Perhaps most important, though, is the sheer significance of the subject matter this collection treats; Understanding Community Media shines a light on nagging issues that we, in media studies, have neglected far too long.

An Italian woman may become an intensely involved member of the ethnic and cultural community of her Nigerian husband. Whichever community defines your work, you will want to get to know it well. What do we mean by understanding and describing the community? Understanding the community entails understanding it in a number of ways. Whether or not the community is defined geographically, it still has a geographic context -- a setting that it exists in. Getting a clear sense of this setting may be key to a full understanding of it. You have to get to know its people -- their culture, their concerns, and relationships -- and to develop your own relationships with them as well. Every community has a physical presence of some sort, even if only one building. Most have a geographic area or areas they are either defined by or attached to. Also important are how various areas of the community differ from one another, and whether your impression is one of clean, well-maintained houses and streets, or one of shabbiness, dirt, and neglect. If the community is one defined by its population, then its physical properties are also defined by the population: The characteristics of those places can tell you a great deal about the people who make up the community. Their self-image, many of their attitudes, and their aspirations are often reflected in the places where they choose -- or are forced by circumstance or discrimination -- to live, work, gather, and play. Patterns of settlement, commerce, and industry. Communities reveal their character by where and how they create living and working spaces. Are heavy industries located next to residential neighborhoods? If so, who lives in those neighborhoods? Are some parts of the community dangerous, either because of high crime and violence or because of unsafe conditions in the built or natural environment? Age, gender, race and ethnicity, marital status, education, number of people in household, first language -- these and other statistics make up the demographic profile of the population. When you put them together e. The long-term history of the community can tell you about community traditions, what the community is, or has been, proud of, and what residents would prefer not to talk about. Community leaders, formal and informal. Some community leaders are elected or appointed -- mayors, city councilors, directors of public works. Community culture, formal and informal. This covers the spoken and unspoken rules and traditions by which the community lives. It can include everything from community events and slogans -- the blessing of the fishing fleet, the "Artichoke Capital of the World" -- to norms of behavior -- turning a blind eye to alcohol abuse or domestic violence -- to patterns of discrimination and exercise of power. Most communities have an array of groups and organizations of different kinds -- service clubs Lions, Rotary, etc. Knowing of the existence and importance of each of these groups can pave the way for alliances or for understanding opposition. Every community has institutions that are important to it, and that have more or less credibility with residents. Colleges and universities, libraries, religious institutions, hospitals -- all of these and many others can occupy important places in the community. Who are the major employers in the community? Who, if anyone, exercises economic power? How is wealth distributed? Would you characterize the community as poor, working, class, middle class, or affluent? Understanding the structure of community government is obviously important. Some communities may have strong mayors and weak city councils, others the opposite. Still other communities may have no mayor at all, but only a town manager, or may have a different form of government entirely. Whatever the government structure, where does political power lie? Understanding where the real power is can be the difference between a successful effort and a vain one. This area also includes perceptions and symbols of status and respect, and whether status carries entitlement or responsibility or both. Again, much of this area may be covered by investigation into others, particularly culture. What does the community care about, and what does it ignore? Is there widely accepted discrimination against one or more groups by the majority or by those in power? What are the norms for interaction among those who with different opinions or different backgrounds? There are obviously many more aspects of community that can be explored, such as health or education. Depending on your needs and information, this description might be anything from a two-or

