

Community radio and identity construction post-1994

ABSTRACT

The South African social transition was accompanied by widespread media reform. Community radio stations were for the first time, set up to empower communities previously without access to the media. More than a hundred radio stations were licensed, and further provision was made for community television, even if it was nearly a decade later before there was any discernible movement in the area of community television. The paper addresses concerns about media, politics and identity struggles, viewed through the lens of community radio. While there is a wealth of literature analysing the development of various aspects of the South African media over the last decade, few, if any, studies specifically consider the role of community media. Set up after elections in 1994, expressly to create spaces for the articulation of marginal or “disadvantaged” groups, the community radio sector in South Africa has mushroomed, with nearly a hundred stations currently licensed.

This paper will explore the ways in which community radio has facilitated the construction of new identities. Adopting a case-study approach, the paper considers community radio station Bush Radio, discussing how the station interpellates diverse identities through its programming. *In the Pink*, for example, creates a space for the articulation of various gay identities, while the Children’s Radio Education Workshop becomes a mediated space for youth in the new political dispensation to form a generational consciousness. The intersection of class, culture and language at Bush Radio, and on its airwaves, often results in the constant (re)negotiation of identities.

Furthermore, the paper also reflects on the religious or community-of-interest community radio stations, and argues that these stations further serve the purpose of identity building. The resultant listener loyalty results in increased sustainability; they serve the purpose of therapy or confession, giving listeners an outlet for frustrations; and finally, religious community radio stations become a virtual church, transcending physical boundaries and resulting in instantaneous religious community building.

INTRODUCTION

Community radio in South Africa emerged post-1994, as an alternative to the status quo of a state-owned and – closer to-controlled press (Thorne, 1999) and community radio stations in South Africa have mushroomed as concrete manifestations of the liberalisation of the airwaves and a new era of democratic communication. With the formation of an Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) in 1994, over 100 community radio licences were granted, with nearly one hundred stations broadcasting in 2007.

The IBA was set up “to open the airwaves to previously excluded voices and opinions and to establish viable market conditions for a diverse and independent broadcasting system” (Barnett, 1999:651). For the first time ever, special provision was made for community radio as a formal structure, intended to afford previously disadvantaged groups access to the airwaves. Community broadcasting was defined as that which is “initiated and controlled by members of a community of interest, or a geographic community, to express their concerns, needs or aspirations without interference, subject to the regulation of the IBA” (Duncan & Seleokane, 1998:216).

The subsequent rise of community radio has helped black, rural and minority groups to learn how to establish, manage and develop radio stations, and to acquire skills in all aspects of radio broadcasting. Community radio has provided communities with access to media and the opportunity to articulate their views through direct and indirect participation (Mtimde, 2000). In fact, globally, community radio is growing as a response to the spread of international media corporations. This rise of alternative media allows communities of developing countries to express their opinions and needs, and to obtain participation in the public sphere (Mowlana, 1998).

In South Africa there is provision for two categories of community broadcasting: geographic stations i.e. stations broadcasting to specific geographical communities; and community-of-interest stations, i.e. those intended for specific interest groups, either religious or cultural, including campus stations. The current policy regulator, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), lists 90 community radio stations as recipients of four-year community licences (.). Of these, half operate with community-of-interest licences (including campus and music radio), while a further 13 operate as religious (Christian and Muslim) radio stations.

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

While there is a wealth of literature dealing with various aspects of South African media development over the last decade, there is a dearth of literature on community radio. The main research question guiding the article is: What role does community radio play in the construction of social identities in South Africa? The article also addresses broader concerns about media, politics and identity struggles, viewed through the lens of community media.

First, a geographic radio station, Bush Radio, is discussed, and the article explores how it builds diverse social identities via its programming; then four religious radio stations are discussed – two Christian and two Muslim - exploring how these religious broadcasters achieve identity construction

through their programming. The stations under scrutiny are Radio Islam, Radio 786, Radio CCFM, and Radio Tygerberg.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper uses the methodology of a collective case study, with cases purposively selected so as to maximise understanding of community radio in South Africa. Bush Radio in Cape Town was selected as the largest (and most well-known) geographically based station in the country. Similarly, Radio Islam in Johannesburg was selected as one of the most well-known (and sometimes controversial) Muslim radio stations. Radio 786 was selected as a point of comparison, and because it is anecdotally described as being the most successful Muslim station in the Western Cape. The Christian Radio Tygerberg in the Western Cape was selected for having the highest number of listeners of any other community radio station in the country, and Radio CCFM in Muizenberg was selected as a smaller Christian station, to provide a point of comparison. Ethnographic research, namely participant observation and in-depth interviews were conducted at Bush Radio as part of a larger study (Bosch, 2003). In-depth interviews were carried out with management staff of the other four radio stations.

