THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

LSE Research **Online**

Peter Bryant

Interaction, feedback, reinforcement and collective identity: the role of zine making in the formation and sustaining of informal communities

Conference Paper

http://eprints.lse.ac.uk

Interaction, feedback, reinforcement and collective identity: The role of zine making in the formation and sustaining of informal communities

Peter Bryant

University of Greenwich, United Kingdom

Abstract

This paper will explore the roles played in the formation and operation of zine communities. Utilising data from thirty-two interviews with zine makers in three continents, information sharing roles within informal networks, as discussed by Cross and Prusak (2002), are used to codify the roles within zine communities. The paper identifies that within zine communities there are two additional information sharing roles (emancipator and change agent) suggesting an emerging approach to information interaction. Further, I argue that knowledge transfer and experience sharing processes, which are fundamental to innovation and creativity within a community are potentially compromised within zine communities, leading to a further disaggregation of membership, and ultimately to an increasing and difficult to breach gap between these disparate zine communities.

Key words: Zines, community formation, network roles

The formation and nature of zine making communities

Zine making, defined as the practice of making '…non-commercial, non-professional, small-circulation magazines which the creators produce, publish, and distribute by themselves' (Duncombe, 1997, p. 6) has undergone a number of significant and concurrent shifts in the roles it plays within its community. The roles played by individual zine makers have also changed resulting in a fractured collection of existing and self-formed zine communities. These shifts have occurred within an unstructured, almost libertarian environment where leadership and hierarchy within the community is hazy and informal (Duncombe, 1997). These fractured, multi-member networks remain stubbornly independent of each other, with their shared information often more personal than collective.

'The zines provide a space in which we can create our own meanings, for our own pleasure and amusement' (Richardson, 1996)

The contested definitions of what constitutes zine making practice can explain some of this fracturing, with like perspectives congregating with like (Chu, 1997; Ware, 2003). There is also a lack of clarity about the roles that need to be (or should be) undertaken within the zine community. One of the outcomes is the inability of zine makers to access specific knowledge, reinforce or challenge their behaviours or share their own experiences within their chosen community (Chidgey, 2006; Kucsma, 1998).

The formation of zine communities has been part of zine making practice since the early development and distribution of zines, with the zine as the 'clubhouse' that brings individuals together, however tenuously (Duncombe, 1997). An active linking process is initiated through community formation, which assists to overcome the tyranny of distance between zine makers and

support the development of resources and structures (such as zine stores) (Duncombe, 1997; Reagles, 2008; Spencer, 2005). Whilst there has been some research into how informal communities such as zine making form and operate, citing trans-organisational criteria such as proximity (either geographic or content-based), contact and inter-personal communications and the sharing of a collective identity underpin the formation of informal networks (Arzaghi, 2004; Taylor & Whittier, 1999), there has been little that specifically identifies the structures or catalysts for formation of zine communities. The surfeit of structure has resulted in a variety of competing and sometimes complementary network formation and development practices in zine communities, complicated by the notion that zine making in fact rebels against established societal roles engendered by class, race, gender or political ideals (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004).

Within informal networks, the interaction of friends, the formation of friendships and the use of 'accidental communications' initiates activity, manages conflict and undertakes the work required within the community (Krackhardt & Stern, 1988). The processes exist within the formation of some zine communities where a community of friends, not always located in the same physical space, interact in order to read, create, distribute and share zines (Duncombe, 1997; Langston, 2010). The democratic ideal of these communities is sometimes challenged when one person attempts, or is singled out by the media, to speak for or define the community (Langston, 2010; Piepmeier, 2008; Schilt, 2004). The leadership role implied here challenges the over-arching do-it-yourself (DIY) ethic that permeates zine making. This ethic, which can also partially describe the aesthetic of zine making (Leventhal, 2007) is centred on empowerment of the zine maker and the role of DIY expression in supporting the social capability of the individual and their society (McKay, 1998; Spencer, 2005; Triggs, 2006).

The DIY ethic does not always emerge just from zine communities. Within other activist, fan or political communities' zines have been an effective tool for individual expression and for supporting recruitment. Especially where communities that have been disenfranchised from mainstream media, zines makers have been able to use self-publishing as a way of supporting inter-community engagement or to form smaller sub-groups within the wider community (Chu, 1997; Lo, 2004) Two significant examples have been the punk community in both the United Kingdom and the United States from the late 1970s (Triggs, 2006) and the nascent riot grrrl movement of third wave feminism that emerged from the Northwest United States in the early 1990s (Schilt, 2004; Wagg, 2003).

The functions of a zine making community

Zine community members, though perhaps isolated by their location, experience, practice or economics, can aspire to express their views and commune with others who either share and/or want to listen to those views (Poletti, 2005; Schuler, 1994; Zobl, 2004, pp. 2-3). Whilst this aspiration can and does translate into practice, the functions that support or enhance the success of this exchange are neither uniform nor commonly accepted. Through a combination of the conditions under which zines are created including isolation, expression, shared experience and authenticity the operations of a zine community can be fractured and discursive (Atton, 2009; Isaksen, 1999; Radway, 2001).

