REFEREED ARTICLE

Estranged but not strangers: Challenging organisational norms of access for people with disability and people from a NESB

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Abstract

This research investigates the reasons why clients are estranged from their organisation when they expect to be the focus of communication attention. It investigates an organisations' ability to establish the conditions necessary for inclusion of the organisation's publics who identify with disability and who come from a non-English speaking background (NESB) to understand why estrangement occurs. An analysis of communication between the organisation and their clients aims to isolate inclusive processes by understanding power relations that facilitate voice and listening. This is achieved through a case study of a service organisation that is obliged to engage with its publics and has a strategy to do so. Data were gathered from the organisation's documentation and interviews with instigators of policies and processes. Feedback from the organisation's clients was collected focusing on their experience of being engaged and included given norms of inclusion may not be shared. A thematic analysis was undertaken of the data to isolate themes on inclusion. The themes revealed: a culture of inclusion; a policy that encouraged an exchange, and processes established by professionals with expertise to design and promote inclusion beyond their usual publics.

Keywords

Organisational Communication, Disability, NESB, Listening

Introduction

The effective inclusion of diverse publics[1] in organisational communication is challenging to achieve yet immensely beneficial for the organisation. Success relies on an ability to share an understanding of the culture and Kim argues shared norms facilitate the exchange (Kim 2001, p.143). For this reason, publics outside an organisation's usual culture of engagement can face norms that lead to exclusion (Chriss 1998; Roper 2005; Hall 1992; Atkin & Rice 2013; Davis 2006 2013; Vardemann-Winter & Tindall, 2011; Vardemann-Winter, 2014). This presents a challenge for organisations and their communicators who may be adept at communicating with known publics but find they are challenged by publics who sit outside of their norms of practice (Davis 2006; Vardemann-Winter & Tindall, 2011; Vardemann-Winter, 2014).

Simultaneously, many people from diverse backgrounds report feeling estranged from their service organisations, despite being clients expecting to be the focus of communication attention (Vardemann-Winter & Tindall, 2011, Vardemann-Winter, 2014, Atkin and Rice, 2013, Davis, 2013, Client 2 and 3, 2017). While organisations may make an effort to engage with their publics, listening to them to understand and facilitate their needs requires greater commitment. This is because norms of practice vary and power relations impact the exchange and often leave publics confused because meaning has not been shared (Shildrik, 2012; Bê, 2012; Honneth, 1995; Bickford, 1996; Hage, 1997; Thomas, 2007; Davis, 2013; Barnes, 2012, p.8; Goggin, 2009).

In this context, the current study attempted to identify the conditions necessary for the inclusion of people with disability and people from a Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) in communication with their service provider organisation. The aim was to isolate the aspects that make inclusion possible for the publics outlined, given that 'norms of practice' may not be shared (Davis 2013; Krompridis, 2006; Vardemann-Winter, 2014; Roper, 2005; Atkin and Rice, 2013). The research was conducted in an Australian context using a case study of the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), which is a not-for-profit organisation known for its inclusive policies and practices. ACCAN is Australia's peak communications consumer organisation and in their role as advocate they are obliged to engage with their member publics and the broader community and have a strategy to engage with them. ACCAN represents individuals, small businesses and not-for-profit groups as consumers of communication products and services, including telecommunications, broadcasting, the internet and online services of current and emerging technologies (ACCAN, 2017). It is a small organisation of approximately 14 employees but its remit is Australia-wide. ACCAN's organisational vision and mission focus on informing, enabling and equipping consumers with information to empower them to make informed decisions about the communication services they use (Constitution of ACCAN Ltd, 2012, ACCAN Strategic Plan, 2012-2017). This philosophy is operationalised through organisational goals and the following objectives: to act with courage, integrity and

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[1] In public communication literature, 'public' commonly refers to a group of people who share an interest and know about each other, increasing their power to act (Dewey, 1927, Hallahan, 2007, Smith, 2013).

independence; operate openly, efficiently and effectively; be accessible and inclusive; recognise relationships are critical to their goals, and value volunteers and staff (ACCAN Strategic Plan, 2012-2017).