3. BUSH RADIO AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Bush Radio broadcasts 24 hours a day on 89,5FM, with a balance of 60% talk and 40% music. Talk shows and documentaries deal with issues including health, gender, children, governance and democracy. Music shows include specialist music shows of genres not available on other radio stations, e.g. drum and bass, reggae, and blues. Programming is produced by volunteers drawn from the target community, and the station uses horizontal communication to encourage dialogue within the communities of the Cape Flats, as well as between those communities artificially created and fragmented during apartheid. The role of Bush Radio vis-à-vis the construction of various social identities will be discussed with reference to two specific programmes: the gay and lesbian show, *In the Pink*, and the *Children's Radio Education Workshop* (CREW).

3.1 *In the Pink: The construction of gay identities*

Faint traces of the song, '*It's Raining Men*', drift down the stairs of the Bush Radio building in Salt River, Cape Town. The programming office is filled with people making last-minute changes to the lineup. One young man wearing a T-shirt sporting the slogan, 'I'm HIV positive,' is on the phone confirming an interview with the *Gugulethu Support Group for Gays*. In the music library a lesbian couple discusses how to advise teenagers who may be suicidal about their sexuality.

...It's nearly 9 o'clock on a Thursday night, and time for *In the Pink*, Africa's only gay and lesbian radio programme, produced for and by the gay community.

In the Pink airs on Bush Radio every Thursday night at 8pm¹. Previous topics have included: gay² rights, gay artists and musicians, coverage of the gay and lesbian film festival and similar events,

¹ As of February 2007, the programme was not on air. Station director, Zane Ibrahim, acknowledges a need for such a show and articulates a commitment to having it return to air within the year. Some of the former producers quoted in this article are currently putting together a proposal for a new show.

² This article uses the term *gay* as it is used by *In the Pink* staff. In this article, the term refers to all people who self-identify as gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgendered (GLBT).

homophobia and growing up gay. The programme follows a talk show format with interview guests, a news bulletin, and a predominance of music with gay themes or by gay artists. The programme is produced and presented by members of Cape Town's gay and lesbian community, specifically members of service organisations such as The Triangle Project. The programme has undergone several transitions over the years as the political context in South Africa has changed.

While this country was still struggling with issues of human rights, gay rights were probably up there amongst them, right on the top. And I think maybe the nature of the programme has not necessarily changed, but certain issues in terms of discovering our identity have maybe shifted on some level. Certain emphasis has maybe shifted. Now I think it's more about reclaiming an Africanised or an African sense of what it means to be gay. Almost from a cultural or a sense of home level where we're still asking ourselves whether intrinsically within our cultural experience of who we are, there is room for us to be gay. Where it's not just a political pseudonym, or a politicised identity but a more personal identity that can be celebrated as much as anything else that we've celebrated in recent times (A. Alberts, personal communication, 06/03/03).

One possible criticism of *In the Pink* is that by narrowcasting, or targeting a specific community, it becomes exclusionary. While there are obvious benefits of minority groups coming together to assert a collective view, this could alienate potential supporters by tacitly closing off membership. According to former producer Lorenzo Raynard,

...people always ask me why *In the Pink*, doesn't it create exclusion? Maybe it does, but I feel that if you as a gay individual have something that recognises you and your group, you feel empowered in that way...maybe sometime in the future when there's proper integration, then your gay issues can be spread out to other programmes. So if you get people coming in and reinforcing and endorsing that kind of different sexual orientation on a community radio station, then it does have a large impact (L. Raynard, personal communication).