three-page outline to an in-depth portrait of the community that extends to tens of pages and includes charts, graphs, photographs, and other elements. The point of doing it is to have a picture of the community at a particular point in time that you can use to provide a context for your community assessment and to see the results of whatever actions you take to bring about change. It can be written as a story, can incorporate photos and commentary from community residents see Photovoice , can be done online and include audio and video, etc. The more interesting the description is, the more people are likely to actually read it. Why make the effort to understand and describe your community? Not having the proper background information on your community may not seem like a big deal until you unintentionally find yourself on one side of a bitter divide, or get involved in an issue without knowing about its long and tangled history. Some advantages to taking the time to understand the community and create a community description include: Capturing unspoken, influential rules and norms. There may be neighborhoods where staff members or participants should be accompanied by others in order to be safe, at least at night. Knowing the character of various areas and the invisible borders that exist among various groups and neighborhoods can be extremely important for the physical safety of those working and living in the community. Having enough familiarity with the community to allow you to converse intelligently with residents about community issues, personalities and geography. That can make both a community assessment and any actions and activities that result from it easier to conduct. Being able to talk convincingly with the media about the community. Providing background and justification for grant proposals. Knowing the context of the community so that you can tailor interventions and programs to its norms and culture, and increase your chances of success. When should you make an effort to understand and describe the community? Communities are complex, constantly-changing entities. Organizations have to remain dynamic in order to keep moving forward. Reexamining the community -- or perhaps examining it carefully for the first time -- can infuse an organization with new ideas and new purpose. Aside from when you first come to a community, this is probably the most vital time to do a community description. When a funder asks you to, often as part of a funding proposal. While researching and writing a community description can take time, your work can almost always benefit from the information you gather. Whom should you contact to gather information? In addition, however, there are some specific people that it might be important to talk to. In a typical community, they might include: Be prepared to learn from the community. Assume that you have a lot to learn, and approach the process with an open mind. Listen to what people have to say. Take notes -- you can use them later to generate new questions or to help answer old ones. Race relations in the U. There are a number of reasons why informants may tell you things that are inaccurate. In addition, some may intentionally exaggerate or downplay particular conditions or issues for their own purposes or for what they see as the greater good. The Chamber of Commerce or local government officials might try to make economic conditions look better than they are in the hopes of attracting new business to the community, for instance. Get information, particularly on issues, conditions, and relationships from many sources if you can. To the extent that you can, try not to do anything that will change the way people go about their daily business or express themselves. That usually means being as unobtrusive as possible -- not being obvious about taking pictures or making notes, for instance. In some circumstances, it could mean trying to gain trust and insight through participant observation. Participant observation is a technique that anthropologists use. It entails becoming part of another culture, both to keep people in it from being influenced by your presence and to understand it from the inside. Some researchers believe it addresses the problem of changing the culture by studying it , and others believe that it makes the problem worse. Take advantage of the information and facilities that help shape the world of those who have lived in the community for a long time. Read the local newspaper and the alternative paper, too, if there is one , listen to local radio, watch local TV, listen to conversation in cafes and bars, in barbershops and beauty shops. You can learn a great deal about a community by immersing yourself in its internal communication. The Chamber of Commerce will usually have a list of area businesses and organizations, along with their contact people, which should give you both points of contact and a sense of who the people are that you might want to get in touch with. Go to the library -- local librarians are often treasure troves of information, and their professional goal is to spread it around. Check out bulletin boards at supermarkets and laundromats. Even graffiti can be a

valuable source of information about community issues. Every contact you make in the community has the potential to lead you to more contacts. Public records and archives. Most communities have their own websites, which often contain valuable information as well. Individual and group interviews. Interviews can range from casual conversations in a cafe to structured formal interviews in which the interviewer asks the same specific questions of a number of carefully chosen key informants. They can be conducted with individuals or groups, in all kinds of different places and circumstances. University researchers, staff and administrators of health and human service organizations, and activists may all have done considerable work to understand the character and inner workings of the community.

Understanding Community Media: SAGE Publications and millions of other books are available for Amazon Kindle. Learn more Enter your mobile number or email address below and we'll send you a link to download the free Kindle App.