The two specific publics that include people from a NESB and people with disability were selected because they each comprise a large percentage of the Australian population: 19.3 per cent (Ho & Jakubowicz ,2013, p. 23) and 18.3 per cent (Survey of Disability, Ageing & Carers, 2016), respectively. Despite their significant number, there is agreement these publics are under-represented in organisational communication, media and society (Vardemann-Winter, 2011, 2014; Atkin & Rice, 2013; Davis, 2013). Indeed, Thill and Dreher argue that their lack of recognition 'contribute to a denial of basic human rights' (2017, p. 2). This argument underpins the impetus for this study.

Reviewing perspectives that challenge a culture of inclusion.

A survey of the literature was conducted to identify organisational communication processes that aim to create a culture of inclusion. With reference to the literature surveyed, public communicators establish a culture of inclusion when they hold expertise and persuade organisations to engage with all of their publics. However, if communicators are to fully explore possibilities that maximise inclusion, they need to understand the internal and external organisational communication environment as it sits within an active mediated public sphere (Gregory 2012; Stacks 2016; Habermas 1989, 2006; Macnamara 2016; Daymon & Demetrious 2014).

A culture of inclusion challenges powerful barriers established by a 'hegemony of normalcy' (Davis 2006). The onus to persuade organisations to broaden their remit in part falls to public communicators. Their role must manage the needs of multiple publics; nevertheless, the organisation has the final say (Holtzhausen, 2010). Ahmed (2012) argues that organisations are easily blinkered by self-interest and must be pushed to review processes beyond an economic imperative. Hallahan (1999) agrees and argues that, while the exchange maybe dialogic, it is limited by the framework it operates within.

Organisations need to keep abreast of changes by undertaking research to isolate publics and the organisation's needs (Stacks, 2016). More critically, a communicator's abilities require a mix of priorities arising from the organisation and their own ethnocentric perspective embedded through historical, political, social and cultural experiences to affect their ability to include (Woodhams & Corby, 2007). By proactively exploring inclusion in policy and process, communicators can compare outcomes with their publics and address deficiencies.

For organisations to recognise minority publics, they need to hear them. Having a voice that counts means more than speaking. It requires agency to put forward a view (Couldry, 2010, p. 8). Voice draws attention that can lead to acknowledgement and create a space for inclusion (Couldry, 2010, p. 2). Yet, Fraser (2008), claims many voices are either not heard or not recognised because they differ from the dominant culture. Diverse publics need to be positioned so their voice can be heard. Concurrently, organisations need a system that allows

diverse voices to be heard. Scholars argue for a critique of the way voice manifests to assess 'processes which obstruct [the] voice' of diverse publics who are often challenged by the process (Couldry, 2010, pp. 2-3; Thill, 2015, p. 40). For diverse publics to be included in communication processes, they need to be valued. Dreher states, 'the promise of voice for marginalized communities without attention to political and institutional listening may not deliver' (2012, p. 161).

Listening as the other side of voice, is an essential element for inclusion but it can be selective and lead to oppression when publics lack the power of positioning and become marginalised (Lukes, 1978; Bickford, 1996). Bickford's framing of the concept 'political listening' as openness, courage and continuation to value the voices of marginalised people so they have a chance to be heard, showcases the ideal environment (Bickford, 1996, p. 170). Whereas Dreher (2010) argues institutions must initiate opportunities to listen to ethnic minorities by privileging their opportunity to be heard given they are better placed to resource the communication process, Macnamara (2014, p. 9) found that while the communication field values a two-way dialogic approach to the exchange, listening is narrowly conceived as engagement and haphazardly applied by organisations as their need arises. The exchange while two-way is not equal. To be listened to only signals the intent to include. Inclusion needs a process to enable, capture and include feedback. The power to exchange must be given available to all publics if the organisation wants to claim inclusion. Organisations need greater focus on listening protocols for publics who sit outside their norms of practice to improve inclusion for diverse publics.

Analysing inclusive practice

The study used a qualitative research methodology by case study to analyse access and inclusion within a service organisation (Yin, 2009). The aim was to review current practice to find exemplars of best practice, and provide insight on new ways of engaging that lead to inclusion (Stacks, 2016). The methodology included content analysis of organisational policy and procedure documentation, and in-depth semi-structured interviews with staff and clients of a service organisation (Fink, 2010, p. 64).

