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Audio Storytelling: unlocking the power of audio to inform, empower and connect.

ABSTRACT:

Audio storytelling is booming. From crafted long-form documentaries to short digital narratives, podcasting, social media and online streaming have liberated audio from the confines of a live radio schedule and created huge new transnational audiences. But how can the burgeoning influence of audio storytelling be harnessed in educational and community sectors? Evidence provided in the United Nations Creative Economy Report 2013 suggests that it can be a tool of sustainable development and social inclusion. This paper examines an initiative designed to advance the use of audio storytelling in educational contexts: the Emotional History project, an intensive teaching model that trains undergraduate students with no prior audio experience to create powerful short audio stories in a 4 x 3 hour module. It relies on the capacity of audio to convey emotion, and the power of emotion to transcend social, cultural and racial difference and forge a visceral connection. By gathering deeply personal emotional moments, students not only have a heightened incentive to learn technical production skills, they are also motivated to consider ethical issues and vital principles of empathy and responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

In a digital age where anyone with a smartphone can record a video and post it online, the surprise is that audio is not merely surviving – it is thriving. There are some 33,000 radio stations around the world, with more than 12,000 in the US alone. That translates to about two billion radio sets in use, or one radio for every three persons. (Fitzgerald 2013) In the UK, over 90% of the population tune into a radio station at least once a week. (Dwyer Hogg 2014) In Vietnam, radio reaches over 99% of the population, in Kenya 95%, while in India, 300 new commercial radio stations compete with the state broadcaster. (Nam 2013) But online delivery systems from podcasting to streaming mean “radio” is no longer governed by mainly live broadcasting of news, chat shows or music: a growing public and independent sector, particularly in the developed world, has seen a renaissance in radio documentaries and features ([Hilmes and Loviglio 2013](#)), crafted audio stories whose scope can range from expanded reportage and investigative journalism to intensely personal narratives and poetic or impressionistic treatments of abstract ideas and local issues. These audio stories “colour in” and extend beyond the news agenda, the best ones providing psychological, philosophical, cultural and political insights that transcend national boundaries and connect listeners from around the world.

The resurgence in audio storytelling derives from the advent of podcasting in 2005, the ease and economy of digital audio recording and production and the use of social media to promote and disseminate audio stories. (McHugh 2013) Exemplars of the audio storytelling form such as *This American Life*, an hour-long weekly show which delivers three-act personal narratives of studied informality, and *Radiolab*, a weekly show characterised by micro-produced, fast-paced stories loosely related to science,

culture and philosophy, attract huge transnational audiences. Live audio “screenings” of audio documentaries, features and sonic works are increasingly popular in the US, UK and Australia (Lindgren & McHugh 2013) and in 2014, the prestigious Sheffield Documentary Festival inaugurated an audio category.

The popularity and accessibility of the audio storytelling genre make it an ideal format for communities to use to tell their *own* stories, unmediated by outsiders or professionals, who inevitably bring external values and traditions. As eminent cultural policy advisor to UNESCO Professor Yudhishtir Raj Isar has noted: “Agency must be given to other players who, by deploying their own imaginaries and applying their own perspectives, can truly diversify the ‘culture’ of cultural scholarship in the world.” (Isar 2012) Radio, sound recording and podcasting are variously included as part of the cultural and creative industries identified in the UNDP Creative Economy Report (2013, 24-7), which notes how “the value of culture in and for human development transcends economic analysis in particularly meaningful ways” (*ibid*, p. 41). Two of these chime with the community-building capacity that locally developed audio storytelling could provide:

The first is *cultural expression (or artistic practice)*, both individual and collective, which energizes and empowers individuals and groups, particularly among the marginalized and downtrodden, and which provides platforms for their social and political agency; the second is *tangible and intangible cultural heritage*, which, in addition to the income it generates, provides people with the cultural memories, knowledge and skills vital for the forging of sustainable relationships with natural resources and ecosystems... (*ibid*)

In Africa, the potential to educate, inform and build community through online audio storytelling is particularly significant, as internet use via mobile phones is set to increase a staggering twenty-fold there by 2019 due to declining prices of handsets and data, and faster transmission speeds. (Smith 2014, p.6) This is double the rate of growth in the rest of the world.