Team members feel that the benefits outweigh possible negatives, as the programme creates a space for the legitimisation or affirmation of gay identities, in a context where few such spaces exist. As another former producer, Russell Southey said,

I think that for listeners it's hearing and learning that 'there are others like me out there'. Because just being gay on its own can be a very lonely experience. But realising through the show that 'I am not alone' and gaining a sense of belonging in a broader community. So Bush Radio does provide that space. In the past it has provided that space for the articulation of political issues, but those are no longer relevant today. Today I think it's about ... (R. Southey, personal communication, 6/3/2006).

Furthermore, the wider context of Bush Radio also provides a space where gay people can function without fear of discrimination. Interaction within the group and between the group and other staff

on the premises is relaxed. The more flamboyant members of the team are sometimes regarded with bemusement, but I never witnessed any derogatory comments or jokes during my fieldwork and observation periods. Gay volunteer producers were always accorded the same respect as all other producers.

Yet, at the same time, the programme can also be seen to promote exclusion within the gay community itself. While Southey feels that the programme succeeded in bringing together diverse groups, former producer and presenter, Libby Mokgoro, feels that more could have been done to reach a broad-based gay constituency.

For me at first, I saw it as a voice for the community, a space for people to give their voice on air. But it didn't serve that purpose, it ended up becoming a vehicle for a few minorities – Triangle Project, Cape Town Pride, etc., and they didn't really get the people on to voice their opinions. People who listen are not the white *Triangle* [reference to the NGO Triangle Project] community; it's the community, they're the people who listen to Bush Radio, and we didn't reach them. The people in the gay village, they don't listen. People in the townships, they're the ones that listen. They are curious to find out more about gays, they wanna know is it for real (L. Mokgoro, personal communication, 06/03/2006).

While gays are the programme's primary target, the team is also conscious of its heterosexual listeners. According to Raynard,

It also extends further than just the gay community. We have a mental and physical health slot – last night we did schizophrenia and bipolar – so it caters for more than just the gay community (Personal communication, 08/23/02).

Indeed, the programme seems to appeal to a broader audience, as most of the Bush Radio staff listen to the programme and sometimes discuss programme content the following day. In this sense, the programme serves a cognitive and affective function for non-gay listeners. Heterosexual listeners learn social empathy through gaining insight into the personal circumstances of others. The programme also occasionally steps out of the boundaries of radio to participate in other activities that may be appealing to non-gay listeners.

In the boldness of *In the Pink*, we initiated an interfaith service as part of Pride Week last year. We sense the need from people to speak about religion, and gay people still being spiritual...So we organised this interfaith service...and we had 5 different world religions present. And it was held in the Catholic church right next to Bronx [gay club] which is in the gay village... (Raynard, personal communication, 08/23/02).

The common perception that African culture excludes the possibility of being gay, has been covered repeatedly on the programme, that has hosted many discussions about what it means to be gay and whether one can self-identify as African and simultaneously choose an alternative sexual orientation.

We've gone into black gay communities and had a programme called The Black Gays and...there are lot of men sleeping with men and not necessarily identifying themselves as gay (Raynard, personal communication, 08/23/02).

For Alberts, there is no doubt that there is space for a gay identity within Africa:

There's always the question of whether being gay is African - the concept or the idea of it being un-African among sectors of the community who perceive themselves as being representatives of what African is. There seems to be a very deep and rich celebration within African communities if one looks at the turnout at competitions, like Miss Gay Western Cape, of precisely that – being gay, that it is a celebrated phenomenon or expression within culture or within African culture. The current winner is a Setswana man who is gay (A. Alberts, personal communication, 06/03/03).

In the Pink has attempted to present a picture of the diversity of the gay community in Cape Town, bringing these individuals together as listeners, but also as producers.

The nice thing about the show was that it brought diverse groups of people from across the city together via the medium of radio. People in Khayelitsha, for example, wouldn't have access to the gay community of De Waterkant, just because of proximity. But, through the show, they would be granted access. I got to meet someone like Libby for example, who I might never otherwise have met. Yes, because she's a black lesbian, but also because we do very different kinds of work (R. Southey, personal communication, 3/3/2006).

One listener I spoke to after the programme aired, said,

The program is really amazing to me in that I never thought I could be gay because I didn't like to dress like a *moffie*, you know in women's clothing. But through listening to the radio programme, I realised that there are many different ways you can articulate a gay identity as a coloured man (Anonymous personal communication, July 2003).