The function of zine making as a practice that supported communication and organisation for isolated or fringe communities has shifted inconsistently but substantially over the last two decades. Much of the literature now centres on the zine maker as the nexus around which a community forms, supporting the emancipatory dialogues, interactions and intimacy common in zine making (Duncombe, 1997; Radway, 2011; Zobl, 2004). These communities are often formed organically and without structure, leading to what Krackhardt and Stern (1988) identify as dysfunctional or sub-

optimal organisational structures that perpetuate crises and bring into question the longevity and viability of the community (Krackhardt & Stern, 1988).

The zine maker does not always form their community with its function clearly identified. The act of formation occurs as the maker distributes, markets and talks about their zine, often in informal settings with the community forming through activity (Poletti, 2008). The ease with which materials can be acquired to make zines, the relatively low level of skill required to enter the community and the impact of the DIY aesthetic contribute to a emancipatory practice of expression and community creation in which zine makers construct their own communities around their perspectives, attitudes and 'imagined' communities, selecting and categorising potential and actual readers of their zine and supporting the transference of skills (Chidgey, 2006; Kuznetsov & Paulos, 2010; Poletti, 2008). Alternately, the intent to form a community may be pre-mediated, with examples of zine makers '…seek(ing) to build and mobilize community, and work(ing) to forge alliances across lines of difference for purposes of pursuing agendas that are framed in terms of social justice and equity' (Licona, 2005, p. 109). In either case, the rigidity of the community itself, in terms of membership, function and purpose is questionable. Zine communities are frequently heterogeneous, with the boundaries between reading and writing practice blurred (Glastonbury, 2010; Piepmeier, 2008).

One of the key functions with zine making communities is the transfer of information and experiences within the community, and the subsequent transformation of these information sites into sites of learning (Schilt, 2003a; Siemens, 2005). There is a contested discourse around what kind of knowledge exists and is shared within zine communities. Either in terms of knowledge constructed through shared experiences, the transmission of practice or through shared content or opinions, information sharing remains firmly centred in the frame of the individual (Ferris, 2001; Stoddart & Kiser, 2004). Whilst shared experience and information represents a particularly powerful site of

knowledge for zine makers, zine making remains a physical experience based on '...pleasure, affection, allegiance and vulnerability (Piepmeier, 2008) or constructed through a sense of social isolation, repression of sexuality and gender empowerment (Boellstorff, 2004; Collins, 1999; Gottlieb & Wald, 1994; Harris, 2003; Long, 2000). It is the zine maker's personal engagement with experience, linked perhaps with the knowledge that someone else has experienced similar that can facilitate the formation of the community (Schilt, 2003b). Rauch (2004) notes that this engagement can be an interpretive one, resulting in the formation of '...informal contacts, shared discourse, and collective interpretations' (Rauch, 2004, p. 157). In such a dynamic environment, the entry of new members to a community may challenge the functions extant in the community or even re-invent and re-define the community itself through shifting the way community members are attracted and involved (Lacey, 2005; Milner, 2002; Sinor, 2003).

The roles within a zine making community

Within social movement theory, the roles played by the individual and/or collective within a community are well explored, identifying both a collective democratic outcome and a societal impact (Diani, 2000; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Pateman, 1970). Even the most informal or disorganised networks or communities have roles played by community members in order to propagate the growth of the community or to encourage and develop the motivations and outcomes of participation (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987).

Whilst zines have played important roles in the development of and recruitment to sub-cultural or social movements such as punk and riot grrrl, the possessiveness of the individual to their zine sets zine making apart from other movements of collective action (Daugherty, 2002; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004; McKay, 1998). Zine makers can play a multitude of roles within their self-formed community, including that of creator, distributor, promoter and gate-keeper. They can control their own editorial

and creative output and influence the space between the reader and themselves (Ferris, 2001; Lymn, 2008; Piepmeier, 2008, 2009; Sinor, 2003). This control may then be ceded to some extent when the zine maker joins other, perhaps larger communities of zine makers, as occurs when the zine makers engages with a distributor or as the zine maker seeks the engagement or approval of other zine makers. At the same time, the zine maker can maintain control and influence over the own, independent community of readers. The zine maker can also be seeking or providing senses of vindication, experimentation, support and authenticity within the community. These simultaneous and/or dichotomous spaces/roles within a number of different communities are somewhat representative of the DIY aesthetic of zine making, but equally, may be attributed to an on-going micro-fragmentation of communities in general (Barnard, 1996; Rennie, Berkeley, & Murphet, 2010). This 'community of losers within a society that celebrates winners' requires complex information sharing roles primarily because the community itself refuses to be mapped or structured. It is a nebulous and sprawling collection of over-lapping formations that act as the 'cement' that holds scenes, alliances and collective interests together (Duncombe, 1997; Spencer, 2005).

This analysis does not promulgate the idea that zine communities form and grow without the development of functions and roles. As discussed earlier, zine communities need to develop (or allocate) roles that imbue the community with the ability to sustain and grow, to promote and encourage participation in the medium and to self-organise in order to share practice and experiences. How do zine makers support the development and membership of theirs or others zine communities? Do zine makers actively seek feedback or interaction that facilitates zine community formation or is their participation the sole outcome of their creative act; an effective and personal statement of their intent as the insider to the outsider?