Given the vast social capital that audio storytelling can unlock, it is important for journalism educators to consider how best to consider both teaching and using the form. This paper describes an accelerated teaching model, the Emotional History, devised by the author to teach the basic elements of audio storytelling in one 4x3-hour module.

WHY AUDIO?

Why *audio* storytelling, rather than video, or blogging, or other social media? Audio’s non-intrusiveness, compared to video, facilitates revelation and the expression of deep emotion: even film makers concede that “people clam up when you put a camera in front of them”. (Thornton in Galvin 2013) Audio liberates speakers from being judged on appearance: the fat, the old, the ugly are made more equal, spared judgement. Instead the listener, unable to jump ahead as in text, or freeze-frame as in film, develops a “pact of intimacy” with the speaker as they accompany him or her in real time. (McHugh 2012, p. 200)

Its immediacy and accessibility partly account for audio's broad demographic. But it is audio's qualities as a *medium* that deliver its singular impact. "Sight isolates, sound incorporates. Whereas sight situates the observer outside what he views, at a distance, sight pours into the hearer." (Ong 2007, p.71) Its subtle, porous nature fosters a "partnership between imagination and memory" (Street 2014) that allows each individual listener to create a personal response, engaging both head and heart. Stanford University psychologist Anne Fernald puts it succinctly: "sound is touch at a distance". (Fernald on Radiolab, 2007) Unlike video or print, which require full attention, audio accompanies us, in the car, in the kitchen, in our headphones: sound "envelops us, pouring into us, whether we want it to or not, including us, involving us", notes American scholar Susan Douglas. (Douglas 2004, p. 30)

Add the lure of narrative, the affective qualities of sound and the highly connective act of listening and the resulting audio story engenders a visceral response. As Seán Street, the first Professor of Radio in the UK, notes, "the human mind is a kind of radio producer/receiver in the sense that it possesses the ability to interpret feelings absorbed through sound, particularly when those sounds act as reminders of past events in our own history." Importantly, if the sounds we hear – whether voice or "environmental" sound – trigger an emotional response, we are more likely to absorb (be affected by) the content, suggests US neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, who has pioneered research on the links between feelings and cognition. "Feelings are just as cognitive as other precepts. They are the result of a most curious physiological arrangement that has turned the brain into the body's captive audience." (Damasio 1994, xv) As great rhetoricians from Churchill to Martin Luther King Jr. knew, appealing to the emotions is a highly effective way of engaging with audience. Emotiveness also has a place in journalism's role in facilitating democracy, as the UNDP Creative Economy Report (UNCER) points out:

In many cases, expressiveness and emotion also imply that dissonant voices will be heard, but these are aspects of culture that policymakers are not always prepared to accommodate. Indeed, cultural expression has informed or inspired many recent democracy movements, as people recognize that freedom of artistic expression is constitutive of a free society – of its diversity, its liberties, its openness and its flexibility. Such a society must also have a place for those who raise embarrassing questions, confront orthodoxy and dogma, and who cannot be easily co-opted by either governments or corporations. (*ibid* 42)

As a radio studies scholar, and producer of radio documentaries for over three decades, the author has applied both the theory and practice of audio storytelling to devise a pedagogical model designed to teach newcomers to audio production how to elicit, record, edit and craft an effective audio story after a 12-hour (4x 3hours) teaching module. The module, called the Emotional History, draws on audio's powerful capacity to convey emotion. It is described in the next section.

