BREAKING THE SILENCE: Community Radio, Women and Empowerment

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctorate in Education in the Faculty of Humanities

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Confidentiality
All respondent’s names have been changed in this study and ‘Shout FM’ is a pseudonym

Declaration of original contribution
No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning. I confirm that this study is compliant with the proposal I submitted and was given permission to undertake.

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NB: This research thesis, for the Doctorate in Education (a 6 year part time programme), is preceded by three 10,000 word assessed research papers including an initial literature review, a pilot study with 3 participants and a formal proposal. Here are the latest course details, which have changed a little since my enrolment in 2013 www.manchester.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/programmes/list/00852/edd-education/
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50,433 words
**ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the concepts of voice poverty and empowerment through the narratives of female community radio volunteers in Northern England. It contextualises community radio in relation to a variety of conceptual and methodological debates to understand the activism of critical pedagogy, intersectionality and empowerment in radio and how this understanding might be useful in a variety of disciplines. It is rooted in bell hooks' and Paulo Freire's perception that the existing system of dominant social relations 'creates a culture of silence' where oppressed people are silenced, alienated and 'a mere object of the director society' (Freire, 1977:16). It embarks from cultural theorist Stuart Hall's contention that media and cultural spaces can be powerful sites of social action such that community radio emerges as a key, and powerful, site of informal education.

Over a period of four years, twelve female radio project volunteers were recruited and using an ethnographic approach (the researcher is, herself, a radio volunteer), their individual narratives recorded and later jointly analysed as part of a research group exercise. The data generated from these meetings and a research diary, is analysed alongside a conceptual and contextual framework to produce some original insights, not only with regard to the gendered nature of technical learning, but also about the wider potential of feminist pedagogy. Additionally, the participatory approach to research underlines crucial learning points for social and educational research.

In the perception of the women participants in this study, community radio emerges as a site of feminist pedagogy, in which diverse identities emerge through laughter, dialogue, raised consciousness and solidarity. Women’s knowledge is validated and confronts the orthodoxy of young white, male dominated media, but also romantic notions of empowerment by recognising inherent tensions in womanhood and in communities.

The thesis foregrounds evidence from the majority world, where community radio is well documented as 'giving voice to invisible women' (Wairimu Gatua, Patton & Brown, 2010). It concludes with an argument for further exploration of this highly symbolic and creative dimension of empowerment where women break their silence by broadcasting their voices on radio. In terms of contribution, in addition to providing a powerful document of the educational and social mobilisation potentials of community radio, this thesis also challenges UK commercial and public broadcasters to learn from the global south that community development is an effective method of reaching out to and empowering women and enriching the mainstream media world.
Breaking the Silence: Community Radio, women, and empowerment
**PART ONE** - Provides an overview of the project, sets out the thesis aims, structure, and rationale. It contextualises the study, explains the nature and history of Community Radio and discusses concepts used to establish a framework for later discussion and analysis.
Chapter 1 Introduction

The fruitful use that can be made of the radio can well be imagined. Algeria has enjoyed a unique experience. For several years, the radio will have been, for many, one of the means of saying “no” to the occupation and of believing in the liberation. The identification of the voice of the Revolution with the fundamental truth of the nation has opened limitless horizons. (Fanon, 1965:97).

This thesis describes my Community Radio project focussing on the experiences of female radio volunteers in a U.K. radio station between 2014 and 2018. As a volunteer myself I use an ethnographic approach to elicit radio stories from twelve diverse colleagues. They begin with their experiences of school, move through their life experiences to their engagement and training in radio production. After the training, they go on to produce and present their own radio show whilst continuing as active volunteers and supporting others at the radio station. The thesis documents their radio stories and also their analysis of those narratives in relation to education, silence, voice and empowerment. The collective analysis of their stories is combined with literature and leads to the realisation of some different dimensions of silence, voice, and the use of feminist, critical pedagogy towards empowerment. Whilst the thesis embarks from Freire’s notion of ‘culture of silence’ (1977), and hooks’ perception of ‘invisible histories’ (1994), it employs manifold literatures from diverse disciplines and global regions to explore how radio might enable women to break their silence. Silence and voice are explored through literature and the analyses of the research participants. These concepts are perceived here as powerful metaphors for the oppression and empowerment of women. Viewed through the lens of community development and media, women remain unheard; under and mis-represented. Radio offers diverse women the
opportunity to be heard and not seen - avoiding objectification and misrepresentation. Nevertheless, research participants challenge Solnit’s (2017) and Lorde’s (1984) lamentation of women’s silence as dangerous, with some of them recounting how silence has kept them safe from abuse.

An important dimension of the women’s stories, is to expose the importance of creative, collective activities through which people come to imagine a more positive political reality. (Lorenz, 1994; Hatton, 2013) Creative learning lifts people away from the daily grind of complex individualised problems, but rather than escaping those problems, they are shared and reframed as community/society concerns. Creative collective learning is inventive, inspirational and the radio becomes a place of laughter, where dreams are discussed, untainted or controlled by an external power.

I use this Doctoral study and the immense support from the University of Manchester to consider whether Community Radio will do for others what it did for me in 2009 when I found myself unemployed and depressed, i.e. open up my dreams and the limitless horizons referred to by Fanon.

a) A note on structure

The thesis is structured to introduce the reader quickly to the women participants and the site of the action. The research questions go on to formulate the aims of the paper and later (in chapters six, to nine), provide a framework and headings for analysis and discussion. The questions are: why do women decide to become involved in radio; how do they become engaged in radio training and how do they articulate their radio
experiences in terms of learning together, empowerment, silence and voice?

‘Shout F.M’. , a pseudonym, the site of the project, is a radio station in culturally diverse Northern England housed in a crumbling Victorian building, with over one hundred volunteers, a third of whom are women. The absence of women in a small urban radio project reflects a national and global deficit which is an important rationale for the thesis. Shout F.M. is a registered charity with three part time paid staff, who spend their time on funding applications, administration, technical support, training and general volunteer support. It is housed in a privately rented building containing two radio studios, a training room, a green room (the lounge), an office and a production room (with four ancient computers). Austerity cuts by Government and councils severely affected staff hours and renewal of equipment and the station struggles to pay its rental. Live broadcasts are aired between 0700hrs and 0100hrs. Each day, volunteers enter the building in order to prepare and broadcast their show. Many of them spend the whole day, afternoon or evening at the station in order to chat, eat, use computers, help others and keep warm. There is a small kitchen with a large box of donated food (food bank) and free hot drinks.

Unlike the global South and the U.S., in the U.K. there is limited literature concerned with community radio; even less with radio as pedagogy; and again less on women’s participation in radio, except for an upsurge of press indignation in 2017-18 about women’s treatment, silence or invisibility in all Western media. (Burke, 2018). In the U.K., community radio has a shorter
history beginning in the 1980’s. (Stewart, 2010). By definition it differs from public and commercial radio as a ‘not for profit’, voluntary body which is compelled by Government to represent minority communities which encounter voice poverty (Pavarala, 2015). In the thesis I explore the meaning and potential of feminist pedagogy in radio as a method of engaging women in the technoscientific world (Haraway, 1997), sharing and amplifying their epistemologies and moving towards solidarity and collective empowerment. At the end of this research journey I aim to use the material generated, to make modest contributions to academic and professional fields in education, media, mental health, social work, community development and feminist research, all in which I have been passionately involved over the last thirty years. The thesis will raise more questions and the need for more research, but it initiates a dialogue in which a critical feminist pedagogy becomes relevant and effective in the pursuit of empowerment in a variety of fields.

The reviews of literature which follow this introduction in chapters two and three, situate the thesis in a gendered and socio-economic context and advance a necessary conceptual discussion with regard to the meaning of terms used in the title and throughout the thesis. The study asks about some ‘emancipatory possibilities that may have benefit in a hyperglobalised capitalist world where 99% of people are said to be marginalised’. (Westoby, 2017:19). It is set against a backdrop of diverse literatures which are used in chapters 2 & 3 to explore concepts of silence, voice and empowerment expounded by critical educators (hooks, 1994; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2010; Apple, 2009) who perceive dominant social relations as creating a ‘culture of silence’ where oppressed people are silenced, alienated and ‘a mere object of the director society’ (Freire,
1977:16). Chapters four and five move onto the justification and explanation of the feminist ethnographic methodology used here, followed by the mechanics of the primary study designed to collect twelve narratives. The ‘River of Life’ (Thompson, 2008) and World Café (Steier et al, 2015) data collection techniques, used commonly in Community Development, assist the data collection and participatory analysis. The four analysis chapters (six to nine) contain substantive material generated in the primary study combined with literature within a framework of headings designed to appraise the potential of community radio as a feminist, liberational pedagogy by considering:

- the reasons women get involved in a radio project
- how they become engaged in the training
- how they articulate their experience in terms of learning together, empowerment, silence and voice
- what this means in terms of research and practice

Chapter 10 reflects upon the project, together with the respondents and considers my learning, specifically about education and feminist research, but also about my mistaken assumptions. The thesis concludes in Chapter 11 with an emphasis on main messages with regard to engaging and retaining women in radio learning for empowerment and an indication of how this thesis might contribute to a variety of academic and professional disciplines.

b) **Meet the women – respondents and researcher**

In **appendix 9** there is a more detailed profile of each woman who volunteered to participate but here are brief profiles using their chosen pseudonyms and self-definitions:

**Ayisha:** Poet, writer and community activist, lone parent. I’m a British Asian.

**Jessica:** Welsh background, from the LGBTQ community and have Asperger’s.

**Liz:** Carer with 3 children and 9 grandchildren.
Lorraine: Retired, happily married LGBTQ activist and Grandma in my 70s.
Sasha: Young adult from a West African background.
Vee: Musician and collector of music, ‘Phenobarbital baby.’
Collette: Radio presenter into doing serious and not so serious shows. Mixed race -Black African white English. ‘I sometimes say Black English.’
Kimi: I love music. Carer and mother. ‘I’m brown and hate being stereotyped’.
Marie: Blogger and carer to my Irish Mum until she died. ‘I’m mixed race – interested in all cultures’.
Madonna: ‘Football fan’. Grandfather from Sierra Leone.
Kate: ‘I came out in my 20’s, I’m a trade unionist, activist and a singer songwriter’.
Priceless: ‘I’m a Jamaican woman with daughters and an interest in aircraft’.