The analysis of inclusion provides a snapshot of contemporary practice and the way it manifests in communication policy and processes (Yin, 1994, 2009; Parkhe, 1993). An interpretivist paradigm aimed to capture meaning in people's experience of inclusion and exclusion and to allow for emerging interpretations from diverse publics to be explored (Frey, Botan & Kreps 2000). This methodology aimed to interpret the beliefs and lived experiences of multiple publics to isolate effective communication processes. The investigation used principles of constructionism as 'constructed reality' informed by historical, political, social and cultural experiences that affect inclusion (Woodhams & Corby, 2007, Weerakkody, 2015). It is limited by the communicators' ethnocentric perspective as informed by their experience. This approach aimed to determine the power relations behind 'who is heard and who is not' (Goggin 2009; Weerakkody 2015). A shift in focus on the exchange aimed to explore possibilities for minorities who are empowered to engage.

Data were collected from ACCAN's organisational documents (see Table 3) and from semi-structured interviews with managers of communications, policymakers and their diverse clients between August and December 2017. The interviews with managers of policy and communication were conducted at the organisation's office in face to face mode for between45 minutes and one hour (see Table 1). Interviews with ACCAN clients were conducted over the telephone with the exception of one which was conducted in his office (see Table 2).

I asked managers of policy and communication a series of nine questions to obtain their opinion on how they included the publics outlined. The questions focussed on ACCAN's communication policy and processes. The topics included: how they engaged their members, any variation of process offered and why that did or didn't happen, examples of success and challenges, lessons learnt, and if feedback had changed processes. I also wanted to find out how the organisation promoted the opportunity to engage because creating awareness is raised as a key issue for diverse publics. In most instances I asked interviewees to provide examples of inclusion in their own words. The account allowed me to observe differences in understanding and implementing effective access and inclusion. Additionally, I wanted to find out if the organisation would extend capacity for inclusion beyond compliance according to incorporation law and human rights legislation to proactively engage these publics. Finally, I wanted to know who in the organisation manages the process and understand their expertise and worldview.

Seven questions were put to clients to understand their experiences and their relationships with the organisation, how they were engaged and if the process was adequate. I asked whether clients were provided with a variation of access, if it was useful and how it could be improved. I also asked how they found out about the opportunity to engage and if the process was effective for them or how might it be improved. Clients were asked to provide examples in their own words about having access and if those examples meant clients were included. Finally I asked them to describe what successful inclusion looked like and how they measure it.

The questions were analysed by content to isolate themes that occur around engagement and inclusion. A purposive sample was taken of managers (Table 1). As shown in Table 2, the clients were selected based on their level of engagement as members of ACCAN and because they were self-identifying publics with disability or from a NESB. Table 3 lists the documents used.

Table 1 Managers

Interviewee	Role	Interview
Manager 1	Manager of Operations	Face to Face- 1 hour
Manager 2	Manager of Policy	Face to Face- 45mins
Manager 3	Manager of Policy	Face to Face- 1 hour with Manager 4
Manager 4	Manager of Policy	Face to Face- 1 hour with Manager 3
Manager 5	Manager of Communications	Face to Face- 1 hour with Manager 6
Manager 6	Manager of Communications	Face to Face- 1 hour with Manager 5

Table 2 Clients

Interviewee	Diverse Background	Level of engagement with ACCAN	Organisation
Client 1	Disability	Active member	Vision Australia, NSW.
Client 2	Disability	Aware member	Ablelink, Able Australia, Victoria.
Client 3	NESB	Active member	Federation of Ethnic Communities Council Australia, (FECCA), ACT.
Client 4	NESB	Aware member	WestJustice, Victoria.
Client 5	NESB	Latent member	Asylum Seeker Centre, NSW.

