and the personal and shared narratives of the agents (DJs and staff) who comprise the stations. It presented an analysis of the actions undertaken and the related power and rule use that occurs in daily interaction alongside an exploration of the rules used to construct programmes. It concluded with analysis of how the stations broadcast and communicate with their communities on narratives of ethnicity and identity.

This paper explores how DJs, within six case study stations, use a variety of technologies and performance techniques to enable interaction between the stations and their communities.

This paper has two aims, which are to provide:

1. An examination of the participatory nature of these programmes through the technologies and rules developed by the DJs and listeners.

2. An exploration of the impact these interactions have for the community and its station.

1.1   Theoretical context

To achieve these aims the paper employs a theoretical framework drawing on Giddens' theory of Structuration (1984) alongside Scannell (1996) and Moore's (2005) work on radio and identity with Karner's structures of ethnicity (2007). The main elements used are described below.

Structures (Giddens, 1984) are the radio station, collectives of agents drawing upon the ordering of broadcast rules for programmes, the performance of being a DJ, the cyclical structures of back office operation, and the related institutional structures the station utilises. Structures are also reflected in ethnicity and identity. They are the languages spoken, the rules of presentation the DJ adopts with different members of the community or shared religious beliefs that structure an agents' day. These are all drawn upon not only to reproduce the station everyday through agent-to-agent interaction, but structures constitute the identity of the stations, their programmes, the staff and the communities of which the station is part. Many of these

structures are momentary, existing in the doing of action. Structures are both internal to the agent, who draws on their own practices and experiences, but also external, shared by others and existing independently.

Position-practice (Stones, 2005) is a way of placing agents (station managers, administrators, DJs, technicians and marketing teams and also community, religious and creative figures) in relation to each other, as a network, whether in immediate co-presence or as part of the wider community.

The paper draws on Karner's (2007) use of structures for ethnicity that similarly views ethnicity as processual, rather than reified or fixed. There are three related theoretical lenses:

Structures of seeing concern the ways in which someone interprets the positions they allocate to themselves and others in their social world of the station and its community. Such structures are found in the narratives of the agents involved at the station and their position in relation to others within their communities.

Structures of feeling shows ethnicity to be 'rooted in…the most familiar experiences and practices that clothe people's (early) lives, about sounds, sights, and smells that surround us' (Karner, 2007, p. 34). For the paper these structures are be in the expressed emotions, observed behaviours and vocalised thoughts of agents within the stations.

Structures of action reflect the heart of structuration theory and bring together the structures of feeling and seeing. Ethnicity as part of the toolkit of structures that the agent calls upon, and is also constrained by, with an agent's inner sense of the self created and maintained through situated dialogues with those around them.

Cultural competences (Moores, 2005) assume the listener is 'capacity built' in a similar sense as the broadcaster; able to share a depth of understanding not superficially achieved. Issues of identity are often subtly expressed where those equipped with a shared background or cross cultural understanding will notice certain phrases, turn of words, the meaning of the music being played.

This is the theoretical context within which to place the interactions that make use of the structures of action, feeling and seeing ethnicity. The theoretical context enables the contextualisation of radio as everyday practice, reciprocally produced programmes, schedules and identities that reproduce the station to stretch across time and space.

This paper examines the technologies (a physical resource, some of which are not available to all stations and others used with varying degrees of success) that enable station agents to employ the rules and norms of communication on air to reach their communities. Using the concepts described, the paper will demonstrate that these rules are developed (and are

developing) processes, enabling (and in some cases constraining) interactions that have impact for the community and its station.

2 Stations

The paper draws on research that took place with six case study stations, these are:

BBC Asian Network: Is a national public service station and is part of the BBC's DAB offering. Originating as a series of programmes broadcasting in the Midlands during the 1970's, the Network officially launched on DAB in 2002 though it retained its AM frequencies in the Midlands area. What had begun as a radio station aimed at providing language programming and community news broadened its scope to represent music, news, sports and events from across the South Asian diaspora, mostly presented in English. It combined this whilst retaining the specialised language elements *and* seeking to appeal to audiences ranging from 15 to 35 years old identifying with a British Asian heritage.