Howley had just completed his book Community Media: People, Places, and Communications Technologies, and as he spoke of his broader research agenda, I was reminded of some of the big questions that initially drew me to media studies two decades earlier, questions about media, representation, power, participation, and identity. On its publication, Community Media quickly jumped to the top of my reading list, and it has been required reading for my advanced media studies students ever since. Howley has a rare capacity to make connections between theory and practice: He can both see how particular cases illuminate broader processes and how social theory helps identify productive questions about specific media objects. At the same time, Howley has experience working with various community media projects, which gives him valuable practical knowledge that enhances his scholarly work on community media. All this makes Howley an ideal person to conceptualize and assemble a much-needed collection on the current state of community media. So I was not surprised by the richness and depth of this new reader, Understanding Community Media. As you will see, this edited collection is a rare gem, one that will stand out among bookshelves of edited volumes in media studies for its clarity and coherence, the depth of the questions it explores, and the range of the cases it considers. Perhaps most important, though, is the sheer significance of the subject matter this collection treats; Understanding Community Media shines a light on nagging issues that we, in media studies, have neglected far too long. A whole range of media objects, practices, and experiences exist alongside, often in critical relation to, commercial media. This persistent marginality has real costs. The agenda for media studies is quite clear at this point: We need to move beyond the simple platitudes that appear in so much of the buzz about new media and look carefully and critically at the structure and forms of community media, how people create and use such media, and how community media interact with major corporate [Page xi]media. In other words, we need a theoretically informed and empirically rich media studies of community media. Anything less, at this historical moment, would be more than simply a missed opportunity but would challenge the fundamental relevance of media studies in the 21st century. Understanding Community Media is more than a productive starting point. Throughout this volume, Howley and the contributors take seriously the complexity of what it means to understand their object of study. As a result, there are no simple narratives or easy answers here; instead, the contributors challenge us to think with them about how and why community media might matter, and what it means to put community media at the center of our scholarly inquiry. It is also worth noting that several specific strengths of this collection set it apart from many other edited collections. The thematic organization of Understanding Community Media is, itself, an important contribution, as it helpfully articulates key dimensions of the field. Even more important, Howley has written a series of substantive introductions to the seven parts, identifying the key questions and how each specific contribution fits in to the broader picture. These part introductions will provide a treasure trove of ideas and questions for seasoned scholars and graduate students alike. In addition, this collection is genuinely global, with chapters that focus on media in a stunning range of settings. This diverse collection of case studies is organized so effectively that each part remains coherent, with each set of chapters reflecting on a core set of questions. As a result, the global dimension on display here help open up a productive cross-national dialogue about the meanings and possibilities of community media. The variety of community media out thereâ€"some long standing, others still emergingâ€"should be a central focus for media studies. Understanding Community Media moves us a significant step forward by giving us a series of valuable theoretical frameworks and rich case studies that help map the contours of a field that will only become more significant in the years ahead. This collection deserves our attention and Howley our gratitude, both for the work contained here and for the new questions and projects it will undoubtedly inspire. It has been a rare privilege to work with such a talented and committed group of scholars and writers. And at the risk of being presumptuous, I believe we are all indebted to the community media workers and organizations who inspired and supported our research efforts. Finally, to my