My profile: Just as it is important in professional practice to situate self (Popple, 2015), it is also vital in order to build trust in the research process: ‘to have a clear appreciation of one’s own values and an understanding of how we behave and appear to others’. (p.119). In the book Methodological Reflections on Practice Oriented Theories (2017), Sedlačko points out that in Ethnographic research the focus should be on immersion (inside the research group) and also on openness (about ourselves). These concepts are explored more fully in Chapter Four. My own profile appears in detail in Appendix 10. In 2009, whilst lecturing and volunteering with grass-roots projects, I became redundant, depressed and placed myself on a community radio training course, which uplifted and inspired me to change careers. This constitutes a very personal motivation for the project.

c) Rationale

My personal experience of radio enthused me to find out if other women could benefit similarly. After all, women represent the ‘key constituency for community work and community action…against gendered violence, trafficking,
body surgery, self-mutilation and the overall “pornification of the media”.’ (Popple, 2015:65). Yet despite this, there is sparse evidence that U.K. community radio is being perceived as community work; least of all utilised as a pedagogy for empowerment, particularly in support of women. Since women (including all intersections of womanhood) are still dramatically underrepresented in UK radio (Ofcom, 2018); the need for new engagement methods is compelling. Furthermore, women’s radio silence seems a fitting metaphor for their muted presence in community and society. Radio is analysed as a ‘powerful media and cultural space’ where, according to cultural theorist Stuart Hall, dialogue, problematising and social action takes place and: ‘...what we are really looking at is the active destruction of particular ways of life, and their transformation into something new’. (1981:72) Media literature in the global south refers to women’s silence as ‘voice poverty’ (Pavarala, 2015:14). Whilst the literature, conceptual understandings and theories underpinning critical education and media are paramount in this study, and are considered in detail, my focus is on the activism of theories; on whether they work in practice to appreciate intersectionality, women’s ways of knowing; feminist epistemologies and ‘feminist pedagogy’ (hooks, 2003:129); whether, in the perception of respondents, they actually raise consciousness, confidence and improve solidarity and participation.

Popple (2015:122) highlights the importance of research as it: ‘strengthens Community Development work’ and my observation as a community development worker and radio trainer, is that participation in radio may have the potential to improve individual mental health, facilitate collective empowerment and enhance women’s solidarity. In-keeping with the theoretical impetus of
hooks (1994) and Freire (1972), for these women to have their voices broadcast on radio potentially breaks actual and metaphorical silences, offering them agency and choice to participate more actively in individual and community destinies. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) Freire argues that education for liberation must be situated in the lived experience of the participants and that learning is a mutual activity; learners are not empty vessels. hooks (1994) extends and deepens this approach arguing that people of colour, especially women, are viewed through a deficit lens; their histories, culture and knowledge base being devalued, silenced or made invisible. My aim is to demonstrate radio as a respecter of women, amplifying their voices and championing their narratives.

**d) Proceeding with caution**

The thesis acknowledges that the shoulders on which it stands, were not infallible in their analysis of oppression. Freire, born in a multiracial, post colonial Brazil, focused only on class oppression in his pivotal work (1970); Fanon (1965 and 1969) on colonisation and racism (though he does make some important, if contentious, observations of women’s role in resistance). Gramsci (1988), a disabled man, makes no mention of disability oppression. Their works mainly render women invisible or view them through a stereotyped lens. Later hooks (1994) and other feminist, critical educators (Luke & Gore, 1992; Webb, Allen & Barker, 2002) modernise the original theories, introducing womanhood and its intersectional complexities to the discourse. hooks (1994), Apple (1999) and his later work testify to the fact that gender, race and other struggles became central to Freire and to the task of:

collectively building an education that is both counter-hegemonic and is part of the larger terrain of struggle over what counts as literacy, who should control it, and how critical literacy (what he called
conscientisation) was connected to real struggles by real people in real relations in real communities. For him [Freire], an education that was not connected to the struggles for emancipation and against exploitation was not worthy of the label education. (Apple, 1999:5).

Criticisms of Freire and the contentious concepts of education for empowerment, silence and voice are grappled with throughout the thesis, which amplifies and explores the voices of women – their experiences of community radio. Freire (1985) acknowledged the pitfalls of an idealised vision of conscientisation and empowerment, which appeared to some as: ‘a sort of third way that would allow people to escape miraculously from the problems of class conflict, creating through mutual understanding a world of peace and harmony between oppressor and oppressed’ (p.124). While the women in this study confront orthodoxies of education policy, of young white, male dominated media; they also confront romantic notions of empowerment, harmony and happiness by recognising inherent tensions involved in community, and internal conflicts with regard to breaking out of ascribed gender roles. Furthermore, their experiences emphasise the importance of intersectionality, a term which dispels the notion of women as an homogenous group by exemplifying varying configurations of their oppressive experiences. (Crenshaw, 1989).

In addition to these cautions, at time of writing, the contemporary state appears to be in a condition of legitimation crisis (Habermas, 1976) ‘lurching from problem to problem’ (Westoby & Dowling, 2010:7) and this offering of a Community Development method, may seem flippant. However, the aim is to resist the shallowing temptations (ibid) of superficial community techniques by presenting evidence that a deeper, more dialogic, consciousness-raising approach can produce the transformation heralded by Freire (1972) and hooks
(1994). As Westoby & Dowling (2010) state, the work of Freire, Buber and others: ‘has seeped deep into our bones’ (p.10) and this thesis is the result of that seeping.

Having justified and positioned the research project and taking a cautionary approach, the following two chapters harness literature and policy to shape the context and concepts used throughout.
Chapter 2 Literature Review (Contexts)

Development can only be achieved when people have real freedoms in their social contexts. (Patel et al, 2018:62)

Introduction

The two literature review chapters consider literature depicting the context and concepts of the project. They establish the background, contexts and conceptual basis of the thesis. The purpose of this chapter is to set the research in a socio-economic, mental health and gendered landscape. The relevance of this background is primarily to draw attention to the poverty and low self-esteem against which most respondents struggled, in order to take part in radio training. Secondly, this chapter will define community radio, demonstrating its use in the Majority World and its history in the U.K. providing a backdrop to the study.

Set in the context of global, national and local poverty; the ongoing oppression of women and the individualistic, competitive context of corporately owned media; the chapter argues that community radio represents a beacon of hope. It foregrounds evidence from the global south of its potential as a site of critical, feminist pedagogy and collective empowerment. In broader terms, the Freire Institute argue that such sites, of reflection, consciousness-raising and challenge are an important part of the growing social economy which challenges individualist culture:

the answer to some of the problems of economic globalisation – notably the global financial crisis, high unemployment and sovereign debt crises – is not national retrenchment, but enhancing the role of the social and solidarity economy (2013).
The idea of a social and solidarity economy; communities where relationships, support and co-operation triumph over competition and capitalism – is appealing, despite appearing naïve, but as hooks (2008b) notes, until we are all able to understand and challenge the ‘interlocking, interdependent nature of systems of domination…we will continue to undermine our quest for freedom and collective liberation struggle’. (p.290).

\[a\] Setting the scene: the socio-political context of the study

For some of the respondents, the context of this project is one of poverty. At time of writing there is evidence of increasing global, national and local poverty, particularly impacting upon women. In February, 2018, on the anniversary of women’s suffrage in the U.K., the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Institute of Fiscal Studies lament increased women’s poverty in the U.K: ‘As we approach the 100 year anniversary of the Representation of the People Act (and women’s suffrage)…the penalty for working part time is locking mothers and their families in poverty’. (Barnard, 2018). Whilst sociological literature remains crucial to contextualise this Northern U.K. study (Alcock, 2006; Lansley & Mack, 2015), data on poverty is constantly shifting, often rendering reputable national and local campaign groups more meaningful and current. Emergent from Research Papers one and two, which were required earlier in this Doctorate programme, (Rimmer, 2013 and 2014) are themes of increased U.K. poverty levels (JRF, 2014; Oxfam 2017), escalation of poor mental health (McManus, Bebbington, Jenkins, Brugha, 2016) and the contested assertion of diminished participation in community and society (Skidmore, Bound, & Lownsbrough, 2006).
Alston’s report for the United Nations (2018), challenges and complexifies the idea that employment is the singular solution for poverty as proffered by U.K. Government (May, 2017). He argues that many women in the U.K. are working four or five jobs and still struggling with dire poverty. And also that women are more likely to be living in poverty:

Women are particularly affected by poverty. Reductions in social care services translate to an increased burden on primary caregivers who are disproportionately women. Under Universal Credit [U.K. Welfare payments], single payments to an entire household may entrench problematic and often gendered dynamics within a couple, including by giving control of the payments to a financially or physically abusive partner (Alston, 2018:18).

My research diary (2013-2018) records the desperation of some community radio volunteers, one of whom collapsed whilst walking to the radio station because they had not eaten for five days. Others have come to depend on the tea and toast and the installation of a food ‘bank’ at the station. This locates the small study in the context of national statistics which demonstrate that: ‘there are now more people in poverty in the UK than there have been for almost 20 years and a million more than at the beginning of the decade’, (Watson, Oxfam, 2017). Whilst most research bodies draw Governmental attention to women as a group particularly affected by poverty, more are now focussing on intersectionality (Oxfam, 2015; Fawcett Society, 2018) as ‘too often, women remain treated as an homogenous group by researchers and policymakers with the assumption of a single female experience… this one size fits all approach means there are, in effect, millions of invisible women, who are not being seen or heard by policymakers’ (Fawcett Society and young Women’s Trust, 2018:3). In terms of other intersections of oppression, Disabled respondents are, at time of researching, having their welfare income reassessed after a directive by the
U.K.’s Conservative government. The climate of mistrust surrounding these assessments appears regularly in the press with 47% of claimants having their income reduced or ceased after assessment by a private company appointed by Government (Bulman, 2017).

The purpose of describing this socio-economic context is not to claim radio as the panacea for such deeply complex societal problems, but to explore its potential as a site of mental health support, creative learning and resistance. Against a backdrop of ‘monumental suffering’ in a national and global mental health crisis (Patel et al, 2018), came the U.K. Government’s Inquiry report ‘Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing’ (July, 2017). It reviews evidence that creative activities demonstrably improve mental and physical health bringing into sharp focus the positive impact of collective creativity. In the report, Lord Howarth states:

> The evidence we present shows how arts-based approaches can help people to stay well, recover faster, manage long-term conditions and experience a better quality of life (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, health and Wellbeing, 2017).

The report, in its polite impartiality, refrains from mentioning poverty, consciousness-raising or social action, and no funding stream accompanies it. Nevertheless, it contains practical examples of how creative projects can facilitate individual welfare and engage disempowered communities to use existing, and initiate new collective channels of participation. In *Social pedagogy in the U.K.* (2013) Hatton foregrounds creativity is part of the essence of empowering work, along with pedagogy and inclusion. In his terms, such factors are key to building strong relationships and working towards a common goal. He dismisses any notion that a learner or service user should be
pathologised and *changed to fit* into the orthodoxy. Social pedagogy finds a space of equality and creativity for worker and learner. Similar claims are made about other creative activities. Fiore (2013) refers to spoken word poetry in urban schools as a ‘pedagogy for liberation’. (p.813). Fiore presents evidence of increased confidence and self-esteem in her group, but whether this (unmeasurable) success can be described as *liberation* is moot and is part of the ongoing discussion in this thesis.

The context of mental distress is depicted in more detail in *The Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development* (October, 2018). Patel et al argue for major improvements in income and gender equality and ‘intensive opportunities’ for education in community settings as well as for ‘occupation, employment and social inclusion’ across the life course. (p.24). The paper strongly contends that the bio-medical model of mental health is too narrow a determinant of mental distress and that more emphasis on social determinants and particularly upon discrimination and abuse - is crucial to addressing what he calls such ‘monstrous suffering’. His statement is relevant to the radio project, situated in a context of poverty, oppression and depression – it offers a collective learning experience as an alternative to the bio-medical method of alleviating mental distress.