Table 3 Documents

Document	Title	Available to public or only internal
Document 1	ACCAN Strategic Plan 2012-2017	Available internally and externally
Document 2	Constitution of ACCAN Limited 31.10.12	Available internally and externally

Three client interviewees self-identified with disability or from a NESB and all interviewees were member organisations that provided an advocacy service to their NESB and disability clients. The ACCAN member clients were selected based on their level of engagement and to improve the opportunity to collect data that demonstrated a broader selection of views. For instance, each client was recommended for an interview based on a manager's interpretation

of their level of engagement with ACCAN as 'usual', 'less engaged' and 'actively engaged' (that is, 'aware', 'latent' and 'active' according to the Situational Theory of Publics methodology, (Grunig, 1997; Aldoory & Sha, 2009). Knowing a public's level of interest on an issue enables public communicators to design communication strategies to more effectively engage them. For example, public communicators do not use information-seeking strategies for latent publics because they do not look to engage. Client 5 (NESB), said 'I get their newsletter… they mostly email us … we just don't need the support now'; in this case, the communicators would need to grab their attention. Whereas, active publics do not need to do so because they regularly engage by sharing information and communicators can easily select one of those methods to engage with them.

Public communicators develop strategies to suit the publics' specific needs according to their level of engagement by knowing their communication style using the Situational Theory of Publics process. Client 1 (Disability) said: '…we [speak by] phone if there is a pressing issue, regularly email and call or face-to-face or teleconference type interaction…'. Opportunities that expand traditional segmentation strategies by name or demographic, and that bring preconceived understanding of terms, create possibilities to extend engagement more effectively. Alternative engagement processes challenge norms of engagement effected by stereotyping and are key to inclusion (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p. 36, Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002).

This study has observed that while ACCAN aimed to engage carefully with all publics in alignment with its advocacy position, communication with disability groups was more extensive and was more likely to be successful. For example, ACCAN have a staff member who identifies with disability and his lived experience and that of his contacts have become key to informing their policy and processes. While there is a focus on engagement with indigenous and NESB communities, the organisation relies on grant applications where communities develop their own resources, or their member clients advise them on best processes for engaging.

Interviewees report their experience of inclusion and discuss the challenges

Interviews with ACCAN managers and their disability and NESB client 'member' publics are reviewed under three themes argued to reflect 'political listening' as openness, courage and continuation to value the voices of marginalised people as claimed by Bickford (1996, p.170). They are: a culture of inclusion; a policy that encouraged an exchange; and a process that promoted and enabled inclusion for the member organisations who represent people with disability and people from a NESB. These themes are discussed through the words of interviewees to demonstrate ACCAN's processes for inclusion.

Theme 1: A culture of inclusion

Managers reported that the expertise of staff to undertake research, decipher complex government reports and develop communication to engage their diverse publics showed a genuine commitment to inclusion. In addition, staff's ability to establish and facilitate

advisory panels, grant schemes and attend staff training demonstrated they want to listen and be inclusive.

The value of longstanding relationships with diverse clients and a commitment to engage with them is demonstrated by one manager's response: 'I think we've been married to some of those consumer organisations for so long, that we really understand what it is their constituents are actually needing' (Manager 6). Simultaneously, this manager acknowledged a reliance on the community to provide culturally specific information citing an example of when they '... provided info about a phone card scam in the Chinese community and published … it in Chinese newspapers/radio'. The process was only possible because the community provided the translation and advice on where to promote the information. A good relationship is important. Another client agreed saying 'we work quite closely with [ACCAN] on lots of different projects to provide advice on a wide variety of communities and languages other than English' (Client 3). This client organisation shares culturally and linguistically appropriate information to enable ACCAN to better support their NESB clients. The exchange is mutually beneficial and builds a trusting relationship because the organisation has established a reciprocal process.

The communities rely on ACCAN to share resources according to a manager. The disability community uses '… regular spots on the Radio for the Print Handicap (RPH) to promote [ACCAN's] their latest reports and provide updates about [telecommunication] scams' (Manager, 1). Sharing information in appropriately accessible formats for diverse and specific publics is important to reduce discrimination. A review of the format and promotional processes used is argued to improve access and lead to inclusion.