Buzz FM: Buzz was a pirate radio station which has operated intermittently from the early 1990's where it had been begun as a radio station broadcasting mainly South Asian music to the inner city suburbs of Manchester. South Manchester is multiethnic but has well established predominantly black communities around the Trafford, Moss Side and Hulme areas of the city. It was the areas around the Hulme crescents, large labyrinthine 1960's blocks of flats, which played host to strong cross-cultural and musical creative communities and where many of the pirate stations and their DJs were situated historically. During the 1990's as these creative centres were being demolished and many stations were being raided by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the station manager noted the lack of representation of black music so the focus of the station changed to a mix of soul, reggae, ragga, drum and bass, dance, garage and bashment. The station used the frequency of 88 and 88.1 FM broadcasting to Manchester and beyond from a garden shed and various locations until a raid in 2009 put a final end to its broadcasts.

Colourful Radio: A commercial DAB station broadcasting to Greater London via their DAB licence. Originally conceived in 2004 as a black talk radio station that broadcast via Sky, at the time of the research they had relaunched as a soul music station concentrating on 50/50 speech and music output for a market aimed at black and mixed audiences over the age of 30. The station has been described as a Kiss/Choice FM Gold for listeners who have grown up during the soul, reggae, hip-hop and jazz scenes of the 1990's but who were open to more speech content.. The radio station is located in Vauxhall, South London which is a diverse area bordering the traditionally Afro-Caribbean communities of Brixton, Stockwell and Harlesden.

Spectrum Radio is a multi-ethnic radio station, based in Battersea, serving the area of Greater London using a combination of its traditional AM signal along with a DAB channel, two satellite channels and its internet stream. Spectrum was one of the first licensed ethnic minority radio

stations having been set up following the 1990 Broadcasting Act that widened access to the airwaves for commercial stations. It hosts two programmes that were participants in the research:

Irish Spectrum: Irish Spectrum is a programme that has been running since 1992 and forms part of the Irish Radio Roadshow business run by Gerry Byrne to serve the Irish communities in and around Greater London.   Irish Spectrum airs on Saturdays between 1-2pm and Sunday/Monday nights between 12-1am. It is run and hosted by Byrne who is assisted by an administrator/runner. The Saturday programme is a magazine format incorporating Irish country music, a community notice board, roundups of the weekend's Irish pub and club events around the London area, horseracing tips, Irish sports summaries, occasional Irish personality interviews and a phone-in quiz. The Sunday programme which follows Gerry's afternoon at the Wellington pub incorporates a similar format with Irish country music, Irish sporting news, a quiz, a countdown of Irish country music and a larger proportion of community messages and dedications, some of which will have come from the afternoon's roadshow.

Radio Asian Fever: A community radio station based in the mainly South Asian inner city district of Harehills, Leeds which began broadcasting in 2007. The station broadcasts predominantly in English, Punjabi and Urdu with afternoon programmes set aside for specialised Punjabi dialects such as Mir Puri,. The focus is on programmes airing a variety of Bollywood, Lollywood (Lahore as Pakistan's film capital), bhangra, Punjabi hits and some British Asian acts; speech is provided in the form of community conversation with the DJ interacting with listeners, talent and talk shows, poetry readings and on Fridays the station dedicates programmes to religious spoken word provided for by visiting Molanas (religious clerics from the communities).

Somali on Air: Britain's Somali communities are widely dispersed around the areas of Tower Hamlets, Camden, Hammersmith, Fulham, Ealing and Southall in London as well as the cities of Birmingham, Leicester, Liverpool, Cardiff, Manchester and Sheffield. This spread of communities has arisen due to the refugee status of the majority of Somali migrants who are fleeing a prolonged, violent civil war and sustained social disorder. This, now defunct programme, began broadcasting in April 2006 and was set up by two friends Mohamed (Elias) Ahmed and (Socoto) Abdirazak as a way of reaching out to both first and second generation members of the communities. At the time of the research, the programme was being broadcast between 6-8pm every evening. Each programme would have a different theme and style with a variety of presenters who were volunteering and received radio training at Spectrum. The programmes were a mixture of community debate and phone-ins, light music based games and a Friday religious programme featuring Islamic readings and poems.

3 Methods

This paper makes use of a qualitative case study approach and the methods of non-participant observation, interview and programme analysis. The observation focused on the activities of the studio, the DJ and other relevant agents with the aim to 'develop a detailed portrait' (Robson, 2000, p. 200) of the interactions going on. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff and associates using questions derived from the doctoral objectives using the theoretical framework described above. The programme analysis utilised themes identified by Scannell (1996) for studying radio in everyday life.

The following discussion is based on an analysis that utilises Stones' (2005) suggestion for ordering agent conduct and their context of action to identify the processes that comprise the duality of structure. The purpose of this fine-grained analysis is to trace the interactions of positioned agents, the shared contextual rule use and the resources that facilitate interaction. These constitute the shared narratives that are built up during interaction and the outcomes related to station and community structures.