**b) Women in Society and media. #metoo**

An illustration of the gendered tensions which arose during the research, is captured in Time Magazine’s front page entitled: *The Silence Breakers* featuring ‘the women and men who have come forward to shed light on sexual harassment and abuse in America’ (6.12.17). The revelations that Hollywood
director, Weinstein had abused women for decades, turned into a global ‘outpouring of pain’ (Brockes, 2017:4); a twitter protest, with the hashtag #MeToo used by more than 4.7 million people in 12 million posts during the first 24 hours of its initiation (Santiago & Criss, 2017). Critics immediately warned that women might lie about abuse or might wish to internalise victim status in order to attract attention (Brockes, 2017:5), but Tarana Burke, the movement’s founder, insists that a change in the culture of silencing and disbelieving women is essential:

When I first started #Me too, young people had no language to talk about this. That’s something I’ve seen change. Hearing the words rape culture doesn’t sound foreign to them…there is no doubt that to the person drenched in shame, hearing the words rape culture communicates at the most basic level: it isn’t your fault (Burke, 2017:5).

Hamelink adds an analysis of the dominant culture and media environment of the study, which, he asserts, ironically fails to inform and educate, but rather acts to proliferate a worldwide individualist consumer culture:

…people are facing governmental and commercial censorship; distorted and misleading information; stereotyped and damaging images of the human condition, including gender, age, race…a disempowerment that violates the human entitlement to dignity, equality and liberty. Media moguls and their political friends will not voluntarily put their stakes at risk…are not likely to act against the disempowering impact of current forms of information provision (Hamelink, 2007:209).

This view of media and its corporate owners mirrors Usher’s (1997) work:

*Fantasies of Femininity, reframing the boundaries of sex*, and Foucault's (1984) perspective of media culture which is ‘intimately bound up with power. Power is an effect of discourse rather than a possession. To define the world or a person in a way that allows you to do the things you want is to exercise power. Once a discourse becomes available it is then possible for it to be appropriated in the interests of the relatively powerful’. (in Edwards, 1997: 69).
It is argued that owners of global media corporations control Governments (Mayer, 2016) as well as women’s role and visibility and that they censor or exclude the views of marginalised communities: ‘Global media sees itself as expert opinion formers and ordinary citizens as ‘ignorant meddlesome outsiders’. (Chomsky, 1991:9). In Foucault’s view, for them to give up their power, is unthinkable and it is for this reason that critical education, or ‘problem posing’ education (Freire, 1970:64) as used in Development, is arguably, a prerequisite to taking control of discourse.

The #metoo (2017-2018) outrage of women in the U.K. and U.S. media industries against abuse and low pay is symbolically impactful upon this study and it is important to take account of its breaking of an historic silence. Media has traditionally been a place where women have done white men’s bidding: ‘For too long, women have not been heard or believed if they dare speak the truth to the power of those men. But their time is up. Their time is up’. (Winfrey, Golden Globe Awards speech, 2018). Academic commentators and grass-roots activists may endorse the spirit of #metoo whilst arguing that the reality of women’s empowerment is complex and long term. (Bhopal, 2010; Cornwall & Edwards, 2007; Dominelli, 2002; East & Roll, 2015).

c) Community Radio, its history and potential

Thinking about issues of democracy and the media, there came up the example of trade union radio stations in Bolivia that had an absolutely heroic record in refusing to be silenced by even the most right-wing and ruthless military coups (O’Connor, 2001:1).

Bush Radio was the first time in the history of South Africa that black people could be formally trained as broadcasters. Broadcasting commenced on National Women’s Day as a symbol of appreciation for the role women played during the struggle for liberation. Our mission...
ensure that communities take part in producing ethical, creative and responsible radio…reaffirm their dignity and identity and promote social responsibility and critical thinking. (Ibrahim, 2000:200).

When I refer to ‘radio’, it means a number of things: it is about the pedagogical power of radio, including the act of learning by *listening* to radio; but importantly for this study, it also refers to the collective process of women learning creative production skills and *producing* radio, broadcasting their perspectives, identities and cultures to the wider community and gaining from this process, skills, knowledge, confidence, creative satisfaction, friendship, dignity, identity and pride. For some, media activism may be regarded as an end in itself, with social justice activists using media to purvey their activism, as one U.S. radio volunteer states:

> We’re looking forward to unbuckling these Bible-Belt airwaves with our new station by giving real people the tools to find their voice and use it in our democracy. Plus it will be a hell of a lot of fun! (respondent cited in Dunbar-Hester, 2014:49)

For others, the politics of community radio may be a (no less important) spin off. Jayaprakash and Shoesmith (2007) explored the importance of Ooty Radio Station in the Nigiri hills of South India where despite the introduction of cable TV in some areas, radio is still a crucial source of news, education and entertainment: ‘they consider the radio a more credible medium of information because they are suspicious of news telecast by satellite channels associated with the local political parties’. (p.51). Furthermore, for many rural and hill communities, Ooty radio is the only place they can hear their own traditional (Kota) songs. ‘Tribal women are fond of listening to (Tamil) film songs whilst they cook…however most Toda women who choose to follow Christianity, ignore film songs and listen to…public service programmes affirming their affinity with Christianity. Many Christian missionaries preach that true followers
should not listen to film songs on radio.' (ibid:52). In the U.K. my exploration of community radio demonstrates it (though anecdotally) as the only outlet where minority communities can (regularly and cheaply) hear their language and music.

Whilst *listening* to radio is important, this study focuses on the *process* of learning together, working together; finding a voice to *produce* radio. This process is a central tenet of community development work (Ledwith, 2011) and media literature suggests that activists see radio as a direct application of critical agency. Their ambitious goal is that: ‘the propagation of radio will enable community members to create their own media and effect personal, local and global change’. (Dunbar-Hester, 2014:49). Whether this process characterises ‘empowerment’ is debated throughout, nonetheless, it is undeniable and lamentable that, in 2017, women’s diverse voices are still missing from mainstream radio in U.K. and globally (Laverne, 2007; Elba, 2016; Ruddick, 2017:7). Whilst community radio is not immune from social divisions in society, it is:

> driven by social objectives rather than the private profit motive. It empowers people rather than treating them as passive consumers… it is committed to human rights, social justice, the environment and sustainable approaches to development.’ (Fuller, 2007:1).

Its mission is to expose hidden communities: ‘It mirrors the political, economic, social and cultural diversity of the region’, (Pavara, 2015:14).

Although there is a growing interest in alternative and community media in the U.K., the most extensive data is found in the Majority World or Global South (Pavarala, 2015; Paranjape, 2007; Gatua et al, 2010; Carroll and Hacket, 2006; Fuller, 2007; Curry et al, 2013), where the history of Community Radio goes

He draws particular attention to the contribution of women radio volunteers, who:

…started a hunger strike in 1978 to protest against the closure of the radio stations and demand unrestricted amnesty for all political exiles. In 2 weeks there were already two thousand hunger strikers in all of the country and the dictatorship gave in. (O’Connor, 2004:30).

In U.K. in 2014, I attended a conference hosted by ‘RadioActive Europe’, its remit being to promote: ‘engagement, informal learning and employability of “at risk and excluded people” across Europe through internet radio and social media’. Combining the disciplines of psychology, education, social work, drama and media, the group presented a paper at the British Educational Research Association Conference (RadioActive, 2015).

Participation in U.K. community radio generally begins with funding (most often) directed at ‘vulnerable’ or ‘excluded’ groups. This is followed by engagement and a 10-12 week radio skills training course at a local radio station, after which – learners become radio volunteers and submit a pitch for their own show. Helen Manchester’s study of community radio learning (2011 and 2013) and Fogg et al’s *Community Radio Toolkit* (2005), are two (of few) U.K. based pedagogical texts specifically relating to community radio learning. Both sources state that groupwork, collaboration and reflection are crucial to radio training. Stewart alludes to the community radio ‘movement’ (2010:5), which
began in UK in the 1980’s with voluntary, non-profit stations run by and for community members, not financial gain. ‘Community’ was (importantly) defined as ‘of geography, of identity or of interest’ (F.C.D.L. 2009). This is pertinent to intersectional practice, though open to criticism of homogenisation; for example one of the first ‘identity’ stations to be created was ‘Gaydio’ for the gay community in Manchester, U.K. In the same city, ‘Legacy’ and ‘Unity’ serve older and younger Caribbean people (respectively). With regard to geographic community stations, ‘Sunny Govan’ radio serves part of Glasgow. OFCOM, (Office of Communication), the U.K. state regulating body, mandates that within each community station there is a representation of diverse voices within its area, so many stations broadcast in a variety of languages and reflect diverse cultures; a show in Polish, may be followed by a show in Urdu or a Disability Rights or LGBTQIA show. Whilst no one show will attend to all of the intersections in the identities of people and communities, community radio is compelled (by the regulator) to celebrate diversity:

Community radio stations provide a new voice for hundreds of local communities across the UK. Fueled by the hard work and enthusiasm of volunteers, they reflect a diverse mix of cultures and interests and provide a rich mix of mostly locally-produced content (Ofcom, 2015).

In criticism of U.K. community radio, aside from under (and mis)representation of women, some Black commentators protest that Government regulated radio aims to, replace unregulated pirate stations. Kenlock laments the loss of radio controlled by and for the Black community, arguing that the removal of pirate stations created a cultural void for Black Britons:

If you walked down any south London street in the early 1990’s “London’s soul power” could be heard booming with pride from passing car stereos, at local youth centres and in businesses. This sense of community empowerment and embracing our Black British identity (Kenlock, 2013, Guardian online).
The notion of Government (and market) colonisation of community radio is reflected by Gaynor and Obrien (2017) in their discussion about Habermas’s 1987 work, *Theory of Communicative Action*:

…the colonisation of the life-world by the system, most notably the colonisation of the media as a key institution within the life-world by the state and market, resulted in a crisis of modernity, of which the erosion or refeudalisation of the public sphere was a significant part. (p.32).

However, Habermas later proposed that community and cultural spaces could become sites: ‘of rational critical deliberation, open and accessible to all citizens employing deliberative norms that are inclusive, reasoned and reflective, and aimed at reaching common understanding and consensus’ (ibid).

That community radio was regulated in order to crush the power of oppressed voices is a moot point, but is certainly the case that the U.K. Government, through OFCOM (Office of Communication, U.K.), compels ‘community radio to demonstrate measurable social gain and be accountable to the target community’ (OFCOM, 2011). Relevant to this thesis is the notion that the community radio movement comprehends and addresses intersectionality by providing sites of daily dialogue which acknowledge the intertwined and co-constitutive facets of women’s identity, enabling them to problematise; thus combatting Freire’s ‘culture of silence’ (1972) and hooks’ ‘historical amnesia’ (2003).

Global examples of Community Radio as a political mouthpiece for oppressed groups are numerous. During the (1992) anti-racist uprising in Los Angeles, Stevie Wonder’s KJLHFM, Black radio became an important alternative political
voice. Johnson describes its role as 'activist, mediator and change agent.'

