

**Choosing zines: Defining the constructs that influence
the decision to participate in the practice of zine-
making in the digital age**

Submitted by Peter Bryant in fulfilment of the requirements of a Doctor of
Philosophy 2017

University of Technology Sydney

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as part of the doctoral degree and/or fully acknowledged within the text.

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Date: 23rd January 2018

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I don't know how to create what I am searching for. I want something meaningful, but I don't know where to begin.

She's So Very... #9 – A zine by Melissa Ann (2007)

This thesis has been a long time coming, with a few false starts along the way. It would not have been possible without the help, advice and hearty appetite to listen to me think this through for hours on end from everyone around me.

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ABSTRACT

Zines are a unique, small circulation, print based medium that have been in existence for over eighty years. They have survived and some would argue flourished in an environment of participatory social media and declining print circulation. Zine-making is a contradictory, lo-fi, do-it-yourself media-making practice, rich in parallel research traditions and historical engagements across many vocal creative and social communities. This study investigated the constructs that influenced the decision to choose to make zines in the digital age. Drawing on thirty-four semi-structured email interviews, conducted between 2011 and 2015, the study interrogated and defined the motivations of individuals to participate in zine-making. Using a constructivist grounded theory inquiry, a theoretical model was developed from the responses that located the activities undertaken to make a zine within a four-stage model of zine-making participation processes. The study argued that these stages were not enacted sequentially or discretely, but coalesced into liminal spaces that shaped the aspirational and attitudinal aesthetics of zines. It is within these liminal spaces that zine-makers defined and shared their own understanding of what they were choosing to participate in. Zine-makers, by constructing and sharing meaning and their identity through zine-making, became part of a bounded but fragile *communitas* of makers and readers, where small sub-spaces intersect to form semi-private spaces defined by an almost infinite combination of geographical locations, socio-cultural influences, digital technology and social media practices, interests, types of making, attitudes and beliefs, lived experiences and audiences. Finally, the study locates the impacts, influences and transformative effects of digital technology and social media practices on the decision to make zines.

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Bryant, P. (2014). If a tree falls in the forest: the role of community formation and the power of the individual in zine making participation. Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies 4(3).

Bryant, P. (2014). Making analogue connections in a digital world: Exploring the motivations for zine-making participation through the lens of zine writing. International Perspectives on Participation & Engagement in the Arts. Utrecht, Netherlands.

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