ACCAN are committed to ensure their office and events are accessible, '… the lifts announce what floor you're on' (Manager 2). When an advisory forum is held, they must accommodate the people and their accessibility requirement 'such as wheelchairs, technology and their advocate(s). It can be hard to organise' (Manager 2). ACCAN have established a baseline of provisions. A manager said, 'we ask people is there anything you need that will make it easier for you to participate, and we build on it'. The manager provided further examples: 'We have real time captioning, Auslan, hearing loop, everyone must use the microphone when they speak so the [conversion] technology works for those who need it'; and in addition, 'there is someone who is speech impaired, so that person has a communication assistant' (Manager 2).

ACCAN proactively facilitates inclusion. A manager said that this means that when members attend the annual conference, they 'don't need to identify because it is all included' (Manager 2). In addition, ACCAN have staff with accessibility needs, and managers work to 'make sure, and [staff] makes sure, everything is accessible' (Manager 1). The manager said there is a shared understanding that if something is not accessible, 'they [the clients] will tell us' (Manager 2). ACCAN demonstrate they are open to improving inclusion.

A manager described a consultation process that 'casts the net widely to touch base with different organisations … rather than a static advisory committee' (Manager 1). This

culture is argued by Ahmed to stand in opposition to 'a fixed style that values certain cultural accomplishments' that 'shape what is taken for granted' (Ahmed, 2012, p. 417). Staff training through sharing ideas and being exposed to a variety of communication processes was argued to inspire new ways to engage. One manager said, 'we will look year on year for good... training initiatives. We focussed on 'easy English' [this year] and previously on cultural awareness with indigenous communities' (Manager 1). Further, the manager commented on developing a 'solid expertise within the staff … and encouraging staff to be active in the community sector organisations… where we're well aligned to take on leadership roles' (Manager 1). An organisation that creates pathways for exchange demonstrates it values the exchange beyond compliance. Additionally, the manager said '… when staff move on… we've got this alumni in great organisations and we can call on them and they are our contacts' (Manager 1). The organisation demonstrates it values productive and mutually rewarding relationships which are key components found in Bickford's 'political listening' framework (1996, p.170).

Most of the clients interviewed indicated that they found ACCAN to be open to a variation of content style by language translation or format such as braille, or processes such as audio or captions, and to work collaboratively to improve accessibility. One client identifying with disability said: 'I think ACCAN is a good example where you do have that culture [of inclusion] that's driven from the senior levels and permeates the organisation' (Client 1). However, not all were in agreement. Another client said, 'they are good [advocates] but they could be better … they sometimes swing a little bit more to the direction of appeasing industry' (Client 2). He qualified the comment by saying: 'we are very aware our little corner of interest is just one part of a broader portfolio that ACCAN has' and must manage with limited staff (Client 2). While clients agreed ACCAN has a culture of inclusion they also acknowledged their wide remit and minimal staff were limiters as maintained by some of their clients and managers. Indeed, as one ACCAN manager said, 'we try to be inclusive but we are human, we make mistakes' (Manager 1). This response demonstrates a manager who values honest self-appraisal. The core values emerging from managers and their clients suggest this is an organisation that encourages collaboration and in doing so, it establishes a pathway that improves engagement for their diverse clients. The process for inclusion may not be full formed but the elements applied as indicated in the interview transcripts describe a willingness to include exists.

Theme 2: Policy that encouraged an exchange

ACCAN's communication policy to encourage engagement is broad. While it aims 'to represent members from a range of special interest groups and general consumers …', it also aims to use evidence-based research of the lived experience of its members to make a case (Manager 1). Formal policies include: an industry engagement framework, member engagement framework, committees, formal sessions of consultation and ad hoc consultation. Manager 1 stated, if needed they 'will commission research on a topic, work with industry specialists, look through ABS and advisory forum feedback … and draw on grant applications from which we've had 172 in the past 4 years and 9 months'.

The ACCAN grant scheme is a competitive process that 'funds projects which either undertake research on telecommunications issues, represent consumers or create educational tools which empower consumers to make decisions in their own interests' (ACCAN, 2017). In 2017-18, $275,000 per annum of all eligible projects was provided to 'address systemic issues for telecommunications consumers' (ACCAN, 2017). The assessment of applications was carried out 'by three panel members who have lived experience but are not representative of their sector' (Manager 1). The results of the research can impact ACCAN, government and telecommunication policy. The process allows for community-specific data to be gathered and shared to empower others in similar situations.