4 Discussion

A significant part of the daily interactions at the radio stations involved the listeners and station staff. However, as will be shown, the type, quality and frequency varied greatly between the six case study radio stations. For some, it is integral to their operation, for others it informs some of the actions carried out at the station but is less vital to daily action.

4.1 The context of station and listener interaction

For four of the six radio stations, interaction formed approximately 50% of the programme content and therefore played a significant role in the dailiness of the station. These stations were Irish Spectrum, Somali on Air, Asian Fever and Buzz FM. Interactions occurred at both Colourful Radio and BBC Asian Network but the nature of engagement was different so listener/station interactions were less integral to the dailiness of the programmes and the schedule.

The interactions examined are ones that took place within the studio or which had a direct role in facilitating the programmes. Some of these did occur in the back office but were less frequent and were to do with programme planning rather than live interaction. Interactions took place in several ways: listeners could telephone the studio and speak with the DJ either privately or on air; text messages could be received, usually directly to a computer terminal in the studio; emails were received and/or exchanged with those in the studio; the use of social networking facilitated some interaction and, finally, listeners occasionally interacted with the station staff face to face at the studio or at station arranged events.

Interaction occurred for various reasons but mainly took place during live broadcasts to facilitate 'shout outs', dedications and song requests. Less frequent interaction was engagement in a

participatory programme such as an on-air talent show, live poetry readings, the 'lucky numbers' game, during studio and phone-in debates or to meet the station staff at events such as the London Mela, club nights, live roadshows or at religious gatherings. For studio based interactions these could occur many times per programme and were features of the broadcast day. During more mediated programming the rate of interaction decreased but took on greater meaning and opportunity for shared narratives and perspectives. Least frequent interactions were at the live events which were heavily promoted at the radio stations and were about shared community experiences rather than one-to-one meetings.

4.2   The uses of technologies and rules to facilitate participation

Resources used for participation varied and were not necessarily dependent on the financial power of the radio station but often had to do with the legacy of how actions were undertaken. For example, Irish Spectrum and Somali on Air shared studio space used in slots for programmes. Whilst the transmission equipment was of high quality the transient nature of programme partners at Spectrum Radio meant investment in new studio equipment was less a priority. The programme managers struggled with a single telephone with six lines for listener interaction. For Irish Spectrum this is what the manager had always known and due to the frantic activity of the one hour programmes, he had an assistant in the office to take calls and bring these messages through. The staff at SOA would use the telephone in the studio with one person at the microphone, broadcasting and one or two others attending to the telephone and taking messages. At Asian Fever, the daily emphasis on interaction meant they had invested in computerised text message and email within the studio so that participation could be handled by the DJ at the mixing desk. Calls which came through did so via a virtual telephone switchboard and if the caller was registered on the database, their details would flash up on screen as the phone silently rang. This enabled the system to be used for two purposes; silent 'flashing' *in between* songs to prompt the DJ to 'shout out' their name or 'flashing' *during* songs which indicated the caller wished to speak with the DJ.

At Buzz FM, resources were more rudimentary in part due to a previous raid when the laptop which streamed live broadcasts and enabled the receipt of emails had been seized by police. This meant the assistant in the studio used a 'pay as you go' mobile to receive text messages from listeners detailing 'shout outs' and requests and occasionally to speak one-to-one. When the message box had reached its limit, some listeners would contact the DJ instead on his 'private line' as the assistant frantically deleted old messages.

The legacy of DJs being 'driven' by producers and technicians from a separate mixing desk in an adjacent studio at BBC Asian Network meant interaction was highly mediated. Approved text messages and emails were received, printed off and taken through to the DJ for live reads, and telephone, unless it was for the phone-in, was rarely used. During phone-ins callers would interact with the production team before being connected through to go on-air with the DJ. The BBC website enabled users to post conversations on the message boards; however as BBC

website staff had to 'approve' these messages before they appeared online it meant conversations were less 'live' for listeners.

Listeners contacting Colourful could do so via text messages received onto the studio computer, by telephone straight to the DJ and by email which was mediated through the Colourful website as a way of driving listeners to this resource. DJs at Colourful and Asian Fever used the social networking websites Facebook and Twitter to notify listeners of when their programme was live and to instigate live interaction as the DJ broadcast.