Our community was burning...and our community wanted something; they wanted a forum where they could express their rage, their anger, and obviously, we had a voice that wasn’t getting the kind of airplay or getting the forum that they needed—and so KJLH FM began to become that forum... (p.263)

Black radio’s power to inform and unify the community, especially during times of crisis is well documented... Black radio, serving as the voice of African Americans nationwide, became a unifying force immediately after Dr King was assassinated. It “came of age” the night King died (p.355)

Arguably, the most recognised proponent of radio as an educational and liberational device, is Frantz Fanon, who at first noted the resistance to state controlled radio, as broadcast by the colonial power of France: ‘The radio in occupied Algeria is a technique in the hands of the of the occupier...within the framework of colonial domination’. Fanon perceived French ‘Radio Alger’ as a symbol of French presence ‘only listened to by the representatives of power in Algeria, solely by the members of the dominant authority and seemingly magically to be avoided by the members of the “native” society, the dominated society...’. It was, he stated, the reason why many people refused to be seen as having a radio set. (1965:73). After the anti-colonialist mobilisation came the creation of Arabic radio ‘Voice of Fighting Algeria’ which challenged colonial propaganda with what Fanon described as ‘the first words of the nation.’ He endorsed radio as a ‘powerful pedagogical resource which opens up unlimited horizons’ (1965:94). Whilst newspapers had their place as tools of education and information, both Freire (1970) and Fanon (1965) question their effectiveness amongst an illiterate or oppressed population. Radio was and is cheap and accessible. Although he did not suggest that radio could create
revolution, Fanon indicated that radio could become a ‘powerful pedagogical resource in the construction of a new Algerian nation’ (ibid).

The Transistor-Radio Revolution sounds preposterous, yet the Arab Spring has become known as the Facebook Revolution (Netherly, 2011 online blog).

So, why not a women’s radio revolution? The absence of female voices on mainstream media remains under-researched, but Gill’s Justifying Injustice; broadcaster’s accounts of inequality in radio (1993), uses discourse analysis to attempt explanation of the absence of women’s voices. She concludes that the lack of female presenters looks:

less like the result of a lack of applications from women, and more like a deliberate policy not to employ women - because of audiences’ alleged preference for men rather than a woman’s voice (p.76).

There is concern in global media literature to uncover existing power relations throughout communication infrastructures ‘making the invisible visible’ (Stewart & Pileggi, 2007:242). This ‘uncovering’ and understanding information and communications policy means ‘going beyond the recognition of corporate or state dominance of technology and foregrounding existing power relations’ (ibid). This exposes the need to give attention to women’s ‘radio silence’ (Fuller, 2007; Curry et al, 2013; Mitchell, 2000), as it reflects a deeper malady of their inaudible presence in society.

Community radio, produced, controlled and owned by the people can empower the marginalised and address voice poverty, (Pavarala, 2015:14).

Prior research papers leading to this thesis (Rimmer, 2013;2014;2015) introduced me to the literatures of social justice media (Curry-Janson et al,
2013; NUESTROSMEDIOS, 2017), defined widely as alternative, participatory media including graffiti, dance, street theatre, murals, labour movement pamphlets, feminist media, ecological media – where unheard stories are told. However, Dagron (2007) cautions against romanticising community media:

The terms ‘participatory’, ‘alternative’ and ‘community’ are generously used to refer to a wide diversity of experiences that often are not very participatory, alternative and/or community-based and may create confusion, especially among those that have had little experience at the grassroots level (p.198).

He goes on to challenge the simplistic ‘shaky paradigms’ which may be eulogised by academics, but painstakingly (and painfully) worked through by those at the grassroots:

One thing is what has been written on alternative or participatory media, another how …experiences have evolved (2007:202).

As someone still involved at grassroots level, together with other colleagues, I lament the misappropriation of comforting terms such as ‘community’ and ‘participatory’ by academics, governments and corporations (Beresford & Croft, 1993). Literature by community practitioners, such as Ledwith & Springett (2010) and Beresford & Croft, hold that conflict has a vital role to play in social pedagogy, development and empowerment, the principles of which are built on bringing tensions out into the open and turning them into informed dialogue (Gilchrist, 2003:24).

**Conclusion**

The chapter sets the context of the project as one of mental health decline, increased poverty and gender inequality. However, it foregrounds an idea for action to combat this grim picture by exploring the global history, purpose and significance of community radio, fostering optimism with regard to its potential as site for pedagogy and social action. In this respect, the chapter defines
community radio in the U.K. as a neglected sector, especially in terms of its utilisation in engaging excluded groups in education, empowerment and solidarity. There is clearly much to learn from the majority world about radio as Stuart Hall’s: ‘critical site of social action and intervention, where power relations are both established and potentially unsettled’ (Proctor, 2004:2). Uncovering radio’s potential as a method of women finding and amplifying their voices is central to the project:

This process closely parallels the group-centred approach to social change developed by Freire (1972), which sets out three key elements: dialogue, problematisation and conscientisation...It enables people to break out of what can be a demoralising and self-perpetuating narrowness of vision, introspection and self-blame created by poverty, lack of opportunity and exclusion, as well as the postmodern emphasis on the self. (Fleming & Ward, 2017:79).

Community media, through its diverse forms and processes, have the power to move community members from being dependent and passive to becoming actively involved in the creation of a more meaningful society, (Paranjape, 2007:468).

The project is situated in Northern U.K. termed by Government as ‘The Northern Powerhouse’ (HM Government, 2015), and by opponents as ‘Northern Poorhouse’ (Guardian Editorial, 26.11.15). Alston’s United Nations report (2018) highlights the devastating impact of U.K. austerity policies on women. The #metoo campaign (2017-18) highlights specific gendered issues for women in media. Whilst this chapter has portrayed a rather dispiriting backdrop, chapter three moves to consider a framework for the activation of concepts and theories in order to combat disempowerment.
Chapter 3 Literature Review (Concepts)

We have to constantly critique imperialist white supremacist patriarchal culture because it is so normalised by mass media and rendered unproblematic (hooks & Mesa-Bains, 2006:60).

Introduction, Underpinning theories and standpoint

hooks & Mesa-Bains spell out the enormity of the task of countering the cultural hegemony. Nevertheless, the ontological premise of the study is that education can be a vehicle for reflective consciousness and transformation as expressed in hooks’ Pedagogy of Hope (2003) and in Freire’s Politics of Education (1985) as ‘a liberating and humanistic task’ (p.114). This chapter establishes underpinning concepts and theories, preparing the reader for a coming together with the respondent’s voices in chapters six to nine. The concepts and models of action provide the theoretical base for professional youth, community, development and social work and will be used to consider: the reasons women get involved in a radio project; how they become engaged in the training; how they articulate their experience in terms of learning together empowerment, silence and voice and finally, what this means in terms of research and practice.

I began by reviewing the familiar literatures of my professions – critical pedagogy, development and social work, then moved into unknown territory: the literatures of culture and media. My aim was to find literatures which positioned themselves as theories for creative action towards social justice, what Freire (1970) describes as praxis, ‘reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it’. (p.33). Whilst abstract conceptualisation is essential (Sibeon, 1991), it is important to build a repository of evidence of its relevance to practice.
in real life. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall’s extensive lectures were mainly to be found on film (Media Education Foundation, 2018), rather than in academia, so in addition to hours exploring books and journals, some hours were spent reviewing Hall’s Open University lectures. Additionally, more hours were spent listening to community radio stations across the world.

The chapter constructs a critical lens through which the women’s narratives may later be analysed in relation to education, silence, voice and empowerment. It endeavours to pinpoint theoretical principles which are useful in making sense of the women’s voices. Whilst some of the disciplines and their supporting literatures are new to me, I have been astonished at the symmetry between them, specifically their commitment to the principles of decolonisation, social justice and empowerment through learning:

Today, in the interconnected era, radio remains the most transversal platform for accessing knowledge. Radio is a bridge for learning and that is the main rationale – Learning for radio, Learning for Life! (RadioActive 101, 2014:6)

**Underpinning theories and standpoint**

The approach to this conceptual review assumes women to be an oppressed group in society (Rowbotham, 1977; Steinham, 2017). Fundamental to the study is a feminist and intersectional predisposition which acknowledges womanhood as a diverse landscape as expressed by Crenshaw (1989 & 2017) and Solnit (2017). In the review and the subsequent analysis of narratives, the prevailing aim is to find ‘womanist ethical understandings…and strategies for liberation and justice’ (Martin, 1993:41). Whilst respecting and highlighting the implications of intersectionality, I aim to amplify the women’s voices and privilege their creativity, resilience and strengths whilst critiquing (together with
them) community radio as a vehicle of education for individual and community development, and empowerment.

With regard to the ideal of ‘decolonisation’, of methodology, education and community development; I acknowledge assertions that the term may trivialise actual colonial struggles characterised by violence and murder or be used as a ‘white settler harm reduction model’ (Tuck & Yang, 1993:14). Decolonisation is central to maintaining an acknowledgment of oppression, including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, xenophobia, and settler colonialism. As labelled by Tuck & Yang (1993:14) this project aims to be a ‘pedagogical project of critical consciousness’ pursuing what hooks calls a ‘feminist pedagogy’.

Freire (1970) perceives critical pedagogy as challenging the idea of education as a one-way process, where experts furnish empty vessels with knowledge and social conditioning to preserve the status quo. hooks (1994) augments this with her perception of feminist pedagogy as a commitment to challenging education systems which reproduce the capitalist patriarchy. Hatton (2015) cites Hamalainen, who sees social pedagogy as ‘a translation of thought and action in which social and pedagogical points of view are combined’. (p.133) Hatton specifically focuses on social pedagogy as centralising creativity in order to maximise potential and improve life chances. (2013:30). Acknowledging nuanced differences in these concepts, the approach in here is to embrace an anti-colonising, feminist approach to education. Florence (1998) merges the various conceptual approaches to critical pedagogy as:

Transforming education, education as the practice of freedom, critically based education, question-posing education, dialogic approach to
education...though posited by different critical theorists, the main intent of each...is to counteract the traditional transfer-of-knowledge pedagogy characterised by learner passivity rather than the development of critical consciousness. (p.79)

As a feminist educator, it is necessary to question what Luke and Gore (1992) call ‘the canonical knowledge of male authored critical pedagogy’ (p.143).

a) Decolonising education – towards an understanding of feminist pedagogy

Education, whether formal, informal or community-based is a potentially dangerous process. (Beck & Purcell, 2010:29).

Popular culture...is one of the places where socialism might be constituted. That is why popular culture matters. Otherwise, to tell you the truth, I don’t give a damn about it. (Hall, 1981:72)

This study is educational in its remit and tutors have cautioned me not to forget this, nor to jettison more mainstream educational literature. In unpublished research papers one to three for this Doctoral programme (Rimmer, 2013:2014:2015), I review and discuss literature on education augmenting my understanding of education as a highly political activity. Here I revisit the concept of ‘education’ and move the conversation towards understanding critical, feminist pedagogy in action as ‘a pedagogical and practical tool’ (Sallah, 2014:107) supporting women to learn radio skills. Media, Communication and Development scholars argue that community radio has the potential to foster development (Dagron, 2001; Mody, 1991), but Jayaprakash and Shoesmith (2007) conclude, in their Indian study, that success depends upon levels of genuine participation by excluded groups - as producers and listeners. Pavarala (2014) and Dunbar-Hester (2014) focus on the engagement of women in radio and the importance of establishing a feminist approach to radio learning, especially the technical aspects.
The notion of critical pedagogy underpins every job I have ever done over thirty years, so it is important to revisit and develop critical pedagogy as a means of decolonising and de-gendering learning. Critical pedagogues (Freire, 1985; hooks, 2003; Macedo, 1993) argue that the main purpose of formal educational institutions is to domesticate, rather than liberate; they have become:

vigorous mechanisms for the reproduction of dominant race, class, and gender relations and the imperial values of the dominant socio-political order (Mclaren, 1995:229),

and that modern capitalist economies, still define education as:

a banking system…where knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing, (Freire, 1970:53).