One ACCAN research grant involved a Queensland remote Aboriginal media group. The media group found 'a lot of people in their community falling victim to bad phone selling practices and getting in a lot of debt' (Manager 1). The researcher gathered data on why this was happening and found that while the remote community had 'limited access to media and English language they were connected by their local radio and they used it to spread the word' (Manager 1). The grant manager said that the media group, 'developed some great radio spots in community language … they are still playing them' (Manager 1). The radio spots informed listeners about the scam and how to address it. The community have applied for multiple grants since to develop more radio announcements having found it the best way to communicate with their remote community. In addition, 'the radio spots have been translated into multiple indigenous languages' (Manager 1). Not only did the grant outcomes help the public address their own issue, they also informed the organisational policy of the Telco to address the scam and the Telecommunication Industry Ombud (TIO) to manage the process. Encouraging communities to address their own issues enables them to better understand the problem and develop communication tools that are fit for their own purpose. As Davis notes, norms shared challenge a hegemony of normalcy (Davis, 2013).

Both managers and clients agree that the research grant scheme empowers communities to develop their own solutions and provides ACCAN with evidence to drive change in government policies. Insight gained from the research funded by the grant scheme is shared amongst ACCAN members through summaries of projects in the ACCAN weekly newsletter, blogs and promotion at events and conferences. A NESB client said, 'we get ACCAN's newsletters and grant information and if it aligns with an issue we are trying to address we get involved or apply for another grant' (Client 2).

ACCAN reported their work is evidence based arising from listening to the experiences clients face and reviewing government policies. The evidence indicates the need for telecommunication organisations to improve communication, particularly with their diverse publics. A member organisation manager who provides advocacy to their client said, 'telecommunications has inadvertently become a huge part of the lives of most deaf-blind people with the smart phone revolution. … [it has] given people access… a level of independence, but … they've become customers of telecommunications providers.' (Client 2). He said his members were unable to obtain customer service advice on bill anomalies because the telecommunication organisation was not set up to speak to them. They were told to come in to the office to sort out the issue. Client 2 said, 'part of what you are paying for is

this ability to access customer service when needed. You don't get a discounted rate because half the services are inaccessible.'

Accessibility is an issue for people with disability because many service organisations are not equipped to manage a variation in process to enable inclusion. This may be due to a lack of understanding of the process needed to connect or an inability to provide the service. Furthermore, accessibility for some publics stands in contrast to customer service protocols and human rights legislation. Engagement protocols require attention. Thill argues that if the voice of disabled publics is to be valued, institutions need to structure the way their voice can be heard (2015). Organisations need to know how to communicate with their client publics. Client 2 argues that working with ACCAN to share experiences and find appropriate ways to contribute to policy change is a key factor. ACCAN rely on their members to raise issues during advisory forums and feedback processes so they can seek advice on how to address discrimination from a policy and process perspective. Fraser states that while it is of mutual benefit to ensure accessibility, the organisation must establish a process to bridge to the dominant culture (2008).

Members of ACCAN share their experiences to build expertise. A NESB member organisation said: 'we approached them [ACCAN] to be involved in "Bills Day"' (Client 4). 'Bills Day' is a day on which publics from specific communities, often without English language skills, can bring in their utility bills to be assessed for payment and legal issues arising as a consequence of being signed up to the wrong internet plan. 'ACCAN helped us with information in language and advice on how to support particular communities and connect them up with the TIO [Telecommunication Industry Ombudsman]' (Client 4). The collaboration has been so successful that the model has been distributed across many communities. In this case, sharing solutions is mutually beneficial.