Interaction formed the dailiness of the radio stations in different ways. At Buzz, Irish Spectrum and Asian Fever, it provided the cyclical and routine rhythms of the programmes with listeners using email, text and phone to take part in the programmes as observers and unseen participants. This was most pronounced at Asian Fever through the use of the computerised phone and text system. The 'flashing' up of registered users would indicate approval of the music or a comment being made on air. These negotiated interactions with the station's community of listeners directly fed into the schemas of the programmes. This would be incorporated into the speech of the DJ with names called out such as 'oh I see Mrs Roys is up this morning, and Shazi is too'. Similar interactions were noted at Buzz; these occurred at a high rate involving the DJ incorporating these unseen others into his talk between tracks (see Figure One). A listener to some of the black pirate stations in London echoed the perceived motivation for participation. His text message to the DJ would be intended for other unseen listeners and would say 'big up that person, the person would be listening and the next person like send back a text and they say your name and sometime you get a buzz of it, hearing your name call on the radio' (Pirate Radio Listener, 2009). The level of intense interaction at Buzz was noted when a DJ requested at least fifteen texts from listeners if they wanted to hear a further hour of broadcast; forty-three messages were received within fifteen minutes.

Figure One: Buzz FM DJ with transcribed text messages

At Colourful, the interaction included some text messaging and emails to DJs but the system was new and was not heavily used. The main interactions were with the DJs using Facebook; they had set up pages and accounts so that listeners and those who attended their club nights could be 'friends' and engage with the DJ during the evening specialist shows. These interactions were often international in nature with listeners using the internet streams and conversing at the same time. The Asian Network's more mediated interactions would incorporate emails and texts usually pertaining to a specific point in response to DJ or phone-in talk, constituting eventfulness rather than a daily rhythm. Both the Network, Somali on Air and Asian Fever used their phone systems to incorporate listeners in on air chat and performance. At the Network this was mainly during the morning phone-in where listeners could engage with the topical discussion or during drivetime for more 'light hearted' chat. Asian Fever and Somali on Air both shared a phone-in format for more serious discussion of relevant mainly British based issues. They both also had an on-air talent show where listeners called in to perform songs, tell jokes and recite poetry or religious readings. For Asian Fever this culminated in a live

talent show at a local arts centre where many of the regular on air participants attended to compete and finally meet each other.

The most community linked form of interaction occurred at Irish Spectrum through the roadshows and the broadcast programme. This occurred weekly as the manager fulfilled a schedule of four roadshows a week across the Home Counties. These music and dance events enabled members of the community to complete request slips with dedications for family members in London and Ireland. These, and the additional calls received during the show for both dedications and the quiz formed the structure of the programme with the manager pausing between tracks to pass on the messages.

4.3   The reproduced narratives of station/listener interaction

The facilitated interactions had the effect of building up complex narratives between listeners over time and often between participants who would never meet face to face. Some stations became a stage for position-practice of a shared community identity. Broadcast meaningful interactions created a ripple effect of 'reproduction, learning and change' (Coad and Herbert, 2009) of community structures. For many, certain programmes on Asian Fever were a daily event that had enabled listeners to become aware of, and interact with, positioned others of their community. The two managers felt this went some way to reduce the isolation felt by many in the area. Listeners would often listen throughout the day from their homes, in kitchens, at the takeaways or as taxi drivers at work. These participants would 'flash' throughout the day and in some cases would listen out for other pseudonyms of listeners so they could engage in 'conversation' through the DJ. The Co-Manager noted that listeners were gradually 'making contact with each other and you think 'have you ever met them?', "no, I've never met…" like this morning [a listener] he's dedicating a song, he hasn't met the guy heh' (2009). The newer use of the text message system augmented the quality of this facilitated chat so that listeners would compose messages and dedications for other listeners that they hadn't met but had got to 'know' from regular name calls on air. One text message read 'Slaam baji hope ur wel plz cud u play a nyc trk 4r my best mate shazi an ladoo an glub jaman! 4rm kyla'. (Hello sister, hope you are well, please could you play a nice track for my best friends Shazi, Ladoo and Gulub Jaman! From Kyla). This text message, typical of those received at the station, captured several structures being reproduced through the station. Examples such as particularised 'text speak' shared amongst younger members of the community, a reproduction of imagined friendship groups that only operated through the station and shared 'cultural competences' (Moores, 2005) of words such as 'Gulab Jaman' (a South Asian sweet) used, along with others, as pseudonyms.