The Emotional History pedagogical model for audio storytelling

In 2011, the author was asked to teach a new subject, Convergent Journalism, to second year Journalism undergraduates at University of Wollongong, Australia. The subject laid a foundation in three distinct media platforms: audio, photography, and the bringing together of both media to create audio slideshows. After an introductory lecture in Week One which surveyed exemplars of the forms came a four-week audio module. Most students had had no formal training in recording or producing audio; none had studied the theory of the audio medium. Given the steep technical learning curve involved, the author decided to dispense with the more conventional practice of having the students gather a news story, a daunting task in an unfamiliar medium. Instead, the *medium* would drive the story.

As Street notes, audio has demonstrated capacity to convey emotion (“feelings absorbed through sound”). This is linked to a quality called affect, an intuitively simple yet elusive concept studied by disciplines from medicine and neuroscience to psychology and cultural studies. The Oxford Dictionary defines “affect” (noun form) as “emotion or desire as influencing behaviour”. In the fields of medicine and psychiatry, “affect” means the communication of one person’s emotional state to another. American cultural theorist Eric Shouse presents the notion of affect as “a non-conscious experience of intensity... a moment of unformed and unstructured potential”. (Shouse 2005, p. 5) Damasio further distinguishes between affect, as quantitative, and feelings, as qualitative. “Without affect, feelings do not ‘feel’ because they have no intensity.” (Damasio 1994: xvii) Any discussion of affect describes associated mood, feelings and emotions; what matters here is the concept of emotion... *as influencing behaviour* (emphasis added) – something that can be transmitted from one source and influence another. Audio with strong emotional content will trigger powerful affective resonances with a listener: this became the core of the Emotional History concept.

The word “emotion” is loosely and commonly used, but as researchers from Darwin to Tomkins and Ekman have shown, there are only six universal emotions – emotions physically encoded in facial muscles across a broad range of societies, from East and West, in the developed and developing world and in isolated hunter gatherer communities. Surprisingly perhaps, love and hate are not among them. US psychologist Paul Ekman famously described the six universal emotions: Anger, Disgust, Fear, Happiness, Sadness, Surprise. (Ekman 1969) For the Emotional History (EH) assessment task, students are asked to record an audio interview which will capture an emotional moment related to one or more of the six universal emotions. They are then required to blend it with a non-verbal audio source – natural or ambient sound – to create maximum narrative and affective impact. The second audio source will add its own affective quality, and can also be used to shape narrative elements, such as managing pace and mood. Maximum duration of the EH is set at two minutes to simplify narrative structure.

Using a sound element – a natural sound such as birdsong, or an ambient sound such as a train passing – provides subtle lessons in the subjectivity of sound and its ability to evoke reaction. As sound theorists Back and Bull point out (2003, p.9): “Sounds are embedded with both cultural and personal meanings; sounds do not come at us

merely raw.” British radio feature maker Alan Hall is more poetic: “no sound is innocent”. (Hall in Biewen & Dilworth, 2010, p. 100) Even something as “natural” as wind can have a host of meanings on radio, depending on how a producer incorporates it as sound and what that sound evokes to an individual listener. As the German philosopher and musicologist Theodor Adorno notes: “We can tell whether we are happy by the sound of the wind. It warns the unhappy man of the fragility of his house, hounding his shallow sleep and violent dreams. To the happy man, it is the song of his protectedness: its furious howling concedes that it has power over him no longer.” (Adorno 1974, p.49) This subjectivity of sound is a boon to an audio storyteller, because unlike film or video, which prescribes the images we see, audio makes us co-create the story. “Sound offers a portal through which a deeper, often inarticulate consciousness can be glimpsed.” (Hall in Biewen & Dilworth 2010, p. 99)

Music is of course another potent affective force, its influence and application in audio storytelling and radio documentary meriting separate study. (Abumrad 2005, Rubin.S, et al, 2012) For the purposes of the EH assessment task, an introductory lecture on the use of music to ‘score’ audio stories is provided, and students may use music as an optional third element of the mix. Many choose to do so, because music is often a significant mode of expression for young people. Because the EH is published online on the free audio sharing platform Soundcloud, any music used must be copyright-free.