Methodology

This study drew on thirty two semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted by email with zine makers in Australia, The United States, Canada, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The respondents were selected using a purposive sampling approach, with expressions for participation placed on five different zine making websites, Facebook and three zinester mailing lists. These expressions were then snowballed out to include the contacts of the original respondents, resulting in the final sample. Whilst there was no specific quota, the numbers of respondents from each of the regions remained roughly equally split between Australia, the Americas and Europe. It was also decided that the process would not specifically target self-declared important, visible or noted zine makers (although they were not excluded from the sample) and instead would rely on respondents identifying themselves simply as zine makers.

As the situation of each zine maker in terms of community formation and positionality within a community was arguably going to be varied, each respondent was initially asked about their role within a self-defined community. After this was explored, the interview moved to discussing the zine maker's role (if any) in the wider zine communities they engaged with. Finally, the respondent was asked what they believed the 'ideal' interaction was between reader and maker. The intent of this series of questions was to identify if there was a role distinction between these two relatively simple and identifiable functions. This would hopefully provide a frame by which other roles could be identified.

The responses were then coded against an expanded rubric based on the informal network information sharing roles identified by Cross and Prusak (2002). These four roles (central connector, peripheral specialist, boundary spanner and information broker), whilst primarily representing modes of organisational interaction, have been utilised in a number of studies to categorise and explain the behaviours and practices of social interaction, social networking and personal interaction in informal

settings, and supports the basis of effective social networking and engagement with experiences (Awazu, 2004; de Toni & Nonino, 2010; Nguyen & Huang, 2010; Tuomela & Salonen, 2005). The intention was to firstly identify if these roles existed with zine communities and if so to what extent. Secondly, are there other information and experience sharing roles played by zine makers within these communities that contributed to their on-going viability and development?

Role 1: Central connector

This is a proactive role that supports others in the network by disseminating information, answering technical questions and supporting the practice of 'troubleshooting' and linking colleagues. This role is often fundamental to the success of the network in that it becomes a repository of skill, experiences and most importantly modes of inter and intra network communications (Cross & Prusak, 2002, pp. 6-10). They frequently act as matching agents, bring people together with homogenous experiences (Awazu, 2004). There was an interesting dichotomy of responses in terms of the role of the central connector in zine communities. A number of respondents either saw the role as non-existent or redundant.

> 'I think I'm less interested in a wider zine community & just interested in my community whether they read or make zines or not' (R.21)

> '…we should send each other more creative challenges and feed off each other's interests and experiments. It is a creative community I seek in zines, rather than a writer-reader relationship' (R.10)

Alternately, there were a significant number of respondents who recognised the need for a central connector in their communities but found it difficult to link with or identify the person undertaking

the role. There were some respondents who were willing to become central connectors, especially in terms of forming wider communities than offered by their own zine, but found the community not supporting or engaging with them. The result of this was that there makers were positioned as unwilling outsiders, with little or no way to participate in a wider community.

'I mistakenly thought that because I shared a common hobby/interest with others, and because I was interested in the zines that they made regardless of genre, that they would be interested in the zines I make. This clearly is not the case. At least, not in my experience. There are a lot of zinester cliques, and while I've found a few individuals that share my interests and values, I feel like an outsider, on the fringe, of the "zine community"' (R.4)

The outcome of these disconnects between acting and requiring a central connector has been the development of a pragmatic belief in the power of the maker's zine for sharing expertise and experiences. The respondents frequently identified with the loneliness of zine making noting, one R.15 noting that '...I don't have that much contact with other zine makers. I know some but we rarely talk about making zines'. The absence of a central connector means that much of the zine creation can happen in isolation, leading to a stronger sense of self, but a diluted role of the zine in a wider community.

'I increasingly feel that I speak only for myself, and that zines have been a fantastic way for me to pare back all the other stuff and find my own voice.' (R.8)

There was still a strong belief amongst zine makers that their zine represented a call to arms for the importance of their voice in the community, and whether by accident or design they aggregate (or connect) activity and activism as part of their role in that community.

'I do strongly believe in the motto that "the personal is political", especially so when I'm talking about my experiences as a male-identifying heterosexual transvestite - it's hard for me NOT to do something political, given that identity.' (R.20)

There was some dissatisfaction with the broader 'zine community' in that there was a perception that you needed to make a specific type of zine in order to be able to effectively share your expertise and experiences as a central connector. The result of this was the formation of smaller micro-zine communities centred on the maker themselves.

'I think it would be great if we could all have a beer and sit around chatting about shit...If I wrote scene type zines maybe it would be great to have craft fair meet ups but I don't... so, dedicated readers, pen pals and the sort, that's what's ideal for me.' (R.9)

'Maybe it is because I don't do a per-zine. That seems to be the in thing now... doing a zine of reviews and attitude doesn't seem to rate highly with the kids...I still make my zine... I have a list of people to send it to; they enjoy it... or seem to. That will have to do for now' (R.14)

Where the respondent accepted or identified their role as a central connector, there is a sense of humility matched with a recognition of the role they play in mentoring or sharing information across a variety of zine making contexts.