The dedications and 'shout outs' was also an opportunity for listeners to communicate their feelings for each other on air. DJs would regularly receive requests for romantic songs from husbands to their wives. The unspoken contextual rule use meant the DJs would never name the people involved but give clues as to their identity. This communication fostered a sense of

an empathetic listening community and strengthened family structures. The DJ's romantic song choice had a theme of 'wanting to be locked in a room with someone and the key being thrown away' (Co-Manager, 2009). The mention of a related family name meant the children texted in their approval of the song choice. During some programmes the phone would ring repeatedly during songs so that listeners could talk to the DJs. At SOA, the notion of a community fractured by migration meant interactions at the station sought to connect members of the community listening not only in the UK but particularly in Sweden, the USA and Ethiopia from where dedications and messages were received. The game programme 'lucky numbers' and other request shows fielded these extended narratives being played out between dispersed listeners, much in the same way as Asian Fever. Listeners would dedicate songs to '"my friend" or "my husband" or "my wife" or "my friend whose on my crew wants to listen this" and yes, and some of them, they congratulate weddings and there's a lot of happy birthday and things' (Manager, 2008). It sought to strengthen community structures through the use of schemas of meaning, cultural expression and shared feelings. The pleasure the managers felt at being accepted and utilised for interaction by the community meant the DJs attention to announcements of shared importance were both enabling and constraining. The DJs who had come from Sunrise, a commercial station, initially found the interaction constraining. They occupied their own 'zone, they [didn't] care who's flashing or who's texting or whatever' (Manager, 2009). This changed over time, realising that community radio was a continuing conversation that also provided immediate feedback enabled them to talk 'a little bit more to the community on the phone' (ibid) during songs.

The narratives at Buzz FM had been built up over a period of twenty years and the DJs incorporated these into their talk. Dedications would come from listeners accompanied by reminders of past events that the community shared and represented a positioning of experiences to provide authenticity. One particular text was dedicated to a listener who had been murdered some years earlier; the impending anniversary of his death was remembered by fellow listeners in response. The station also fulfilled a trusted role within the community and a first point of call when incidents occurred. One episode recalled by the manager took the form of a missing child who was located by the DJs through alerts aired during a weekend's broadcast. Mainly however, interactions were more mundane but were meaningful to the station and its listeners:

> 'Shout out to baby Tia who's falling asleep, well she's fallen asleep, nighty night from your mum, who loves you, and that's Lindsey in Moston. [Laughs]. Lindsey in Moston is saying to baby Tia she loves you loads, she's fallen asleep so night night. Shout out to Will who's locked on in Whalley Range, that's your mum and your dad as well. Shout out to DJ Magic by the way, shout out to Luke and Clare, hold tight Lucy, can't forget Beryl and Roy in Old Trafford, the Blakeley Crew on that one as well' (DJ, 2009).

This stream of 'shout outs' constitutes much of the 'structures of feeling' and meaning that Karner (2007) addresses in the operation of ethnic communities. The station is a community notice board and a service where people can hear themselves and hear the presence of networked positioned others which comprise the Buzz FM community. Within this community are smaller ones, the 'crews', the families of parents and their children both listening to the station. The DJ's situated knowledgeability brings these elements together to create the cohesive community of listeners.

At Irish Spectrum the integration of the programmes, the roadshow and other community events meant there was a long legacy of community narratives played out through the programme and face-to-face. The adverts on the programme centring on traditional music nights emphasised the wish of the audience to retain, protect and seek comfort from an Irish identity. This was further reinforced as music narratives of memories shared by listeners and was typified by Peter Burk's song about the Galty Moore, an Irish dancehall which had closed some years before and used to be the prime courting venue in London for the then young Irish migrants. Songs such as this had great meaning for Irish Spectrum's mostly older listeners whose relationships and families had revolved around introductions made at such places.

These shared memories extended into the community for members who attended the roadshow where their birthdays were celebrated with extended family; such occurrences highlighted the importance of the programme and roadshow for capturing a shared notion of identity and reflecting it back at the community as a continuing narrative. The manager knew how much live events meant to the community, that only radio brought these about and managed to 'capture…Irish music, like Irish culture, there's nothing, there's nothing else' (Manager, 2008). Music was central to creating a sense of place both through the shared locale of experience and across time as structures of feeling by the re-experiencing of sounds that 'trigger memories whenever encountered again' (Karner, 2007, p, 34). This was echoed by an attendee of the roadshow in Fulham who underlined Irish Spectrum's role to continue a shared tradition rather than alter it. He said 'you know the way he speaks, the music he plays, he keeps the music alive, he doesn't play the popular music, we really appreciate it, he keeps the Irish country music alive' (Roadshow Guest, 2008). So long as this strategy remained profitable and enjoyable there was no need to change the structures of the programme.