Through the programme *In the Pink*, Bush Radio creates a place and space for the articulation of a marginal identity. *In the Pink* allows for the affirmation of an alternative sexual identity. The GLBT movement in Cape Town extends its struggles for equality and acceptance through the radio programme. Radio thus becomes an extension of the resistance that occurs in the individual, as well as an extension of collective action such as street marches and protests, or debates at policy level. Similarly, the programme builds community by bringing individuals together to produce the programme, by creating a community of audience members who listen to the programme, and by creating a synergy between producers and their audiences. Furthermore, the radio programme acts as a bridge between the GLBT community and others, both within the radio station and on the air.

The gay community in South Africa, particularly in Cape Town, has already built a powerful independent community at the spatial, economic, cultural and political levels. The creation of an additional resistance space of radio allows the simultaneous coexistence of personal and public forms of resistance.

3.2 Critical consciousness: Children, culture and identity

About sixty children turn up at Bush Radio on Saturday mornings to learn all aspects of radio broadcasting. Children were originally recruited from local schools, but as news of the project spread, the station received individual applications, and it usually selects potential applicants from a waiting list. On an average Saturday, one sees children between aged 6 to 18 years old writing scripts, editing their recorded sound, discussing topics for the programme, and running all aspects of the live on-air broadcasts in the on-air studio. The children represent a diverse city: they're black, coloured³ and white, Muslim and Christian, middle and working class, and there are even some refugee children (mostly from the Congo). The group is divided into several smaller groups: The **Bush Tots** consists of a group of fourteen children aged between 8 and 12 years old. The **Bush Kidz** are a group of sixteen children aged 10-14, The **Bush Teenz** range from 14 to 18 years old, and **Street Philosophy** are youth aged 16 to 20. The **Alkemy** project (a loose acronym for Alternative Curriculum Mentoring Youth) is a non-broadcast component, which comprises ten youth between 17 and 20 years old, who meet on Saturday afternoons for what is essentially a political science study group.

The overall approach for each group is that the children produce radio with minimal adult interference. They are trained in various aspects of research and production, but are expected to generate their own topics, handle the equipment themselves, etc. There are minor variations in the specific requirements of each group. For example, while the **Bush Tots** is essentially an open-ended discussion with some segments like recipes or poetry, the **Bush Kidz** are required to secure at least one interviewee, and are guided toward more serious topics that have in the past included substance abuse and HIV/AIDS. For the **Bush Teenz**, packaged pieces such as mini-features and vox-pops are encouraged, and their show is more structured, with a career slot, interviews and discussions with listeners. The **Street Philosophy** group is encouraged to dabble in experimental sound projects such as radio diaries and narrative pieces. According to one of the former facilitators of the **Tots**, Nashira Abrahams:

Basically, what they do on air most of the time is taken up with discussion, and it's whatever they want to talk about. Whether it's where babies come from to what happens to your food when you swallow it _ whatever they want to talk about. And sometimes they'll have a recipe in-between, or talk about something that happened at school (N. Abrahams, personal communication, 08/27/02).

During one programme the Bush Tots read their own poetry, explained how to make Fathers' Day cards, shared a cookie recipe, and discussed the significance of the public holiday, Youth Day on June 16th. The themes that emerge from the Bush Tots programme are thus quite broad and deal

³ One of the 4 major racial groups delineated under apartheid, the majority ethnicity of the Western Cape, the term refers to black South Africans of mixed race, though many self-identify as black.

with a combination of serious and light subjects. The main intention is to give children the confidence to speak on radio, as well as helping them to acquire basic technical skills. During another programme, children brought up the topic of role models.

And of course they all got that right, someone to look up to, or someone you want to be like. And when asked who their role models were, all the girls said, I remember one of the girls said, it's my mother and my grandmother and Britney Spears. Or like: my role model is my father and DMX (N. Abrahams, personal communication, 08/27/02).