Such contentions are discussed in earlier research papers for this thesis (Rimmer, 2013; 2014; 2015) where I learn much about the politics of education and reflect that much of my career has been spent dealing with its casualties in units for excluded pupils and later in mental health and criminal justice. In this study, a disillusionment with school is manifest, especially amongst respondents of colour and there is much documentary evidence to support their discontent; the notion that formal education conspires to invisibilise and silence oppressed groups:

The individual consciousness of the overwhelming majority of children reflects social and cultural relations which are different from and antagonistic to those which are represented in the school curricula (Gramsci, 1971:35).

Mclaren goes further, referring to western educational culture as predatory:

rationalising the knowledge industry into class-divided tiers; reproducing inequality, racism and sexism; and fragmented democratic social
relations through an emphasis on competitiveness, androcentrism, logocentrism and cultural ethnocentrism (1995:30).

Macedo calls it ‘Literacy for Stupidification’ (1993:183). But Apple and Au (2015) note that formal education performs an essential role of teaching social and economic norms and also the critical task, fundamental in advanced industrial societies, of certifying competence. This pulls schools into the real economic world and ‘gives schools their meaning’ (p.277). However, hooks (1994) argues that the Marxist analysis of mainstream education, focusing only its economic function, is reductionist as it failed to take into account the importance of ‘ideological and cultural mediations in reproducing and securing relations of domination and subordination’. (Farahmandpur, 2004:4). Latterly, feminist and critical pedagogues have argued for a more participatory, engaged pedagogy (Florence,1998:97) where dialogic learning about each other’s diverse cultures and histories plays a pivotal role. In social pedagogy, dialogue is encouraged and this respects the knowledge and cultural histories of all group members, disrupting the ‘objectification that is so necessary in a culture of domination’, (hooks, 1994:139). In Teaching to Transgress, (1994), hooks describes the irony that her schooling became worse after segregation ended and she was taught by white teachers who avoided references to slavery, knew little about Black culture and:

were not interested in transforming the minds of their pupils, but simply transferring irrelevant bodies of knowledge…which bore no relation to how Black folk lived or behaved. Gone was the messianic zeal to transform our minds and beings that had characterized teachers and their pedagogical practices in our all-black schools. Knowledge was suddenly about information only (p.3).

As an antidote to silencing and invisibilising the histories, experiences and cultures of learners, social pedagogy considers it necessary and normal for all
(including the facilitator) to share, at least some personal information about themselves (Mullender & Ward, 1991; hooks 2013). This modelling of feminist perspectives and democratic relationships is a central tenet of feminist pedagogy. It is an active, collaborative space where risk-taking is encouraged: ‘where intellectual excitement abounds and where power is viewed as energy, capacity and potential, rather than domination’ (Webb et al, 2002:68). This sharing goes some way towards equalising power in liberatory or transformative education (Shor, 1992:1). Particularly in women’s groups, sharing acknowledges the humanity of the facilitator who may, in remaining silent, appear to have a perfect life. However, Freire (1970), initially rejected the ‘sharing facilitator’ role, demonstrating a variance between critical and feminist thought:

In their attempt to cut the chains of oppressive educational practices, many North American educators blindly advocate the dialogical model, creating, in turn a new form of methodological rigidity laced with benevolent oppression. ...As educators, many of us have witnessed pedagogical contexts in which we are implicitly or explicitly required to speak, to talk about our experiences, as an act of liberation…chastised for failing to locate ourselves in history…(Freire and Macedo, 1995:377).

Freire and Macedo debate the term ‘facilitator’, with Freire contending that the term is ‘dishonest and deceitful’ (ibid), as it fails to acknowledge explicitly, the power differences between the worker (teacher, youth worker, social worker) and the learner:

I have never pretended to be a facilitator. I always teach to facilitate. I cannot accept the notion of a facilitator who facilitates so as not to teach… this educator ends up helping the power structure. (in Leach & Moon, 2006:47).

Yet in later writings Freire (1985) says he was wrong to dismiss the idea that a ‘teacher’ could be humanised and equalised by sharing some of themselves. In
The Politics of Education (1985), he restates that education should ‘be rooted in the everyday experience of local people’ (Beck & Purcell, 2010:14). He reinforces Gramsci’s (1971) notion of the organic intellectual and mutual learning; that education must always be active and creative, just as the relation of the worker to his tools is active and creative (Burke, 1999). More recent publications position the worker as a facilitator: ‘involved in the rigorous process for enabling individuals to come together to reflect on themselves, their place in the world…and identify possibilities for change’ (Beck & Purcell, 2010:13).

Social pedagogy is defined as essentially holistic and concerned with education for well-being, growth; ‘exploring the overarching hegemonic process emanating from the state and powerful institutions’ (ibid) and together, finding ways to combat this.

It is underpinned by the idea that each person has inherent potential, is valuable, resourceful and can make a meaningful contribution to their wider community if we find ways of including them. Social pedagogy requires that we also tackle or prevent inequality (Griffiths, 1998:44)

Feminist pedagogy holds empowerment as its primary goal (Webb et al, 2002:68) and embraces the tenets of social or critical pedagogy. However, it also actively acknowledges the pervasive effect of the patriarchy, even on critical education. It strives to challenge all oppression, but it specifically aims to: ‘combat, overcome and replace traditional power relationships’. (ibid).

hooks specifically criticises mainstream education as ‘subscribing to a form of social amnesia’ which negates the histories and cultures of marginalised groups (1994:31). She goes on to lament the invisible histories of Black people: ‘we
forget that all knowledge is forged in histories that are placed out in the field of social antagonisms’ (ibid:43). McLaren (1997) views formal education as:

‘reduced to transmitting basic skills and information and sanctifying the canons of the dominant cultural tradition’ (p.35). Furthermore, in the tradition of Gramsci (1971) and Fanon (1965) it is argued that western governments fear social pedagogy as a revolutionary force:

Critical pedagogy is a ‘search for spaces of strategic engagement for subversion’ (Fanon in Sefa Dei & Simmons, 2010:2).

The inspiration for this thesis grew from my reading and practice as (what may be termed) a ‘social pedagogue’ in community, youth and social work practice and my more recent insight into the pedagogical and empowerment potential of Community Radio. Arguments for a more holistic, relevant and counter-hegemonic educational curricula are well rehearsed with educational thinkers challenging policy-makers and advocating for liberating formal education systems (Apple & Au, 2015). Fielding & Moss (2011) conclude that Education is currently: ‘rooted in outmoded understandings, that have failed to engage with the rich complexity and diversity of our world, and that is ill-equipped to strengthen the ability of society – local, national and global – to address the profound discontent and species-threatening dangers facing us’ (p.136). They lament the standardisation, reductionism and compartmentalisation of current educational systems, when they need to ‘grow solidarity and democracy’, rather than sow competition and individualism. (ibid). Arguably, the politics of ‘mainstream’ educationalists and social pedagogues are closely aligned, whereas the manipulation of education to fit government agendas is at issue. In their review of educational theory, policy and practice, Raffo et al (2007) highlight the need for ‘particular forms of courage’ required by policymakers if
they wish to stop reproducing inequalities via the education system, they need ‘to step outside the social arrangements which placed them in a privileged position in the first place.’ (p.xiii).

Walters and Manicom (1996) argue for a *feminist social pedagogy*, as a necessary critique of male-biased popular education dominant (globally) in social movements, from the 1980s. Their major concern is to highlight examples of educational practice which: ‘maximise participation in defining and carrying out action aimed at changing situations or relationships experienced as oppressive’ (1996:6). Their works reveal a social pedagogy embedded in its social context and distinctive gendered cultures and political and theoretical discourses (ibid).

Cornwall & Edwards (2014:22) support this ‘embeddedness’ in social, gendered and cultural contexts. They caution ‘against the appropriation and translation of models of popular education directly from one context to another’. If educational methodologies are to be effective, they must be critically reframed to suit their contexts ‘taking into account the broad range of factors that enable and constrain the empowerment of women’ (ibid). Nowhere is this more true than in the technological aspects of radio training, a learning arena from which women have long been excluded simply by the hegemonic notion of *technology as masculine*. (Dunbar-Hester, 2014):

> The education of girls and women has long been seen as an important means by which the lives of individuals and communities can be improved, yet traditional educational systems do not take account of their different lives (Darkwah, 2014:87).
Consequently, the concept of feminist education – whilst embracing the main tenets of critical education – questions the invisibility of lauded feminist educators and moves to record feminist pedagogical methods. As Luke and Gore (1992) attest:

We have all come up through the ranks of education as girls and women…learned well the lessons of dutiful daughters in reciting the founding fathers…we did Hegel, Marx, Dewey and Freire…we agonised over Piaget or Kohlberg, Foucault or Derrida…(p.174).

They question the absence of female theoretical giants whilst, globally, teaching and other pedagogical roles are often the domain of women. They claim that in academia, the construction of feminist pedagogy was limited to (or ghettoised in) Women’s Studies. They describe their political struggle to get women authors and feminist perspectives on reading lists in order to disrupt the hegemony of male domination in academia: ‘to perceive a feminist pedagogy in the making – a pedagogy defined by activist women teachers, forged out of their practice and the material of their own embedded lives’ (p.129). Theirs is a refreshing debate which enables me, for the first time to locate my own practice experience as distinct from the generalised critical pedagogy, as feminist pedagogy. Working with girl’s groups as a youth worker, whilst cooking, painting nails or playing pool, knowledge would be shared about sex, relationships, period pains, racism, sexism – most of which formed part of a youth work curriculum, but enriched with the worker’s personal and political experiences. Young women would more easily become engaged with personal and political learning related by a fallible other woman. Whilst youth, community and social work literature often alludes to such pedagogical techniques (Butler & Wintram, 1991; Singh & Hays, 2008), this is generally
referred to as feminist groupwork, rather than pedagogy. In Soweto, I visited a ‘Granny’s group’ which consisted of 12 or 13 Grandmothers sewing children’s clothing together; the pedagogical reason for the group was for them to exchange knowledge about HIV and Aids and strategies for raising their grandchildren who had lost their parents to the disease. Of course, these practices can be situated in critical pedagogy, but they also closely align with a feminist perspective on shared knowledge.

The thesis uses the varied language of pedagogies interchangeably as the labels applied to different theories of critical knowledge sharing – are not perceived as being in competition with each other. However, some effort is made here to elevate feminist pedagogues to a position of equality with their male counterparts. This mirrors the amplification of the voices of female participants in the analysis of the primary study. Seller (2003:26) refers to educational sites as space to dream; similarly cultural theorist Stuart Hall is cited by Szeman & Kaposy (2011):

These sites, long condemned by the Right are actually sites where there is struggle for and against a culture of the powerful; it is the arena of consent and resistance. It is one of the places where socialism might be constituted. (p.79).