4.4   The impact of interaction for the station and its community

These interactions and richly constructed narratives facilitated by the radio station had two outcomes. First, the subjects dealt with and the interactions mediated through the station subtly changed community structures. Second, the interactions, priorities and narratives of the listeners gradually changed the station's structures of broadcasting and agent identity.

For Irish Spectrum, attention to its community of listeners and a wish to broaden the programme's reach had constrained choices for finding a suitable slot for the sister Irish Link

programme at BBC Three Counties. The Manager had been offered an early Sunday evening slot but he was aware that 'all the people who went to the pub on a Sunday, you missed them, all the people who went to see sport, Irish football and all, there's no way they would be home from that, all the people who went away for the weekend, all the people throughout the summer would have barbeques, have family over, family out, out in the garden with the kids' (Manager, 2008). The outcome was the scheduling of Irish Link at 7pm on Wednesday evenings.

The Asian Network, though in operation for over twenty years, lacked the grassroots complex narratives that were built up at stations such as Asian Fever, Buzz, SOA and Irish Spectrum. This was for two reasons. First, the formal structures of broadcasting and programme ethos present across the BBC meant the station saw its role more to educate, entertain and extend the concepts of what Asian culture was for its listeners. Staff sought to prompt learning and change of community 'structures of action' through challenging accepted norms of behaviour. Second, and as a result of this approach, the programme structures were built less on interaction and more on presentation of these intentions. Conscious of the distance that the agents felt between the station and its listeners, the station was working to alter the traditional programme making structures of the BBC, to incorporate listeners' voices and to embed the station with communities as meaningful, trusted and relevant. The managers saw this as key for marking out the station as unique and to secure its survival. Staff had experienced difficulties with engaging listeners who 'did right from the start but then it didn't really work and you have got to persevere with it…the kind of first aim is to get out into the communities and feel like they are on location and with them so…they might feel more comfortable' (News Manager, 2008). Whilst they worked to establish closer ties they shared objectives with Asian Fever and SOA, to facilitate better communication between the community and *also* how it was viewed by other parts of society. The support of British Asian music was extended to the 'Uni Tour', a live event open to the general clubbing scene and which also promoted the station's new broadcast areas, such as London. A bhangra promoter attending the culmination of this 'Uni Tour' at the Ministry of Sound in London recounted how 'police [were] trying to stop it for a while and I'm glad that we're still having Asian gigs in London and on a large scale, not a small, you know, hidden away kind of thing' (Promoter, 2008). Those at the Network focused on changing negative stereotypes of the community and the reticence of the mainstream promoters to host what were perceived as troublesome Asian events. Their priority for running the 'Uni Tour' was not only for the Network's promotion but, through enabling their authoritative resources as 'the BBC', to change the structures of the music and live events industry. In the same way that the sound systems and black music had struggled for mainstream recognition in the 1980's those at the Network hoped to demonstrate Asian focused nights like these were relevant, profitable and showed the extent of a fluid, relevant, relatively affluent and influential young community.

The agents at the Network also turned their attention to challenging parts of the listening community through the choice of daytime music and the phone-in programme to directly alter the tacit inbuilt knowledge shared in the community. Using the same approach of seeking

listener contributions in the morning show, they sought to address perceptions within the wide Asian community on issues such as disability, class snobbery, marriage breakdown and worklessness. 'Stereotype Hype examined 'stereotypes in the Asian community so for instance one of the questions was you know, are "do British Asians have a problem with freshies[1]"' (Phone-in DJ, 2008). This sought to address the tacit snobbery of some settled British Asians towards recently arrived members of the community by using the tacitly shared reified opinions and rule use as topics for challenging and altering on air. Such playfully controversial programmes led one Pakistani listener to call the station declaring 'British Asians were the most racist people he'd ever met and from the age of 13 when he came to secondary school, he was bullied every day' (Phone-in DJ, 2008). When the outward projection of the Asian community was one set apart and autonomous in British society, this inward projection highlighted the difficult fractures addressed in Husband's article on the meaning of ethnic minority media. (Husband, 2005). Those at the Network understood their ability to enable members of the community such as the caller, initiating higher causal influence to air their personal narratives and challenge community structures.