'I'm not saying that my little zine is suddenly bringing together all the alternative string players in the world into a wonderful loving connected community, but that my writings on being an alternative musician forced into a classical musician mould and on forging a

path/repertoire for punk/avant-garde/folk string playing has (no pun intended) struck a chord with a surprising amount of people who've emailed me to tell me so.' (R.6)

'I believe that the personal is political and that when we tell stories we are revealing our politics and creating our own histories. I don't feel I speak for any specific community but I identify with several. I am a feminist and a vegan and I carry my time I spent living in Utah like a heart on my sleeve. I send my zines out into the world hoping that other people identify with it.' (R.12)

Role 2: The information broker

The information broker is a hub of informal contacts and knowledge, without having the network power of the central connector. They may aggregate historical perspective, archive documentary histories or be the holder of the oral or print tradition (Cross & Prusak, 2002, pp. 10-11). They would rarely have the ability to edit or shape the way information or experiences are represented, but may possess very specific skills and knowledge relevant to the network.

Within zine communities this role may entail the distribution of zines, the possession of particular skills in zine making or knowing how to access zine communities that are isolated or enclosed. There were some significant cross-over between the role of central connector and the information broker, as observed in the literature can often be the same person (Chiriac & Ghitu-Bratescu, 2011). This could be attributed to the informality of the community, one in which network power is difficult to exert or is perhaps non-existent.

'It is my hope that whatever I do with my writing that it at least endures past the hipster movement's point of relevance and reaches someone else. I'm not optimistic that it will but it'd be nice for that to happen.' (R.11)

Information that was shared was not always deemed equal or equivalent by the respondents. A number identified the judgement call they made in terms of the relevance of the information they were sharing with the process of actually brokering the information, with that judgement requisite on the nature of the community itself or their own formed opinion.

'I'm more of a poet who happens to make zines as a way of getting my writing out there each year. I appreciate the zine community, but to be honest, I find the DIY aesthetic a bit shall I say 'scruffy' at times. A bit fringy...To be honest a lot of the stuff out there can be really low quality (particularly the writing), which is a bit disheartening.' (R.11)

The role of information broker can be reliant on whether the information has value to the community and whether the person sharing the information is considered authoritative. This is especially the case in zine communities where the members represent a network of imagined or desired audiences, or through some evolved practice that seeks to represent an authoritative voice.

'a girl sent me a zine that was obviously slapped together with a note reading "I just threw this together so I would have something to trade" it made me really angry that I would spend months working on a zine and this person just threw some thing together to get an unequal trade. So, I wrote her to let her know what I thought and apparently she was really angry at me about it' (R.18)

Whilst the role of information broker was not as prevalent in the data as the central connector, a number of respondents identified either the need for someone to share experiences or critiques directly with them (as opposed to the wider community).

> 'I make zines to develop my writing skills and drawing skills but also in the hope that those skills will be recognised and that I may get feedback about it.' (R.2)

Role 3 – The peripheral specialist

The peripheral specialist holds and adds to a body of specialised knowledge, but resides on the fringes of the network. There is significant cross-over between the role of central connector and information broker in that both possess knowledge. It is the position inside or outside the network that changes the mode of engagement and the ongoing motivation of the participant (Cross & Prusak, 2002, p. 11). A peripheral specialist frequently shares and constructs their knowledge through experience (Awazu, 2004). They may also hold any number of nodes of knowledge, from distribution to construction to the oral traditions of a zine community. The specificity of their skills and the residence within small, isolated networks (as opposed to seeking wider networks) mark the peripheral specialist as different from the previous two network roles (Coenen, 2003).

The analysis of the data did not clearly identify this role within zine communities, although there was some debate about what it means to be outside a community, both as justification for the existence of zines in the first instance, then as a statement of the zine makers own perceived positionality.

> 'I also think it is a radical and highly political act for women, any woman or oppressed person to tell their story and express themselves because our society is so much about

silencing people and white-washing and sanitising everything into tidy shiny fake piles of crap...I think our society needs street art, zines, poetry and music as a reminder we aren't CONSUMERS... ' (R.13)

'I don't communicate much; I just leave zines at Sticky Institute and am signed up to wemakezines [A zine forum website] online. I would like to be more involved, and I guess I would make more zines if I was...' (R.16)

The zine makers interviewed clearly possessed knowledge and experience linked to their practice. Connected with the self-defined role as outsiders, they were intuitively and perhaps unknowingly acting as peripheral specialists. The inability to link with others and convert their expertise and connectivity into the role of either a central connector or information broker may be attributed to a lack of confidence, a conflict of ideals or aims or through the formation of barriers to community participation by existing members (or by the zine maker themselves).

'The first zines I did were basically made so I could feel like a part of a punk community, a way to talk about political ideas, and part of my efforts to become one of the cool kids. My motivations are more hedonistic now than aspirational' (R.10).