Emotional History Assessment Task: Practice and Reflection

These then, are the practical challenges proposed for the student:

1. Select an interviewee who has a strong story to tell that reflects an emotional moment around Anger, Disgust, Fear, Happiness, Sadness, Surprise.
2. Record the interview to high technical, ethical and editorial standard, incorporating deep listening, empathy and respect for privacy.
3. Log the interview, identifying the parts that are most affective (have emotional impact) and effective (supply necessary information and are concise).
4. Locate a second (non-verbal) sound source that will enhance/illustrate the emotional moment.
5. Locate music (non-copyright) if desired.
6. Craft the elements of voice, sound (and music) together to optimum narrative effect and maximum affect, up to 120secs duration.

It may seem impossibly ambitious to achieve this in four classes. (The classes are accompanied by a lecture series which presents a theoretical grounding in the audio storytelling form and exemplars of audio storytelling works from around the world). Yet from its first airing as an Assessment Task in 2012, to its third iteration in 2014, the results have been remarkably positive, judging by the quality of the work produced and from student feedback such as this:

The Emotional History assignment has been by far the most challenging and rewarding experience I have had so far in my three years at University of Wollongong. Learning the key to listening... I not only had the opportunity to discover a medium that I had previously had no experience

in but I also had the chance to engage with an individual, discover their story and appreciate their life! (JM, 2014)

Of 40 students in one class in 2012, seven had their Emotional Histories broadcast on the flagship national broadcaster, ABC Radio National, with one being student winner of a national competition run by the broadcaster – a significant achievement for individuals with no prior experience of audio. In the second cohort, one EH won a National Community Broadcasters Competition. Student feedback from 140 completed Emotional Histories (selection below) suggests several reasons why the EH task elicits strong performance. Underpinning the responses, one simple factor is clear: the EH task starts from a strong premise, in that all students can relate to the six primary emotions. Being universal, emotions transcend culture, class, gender, age. Whether it's the fear of facing a street gang or of battling cancer, the sadness of losing a grandparent or the happiness of being granted refugee status, students can readily tap into a broad range of potential Emotional Histories.

I chose the story of a girl having her two closest friends battling cancer... I have also lost loved ones to cancer, so when Kirstey spoke it was hard for me to listen at first, however I feel that I held myself together quite well as I let the interview pan out. Even as she came close to tears at times during the interview I too came close. ([PP 2014](#))

The most commonly referenced emotions were sadness and fear; the least common were surprise and disgust. The tapestry of short audio stories created reveals moving details of people's lives: a boy is burnt in a backyard bonfire, a woman yearns for a baby, a teenager tells his mother he's gay, a graffiti artist finds exhilaration in his clandestine art, a stutterer describes the fear of a phone call, a wife decides to leave her alcoholic husband, a man is anguished at having to put his demented mother in a home, a student commemorates a fellow-student's drowning, a young woman with cerebral palsy is angry when people pity her. Most topics are inherently sensitive, and students were enjoined to follow the ethical principles of the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance of Australia, with particular reference to "respect private grief and personal privacy". (MEAA 2014) Students had to weigh up the positives (listening carefully and respectfully to someone's story, which can have therapeutic value and provide validation) against the negatives (causing pain to someone in asking them to reflect on an upsetting event). These considerations are addressed in theory in various parts of the Journalism curriculum, but the EH task provided direct experiential learning.

After speaking with a series of potential candidates who had reservations about sharing their stories, I decided to approach a family member who had experienced losing a child to a rare chromosomal defect. Aside from her character, willingness to speak and her ability to communicate, I chose the 'talent' because her story had the potential to show an incredible array and depth of emotion. While there were moments of devastating sadness in the interview, there were also moments of inspiring optimism. (RL, [Kurt](#), 2014)

Subjects varied in their willingness to disclose personal reactions. One girl, who suffered serious burns, was open about recalling the sadness and fear it caused.