This alienation of South African youth from their local or national cultures impacts on their openness to cultural offerings from abroad. "Ironically these youth then use these new cultural forms – rap music associated with the U.S. urban black ghettos, Levi jeans and rave culture associated with suburban white youth of Europe and North America – to redraw lines of distinction among themselves, which often cut at right angles to the old forms of affiliation linked to ethnic ancestry (Dolby, 2001:2). This is an important issue for South African youth, especially given the political history of the country. The cultural ban during apartheid prohibited foreign artists from performing in South Africa. After elections in 1994 there was a sudden flood of visits from international musicians, and of foreign music and music videos, and also a host of other imported cultural products.

The CREW project plays a crucial role, both off and on-air, in interrogating these affiliations to popular culture. Topics like "role models" become significant in terms of educating children about history and culture. For example, after the programme in which the children identified American musicians as role models, they would be engaged in workshops where they were asked to reflect on how relevant such role models were for them as Africans, and thereby attempting to develop a kind of critical consciousness, in a Freireian sense, by getting them to question the relevance of international superstars as role models.

The children are thus constantly encouraged to question their statements, to give preference to local music and to interview local musicians. Rifqah Khan is another volunteer who has worked with the children, and is responsible for their training around content.

What we do generally is anything around content on air and it could be anything from why are we looking at gossip and at J-Lo, and how relevant is it to us. Just posing questions so that they can think about it. Are we looking at our local artists? What is it the value of that? And then looking at things like recipes. Why you are talking about the issues you're talking about. And if you are, how open and conscious are you being about your environment. But also just thinking about issues, whether it's gender issues or race issues or even within the groups, we try to do some sort of making them aware of their own prejudice (R. Khan, personal communication, 08/23/02).

One issue previously raised in the Bush Kidz programme is race and racial prejudice.

One of the little girls talked about her auntie getting married, and her cousin was in the studio with her that day and he told the children, 'You know, she's getting married and I'm

very happy for her, but she's marrying a white man.' And all of them just looked into the mike and said, 'No!' And we just sat there and we said, 'Okay, what should we do?' And we just decided to leave them and what they did was they handled it in their own way. And one of them said, 'Doesn't she like being black?' And this little girl who's sitting there and talking about her auntie just went, 'No she does like being black, but love sees no colour!' (N. Abrahams, personal communication, 08/27/02).

The **Street Philosophy** group use radio to interrogate similar issues. Nazli Akhtary is another CREW facilitator and Bush Radio volunteer who has worked closely with this group. They put packaged programmes together. So they spent a month off air and produced fifteen-minute documentaries, which were personal accounts of family life, issues of race at school. The radio diaries were an example. They had a bunch of other radio diaries that they followed on and they had specialised training in how to put it all together. They edited, they put together the sound, everything (N. Akhtary, personal communication, 08/21/02).

The radio diaries make for interesting and sometimes provocative listening as the teens reflect frankly on their relationships with friends, parents, siblings and other family members. Their reflections are entertaining and engaging, with atmosphere and sound effects recorded at home and school, as well as music interspersed throughout. Some of the diaries reflect on race and culture in South Africa, and the teenagers present their daily dilemmas with thoughtful analysis and insight sometimes beyond their years.

They've just produced a series on generation gaps but each of them took a different angle. For example, Thando spoke to his grandmother about sex and just asked her questions very openly and she would answer. Wendy spoke to her parents about the drug scene, the clubbing scene, what it was like then and what it's like now. And then we also worked on this piece on racial differences among today's youth, Gabrielle being white and Leonie being coloured and them living together and being brother and sister (N. Abrahams, personal communication, 08/27/02).

This group's radio programmes thus play a crucial role in their identity formation as they grapple with issues of history while growing up in a new era. The youth work within this context of racial struggle in South Africa, dealing very frankly with issues of race and difference.

The various components of the CREW project play a crucial role in validating the voices of young people in South Africa. This is one of few projects that create a physical and intellectual space for young people from varying backgrounds to leave their cultural baggage behind in order to create one unified media product.

Providing an outlet for their creative and political expression, Bush Radio creates a mediated space for youth in the new political dispensation to form a generational consciousness. The on- and off-air products allow them to forge a common identity, develop a sense of community, and gain membership to this new social generation. In a society where these youth are increasingly

bombarded with foreign images and role models in the mainstream media through cultural homogenisation, Bush Radio's CREW project allows them to explore alternative spaces.