'I don't intend to seek feedback for the zine at the moment and I don't feel as if I need to right now at this early stage. I suppose I just like to do this all myself for now with my own parameters. Maybe when the zine is 10 issues old or so, or if I lose the passion for making zines I might seek feedback somehow.' (R.27)

There were a number of examples where the specialist knowledge that the respondents wanted to share was contained within the zine itself. The barriers that impact on the zine maker's ability to

participate in a zine making community, whether real or perceived, created crises of confidence both in terms of the relevance of the content and in the practice of zine making itself. The case of R.20 is an interesting one. After being interviewed for this study, she posted a number of pleas on her Facebook profile for zine makers to get back to her with feedback on her zine (which was an authoritative source of knowledge in her discipline). She had stated in the interview that she made zines in order to *'...*trade *with other zine makers and essentially get zines for free'*. Two months after our interview, she shut down her zines Facebook page, noting on the page that she was bored because of the lack of feedback or interaction. Allegedly she has left a number of distributors and readers out of pocket by not delivering her zines with one reader noting on a zines web forum that;

> '…I suppose that my rancour is in relation to the efforts she was making to get the word out about her zine, her efforts to get it distroed, etc. that she put herself in this position then just disappeared.'

In the few cases where the role of a peripheral specialist could be attributed to a zine maker, they identified conflicts within their processes of community formation. By virtue of their role as a peripheral specialist, the respondents felt isolated from the community, experienced difficulties in breaking into that community or in some cases, withdrew entirely. Cross and Prusak (2002) argue that the effectiveness of the peripheral specialist is enhanced if they are closely integrated into the network. They also recognise the notion that peripheral specialists may chose to remain on the fringe (loners as they refer to them) and that by being on the fringe their effectiveness may be enhanced. There was little evidence in the interviews that supported the idea that effectiveness of zine makers was enhanced by remaining on the fringes of the community as a peripheral specialist; rather it suggests that the opposite was true. Zine makers seeking and failing to find community engagement reverted to internal evaluative processes and sometimes even ceased practicing.

Role 4 – Boundary Spanner

This role represents the linking behaviours and cross-community interactions between a network and the wider world. A boundary spanner may be a member of a number of different communities, linking each but not in equal ways. Boundary spanners undertake a number of complex, outward facing tasks in the network including information gathering, representation, influencing of decisions and responding to external interactions (Beechler, Søndergaard, Miller, & Bird, 2004). Whilst Cross and Prusak (2002) argue that boundary spanners are rare, the data from the study indicates that within zine making practice, boundary spanning behaviours are common and accepted. This may be attributable to the differences between the organisational networks that Cross and Prusak were studying and the more informal communities seen in zine making, where participation in more than one community is common.

Boundary spanning behaviours in zine communities appeared to be quite complex in terms of what was considered 'outside' the network. For some zine makers, it was the community of action, political intent or gender that was outside, and the community of zine makers was the internal network that benefited from the boundary spanning, but in other cases the reverse was true.

> 'I find that a lot of zine makers identify with other communities or social movements (be they punk, queer, vegetarian, etc.) in addition to being makers of zines. I don't really feel that I identify with a community/movement in that way, though. I certainly have my own beliefs and politics, but those aspects of my life aren't something that I discuss in my zine, so I wouldn't consider my zine representative of any of them.' (R.1)

The roles that these boundary spanners play in their community are often not discrete or clearly understood. At a practical level, they included behaviours such as relationship building, information exchange, innovation and most importantly connectivity between disparate zine communities. At an emotional or personal level they included behaviours such mutual support, or the caring shoulder of someone who understands what they are experiencing.

'That community is great and supportive to have, in that we show up and encourage each other's writing and summon a good audience for it. (R.7)

'My personal relationship with the wider zine making community is very important. Without them, no one would read or distribute my zine which would make the whole point of creating a zine kind of moot. If it wasn't for the community, these zines would just be web pages or blogs' (R.20)

However, it is important to note the confusion and perhaps conflation that can occur between these spanned communities. The 'other' community (the one that is not about zine making) may well have a number of zine makers within its membership, and its activity may be as equally oriented to zine making as part of its media or cultural output. This conflation may explain a number of blurry distinctions about the boundary spanning role.

'In my main zine, I talk about mental illness. In a way I feel that contributes to the category of zines that are mental illness related. Other than that in a whole I feel like I am contributing to the underground movement that is DIY ethics and creativity, if that makes sense?' (R.2)

Alternately, there were a number of responses that were quite clear about their role within specific communities, and how their practice of zine making initiated the boundary spanning behaviours.

> 'I look at street art, I photograph it, I love it. I see emerging artists and writers and support them. I don't think art should be about profit, art is about life. And zines are the manifestation of a creative anti-authoritarian social movement that knows a better world is possible, and on its way' (R.13)

The role of the boundary spanner appears critical to the operation and on-viability of zine communities. Without this role the zine may devolve to that of an instrument of individual expression existing within the context of a readership that only seeks either make zines themselves. R.26 noted that less than 10% of his readers were other zine makers. He went onto argue that in his belief having the majority of your readership (or your community) outside of the zine making community was the only sustainable way to maintain his zines authenticity. This was supported by R.12 who observed that;

> 'I still enjoy getting mail and zines but the communication/interaction doesn't seem to make a difference to me. I still make my zine… I have a list of people to send it to; they enjoy it… or seem to. That will have to do for now.' (R.13)

Emancipator and change agent– two additional roles?