Advisory groups are another way that ACCAN seek feedback from their members on draft policy. ACCAN invites people with specific skills to come in person or connect online to discuss policy, such as the roll out of the NBN. They rely on the expertise of their members to raise issues of concern to their community and encourage telecommunication member organisations and government to address these issues. Both managers and clients stated that the advisory groups were valuable (Managers 1, 2; Client 1). Forecasting issues helps ACCAN be proactive and develop processes to address issues at a time when changes can be made. Client 1 said 'ACCAN recently contacted us and asked for feedback about the NBN, what the issues are for people with vision impairment, what peoples' concerns are'. They were able to provide first hand advice.

ACCAN clients indicated the materials they are provided help them to do their job of communicating with specific communities. The use of case studies through the lived experience of member clients was of particular benefit. They could raise and discuss their telecommunication issues within a relatable context. While ACCAN acknowledged they were constantly working towards more inclusive practices, some clients said inclusion was limited by the capacity of ACCAN to provide access. For example, for people who use Auslan to communicate, this provision is only available on request and not part of the usual process.

While ACCAN provides multiple provisions to improve access, they are limited by budget, staff numbers and expertise. Comments reveal there is an on-going need to ensure these publics' voices are heard if they are to be included. The onus is on the client with accessibility needs. Many scholars including Roper, (2005), Hall, (1992), Atkin and Rice, (2013), Vardemann-Winter, (2011, 2014) argue the clients lack the power and expertise to speak back in ways that effect change. Dreher also agrees and calls for 'attention to political and institutional listening' (Dreher, 2012, p.166.) The interaction with ACCAN while open is limited by the framework offered. When publics are not fully recognised they lose their ability to engage. A review of policy priorities and ramifications for publics who require attention because they sit outside a norm of the organisation will provide further insight (Davis, 2013).

Theme 3: A process that promoted and enabled inclusion

Managers of communication processes are required to design and promote access and inclusion for all their clients but the process requires expertise and an ability to address feedback. ACCAN provides numerous access points between Australian consumers of telecommunication and government, members and their clients but they are challenged by the design of communication and promotion to engage diverse publics. In the main, their ability to work collaboratively with members and individuals with lived experience enables them to develop materials that are informative and accessible for the publics identified. The ACCAN process encourages collaboration and a by-product is that it offers a fertile space for idea generation and trouble-shooting strategies to emerge (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). This is seen with Bills Day, where the opportunity to share the process helped service providers to understand communication issues in their community (Client 4). The dynamics of such a process enable engagement and inclusion without the usual protocols and are argued to challenge norms of practice (Davis, 2013; Barnes, 2012).

A manager referred to the 2017 ACCAN Conference where the cutting-edge work of the National Disability Service (NDS) was featured. The NDS is the Australian peak body representing 1100 non-government disability services. ACCAN promoted this work to attendees by showing a Youtube video called 'The Making of Nadia', an online virtual assistant developed to answer questions put to the NDS by people with disability accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The 'Nadia' system learns from the user and converts information into a format that is accessible to them. It is a technology similar to Microsoft's 'Siri' but it specifically supports the needs of people with disability. Whilst the technology is the main accessible feature, it could not have been developed without input from people with lived experience. This example demonstrates an innovation that was achieved when government, technology innovators, people with lived experience and actors combined to broaden inclusion for a multitude of users. The Youtube video explains the development process of 'Nadia' and demonstrates ACCAN's commitment to expand norms of practice by sharing resources and promoting innovation. (ACCANect, 2017).

Accessibility for the Deaf community is important to ACCAN. Their policy officer was working with the Deaf community and he identified the need to encourage wider use of

captioning which is the translation of audio words to text. He developed a media campaign to increase awareness while trying to improve accessibility of the videos they were posting on Youtube by creating auto captioning but found that people in government services and Members of Parliament (MP) in particular, were hindering accessibility. The manager said, 'the captioning conversion wasn't very good [as accents can impact translation] and it resulted in some pretty funny captions and frustration for people who rely on them' (Manager 6). ACCAN issued a 'this is how you fix it to MPs' to address the access issue (Manager 6).

ACCAN regularly review their website and resources to ensure the format and content is accessible (Managers 3, 5 and 6). A manager said, 'we have set a baseline of standards that all documents and all our website will be accessible to people with disabilities… so all docs can be used by text-to-speech converters… the disability community know they can rely on our stuff on our website' (Manager 1, echoed by Managers 5, 6). By establishing a standard the organisation demonstrates their commitment to the process, simultaneously marking a point for review. While the standard is argued to represent best practice some clients find it inaccessible.