The components of CREW thus represent more than just a radio programme. They represent the potential for the production of a critical consciousness, in a Freireian sense. Specifically, situating educational activity in the lived experience of participants; developing consciousness that is understood to have the power to transform reality; and the approach of dialogical education – all key elements of CREW – these all contribute to making this a unique educational experience.

Moreover, it is important to remember that children and youth played a key role during the liberation struggle in South Africa. Mobilised in political organisations and at rallies, thousands were tear-gassed, shot, and detained. Some children even joined *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation), the military wing of the African National Congress. In a repressive political context where other forms of mobilisation were restricted, schools became sites of struggle and recruiting grounds for political organisations (Bundy, 1987). This generation of South African youth can be described by using Mannheim's (1952) notion of a "social generation." In other words, they did not merely co-exist in the same time and space, but developed a sense of common or group identity. On the other hand, children born in the late 1980s, or "the twilight of the struggle", have often been because of their inability or unwillingness to participate in political action. This article argues that the children in post-apartheid South Africa, who listen to and make the radio programmes that air on Bush Radio, belong to this generation, politically unaware, oblivious of history and motivated by popular culture. Their apartheid counterparts embraced the alternative education provided by political organisations to understand liberation politics and to resist with implements more sophisticated than petrol bombs (Bundy, 1987).

Youth in post-apartheid Cape Town thus embrace the alternative educational referred to as a "lost generation" experience that Bush Radio offers, as a tool to carve out new opportunities in which ideas of self and other are imagined, produced and lived.

4. RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS AND IDENTITY

Next, this article makes a radical about face to briefly consider several of the counterparts of stations like Bush Radio, and via a thematic discussion, further argues that they also play a role, albeit a somewhat different one, in terms of constructing social and political identities. First, a brief introduction to the history of religious broadcasting in South Africa. Religion was always included by the public broadcaster, with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) featuring Christian church services on both radio and television, usually on Sundays. Today, the SABC is mandated to offer "religious programmes and other broadcasting material on radio and television that reflect the diversity of faiths in South Africa". The objective, then, according to the SABC, is to "present programmes that are representative of the major religions in the country: Christianity, Hinduism, African Religion, Islam and Judaism in an unbiased and appropriate manner" (www.sabc.co.za).

The concept of radio stations broadcasting from a purely religious perspective first emerged with the licensing of community radio stations. In many ways, community-of-interest stations are very similar to their geographic counterparts. Globally, community radio is expected to provide groups with access to media, and an opportunity to articulate their views through direct and indirect participation, with access, participation and self-management as the key concepts underlying community media (Lewis, 1993). The religious community radio stations are also attempting to fulfil this mission, and carry much of the same kind of programming – most often talk shows that deal with various issues perceived to be relevant to their target communities, and not necessarily overtly religious content. As programme manager of Radio Islam, Ismael Variava, says:

Our messages are universal. We deal with current issues, but from the context of a Muslim person. Because our community is so widely spread, in a sense we become geographic even though we are a niche radio station” (Personal communication, 15/5/06).

Similarly CCFM’s station manager, Irmgard Garthoff, indicates that their coverage of community events and issues is quite similar to that of other community radio stations, except that CCFM’s coverage is tempered by a Christian viewpoint. Hardus Zevenster, station manager of the Christian station Radio Tygerberg says:

Being a Christian radio station means not only that we have to spread the gospel, but that we have to give listeners what they need, not just what they want. Our programming is upliftment based, for example, we have a lot of programmes on HIV as it’s a major issue for us and a threat to the country (Personal communication, 29/5/06).

While these stations are predominantly staffed by members of their respective religious communities, they do not limit on-air contributions only to members of their religious community. Moreover, the religious stations carry news bulletins that appear similar in form and content to those carried on other stations, and, in the case of Radio CCFM, even their music is often quite mainstream.

We target the non-Christian listener and maybe those who have backslidden. The news is one hook, and music is another. We play rock, dance, rap, even heavy metal, and it doesn’t have to be praise oriented, but it is generally music with a message, or music by Christian artists who lead a clean life (Personal communication, 15/5/06).