Within communities bounded by shared experiences and handed down expertise (such as zines), the information sharing roles identified by Cross and Prusak are fundamental to the performance of the community itself. However, from the data it was relatively clear that within zine communities, the roles of central connector and information broker were very similar. Each role aimed to engage in

information sharing through the formation and maintenance of social networks. The role of peripheral specialist also undertook the same basic tasks but without the wider scope and often without the interactivity engendered by participating in social networking.

Whilst it was apparent that there was some merging of these roles, two additional roles emerged from the data analysis. A significant number of respondents engaged with people in their community who chose to share information, expertise and contacts freely. These people did not form communities around them, nor did they insist on community membership as a condition of information and experience sharing. They embedded the DIY aesthetic in their practice and strongly believed in the emancipatory 'soul' of zine making. This emancipatory role may be critical to the accessible nature of zine making.

> 'We do not conform or belong to any specific religious or socio-political group. We mainly represent a part of the counterculture that stands for unconditional freedom of artistic expression, no boundaries; no censorship.' (R.17)

> 'Reader or creator or both, it's the thriving individuality within the scene that should be appreciated, encouraged and respected. The ideal relationship between reader and zine maker is one where the reader is inspired to create one of their own. In this scene there is complete freedom to create any kind of zine you want; there are no rules, and DIY technology has never been easier.' (R.23)

An equally altruistic perspective was portrayed by zine makers who sought to ensure the viability of the medium through encouraging and supporting growth and development. Many of the respondents noted that their zine making practice evolved from their initial experiences as readers. A change

agent perceives their zine and the community as an instrument of social and/or societal change. Once again, this role is not about forming a community, but about being part of something bigger and contributing towards the social change initiated by the medium.

> 'SO my zine isn't just "my story" it is part of a rebellious fabric of society that is a movement for change. It believes change is possible and it starts now! (R.13)

> 'I guess (zines) also suits my tendency to change my opinion on certain topics – it's as if the zine grows with me, and as my views become more nuanced and developed, so does my zine' (R.28)

These two additional roles are an interesting counterpoint to the informal network roles. They suggest that despite evidence to the contrary not all zine makers seek to form their own communities. Some zine makers have engaged in the 'rebellious fabric of society' and seek to position their practice within it. This distinction is critical in exploring the way in which zine communities grow, replicate and evolve.

Conclusion

This study represented a comprehensive engagement with a complex and arguably discursive and fragmented community. The role of the insider and outsider within zine communities was probably one of the most contested debates within the study. Chan and Liebowitz (2006) argue that one person may play many different and consecutive roles within a community. In terms of zine making, the data suggested that these parallel roles may occur both when inside and outside a community. The interviews identified the actions zine makers took whilst on the inside of the community, but

(sometimes quite viscerally) identified the emotional impact of not being able to break into the community.

There is a significant body of literature on the behaviours and actions that occur when people whether willingly or not remain outside a community or clique they wish to be part of (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2006; Krackhardt & Stern, 1988; Palla, Barabási, & Vicsek, 2007). Despite having expertise and information to share, or being a member of a community that bounded zine making, a number of respondents found it problematic to engage with zine making communities. They identified feelings of anger, resentment and disinterest that occurred when they were unable to find a way into a community. There is not enough evidence to identify whether these emotional responses resulted in significant numbers ceasing to make zines. However the case of R.20 provided a demonstrative case of dissatisfaction resulting in negative participatory action.

The data analysis also identified a complex relationship between zine makers and readers. The vast majority of respondents saw engaging readers as a central part of their practice, with many arguing that a community cannot be formed from zine makers alone. Some suggested that there was an equality of responsibility between the reader and the maker to forge and sustain a community. But the challenge rests with identifying the power structures within these networks. Are the messages in the zine the nexus that links makers and readers or is it the zine maker themselves and what interests them that hopes to find an audience? This questions what information and expertise is actually being shared around the network. It equally challenges the additional two roles suggested by the data analysis, as these roles are in effect about 'the community' as opposed to the individual maker.

The motivations for an individual's participation in zine making are equally complex. If a zine maker chooses to make their zine in order to engage with other zine makers in a social network, then

the role of sharing information, experiences and expertise becomes secondary to the formation and selection of the community.   In this instance the nature of the information being exchanged changes to facilitating communication and accessing people. But in reality, what is the thing the community is forming around? Does the zine become secondary to talking about zines? This disconnection between practice and interaction poses a further question; what happens to the zine makers that are excluded from these communities, the 'disillusioned outsider'? Do they coalesce into an entirely new and different form of zine community with their own central connectors and boundary spanners seeking to link to their communities they were excluded from? Or do they move away from zine making into a different form of practice? These questions are critical to understanding the viability of zine making. Understanding how communities operate when they are formed is only part of the puzzle. The more cogent observations may evolve from understanding why communities form and the information requirements that direct and shape their structure.