In A Dying Colonialism (1965), Fanon portrays women as silent, invisible, home-based and seemingly passive under occupied rule: ‘The constant smile, the persistence of an apparently unfounded hope, the refusal to go down on her knees is likened to an inability to grasp reality’. (p.67). However, ‘this is not a flight from the world’, rather she is ‘deepening her consciousness of struggle and preparing for combat’. (p.66). He makes the point that under colonial rule, whilst women are arrested, raped, shot down and tortured, ‘they are at the heart
of the combat and …testify to the violence of the occupier and to his inhumanity’ (ibid). Fanon’s ideas about women resonate with critical and feminist pedagogy and fit neatly into the ontology of this thesis about silence, voice and empowerment; but his perception of womanhood appears rather romanticised and her role in struggle idealised. As Katrak (2006) argues, he fails to recognise that the colonised woman is: ‘doubly oppressed, racially and sexually’ (p.81). She accuses Fanon of a ‘refusal to acknowledge the power and authority of Islamic tradition and of religion generally…how religious principles shackle women’ (ibid). There is evidence that after the revolution, many women ‘disappeared into their ashes, donned their haiks and resumed their pre-war unreciprical relations with the external world (ibid).

b) The activism of critical feminist pedagogy

As evidenced, there is much strong rhetoric about critical pedagogy. Analogous to Communism, critical educational theories are charged with being pipe-dreams; never having been put into practice: ‘engaging in theoretical polemics that do little more than fuel a perpetual, self-sustaining, and too often vacuous metadiscourse around concepts treated as intellectual totems’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2007:161). The purpose of this project is to look beyond the rhetoric and find theories and models which acknowledge the reality of women’s oppressions and move to understand the ways they learn, the ways their knowledge can be valued and utilised to activate change and improvement in their own and other women’s lives. hooks (1994), Freire (1970), Gramsci, (1972), and others demonstrate how political pedagogies can be utilised in practice. Furthermore, their theories have been used by movements striving for social justice, what Bourdieu & Wacquant (2007) call the ‘modus operandi
which practically guides and structures scientific practice’ (p.161). In chapter seven, examples of these theories in practice are demonstrated in more detail. Webb et al (2002) list the principles of feminist pedagogy, beginning with the reformation of the power-laden relationship between teacher and learner, including the recognition of feelings and women’s experiences as ways of knowing – a feminist epistemology; the building of a community of collaboration and trust and the challenging of traditional views. (p.68-69). In chapter seven, Luke & Gore (1992) apply feminist pedagogy and demonstrate the inherent problems of teaching against the grain. The idea that mainstream education reproduces and reinforces the social construction of gender is argued throughout this thesis and specifically with regard to the masculinist nature of technical learning in radio. Dunbar-Hester (2014), demonstrates in chapter seven, how a feminist pedagogy counters this orthodoxy by foregrounding the relationship between trainer and learner, instead of the work object.

In Reinventing Paulo Freire; a pedagogy of love, (2017) Darder revisits Freire’s enduring notion that educators should love their subject and their learners. This notion is a central foci for hooks (1994 & 2008b) in the concept of feminist pedagogy. This thesis maintains the importance of love and equality in understanding the activism of critical pedagogy. Nevertheless, it also recognises the cynicism with which such concepts are viewed in a culture ‘that negates human value and valorizes materialism' (hooks, 2008b:294). In Outlaw Culture (2008b) she states that a culture of domination is anti-love. It requires violence to sustain itself and to choose love is to go against the prevailing values of the culture’. (p.293). She comments upon the fact that Black people have unreconciled grief and develop ‘a masculinist focus on hardness and toughness …preventing acknowledgement of the enormous grief and pain in
black life,’ (ibid), this, she feels, augurs against a pedagogy of love. There is also a recognition in this thesis, that a love ethic in education, even in progressive circles may be viewed as naïve in a culture of competition and masculinity.

hooks (2008b), argues that the Black Power movement [in the U.S.] was a positive educational movement for revolution, not simply reform (p.291). Educational movements in pursuit of Black consciousness in South Africa and the U.S. are amongst the most informative historical examples of the activism of critical pedagogy. At time of writing, the U.K. University of Manchester’s student union building is named after South African educationalist and activist Steve Biko (1971) who’s statements about education echo those of Gramsci and Fanon. He understood that: ‘the most potent weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed’ (p.427). In I write what I like (1971), Biko condemns the ‘arrogant’ liberal approach to empowerment which extols ‘the myth’ of integration and assimilation arguing that oppressed groups require segregated, safe space in order to make up for lost time raising confidence and consciousness. A group must ‘be able to attain its style of existence without…being thwarted by another’ (p.21). In a similar vein to Apple (1999), who questions the arrogance of some educationalists, Biko questions the motives of white liberals who ‘waste lots of time in an internal sort of mudslinging designed to prove that A is more of a liberal than B’ (ibid). He questions whether any of them propose a concrete meaningful programme for change, concluding that their deliberations are designed to appeal to white conscience and offer vague ideas, setting the pace for change at some time in the future. Like Freire and hooks, he positions internalised feelings of inferiority as one of the biggest hurdles to empowerment: ‘All in all, the black man has
become a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity’ (1978:29). Biko’s tenets for action are not ‘sneering’ at white liberals, but making fundamental practical points for action: ‘the first step is to make the black man come to himself; to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity…this is the definition of Black consciousness’. (ibid).

Similarly, when applied to women, the literature arising from the works of Newton and the Black Panther Party (Hilliard, 2008) is most instructive. In *The Black Panther Party, service to the people programmes*, Hilliard recounts the educational, social and health services provided by the party as part of the struggle for civil rights in the U.S.A. These ‘survival programmes’ served as ‘a model for all oppressed people who wish to begin to take concrete actions to deal with their oppression’. (p.3). Such programmes operate alongside actions – and not in isolation. It is notable that raising consciousness without any corresponding action, can increase demoralisation. This is the subject of another thesis.

As Fiore (2015) reflects, empowerment, in Freirian terms, is a long term process and:

> it is the oppressed, not the oppressor, who must take the lead and become an agent of change. The oppressed must first recognize his oppression, then reflect critically upon the world, and finally, act upon the world to effect transformation contingent upon dialogical process between oppressed and oppressor, and thus on the ability of the oppressed to articulate his condition. (p.814).

Fiore’s project uses spoken word poetry in urban schools as a dialogic *pedagogy for liberation*: ‘When the beliefs and experiences of students are the
starting points from which their education is built, they’re more likely to be engaged, to ask questions, to read the world critically.’ (p.814)

The activism of critical pedagogy is paramount in my search for the definition of empowering education. Those who have applied the theories illustrate how community radio participation fits into the educational, media and development landscape. This understanding of pedagogy will be used throughout the thesis as it forefronts the importance of exposing and celebrating unseen and unheard cultures and the creative talents of marginalised women.

c) Silence, voice and the importance of participation

Silence is the ocean of the unsaid, the unspeakable, the repressed, the erased, the unheard (Solnit, 2017:17)

Such sentiments about silence led to my focus on Freire’s theory (1970) that empowerment is a process which may break ‘the culture of silence’. However, it is germane to first discuss some of the reasons why women need a voice in their families, communities and nations – the importance of participation. It is frequently lamented that there is a democratic deficit (Skidmore et al, 2006: Cornwall, 2008) i.e. that people in the U.K., particularly oppressed groups are apathetic about participating in community life, or are unable to participate as equal citizens in community and society decision making (Ledwith & Springett, 2010; Beresford & Croft, 1993; Lister 2003; Citizens as Trainers et al, 2004). And yet ‘democratic theorists and social psychologists show that when participation works, it is not only good for government, it can give people a sense of belonging, a sense of control over their lives and can even be a source of happiness’. (Cornwall, 2008:11). And the ‘range and size of social
movements…has never been so broad, and over half the population says it is interested in politics’. (ibid). ADT Fourth World, an international movement promoting participation highlights the importance of excluded people finding their voice, having this voice valued and participating on their own terms: ‘The fear of not understanding and not being understood forces marginalised people to try to avoid being noticed’ (ADT Fourth World, 2006:71). Their research contains strong personal testimony from excluded people, which is not often heard: ‘When you are poor and always living in fear of being poorly received and humiliated, you isolate yourself’ (ibid). Contrary to the idea of disinterest and apathy, marginalised people have a ‘deep longing’ for participation and actively seek out opportunities to become engaged. According to ADT Fourth (2006) organisations have much to learn from marginalised people about how to include them. In previous research, what emerged was a lack of respect, even in righteous community organisations, for the immense skills and untapped talent amongst excluded groups: ‘the biggest barrier to participation is social scepticism about ordinary people taking on powerful roles’ (Rimmer, 1997:33).

While this study seeks links with discourses ‘concerning ways in which people take part in activity they consider political’ (Postle and Beresford, 2007:144), it focuses on the pedagogy of participation; engagement, the building of confidence and consciousness and the simple importance of isolated women coming together to learn and work. It opens up the definition of ‘spaces for change’ (Cornwall, 2008:33) to include participation in community radio as a meaningful participation in community affairs, which may or may not be a precursor to grander things. A respondent in Research Paper two disputed any idea of politicisation yet her weekly radio show included information and
education with regard to Disability rights and campaigns. This type of participation is what many social commentators call a ‘new and radical form of participatory democracy and political participation’ (Postle and Beresford, 2007:144). It refers to non-political party groups who gather together for purposes of self-help and the common benefits of countering loneliness, mental health issues, discrimination and stigma. In their research for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2006), Skidmore et al discuss the importance of utilising the human potential or social capital captured in community projects in: ‘the places with which people are already familiar – the school gate, their place of worship, or their local newsagent or post office – (these sites) hold the key to engaging them in governance activity. These places and the organisations that occupy them act as the everyday bridge between ordinary people and more formal governance activities’. That community radio could represent a pedagogical bridge of transformation is the foremost submission here and the importance of genuine and equal participation, (ie not on the terms of the powerful, but those of the oppressed) cannot be understated.

In my experience of the activism of social pedagogy, what has most impelled me to engage marginalised people, is the thought of such dreadful wastage of human talent, creativity, knowledge and humour. This study considers whether community radio can provide the pedagogical ‘bridge’ of transformation.

Solnit (2017) unambiguously draws attention to women’s silence and the essential right to tell our story: ‘A husband hits his wife to silence her. The history of silence is central to women’s history…being unable to tell your story is
a living death and sometimes a literal one’. (p.19). De Botton, Puigvert and Sanchez-Aroca (2005) refer to emergence from silence as emerging from oppression. They discuss empowerment as ‘transformation through dialogic learning, which accepts their (oppressed women’s) contributions on terms of equality.’ (p.44). Stuart Hall (2011) also argues that ‘transformations are at the heart of the study of popular culture’ (p.78). Those who have advanced Freire’s educational theory posit the importance of ‘egalitarian dialogue’: ‘the contributions to the dialogue are valued according to the validity of the argument, rather than the position of power of the speaker’ (De Botton et al, 2005:89). The review will also note the limitations voice, both in research, (Jackson and Mazzei, 2009) and also in political transformation, (Freire, 1985). Various literatures explore the nature of ‘voice’, its relationship to empowerment and its critical importance in terms of Freire’s foregrounding of dialogue as a prerequisite to empowerment.