“Ethically, her willingness to share eases a lot of the pressure off issues associated with an emotional interview. I never felt that I pressured my talent or made her feel uncomfortable.” (JMC 2014) Another young woman, who witnessed an attempted armed robbery, became unexpectedly intense during the interview.

The moment I hit that record button, she sat there rigid, and didn't move until the end of the interview. In light of this sudden reaction, I was abruptly hit with a sense of reservation. Her sudden emotional response took me aback, and a cascade of ethical conflicts within myself began to form. I suddenly felt void of humanity, given that I was using this traumatic memory for my own gain. (MW 2014)

Journalism students are likely to have to report on and interview people about traumatic events, and in-depth classes on ethics and trauma – both its victims and its reporters – are included in the curriculum. EH students are provided with resources in advance: an organization which advises on how to approach or portray topics around mental illness (www.responseability.org), another which will provide free counselling to students or subjects distressed by an interview experience ([Lifeline](#)). The EH task, while exacting for some, introduced the reality of dealing with difficult subjects in a manageable way. Students were sometimes acquainted with their interviewees; all students were interviewing willing subjects who could stop the interview at any time; and the audio medium is set to minimize intrusion and maximize authentic communication of feeling. Several students developed mature insights into how to conduct sensitive interviews in a way that benefited both parties. One, for instance, interviewed a 20-year-old Australian soldier who had served in Afghanistan. While not diagnosed with PTSD, he was having difficulty adjusting to civilian life.

When I first interviewed him, I was too cautious of his feelings and didn't ask the right questions...we talked about adjusting back in to Australia and the type of help and assistance available to returning troops. While the interview was still interesting, it didn't take advantage of the fact that I was recording sound. When composing an audio story you have the chance to convey the emotion of the talent on a much more personal level. Hearing their tone of voice and the pauses and breaths is what gives it a very "real" sense. In my first interview, we were both too rigid and the chance to extract that "real" emotion was missed. (MC 2014)

In class, trying to edit the story, the student realised how flat the interview was. She had skirted the personal issues, and he had followed her cue. In trying not to upset him, she had perhaps inadvertently frustrated him further – war veterans commonly complain of how alienated they feel from the banal conversations of everyday life to which they return.¹ With the heightened motivation evident in many of the EH tasks, the student decided to seek a second interview, which was granted. In it, he described how his unit had got close to some schoolchildren where Australian soldiers were helping construct a new school building. He played football with them, and felt good

¹ The author interviewed female veterans of the Vietnam war and wives of male veterans on this topic for a book and radio series, *Minefields and Miniskirts* (Sydney: Doubleday 1993) and this was commonly reported. It is borne out in other publications on trauma and war. ([Kulka et al, 1990](#); [Garton 1996](#))

about helping them. Later he heard the school had been blown up by a suicide bomber and some of the children died. The student handled this very difficult revelation with care and commitment, both in the recount and in its editing and mixing.

The story of the children came up very unexpectedly but I believe it was because this time round I had consciously made the effort to have a very relaxed and natural environment for a conversation. This was a really great learning curve for me. In the end I had more than 30 minutes of material to cut down in to a 2-minute piece. It took a lot of filtering and rearranging but I just had to focus strongly on getting the key points and cutting out anything irrelevant. I feel this story would... help to spread the word that these soldiers have faced unimaginable traumas whereby upon their return they need the full support of their country to give them every chance of settling back in to Australia.

I placed emphasis on the children in the story by using [her own recorded] actuality of children playing and laughing to remind us that these children are innocent and could be anyone's son or daughter. At the point in the story where P. talks about the suicide bombing at the school, I used a reverb sound effect on children's laughter to confirm to the audience that children died in this bombing. The echoing laughter symbolises the ghosts of the children whose lives were ended far too early.