editor, Todd Armstrong; his assistants, Aja Baker and Katie Grim; production manager, Sarah Quesenberry; and all their colleagues at SAGE, I offer my heartfelt thanks for your encouragement, professionalism, and skill in bringing this work to fruition. His research and teaching interests include the political economy of communication, cultural politics, and the relationship between media and social movements. He is author of Community Media: People, Places, and Communication Technologies His work has appeared in the Journal of Radio Studies, Journalism: A contributing writer for The Bloomington Alternative, he continues to produce program material for community radio and public access television. A Tribute to Russell J. He received his PhD from the Indiana University in About the Contributors [Page] Bernadette Barker-Plummer is an associate professor of media studies at the University of San Francisco, where she also directs the interdisciplinary minor in gender and sexualities studies. Her research interests are in media, social movements, and social change. Her current research projects include a book-length study of the mediation of transgender politics through popular culture and with Dorothy Kidd a book project investigating social movement communication strategies in the context of transforming public spheres. Rosalind Bresnahan is a coordinating editor of the journal Latin American Perspectives, for which she edited a special edition on Chile in Her interest in Chilean media began when she lived in Chile during the first 2 years of the Allende government and observed the key role of media in the political conflict preceding the military coup. In , she began research on alternative media during the struggle to end the dictatorship and in the post transition to democracy. She has interviewed more than alternative media producers and distributors from both periods as well as current policy makers. She has freelanced in the commercial arts and the nonprofit, community-based arts sectors for many years and is the production editor for On Spec, an award-winning speculative fiction magazine. As a community cultural development activist, she believes the arts to be vital tools for positive social change and argues that work initiated through the ESPA is historically vital to Canadian arts and culture. For 3 years, she was a jury member of the Community Investment Grant Review Subcommittee of the City of Edmonton Community Services Advisory Board CSAB , and she remains an advocate for increased appreciation and funding toward all genres of social and community-based arts. He has extensive experience of both the strategic development and the practical delivery of education and regeneration programs. Her research [Page]explores news media and community conflict resolution with an emphasis on debates around whiteness, multiculturalismi, and listening and around media, gender, and violence. Her previous research has focused on news and cultural diversity, community media interventions in western Sydney, experiences of racism, and the development of community antiracism strategies after September 11, Carlos Fontes is a professor of communication at Worcester State College, where he founded and now directs its Center for Global Studies. He has published and presented in the United States, Canada, Brazil, and Portugal on the general topic of alternative media. He worked for 3 years as a community media organizer in a social service agency in Western Massachusetts with at risk youth groups and mothers of sexually abused children. He is a longtime member of Western Massachusetts Indymedia and the original organizer of Worcester Indymedia. He is currently working on a documentary with the Sarayacu-a kichwaâ€"speaking people from the Ecuadorian Amazon. His research interests include new media studies, media and politics, media policy analysis, and media and community development. Gergely Gosztonyi, is a lawyer and media researcher. He studied sociology and political science for 1 year in Finland and media law for a half a year in Denmark. His research field is alternative media and nonprofit broadcasting. Between and , he was the office coordinator of the Hungarian Federation of Free Radios, and between and , he was the managing director of Civil Radio. Maria Victoria Guglietti is a part-time lecturer on social research methodologies and communication theory at Mount Royal College in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Her areas of interest are visual culture, community media practices, and the interdisciplinary study of cultural production. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Place, Culture and Politics at the City University of New York, where she is researching social movement practices of antifear amid the neoliberal enclosures. Her research interests are in media and social change, political economy of media, and community and alternative media. She has also worked extensively in community radio and video production. She served as a volunteer for the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation PCDC for more than 3 years, helping with the publication of organizational media

and planning community activities. Her research interests include news media and social movements, ethnic media, crisis communication, and instructional communication. She holds a PhD from Temple University. He is currently working on popular music and cultures of disability. His books include Circular Breathing: Cultures of Resistance Since the Sixties His edited collections include Community Music: He also coedits Social Movement Studies: He also coordinates the Open Source Wireless Coalition, a global partnership of open source wireless integrators, researchers, implementers, and companies dedicated to the development of open source, interoperable, and low-cost wireless technologies. He blogs regularly at.

Chapter 3 : SAGE Books - Alternative Media and the Public Sphere in Zimbabwe

A text that reveals the value and significance of community media in an era of global communication. With contributions from an international team of well-known experts, media activists, and promising young scholars, this comprehensive volume examines community-based media from theoretical, empirical, and practical perspectives.

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Understanding Community Media seeks to contribute to ongoing debates within activist and policy-making circles regarding communication rights on the local.' and community media in an era of global communication.

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Chapter 9 : Understanding Community Media: Kevin Howley: blog.quintoapp.com: Books

A cutting edge examination of community media from theoretical, empirical, historical, and practitioner perspectives, with essays on subjects like women's video collectives in India, indigenous radio in Colombia, street newspapers in Canada, and independent media in Nigeria.