Conversely, silence can also be a savior, a tactic used to survive and resist:

Mes enfants, you mustn’t go at things head-on, you are too weak; take it from me and take it on an angle…play dead, play the sleeping dog (Balzac cited in Scott, 1990:136).

This contrasts sharply with the behavior of those described by Freire as the ‘director society’ for whom uninhibited violence is allowed. Scott goes on to discuss his notion of ‘voice under domination’ with the example of the verbal combat of black young men who participate in verbal scuffles where their women-folk are insulted:

and victory is achieved by never losing one’s temper and fighting, but rather in devising ever more clever insults to win the purely verbal duel… this serves as a mechanism for teaching the ability to control emotions and anger; an ability which was often necessary for survival (1990:137).
The notion of hidden transcripts, voices under domination and staying silent to survive, emerges strongly from the women in this primary study. They see the radio station as a safe, supportive space for dialogue, learning, laughter and resistance, but it may be viewed externally as:

A world of rumour, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures, anonymity. For good reason, there is nothing straightforward here... it is intended to be cryptic and opaque (Scott, 1990:137).

Scott argues that women’s voices, their meetings and transactions are often trivialised. But she perceives this triviality as a cloak, an intentional deception, hiding resistance. Parrott (2012) interrogates Hong Kingston’s suggestion that there are a variety of reasons for women’s silence, or as she says: ‘knowledge which exists in its own absence of expression’. Voices are suppressed by: ‘self-restraint, by force or suppressed in translation.’ She concludes that unspoken knowledge is still ‘meaning-making’ and that spoken/written knowledge should not assume such a privileged position. (p.376) In the context of learning and radio, such concepts of silence and voice challenge white supremacy by presenting: ‘multiple views of reality. The process deflects attention from voices of white, male and materially privileged learners’. (Florence, 1998:113)

These notions are crucial in the development of my research questions but also to my methodological approach which seeks to give voice to people ‘whose everyday histories...have been condemned to silence’ (McRobbie, 1982:46). As Chan (2006) states: the discourse of ‘voice’ is important in order to acknowledge ‘that some voices are ‘legitimised, promoted and canonised’ while others are ‘neglected and devalued’ (cited in Blum-Ross, 2016). But Spivak argues that ‘voice’ becomes a metaphor for power and it cannot be given, only

Examined through both the media and the community development lenses, ‘silence and voice' become powerful metaphors for oppression and empowerment. In the U.K., community radio has rarely been perceived as an empowerment vehicle. Nevertheless, there are many dilemmas in subscribing uncritically to the idea of ‘unsilencing’ as an expression of empowerment. Whilst Solnit (2017:17) views silence as wholly negative: ‘an ocean of the unsaid, the unspeakable, the repressed, the erased, the unheard…’ it can also be powerful (Scott, 1990; Parrott, 2012) both as a way of remaining hidden and safe, but also as a way of secreting knowledge and plans, until such a time as they are needed. Fanon (1965) discusses women’s home-based, veiled role in resistance as hidden: ‘the real values of the occupied quickly tend to acquire a clandestine form of existence… in imposing such a restriction on herself, in choosing a form of existence limited in scope, (she was) deepening her consciousness of struggle and preparing for combat.’ (p.66). Baucom (2001) describes Fanon’s works as ‘diverse acts of listening,’ *Black Skin, White Masks*, ‘is often less Fanon's text than a compilation of those voices to which he has inclined his ear and a record of his responses to what he has been hearing’. (p.15).

The conviction of this thesis is that women’s voices have been universally silenced and that ‘power and audibility go hand in hand’ (Solnit, 2017), making radio a significant metaphor for women’s empowerment and suggesting that community radio projects are potential sites of activism for change. In educational literature this activism is expressed as a *pedagogy of hope*, (Freire,
2014; hooks, 2003) whilst media literature frames it in terms of *media for social justice*, (Paranjee, 2007; Curry-Janson et al., 2011). An example of this is Radio Dabanga in Darfur, which reported the rape of over 200 women by Sudanese army personnel and enabled some of the women to broadcast their accounts. (Akasha, 2014). The importance of hearing unheard narratives is highlighted by Sigona (2014) particularly with reference to refugees: ‘Storytelling is part of people’s everyday life, a cultural and intersubjective experience to the core in which a person draws on the cultural repertoires at his/her disposal to make sense of, imagine, and negotiate with others in the world around them.’ (p.370).

From a societal learning perspective, silence leaves gaps in history. hooks (2003) focuses on the invisibility of Black people, Rowbotham (1977) on the deficit in women’s history, whilst Trouillot posits that silences enter history at four crucial stages:

- The moment of fact creation, (the making of sources);
- The moment of fact assembly, (the making of archives);
- The moment of fact retrieval, (the making of narratives);

**d) Empowerment**

The concept of empowerment was considered in research paper one (Rimmer, 2013). Freire’s hypotheses on oppression and empowerment are argued and modernised by various scholars (Mullender et al., 2013; Ledwith, 2016). Freire suggested that the existing system of dominant social relations ‘creates a culture of silence’ where oppressed people are silenced, alienated and ‘a mere object of the director society where the masses are subjected to the same kind of silence by the power elites’ (1977:16). Empowerment takes place through a
dialogic process of sharing stories, problematising issues and oppressed
groups become ‘conscientised’. He explains ‘conscientisation as: ‘men acting
upon the world effectively and transforming it by their work’ (1985:71). Freire
refers to the silent society variously as: oppressed, alienated, colonised and
dependent. Only when ‘the popular masses are able to break their submissive
silence’ will empowerment emerge’ (ibid).

The process of empowerment through ‘working, learning and talking together’ is
central to community development and its literatures (Federation for Community
Development Learning, 2014). However, the concept of empowerment, is often
over-used to induce warm feelings of liberation, equality and justice. Fielding’s
(1996) call for more complex, conceptual exploration of empowerment is
opportune: He claims that the term is: ‘simultaneously bedecked in the sequins
of market glitterspeak or the vibrant patchwork of postmodern socialisms’
(p.399). Similarly, Mullender, Ward and Fleming complain that: ‘the language of
empowerment trips too lightly off the tongue and is too easily used merely as a
synonym for “enabling” which tends to involve individual rather than collective
change’ (2013:24).

In using ‘empowerment’ to gauge responses to the community radio
experience, I stepped into an academic minefield. Fielding’s criticism is aimed
at the (often) unsubstantiated romanticism of a term that has become common
currency in marketing which: ‘subverts traditional marketing tactics by recasting
the consumer as the hero who has the power to effect change and use the
product or service being sold to achieve success’. (Bauhaus, 2017 online).
Significantly, Fielding and Mullender et al raise matters of socialism and collective agency which are central to the perspective of this study. For Freire (1972, 1985) and hooks (1992, 1994, 2003) the nature of oppression is rooted in social inequality, is internalised and expressed by individuals (eg: through low self-esteem or mental health problems) and can only be tackled by collective learning and raised consciousness. Similarly, Fanon posits:

When individuals who have been oppressed by colonialism over a sustained period of time feel solidarity with those in similar situations to themselves, they begin to find a common purpose linked to the personal feeling of catharsis that comes with reclaiming their state (1991: 145).

There are other tensions involved in aspirations of community and individual empowerment. One of those tensions is brought about by the romanticism attached to community as suggested by Gilchrist (2003):

Governmental notions of “community” are often abstract and romanticised as invoking a sense of belonging, of solidarity, of shared identity and interests, conveniently obscuring the many real and imagined tensions lurking beneath the lustrous surface. However, Community Development is built on the ideal of bringing those tensions out into the open and turning them into informed dialogue (p.24).

Furthermore, Burman draws out the risks of romanticising particular cultures or religions, reifying them and thereby possibly concealing other tensions, such as gendered abuse:

Included in this are the seemingly ‘positive’ ways of representing minority cultures – by romanticizing or exoticising them. Either way, culture is treated as static, is equated with religion and is treated as somehow a more primary axis of difference or identification than gender (2004:302).

In this study, gendered and intersectional tensions are highlighted but worked through with dialogue. Women’s experiences come to be problematised and de-individualised.
Hall (1981) and hooks (2003) remain unconvinced that marginalised people can be empowered unless issues of class, culture, oppression and specifically race are centralised. hooks maintains that in formal education, the cultural and racial histories of black children have been rendered invisible and that: ‘a mutual recognition of racism, its impact both on those who are dominated and those who dominate, is the only standpoint that makes possible an encounter between races that is not based on denial and fantasy’. (1992:28)

Hall observes empowerment as a transformation facilitated by collective involvement in ‘popular culture’ where there is: ‘struggle for and against a culture of the powerful; it is the arena of consent and resistance. It is one of the places where socialism might be constituted’. (Hall cited by Szeman & Kaposy, 2011:79).

Nevertheless, in this study, there remains a scepticism about over-simplifying the notion of empowerment or: ‘running too close to contemporary neo-liberal notions of self-help and self-responsibility and glossing over the structural inequalities that hamper personal and social development.’ (Mullender et al, 2013:69).

It is crucial from the outset to understand ‘empowerment’ as a process, rather than an end result. Just as intersectionality is characterised through the ‘dailyness’ of life, empowerment likewise, most often takes place during the process of working and learning together with others. Rather than a grandiose
trumpeted finalé, it is the every-day, nuanced and almost invisible process of change which may (or may not) ultimately, influence organisations or societies:

Empowerment is about opening spaces for meaning-making within communities, so that local voices and stories are heard amongst the maelstrom of global cultures…it is a dynamic and diverse concept. It refers both to processes and practices needed to ensure participatory development and to ensure that structures and institutions are enabling and supportive.’ (Burkett, 2013:3).

Chavez and Soep (2005) are skeptical with regard to the nature of media projects seeking empowerment when such projects are bound by the constraints of funding, broadcasting rules, participant’s personal and economic situations. They identify: ‘a clash between empowerment as an abstract goal and the realities of the interpersonal, economic, political and mediated ecologies that bind…media (p.418). Whilst celebrating the benefits enjoyed through a ‘pedagogy of collegiality’ in youth radio, they lament that the youth voice, media literacy and empowerment aims of their project, were only partially realised due to restrictions:

Matching the ‘micro’ context of youth media production within the ‘meso’ level of the political economy of youth media funding and policy allows us to understand how a single initiative is embedded within its ‘social, relational, or political context (p.415).

Nevertheless, in a later publication, Drop That Knowledge: Youth Radio Stories, (2010), they herald the efficacy of critical education and community radio as tools of relationship building, dialogue and empowerment.

e) The importance of intersectionality

Elements, essence and conceptual framework of the term 'intersectionality' have evolved through, and are evident in Black feminist writing and testimony (Nayak, 2015:153).
An aim of this thesis is to understand women’s media silence and to explore reasons and resolutions. The exploration led to much learning about the nature and significance of intersectionality, a term rarely seen in UK Media literature; though there has long been outrage about the dismal statistics and the invisibility or reductive representation of Black, Asian, LGBTQ, Disabled, Working Class, Refugee people - and Women as homogenised, excluded groups (WFTV and BFI, 2016). Mediadiversified, a website conceived to draw attention to diversity issues in the media, cites Crenshaw’s original (1989) definition of intersectionality:

women experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class, disability, and ethnicity.