4.1 Identity building

Community radio stations frequently use the term ‘community’ to refer to their audiences, often without access to any reliable statistical information about this audience. Most community radio stations cannot afford the prohibitive costs of employing a market research company to carry out quantitative audience research. In South Africa they all depend on the national SAARF (South African Advertising Research Foundation) survey, which provides some statistics for community radio, but is targeted towards advertisers and commercial stations, and often omits community radio stations with small listenerships; or provides combined audience figures for community-of-interest stations, like Voice of the Cape/ Radio 786, which share a frequency.

One of the main apparent successes of community of interest radio stations may be that they are organized around clearly defined group markers. In other words, they know exactly who their community is, even though there may be diversity within this community. For the geographic stations, it becomes a bit more difficult to define the nebulous nature of their 'communities'. The religious stations target along lines of religious identity, demonstrating that "a real community need not consist of people who are perpetually together; but it must consist of people who, precisely because they are comrades, have mutual access to one another and are ready for one another" (Bender, 1978:8). The medium of radio thus has the capacity to collapse time and space, bringing together people who are geographically far apart, making religious community building more instantaneous than it may have been in the past. According to Zevenster:

If you have a common goal, and that is that we proclaim Christ, people forget about their differences and it becomes easy to reach out across race and class (Personal communication, 29/5/06).

With the dissolution of apartheid, and a society formerly organised exclusively around imagined racial categories, government, via the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has used television for attempts at nation-building and a creation of some unified sense of a South African identity, using slogans like "Simunye, We are One", etc., and rallying around national sporting events. In the absence of a clearly articulated national identity (Steenveld & Strelitz, 1998; Barnet, 1999), community-of-interest radio stations have provided South Africans with a medium through which to articulate their secondary, religious or cultural identities. Individuals create their own identities, but within the ritual traditions of the culture in which they find themselves, with media presenting "possible identifications to try on in a safe way, enabling audience members to consider who they are and are not" (Hoover & Lundby, 1997:32).

Religious radio stations thus have the capacity to build a sense of community within the audience, who all subscribe to the same religious beliefs even though they may differ widely in terms of race or culture. As Zevenster reflects,

What brings us together is not music, but the gospel, the message of salvation (Personal communication, 29/5/06).

And According to Price,

If it's a birthday of a prophet, or something like that, we educate people about that. There's a lot that people don't know about the religion. And in doing so, people become more aware of their identity (Personal communication, 29/5/06).

Price also reflects that Radio 786 has managed to make listeners aware of the diversity of the Muslim community in the Western Cape, particularly the increase in the numbers of black Muslims.

One of the main purposes of religious community radio stations is thus that they provide audiences with “a sense of belonging, and a sense of identity” (I. Variava, personal communication, 15/5/06). It is also this sense of belonging which attracts the staff of these radio stations. Garthoff admits that working in the understaffed and overworked environment of community radio can sometimes be difficult, but explains:

[T]hen I hear how people’s lives have changed as a result of the radio station, and I know that God has called me to do this (Personal communication, 15/5/06).

Similarly for Variava, working at Radio Islam,

has given me a sense of belonging, loyalty and fulfilment. I’ve seen the industry and station grow and it’s given me an enormous sense of fulfilment (Personal communication, 15/5/06).

Zevenster says:

I was very successful in business, but my life changed when the Lord changed my life. My life revolved around money, but money and success is not all one needs for life to have meaning. Since I’ve started here my life changed dramatically. For the first time my life has meaning; through my personal relationship with Jesus Christ I have experienced the truth (Personal communication, 29/5/06).

Furthermore, this article contends that religious stations also serve various other purposes, which strengthen their ability to maintain a sense of community and identity. These are that they articulate the notion of radio as therapy and confession, and radio as a virtual church. A brief explanation follows.

4.2 Radio as therapy/confession

In Argentina, radio has been used to allow mental patients to deal with their problems by speaking about them on the radio (Fell, 2004). As one of the participating doctors said: “The radio gives you the freedom to express yourself; it releases you. The medium of radio, because it is a way to communicate, can recover families. The radio breaks frontiers; the wall that surrounds the hospital no longer exists because the antenna knocks it down (ibid.). Similarly, calling in to a religious radio station could be positioned either as therapy or confession (in the theological sense of the term). Like many other stations, CCFM offers a service called prayer friends which allows listeners to call in and talk to a designated volunteer. According to Garthoff,

In essence, the prayer line is the main focus of the station. It’s amazing how you can use it to gauge what’s happening in the community. For instance there’s lots of unemployment, abuse, drug addiction, marriages are breaking up (Personal communication, 16/5/06).

