

# Implications of radio persona characteristics on listener well-being

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## Introduction

Previous research has highlighted how radio presenting and listening can promote older adult well-being (e.g., Krause, 2020; Order & O'Mahony, 2017). However, research has not examined radio presenter behaviours, characteristics, and demographics to consider how they might correspond to listener well-being. The current research focuses on radio presenters and their backgrounds (specifically their gender), how and why they got into radio, and what they perceive the purpose of radio to be. The present research considers possible implications regarding how presenter gender can develop and promote relationships within their listenership and community.

## Method

James Cook University Ethical Approval: H8022

### Sample

- $N = 16$  Australian radio personnel from 6 stations broadcasting in Melbourne, VIC, Australia
- 37.5% female, 62.5% male
- Aged 30-81 ( $M = 60.8$ ,  $SD = 15.29$ )

### Individual, Semi-Structured Interviews

- Conversational style (Bhattacharya, 2017)
- Conducted online using Zoom

### Data Analysis

- Audio recordings → verbatim transcripts
- Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

## References

Bhattacharya (2017) Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide*. Routledge. | Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. | Krause, A. E. (2020). The role and impact of radio listening practices in older adults' everyday lives. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11: 603446. | Order, S., & O'Mahony, L. (2017). Building a purposeful identity in the older adult volunteer space: A case study of community radio station 6RPH (Radio Print-Handicapped). *Communication Research and Practice*, 3(1), 31-44.

## Results

### Getting Involved

While many of the presenters had a background interest in radio and music, we see a difference by gender in how individuals get involved in presenting: there seems to be a more direct path for males compared to females.

"It was something I always wanted to do when I was a kid. I dreamt about it. I used to sit there and dream and listen to radio announcers when I was growing up. I'd spend my whole lunchtimes listening to just the way they did it..."  
"I went and did a Master of Journalism and, as part of that, got exposed to a few community radio stations here."

"I asked my dad if he knew anybody worked in the radio, and he said he knew a guy who called the football for the ABC locally. And so, he gave me his number. I called him, he was kind, and I went in and said "Hi" and he said, "Look, I do this program, you should come on and just talk about," – these were his words, he said – "whatever you girls get up to on the weekend in sport, you know. Just come on in and just talk about that for five minutes." So I went, "Sure". So that's how it started."

### Representation and Influence

In the interviews with presenters, there were 32 mentions of other presenters who were referenced collegially or as an influence on their own style. Only three (9%) of these mentioned were female, one of whom because she could "*touch a nerve with people*" for her feminist program.

Interviewee	Presenter influence	
	Male	Female
Male presenters ( $n = 4$ )	18	2
Female presenters ( $n = 4$ )	11	1
Male managers ( $n = 2$ )	1	3

In contrast, managers/producers highlighted four presenters in their interviews, three (75%) of which were female. They further acknowledged a need for female presenters, stating they have deliberately sought out women to promote station diversity and greater listenership.

"I'm a 43-year-old white dude. [Laughs]. Like we don't need more people like me on the radio...I see my role now to create space for other people to have their voices heard."  
"I would love to see...a diversity of voices, a diversity of ideas, personalities on air ... A couple of years ago we tried a deliberate recruiting drive for more female presenters across the board because ...about two thirds of our presenters are male and a third are female."

Those in production roles acknowledged their female audience engagement and that female presenters get more positive feedback from listeners than male presenters. Thus, a variety of voices on air is important to station engagement and building relationships amongst presenters and listeners.

## Discussion

Radio does not function without the interaction of three components: the presenter(s), the content, and the listener(s). Presenters "*make [listeners] a part of the show*".

**Developing relationships with the audience to promote listener well-being**  
Presenters' demographics, backgrounds, and motivations have implications for how they develop and promote relationships with their listening audience.

"I think the relationship that listeners have ...you become a part of their family"  
"So much of the feedback [during COVID19] was we really rely on you being there"

Diversity in presenters on air will assist in fostering these relationships, which in turn can foster well-being.