References

Arzaghi, M. (2004). A Model of Knowledge Sharing and Network Formation among Advertising
    Agencies: Working Paper, Brown University.
Atton, C. (2009). Writing about listening: alternative discourses in rock journalism. Popular Music,
    28(01), 53-67.
Awazu, Y. (2004). Knowledge management in distributed environments: roles of informal network
    players. Paper presented at the 37th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences
    Retrieved from
    http://www.computer.org/comp/proceedings/hicss/2004/2056/01/205610025a.pdf
Balkundi, P., & Kilduff, M. (2006). The ties that lead: A social network approach to leadership. The
    Leadership Quarterly, 17(4), 419-439.
Barnard, I. (1996). Fuck community or Why I support gay bashing. In R. R. Curry & T. L. Allison
    (Eds.), States of rage: Emotional eruption, violence, and social change (pp. 74–88).
Beechler, S., Søndergaard, M., Miller, E. L., & Bird, A. (2004). Boundary spanning. In H. W. Lane
    (Ed.), The Blackwell handbook of global management: A guide to managing complexity (pp.
    121–133): Blackwell.
Boellstorff, T. (2004). Zines and Zones of Desire: Mass-Mediated Love, National romance, and
    Sexual Citizenship in Gay Indonesia. The Journal of Asian Studies, 63(2), 367-402.
Chan, K., & Liebowitz, J. (2006). The synergy of social network analysis and knowledge mapping: a
    case study. International journal of management and decision making, 7(1), 19-35.
Chidgey, R. (2006). The Resisting Subject: Per-zines as life story data. University of Sussex Journal
    of Contemporary History, 10.
Chiriac, S. E., & Ghitu-Bratescu, A. (2011). Linking Globalisation, Sustainable Development and
    Knowledge Transfer - A Network Based Approach Journal of Doctoral Research in
    Economics, 3(1), 13.
Chu, J. (1997). Navigating the Media Environment: How Youth Claim a Place Through Zines. Social
    Justice, 24(3), 71-85.
Coenen, T. (2003). Evaluating the impact of frameworks for the stimulation and facilitation of
    knowledge sharing. Paper presented at the 10th European Conference on Information
    Technology, Madrid, Spain.
Collins, D. (1999). No Experts Guaranteed! Do-It-Yourself Sex Radicalism and the Production of the
    Lesbian Sez Zine "Brat Attack". Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 25(1), 65-89.
Cross, R., & Prusak, L. (2002). The people who make organizations go-or stop. Harvard Business
    Review, 80(6), 104-112.
Daugherty, R. (2002). The Spirit of'77: Punk and the Girl Revolution. Women & Music, 27-37.
de Toni, A. F., & Nonino, F. (2010). The key roles in the informal organization: a network analysis
    perspective. Learning Organization, The, 17(1), 86-103.
Diani, M. (2000). The Concept of Social Movement. In K. Nash (Ed.), Readings in Contemporary
    Political Sociology (pp. 155–176).
Duncombe, S. (1997). Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture.
    London: Verso.
Ferris, M. B. (2001). Resisting Mainstream Media: Girls and the Act of Making Zines. Canadian
    Woman Studies, 20/21(4/1), 51-55.
Glastonbury, K. (2010). The New 'Coterie': Writing, Community and Collective. Journal of the
    Association for the Study of Australian Literature(0).
Gottlieb, J., & Wald, G. (1994). Smells Like Teen Spirit: Riot Grrls, Revolution and Women in
    Independent Rock. In A. Ross & T. Rose (Eds.), Microfiends: Youth Music and Youth
    Culture. New York Routledge.

Guzzetti, B. J., & Gamboa, M. (2004). Zines for social justice: Adolescent girls writing on their own. Reading Research Quarterly, 39(4), 408-436.

Harris, A. (2003). gURL scenes and grrrl zines: the regulation and resistance of girls in late modernity. Feminist Review, 75, 38-56.

Isaksen, J. (1999). Identity and Agency: Riot Grrrls' Jouissance. Enculturation, 2(2).

Klandermans, B., & Oegema, D. (1987). Potentials, Networks, Motivations, and Barriers: Steps Towards Participation in Social Movements. American Sociological Review, 52(4), 519-531.

Krackhardt, D., & Stern, R. N. (1988). Informal networks and organizational crises: An experimental simulation. Social Psychology Quarterly, 123-140.

Kucsma, J. (1998). Notes from the Underground. Other Voices, 2(1).

Kuznetsov, S., & Paulos, E. (2010). Rise of the expert amateur: DIY projects, communities, and cultures. Paper presented at the NordiCHI '10 Proceedings of the 6th Nordic Conference on Human-Computer Interaction: Extending Boundaries, Reykjavik, Iceland.

Lacey, A. (2005). Networked Communities: Social Centers and Activist Spaces in Contemporary Britain. Space and Culture, 8(3), 286-301.

Langston, S. (2010). Are we rebels? Zine-making, dissent and identity. The Scavenger. Retrieved from http://www.thescavenger.net/arts/zine-making-dissent-and-identity-78456.html

Leventhal, A. (2007). Imperfect Bound: Zines, Materiality, and the Question of Preserving Ephemera. Paper presented at the Canadian Association for the Study of Book Culture.