The managers at SOA were also focused on a programme schedule which enabled the community to discuss taboo or issues many of which were associated with generational differences and transition difficulties felt by migrants. These issues were suggested by listeners during seasonal phone-in programmes which aired ideas for the coming few months. The current affairs programme dealt with exploring low educational attainment amongst first generation children, marital breakups and gang culture. These were difficult issues for parents who saw British society as threatening their family and ethnic culture and which led them to have one foot in the UK and one still in Somalia. Such programmes were highly anticipated to the extent that the multiple telephone lines would be utilised with listeners 'emotionally talking about some of them telling us really strong what happened to them, how this issue is touching to them' (Co-Manager, 2008). The manager's understanding and following of the tacit rules of the community enabled listeners to open up on air, in their own language and in the 'safety' of shared company. The programme on gun crime in the UK addressed the high level of involvement of Somali youths and elicited the spontaneous participation of five mothers whose sons had been killed. The co-presenter recalled:

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[1] The term 'freshies' refers to members of the community who have recently migrated to the UK. It is slightly derogatory as it denotes the person's lack of British based cultural competences

'I mention their name and their age and the date, and where been stabbed.
People start calling me and talking about this, I remember the mothers of those
who died contacted me I never, I never, I didn't know them, I never seen them,
they came on the line, "hello can I help, where are you calling from there?" "Err
I am the mother of that kid…my son had been stabbed by East London driver,
Somalian", and she was crying. Ibrahim, he couldn't do the programme, he
stand up, went outside, wept, crying. I say, "OK I will do it, I will continue", and
I did it…At the end of the programme we say, "well how we can stop this?"'
(Manager, Somali on Air, 2008).

The intention of the managers and the DJs at Somali on Air through this shared narrative was to empower the community to address their own issues and enable subtle changes to their shared cultural structures. The manager summarised this focus as 'I always bring the issues we want to discuss and to show our community to flow' (Co-Manager, 2008). Such an approach gave the managers great agency to employ shared structures of seeing (religious narratives and beliefs) and prompt community learning and change. The lack of Somali media in the UK and the serious interest the managers took in representing the Somali communities extended beyond the programmes through their involvement in other community groups. Access to the candidates in the impending mayoral elections was treated as a priority, not for the radio programme but because the manager was conscious to 'discuss about issues with Somali community…I'm representing the Somalis here' (Manager, 2008). The manager understood that the interaction of political, media and ethnic structures through attendance at such events lent him higher causal influence to account for and develop the Somali community structures. Not all the subtle alterations to community structures were serious. Like Asian Fever, the dedications show enabled callers using pseudonyms to communicate through messages and the types of song chosen. One was received from a young man, calling who dedicated 'Amore' to a female listener also using a pseudonym. Such flirtatious language would be forbidden in face-to-face contact, and as such, the DJ's were encouraging but also suitably coy about such 'clandestine' communication. This common use of pseudonyms enabled listeners to 'try on' different self, in confidence, through the use of pseudonyms that tested community boundaries.

At Asian Fever, the meaningful dialogues which were built up over time were sometimes personally enabling. Here, the listeners viewed some DJs as trusted constants in their lives. One listener was intensely shy and so was known on the telephone system as 'Anonymous' in Punjabi. The interaction with a particular female DJ meant 'she's come out of her shell, has started to go to college to learn to write English and maths and has started a business catering for weddings' (Co-Manager, 2009). These small changes were part of a greater focus on personal agency within the South Asian community. By widening familiar cultural and familial structures during broadcasts, listeners were enabled to start accessing and interacting with wider communities in Leeds. Perspectives within the community were explored through the phone-in discussion and during some DJ programmes. The phone-in was hosted by two

presenters, male and female of differing ages and backgrounds that would open the debate with opposing views and ideologies. One presenter recalled how 'I've had callers call in and shout abuse because they don't agree and I've had callers who agree…the community have changed a lot, they've opened up so much more, today we're talking about Islamic culture, a year ago we couldn't even touch the subject matter, we could not talk about Islam, people would not allow us because they would feel that it should be a scholar' (Phone-in Presenter, 2009).

This understanding of the community's capacity for change was reiterated by another DJ who used a gentle format of music and chat on a Sunday morning. His use of shared collective cultural, religious and ethnic schemas allowed a joint process of slowly changing 'people's mentality who maybe not have the right sort of mentality of life, women's rights, other things…not Islamic but over the years…people have picked it up…so slowly, subtly we sort of explore them things but in a light hearted way cos if you go too heavy you get the fundamentalists out and they sort of, they highjack your show' (Friday afternoon and Sunday morning, 2009).