This is sophisticated and sensitive storytelling, which tackles a complex and important topic with economy and power. There are technical issues – the student's inexperience with audio recording yielded an imperfect sound quality – but it still packs a punch. (Listen [here](#).)

A second notable response to the EH was the ownership students demonstrated around the task, as with MC above. Because the EH are personal narratives, not news stories, students felt qualified to ask for details – they do not have to know certain facts in advance, or confront intimidating public figures, or remember the principles of news interviewing. There are of course still interviewing principles to be followed – attentive listening, empathy, balance and sincere curiosity among them, aspects taught in other parts of the curriculum and reinforced here – but they emerge almost intuitively from the emotional content. This sense of having to set their own parameters led some to ponder serious ethical questions and even challenge the Journalistic Code of Ethics in order to behave more ethically.

The story is of a 23-year-old university student with cerebral palsy... Before taking on the story, I expected problems managing the ethical issue I was later able to define as 'Inspiration porn.' I didn't want the story to thrive simply off the profile's disability. Quite often we find in the media (particularly social media), stories of people with disabilities performing ordinary tasks and being portrayed as inspirations to us all. We surpass [sic] the fact that individuals with disabilities are foremost, individuals, and 'with disabilities' only refers to a condition(s). In practice this negates the second guide in the Journalists' Code of Ethics... "Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including ...

physical or mental disability.” The foundation of my story was the talent’s disability. Got it! (BM, 2014: Free Spirit)

Having understood that contravening the Code was justified, the student successfully showed us a vibrant and irreverent young woman, who lives with, rather than “suffers from” a disability. What comes through most strongly (besides her anger at being pitied) is her *joie de vivre*. As the student realised, the audio medium is an advantage in telling this story, because it prevents us from forming a pre-judgement because we can see she is in a wheelchair. We listen right through her two-minute EH before she ends, provocatively: “I am not my chair – I’m more than that!” ([Free Spirit](#): listen)

This student, in common with others, made technical errors – he conducted the interview in a noisy location, which impeded editing. But overall, after only four weeks, students displayed a heartening appreciation of audio as a medium.

Being able to listen to the interactions between mother and child are something that could not be captured in the written word. The small inflections, the held-back laughter, all add to the emotion portrayed, the joy that was almost tangible in the room. The emotions in the voice convey more than just the words that are spoken. (MP 2014)

I think audio is a very effective medium to convey an emotional history. It enables the reader to use their imagination and to empathise deeply with the speaker. I think the most effective part is the tone of the interviewee’s voice. You can tell so much more about how a person feels from the spoken word than the written word. (EDB 2014)

Having this story – of a man becoming a father for the first time – written as audio provides a level of emotion that written context would never be able to capture. You can hear pride and happiness in all of Iriwan’s responses. (CA 2014, [Fatherhood](#))

Another characteristic evident in the well executed EH was that students demonstrated a capacity for deep listening, both during the interview and in post-production. This is a very useful quality for a journalist, important to gaining the sort of in-depth interviews required for feature writing and narrative journalism. (McHugh 2012a)

During the interview, Christine became tearful and clearly quite sad but rather than interjecting and changing the subject by asking a different question I let her take her time and work her way through the story. I asked a total of three questions over the 8 [sic] minutes I was recording and the end result of the unedited interview feels emotionally honest and is wholly engaging for the duration. (JF 2014)

Originally, I framed the story in a sad way in my mind. I thought it was a little bit tragic that one should be separated from their family and place of origin for so long. My opinion changed when I was listening back to the

story and was able to hear the mellow happiness, and almost reminiscent tone the talent was speaking in. She was reliving the first time she saw her brother again, and remembering the joyful feelings it gave her to go home. (MG 2014)

Once a student has recorded what is often an intensely moving story, he/she feels invested in it, and is highly motivated to see it published in its most powerful form. This derives partly from a sense of responsibility to the interviewee – being a custodian – and partly from having been moved themselves by the story, and wanting to act as a “midwife” to get it out into the world.