Licona, A. C. (2005). (B)orderlands' rhetorics and representations: the transformative potential of feminist third-space scholarship and zines. NWSA Journal, 17(2), 104(126).

Lo, K. Y.-K. L. (2004). Dialogue & Dissident Self-publishing. Four Minutes to Midnight. Retrieved from http://lokidesign.net/2356/wp-content/download/2356_report.pdf

Long, T. L. (2000). Plague of Pariahs: AIDS 'Zines and the Rhetoric of Transgression. Journal of Communication Inquiry, 24(4), 401-411.

Lymn, J. (2008). The Octapod Zine Collection Developing a preservation and access strategy. Retrieved from http://luminen.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/octapod-report-for-web.pdf

McCarthy, J., & Zald, M. (1977). Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory. American Journal of Sociology, 82(6), 1212.

McKay, G. e. (Ed.). (1998). DiY culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain. London: Verso.

Milner, J. (2002). Arts Impact: Arts and culture in the community. Performing Arts & Entertainment in Canada, 34(1), 11-12.

Nguyen, Q. V., & Huang, M. L. (2010). A New Interactive Platform for Visual Analytics of Social Networks. Visual Information Communication, 231-244.

Palla, G., Barabási, A. L., & Vicsek, T. (2007). Quantifying social group evolution. Nature, 446, 664-667.

Pateman, C. (1970). Participation and democratic theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Piepmeier, A. (2008). Why Zines Matter: Materiality and the Creation of Embodied Community. American Periodicals, 18(2), 213-238.

Piepmeier, A. (2009). Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism: New York Univ Pr.

Poletti, A. (2005). Self-Publishing in the Global and Local: Situating Life Writing in Zines. Biography, 28(1), 183-192.

Poletti, A. (2008). Intimate ephemera: Reading young lives in Australian zine culture: Academic Monographs.

Radway, J. (2001). Girls, Zines and the Miscellaneous Production of Subjectivity in an Age of Unceasing Circulation. Speaker Series: Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing and the Literacy & Rhetorical Studies Minor, 18. Retrieved from http://writing.umn.edu/docs/speakerseries_pubs/Radway.pdf

Radway, J. (2011). Zines, Half-Lives, and Afterlives: On the Temporalities of Social and Political Change. PMLA, 126(1), 140-150.

Rauch, J. (2004). Hands-on Communication: Zine Circulation Rituals and the Interactive Limitations of Web Self-Publishing. Popular Communication, 2(3), 153-169.

Reagles, J. (2008). My identity is fluid as fuck: Transgender zine writers constructing themselves. In S. Driver (Ed.), Queer Youth Cultures (pp. 87). New York: SUNY press.

Rennie, E., Berkeley, L., & Murphet, B. (2010). Community Media and Ethical Choice. 3C Media, 6( ).

Richardson, A. (1996). Come on, join the conversation!:Zines as a medium for feminist dialogue and community building. Feminist Collections, 17(3-4), 10-13.

Schilt, K. (2003a). " I'll Resist with Every Inch and Every Breath": Girls and Zine Making as a Form of Resistance. Youth & Society, 35(1), 71.

Schilt, K. (2003b). "A Little Too Ironic": The Appropriation and Packaging of Riot Grrrl Politics by Mainstream Female Musicians. Popular Music and Society, 26(1), 5-16.

Schilt, K. (2004). "Riot Grrrl Is...": The Contestation over Meaning in a Music Scene. In A. Bennett & R. A. Peterson (Eds.), Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Schuler, D. (1994). COMMUNITY NETWORKS: BUILDING A NEW PARTICIPATORY MEDIUM. Communications of the ACM, 37(1), 38-51.

Siemens, G. (2005). Connectivism: A learning theory for the digital age. International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning, 2(1), 3-10.

Sinor, J. (2003). Another Form of Crying: Girl Zines as Life Writing. Prose Studies, 26(1), 240-264.

Spencer, A. (2005). DIY: the rise of lo-fi culture. London: Marion Boyers.

Stoddart, R. A., & Kiser, T. (2004). Zines and the Library. Library Resources and Technical Services 48(3), 191-198.

Taylor, V., & Whittier, N. E. (1999). Collective Identity in Social Movement Communities: Lesbian Feminist. In J. Freeman & V. Johnson (Eds.), Waves of protest: social movements since the sixties (Vol. 101, pp. 169).

Triggs, T. (2006). Scissors and Glue: Punk Fanzines and the Creation of a DIY Aesthetic. Journal of Design History, 19(1), 69-83.

Tuomela, A., & Salonen, A. (2005). Network service organisation: a multiple pilot study. Facilities, 23(3/4), 128-141.

Wagg, H. (2003). MEDIAte This! Positioning Communications in Riot Grrrl Subcultural Formation. Journal for the Arts, Sciences and Technology, 01(2), 19-24.

Ware, I. (2003). An Introduction to Zines and Their Definition. Paper presented at the Critical Animals Conference.

Zobl, E. (2004). Persephone is Pissed! Grrrl Zine Reading, Making, and Distributing Across the Globe. Hecate, 30(2), 156-175.