On the day I visited the station, Raymond, the prayer friend on duty, had already received 10 calls within a 1 hour period. Garthoff explained that they don't seek to be professional counsellors even if some have received training from service organisations like LifeLine, and that they often refer callers to other support organisations or to their local churches.

Garthoff lists all the problems that listeners call in to discuss, which are indeed major social problems for many Western Cape communities. Without access to organisations able to provide concrete solutions to their problems, listeners turn to the radio station to express their frustrations. While middle-class people might turn to solutions such as seeing a therapist or booking their children into formal drug rehabilitation programmes, it appears that working-class people turn to spirituality. Similarly, the Christian station, Radio Tygerberg, offers listeners access to its counsellors, as well as to its prayer friends, who are available 7 days a week to pray with listeners. The station has 60 prayer friend volunteers who work shifts at night, and 3 fulltime counsellors who offer listeners a free counselling service. As Zevenster reflects,

[I]f you give them something to believe in, then it's not only the Christian who's going to listen. Radio is so powerful, you can reach people on every level of society, even the poor. In jail, in hospital, people listen to Radio Tygerberg (Personal communication, 29/5/06).

4.3 Radio as the virtual church

One might thus argue that services such as prayer friends, in offering telephone 'confessions', mean that these stations become and often even transcend both the physical location and the institution of the church. According to Zevenster, the Christian radio stations help to build faith:

Throughout the ages, there has been an inherent need for people to believe in or worship something. A lot of people have misused this and over time people have become more fed up with religion in general. The organization of the church has let people down in the past, and it's important for us to tell people that the formal church is not Christ. We believe in the true gospel, that's what we preach. The community of interest station then fulfils a role which the church needs, and that is you can still believe, there is still truth out there (Personal communication, 29/5/06).

In this way, the radio station becomes even more powerful than the church in that it reinforces Christian beliefs. Listeners call Radio Tygerberg with prayer requests which are then sent to various churches.

Similarly, for Muslim Radio 786 listeners, broadcasts often become a virtual space of worship. Marketing Manager, Abdeah Price, says that before she joined the radio station, she'd listen to the radio all day at the bank where she worked, and that generally others do as well.

With all the reciting on the radio, people unconsciously learn more about the Koran because you hear it every day. And some people don't live near to a mosque, or the

mosques are not allowed to turn on the loudspeakers in certain neighbourhoods, so they can listen to the radio and know when it's prayer time (Personal communication, 29/5/06).

Price further reflects on the fact that the Friday prayers are broadcast on the radio for those who cannot attend, and that many people, particularly the less mobile elderly, often form radio listening groups. The Friday prayers are broadcast live from a different mosque in a different community each week, with local shopkeepers financing costs.

Zevenster also suggests that the radio station brings churches and different denominations together. As they are church based, Radio Tygerberg and other religious stations have to demonstrate their involvement with local churches, and according to Zevenster, the radio facilitates the relationships between different denominations. In fact, the radio station's board of directors is made up of individuals representing the various churches.

One of the key issues the Lord had in mind was for us to work together (personal communication, 29/5/06).

Despite this close relationship between the radio station and church, people no longer need to physically visit the institution of the church for their spiritual or religious needs. The stations' relationship with churches does not necessarily imply that listeners are encouraged to attend services. They merely need to tune in to the right frequency for 'salvation'.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the ways in which community radio has facilitated the construction of new social identities. Adopting a case study approach, we see how Bush Radio, assumes diverse identities through its programming: *In the Pink* creates a space for the articulation of various gay identities, and the *Children's Radio Education Workshop* becomes a mediated space for youth in the new political dispensation to form a generational consciousness. Further, the constant intersection of class, culture and language at Bush Radio, and on its airwaves, often results in constant (re)negotiation of identities. Similarly, religious community radio stations, also construct and consolidate identities among their target audiences, whereby, the resultant listener loyalty leads to increased sustainability; these stations serve the purpose of therapy or confession, giving listeners an outlet for frustrations; and finally, religious community radio stations become a virtual church, transcending physical boundaries and resulting in instantaneous religious community building.

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