I want my listeners to be able to feel the sunshine on their skin because of the sound of the cicadas. I hope they can feel the rain and the worry that struck Sadie. I hope anyone listening can remember their first love and feels that warm embrace as the storm clears. (HS 2014, [First Love](#))

I feel like I am actually sharing what he wants to convey to people but can't get across, essentially giving his story a voice. Also Spyro is the kind of person who rambles a bit when he talks (one of the only tricky technical challenges – getting him to stop talking!) so it was nice to be able to put it in a neat concise yet emotive two minutes. I was really happy when I showed it to him and he said “yes! That’s exactly what I was trying to say!” (EDB 2014, Nepali Dreaming)

This heightened motivation gives students added incentive to master basic audio production skills: recording audio, logging an interview, uploading and editing an interview, adding additional layers such as actuality and music, and crafting it to achieve “the alchemy of the mix”. (Hall in Biewen & Dilworth, p. 104) An audio editing software program called Hindenburg proved intuitive and effective, allowing cut and paste speech editing and visual tweaking of fades on the computer screen. When it came to final production and crafting, some students drew on simple sounds related to their subjects – a child laughing (evoked the joy of motherhood), a door slamming (symbolized walking out on a marriage). They realized the importance of simple editing considerations, such as what sounds to keep and what to ditch: a gulp, a shuddering breath can have just as much impact as any words. Many added music composed and played by a friend, or found on a copyright-free site such as [Free Music Archive](#) Because they were telling a story they understood, they felt confident to take charge and shape the content. The aim here was not to recall the Inverted Pyramid structure, but to deliver a heartfelt audio work that best represented the EH entrusted to them.

But sound can also be used to manipulate us. A melancholy piece of music placed after a reflective comment can reinforce how we perceive the words we heard, but a misplaced piece of music can distort meaning, as some students learned.

I found that many free sounds were over-literal and clichéd, cheapening the ‘Emotional History’ rather than enhancing it. I finally selected

music... that I feel gave the piece integrity. Shaw's composition from 0.00-0.21 is light-hearted and highlights the excitement and joy that the talent felt at the beginning of her pregnancy... In contrast, Dexnay's acoustic guitar chords are used to punctuate and reinforce the talent's devastation when she learns of her child's fate, "he had an extremely rare chromosomal abnormality called Trisomy 13" (0.47).

In addition, I recorded the sound of a clock ticking to accompany the statement, "21 years later we're still coping with it" (1.19). This highlights the impact that the event has had on the family and allows audiences to gain insights into their pain and suffering. (RL, 2014, Kurt.)

A collection of Emotional Histories by UOW students can be heard at [City Lives](#) and at [UOW Multimedia](#). Perhaps if other universities take up the template, completed Emotional Histories from around the world can be placed on a common site online, to connect students from different cultures and "map" rich regional narratives. Similarities and differences in these Emotional Histories can generate crosscultural collaborations and debates. Thus may the primal connectors of sound and emotion advance global communication and understanding.

CONCLUSION:

Audio is a powerful medium, whose non-intrusiveness, affective resonance and enveloping nature make it particularly suited to capturing intimate personal narratives. Audio storytelling requires a blend of journalistic, technical and creative skills. These can be readily learned by following the UOW Emotional History template, a module which harnesses the universal nature of emotions and the affective power of audio to convey emotion. It can be taught in 4x3 hour classes, supported by online listening to exemplars of the audio storytelling form. The author will provide detailed learning materials to educators on request. Podcasting, cheap production methods, easier online capability and a burgeoning global audiostorytelling community indicate that audio storytelling has huge potential worldwide. Audio storytelling can also help marginalized communities to gain agency over their own stories, and build social capital, as part of a sustainable approach to Creative Industries identified by UNCER 2013.

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