Feedback from members suggests ACCAN draws widely across their publics to inform telecommunication policies but they can struggle to engage some of their members. One client said: 'I've always been able to give feedback when I wanted' (Client 1). Another said: 'we were only included because I sent them an email about something unrelated…then I was asked to comment on the Telecommunication Protection code', his concern was 'we came very, very close to not being included' (Client 2). The organisation needs a system to ensure all clients are aware they can provide feedback so their opinions are heard. By contrast, a manager said at times it can be hard 'finding the right people with expertise' [to provide feedback] (Manager 2). Manager 3 agreed adding: 'the community sector can be so stretched… we are constantly asking for feedback… but in saying that I find the community are very generous'. Obtaining feedback from members is critical to inclusion but there are barriers for people with disability and people from NESB who can sit outside a norm of practice, and an ineffective engagement process impacts whether they are included (Davis, 2013). One client commented how pleased he was to be asked 'to contribute to a teleconference about the Telecommunications Consumer Protection Code… [as] I might not have gotten to the written input stuff'. His point refers to the time taken to respond effectively using the technologies that enable him to engage. He pointed out that it takes him time to prepare a response, check materials and run through adaptive technology and this process was prohibitive for him given his workload at the time (Client 1). By enabling him to give feedback verbally, his views were able to be included. The understanding that processes can take longer to adapt is another often hidden element that impacts whether the voices of diverse publics can be heard. A variation of process challenges norms of practice that, as Barnes argues, is reduced to a familiar public that is positioned for communication in ways that enhance their ability to be included, any change requires significant work for the powerless (2012, p.8).

Opportunities and challenges

The circulation of monthly summaries of ACCAN's work was called for by Client 1 to allow time to consider responses and improve awareness. Another client referred to times when he was not aware consultations were being held and how that affected his community with the opportunity to give feedback. He said 'from our point of view, opportunities to engage are so few and far between, that when we do miss them, we're sort of very aware of that' (Client 2). While ACCAN aim to enable engagement, the reality is the process requires the less powerful to speak up and it may not be possible for all publics. Disability advocacy scholar, Cate Thill, states that 'shared dialogue' is only open to some and requires work by the organisation to structure the way voice can be heard (2015, p.40). Having a voice does not always enable diverse publics to contribute effectively because context plays a role and it affects the opportunity to engage. While feedback was asked for from clients on process and policy, clients were not sure if or how it was used beyond having a list of contributors at the end of a report. Dreher argues for voice to be the 'start of an ongoing discussion, negotiation or response' (2012, p.166). Publics are bound by the organisation's processes and if inclusion is not facilitated or the process prevents diverse publics from accessing information because of language, accessible format or as a consequence of cultural norms not being shared, then the exchange is a missed opportunity for all. It is frustrating for organisations who assume they have consulted and for publics who had hoped to have their concerns aired. I argue their voice can be captured by incorporating the lived experience of people with whom the organisation wants to engage, within a framework that is responsive to their needs. However, securing a point of view is different from inclusion which requires commitment from the organisation to establish a process that both listens and includes.

Building capacity of organisations and their diverse publics

This paper has found 'a culture of inclusion' embedded in organisational policy and processes can improve organisations' engagement with their diverse publics. While a keenness to engage is fundamental, it is critical to address the power disparity between organisations and their diverse publics so their voice is included. A focus on 'political listening' in order to privilege an exchange between diverse publics and managers requires facilitation by the organisation (Bickford, 1996, p. 179; Dreher, 2010). Success lies with managements' ability to establish a culture that proactively seeks multiple ways to engage. The data suggest that working with people with lived experience provides unparalleled insight into access and inclusion and this information can inform policies and processes. Similarly, working with public communicators who have expertise in persuading management to establish processes that include all their publics is key. This case study has demonstrated that inclusion takes time. However, there is a real opportunity to build capacity of organisations and their diverse publics when organisations are open to it and publics are empowered to engage.

Acknowledgements

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