The managers at Colourful Radio wanted both to make a commercial success of the station and to become an integral part of local community structures. The newness of the station meant interaction was infrequent but when it did occur was contextualised by challenging and understanding notions of their local community. The work of one manager to raise the profile of young media students at a previous day's event was incorporated as talk through listeners' calls on the breakfast programme and by the appearance of one of the students on the lifestyle show. For this manager, Colourful Radio was a stage to show the positive strides the community was making to break down external reified notions of what young, black students could achieve. The breakfast show was also host to interviews with representatives of parts of the black community in London. The challenging of reification and radicalisation in the Somali community produced an extended and contested interaction on air that without the contextual ethnicity use and understanding of the presenter meant the depth of fractious questioning could not have occurred elsewhere. Interaction and community change extended beyond politicised 'black' issues to the specialised music shows as a way of addressing a wider London and UK audience. The shows extended the music and cultural structures of the presenters and the station to new listeners through the use of Facebook and email where the interactions were with a wide variety of listeners. It was during these programmes that the 'group' or community of 'colourful people' the station was mainly aiming for was being created and explored. The result was that for Colourful the interaction between listeners was defining and building the structures of the radio station as it became established.

The seemingly mundane talk and dedications at Buzz FM had a greater meaning than solely for entertainment, fulfilling DJ interests or communications between the listeners. One DJ was aware that 'with this station, we know it ourselves, the kids are in the house, they're not out on

the street, they're in the house listening to the radio, all the gangs and all those kids, they're all in the house' (DJ, 2009).

All the station agents understood that the role of the station fed into familial structures as a shared experience and so the action of the radio station being on was to strengthen these structures. Sometimes episodes of particular interaction and live broadcast had the mutual effect of reproducing and altering both community and station structures. The following DJ chat was instigated from news received at the studio by phone and conveyed to the listeners.

> *'I've got to go on a serious tip right now, before we get right back into the humorous stuff; very, very sad news this week, a Manchester radio legend passed away, a man by the name of Randolph, if you don't know who Randolph was, if you er, were in Manchester in the eighties, Randolph was the pirate king who used to run alongside Sam Brown on ITR Radio and Lazer Radio as well…*

> *I RIP Randolph, I worked on a number of stations, Carnival FM, Moss Side FM, Hulme FM with him, WRCC Radio and in fact, one of my fondest memories of Randolph was um, when our cousin, my Twangy's cousin Portia, we needed some studio time one time to record a track and Randolph came up with the goods, no money changed hands or nothing, just gave us studio time down there on Princess Road and let us use the studio for free man to record some tracks for our Portia. I can see him now; he was a really nice man, sad news to hear he's passed away'* (DJ, Buzz FM, 2009)

This whole passage discussing Randolph served many functions for both the radio station and its community. The DJ was the communicator of local news which would have resonated with many listeners due to the subject's embedded nature in the Moss Side and pirate communities. The DJ's discussion incorporated shared memories and narratives told by positioned others such as Portia, EricB and Twangy, 'myths' of past radio stations and music. It formed part of the DJ's personal narrative which he shared on air and the doing of this, with the incorporation of these positioned others, strengthened the notion of Buzz FMs community of listeners and the local area's community structures. It had a duel role of strengthening and reproducing the structures of the radio station, that is, the dailiness, eventfulness and intentionality of the show, as well as reproducing and strengthening community structures.

4.5   Conclusion

This paper explored how ethnic minority radio stations reach and interact with their audiences. The outcomes of these interactions formed a duality, that is, an intertwining of mutual reproduction and change of station and community structures through the medium of radio.

For four of the six case studies, daily interactions, bound tightly into the programmes structures, played a significant role. Despite sometimes meagre resources, the stations had developed highly sophisticated structures of communication and rules of engagement for which 'cultural competences' and the use of the structures of feeling and seeing were crucial elements. The frequency and depth of these interactions demonstrated how important the stations and their DJs were for the reproduction of shared narratives and as a conduit for position-practice across their community.

These narratives had, in some cases, been built over many years with second and third generations becoming part of continued conversations that captured incremental changes to station and community structures. For programmes such as SOA, these interactions were an opportunity to bind together fractured communities and begin to explore the meaning of community within daily life in the UK. These interactions were not always implicitly about the reproduction of community structures but as much about challenging boundaries, capacity for change and exploring new narratives. For Asian Network, these interactions were about defining new structures for the station through opening up new channels of music and ideas.

Whilst the maintenance of the station and communities were high priority, station agents were attuned to the enablement that a single, sustained conversation could have for individual members of their listenership. Lastly, the interactions often signified the deeply felt and experienced histories shared between the presenters and listeners. The concept of 'imagined communities' was shown real, embedded in radio talk that reflected a legacy of continuing relationships.

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