Mediadiversified explains: ‘In other words, certain groups of women have multi-layered facets in life that they have to deal with. There is no one-size-fits-all type of feminism’. (Mediadiversified, 2016). Their definition may itself be viewed as reductive, but it is designed to open debate to a broader range of people moving the theory of intersectionality from its domain as a primary analytic tool used by feminist and anti-racist scholars, (Nash, 2008) to its deployment as an active device for understanding and fortifying minority voices in media. It gives people better access to the complexities of the world and of themselves: ‘it’s what it does rather than what it is that lies at the heart of intersectionality’ (Hill, Collins & Bilge, 2016:5). Ledwith critiques the work of Freire, which initially concerned itself solely with class oppression:

Issues of race, gender, disability, sexuality and not just class oppression - must be brought to bear on identity, oppression and empowerment. This calls for a “Freirean-feminist pedagogy (1997:145).
Sweetman, (2015) explains intersectionality as moving beyond simple tolerance to understanding the ‘rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual’. She uses the example of abortion, a gender issue – but immensely complicated by faith and poverty. Actor Elba (2016), implies that the issue of race should not downgrade other oppressions. He relates that his parents’ priority issue was not race - but poverty. The Ford Dagenham factory where his Father worked ‘was more diverse than the media industry’:

I’m not here to talk about black people; I’m here to talk about diversity. Diversity in modern Britain is more than just skin colour – it’s gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, social background and as far as I’m concerned – diversity of thought...The media industry need to think outside the box. (Speech to UK parliament 18.1.16).

Whilst Community Radio is underpinned by OFCOM’s (2017) diversity policy, (all community radio stations are compelled to record diversity statistics), the nuances of intersectionality are less evidently researched, practiced or codified into policy. So there may now be proportionately more women, Black or disabled people (more than commercial or public radio), but evidence of intersectionality within those groups remains elusive. In the methodology and analysis chapters, the nuanced differences between the women in the study group are discussed as well as their commonalities. Fields (2013) describes this discussion as part and parcel of the discourse on what constitutes womanhood and feminism. It is a political struggle: ‘Feminist scholars have struggled with and against one another, debating the status of the category ‘woman’, the intersection of feminism and antiracism, critiques of normativity, queer analyses of sexuality and gender...’(p.495). If womanhood is to be better represented in media, an understanding of intersectionality is essential.
**Conclusion**

This conceptual discussion began by re-asserting the femininist perspective and the social justice aims of the project. Discussion regarding the decolonisation of education led to a more precise definition of feminist pedagogy, its valorisation of feminist educationalists and its importance in imparting women’s epistemologies. My learning here is that my own critical practice can be framed as feminist pedagogy. The chapter then examined the discourse surrounding silence, voice and the contested nature of participation. Reflecting on this literature review, the seemingly 'worlds apart', distinct schools of thought on community development, empowerment, intersectionality, education, and media & culture; collided, stepped back to consider each other, and then embraced. I discovered a growing body of literature, particularly from the majority world, discussing 'media, culture and social justice' and using 'community media' as an active pedagogical tool of empowerment.

The research methodology and methods are constructed using this conceptual discussion as a framework for the engagement of participants and for understanding their narratives. This conceptual discussion underpins (what I hope is) an approach sensitive to the diverse, multifaceted, intricate lives of the respondents. The following two chapters outline critically, the feminist principles underpinning this research approach and the practical methods applied.
PART TWO - explains the methodological approach underpinning the study, the research design and the practical methods used to generate material
Chapter 4 Methodology

Another dimension of the mythologising of conscientisation – whether by the shrewd or the naïve – is their attempt to convert the well-known education for liberation into a purely methodological problem, considering methods as something purely neutral. This removes – or pretends to remove – all political content from education, so that the expression education for liberation no longer means anything (Freire, 1985:125).

Introduction

In The Politics of Education (1985), Freire crystalises the ontological position of educational research, policy and practice, restating that these activities are never politically neutral. Furthermore, he condemns a purely instructional approach to education as reductionist and oppressive; according to him, such an approach, is not neutral, but is adopting the stance of the powerful: ‘Washing one’s hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.’ (1985:122). Similarly Bourdieu & Wacquant (2007) point out the inextricable links between ontology and epistemology bringing into focus key questions about the politics of knowledge production and its classed, gendered and racialised privileges and exclusions:

theory is not a fetishistic thing but ‘a sort of prophetic or programmatic discourse which originates by dissection or by amalgamation of other theories…too often vacuous metadiscourse around concepts are treated as intellectual totems’ (p.161).

They describe theory as ‘a modus operandi which practically guides and structures scientific practice. This represents my ontological approach to the study. The methods used (women’s narratives, research diary, participatory analysis) are underpinned by what hooks calls a ‘feminist pedagogy’ and feminist ethnographic theory. Similar to Bourdieu when he paraphrases Kant’s observation that: ‘research without theory is blind and theory without research is
empty’, in feminist research the point is to learn and develop consciousnesses (of the researched and the researcher) and grow a theory of action which might attend to intersectionality and improve lives.

In chapter three my conceptual journey brought me to a feminist, critical approach to womanhood, radio, pedagogy and empowerment. Notions of women’s silence and voice were highlighted as metaphors for oppression and empowerment. These lessons and my experiences shaped the research. The community groups with which I have been involved have often been denied the opportunity of hearing the stories of their forebears and the opportunity to tell their own. hooks (2003) laments the invisible histories of these oppressed groups and advocates for new educational agendas which champion their histories and cultures. The ontology of injustice mirrors my previous work (Rimmer, 1997; 2004; 2007; 2018) in that it captures a critical view of educational and research realities riven by inequality manifested (and perpetuated) by the hushing or muzzling of oppressed groups (Okolosie, 2017). The duty of this research is to amplify unheard voices and embed them into both educational and media agendas ‘to reveal unspeakable, unspoken, silent experiences’ (Fields, 2013:496).

The epistemological perspective here is that of an activist, seeking positive change through a discursive, feminist approach to knowledge creation; through a ‘feminist pedagogy’ (hooks, 1989:49) where research, media and education can become instruments of liberation. Emergent from this position is an approach which enables unheard stories and everyday interactions to be revealed, yet still: ‘requires our analytical skepticism’ (Fields, 2013:495).
The chapter offers a more detailed and critical rationale behind the feminist, ethnographic approach forming the theoretical buttress for Chapter 5 which details the practical methods used to collect and analyse data and generate understandings about radio pedagogy and its empowerment potential for diverse women. After situating myself within the context of the research, this chapter explores feminist ethnography with questions about its claims. It repeats the importance of intersectionality in the research process and concludes by highlighting cautionary lessons about the romanticism surrounding feminist research and the dilemmas of the feminist ethnographer (Avishai, Gerber & Randles, 2013).

a)  **Situating self**

My own position, as referred to in the introduction of this paper, is as a radio volunteer, a regular participant in discussion and activities at the radio station. My detailed profile can be found in appendix 10. Much consideration is given to my ‘insider-outsider’ status as a researcher (Thomson & Gunter, 2011) and the potential for colonisation, as highlighted by Tuhiwai Smith, who recounts her own shift from ‘insider to outsider’ (friend to researcher):

> I could see immediately that homes were extra spotless… everything was in the kind of order which is organised solely for the benefit of the outsider (1999:138).

Whilst I am not close friends with respondents and have never visited their homes, I have a knowledge of them which has involved working together on various radio projects over the years, sharing stories, music, cultural traditions, laughter (and pain) and ranting together about injustice. There is difference,
but much in common between us and there is trust, evidenced in part by one woman requesting my support at her disability benefit tribunal. Taking this into account, Fields offers the label ‘Feminist Ethnographer’, defined as:

Ambivalent observers, following feminism, but not to the letter; sometimes embracing laws, meanings and vocabulary and other times rejecting them; constructing a narrative of assent that affirms feminism as central to our work as ethnographers …We are not simply adherents to a feminist doctrine; we are engaged in an ongoing struggle with the movement itself (2013:498).

**b) Feminist Ethnography or just a feminist approach to research?**

Discourse with regard to a feminist approach to research has developed since the 1980’s but the field of *ethnographic research* is a contested one and there is no water-tight definition (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, Lofland, 2007) other than the immersion of the researcher within the research group. Feminist research seeks: ‘to give voice to people whose everyday histories…have been condemned to silence’ (McRobbie, 1982:46). The qualitative nature of this research is best expressed in what Mazama (1998:27) calls *Afrocentric research* in which spirituality, holism and intuition are accepted principles and: ‘not everything that matters is measurable; and knowledge generated must be liberating’. (Zamokwakho, 2018:377). In a similar vein, educationalists Taylor and Ivinson (2013) refer to taking women’s knowledge seriously, despite its sometimes chaotic condition: ‘we have to take seriously our own messy, implicated, connected, embodied, involvement in knowledge production’ (p.666). There is a small but growing literature on *feminist ethnomethodology*. Joining the two concepts seems fitting for a thesis about breaking women’s silence as there is evidence that feminist ethnomethodology has been tested by

In my previous limited research experience, feminist principles played a crucial role in exposing the voices of the oppressed groups with whom I worked (Rimmer, 1997; Citizens as Trainees et al, 2004). In this research, as a radio volunteer, researching my peers I consider myself more than an ambivalent observer (Fields, 2005), as I am an active participant in their radio lives as they are in mine. The research approach embraces principles of social pedagogy, emancipation, participation and equality. According to Skeggs (2007) feminists have always incorporated these principles into their research in order to produce counter-hegemonic understandings. Early debates surrounding feminist research (McRobbie, 1982, Stanley & Wise, 1983) centred on feminist research with women focusing mainly on women, whereas later discourse included other oppressed groups and gave attention to intersectionality. (Reinharz, 2007). As Caplan (2007), argues, feminist research is often dismissed as just another specialisation. In fact its arguments have wider relevance to other forms and types of research. Reflexivity, particularly in educational research, but in all research, has become an essential good practice feature, yet as Wolf (2011) argues:

> Before reflexivity was a trendy term, feminists were examining ‘process’ in our dealings with one another – questioning the use of power and powerlessness, examining closely the politics of seemingly apolitical situations, evaluating the responsibilities we bore toward one another’ (p.429).

According to Harding & Norberg (2005), it is in fieldwork that feminist researchers attempt to eliminate or at least to minimise the power differences between the researcher and the marginalised groups which are the objects of
their study, ‘but such powers must always be negotiated within larger contexts of local, national, and global relations that are frequently themselves unstable’ (p.2010).

Aside from its focus on improving lives, an important attribute of feminist research is that it challenges the notion of detached omnipotent expertise in traditional methodologies (Stanley & Wise, 1994). In this research, the trust gained over 4-5 years of my volunteering at the radio station, meant that 12 women volunteered as respondents and felt able to share their personal histories, feelings and dreams. The disadvantage is that there are still epistemological concerns about both feminist and ethnographic research when judged by the yardstick of traditional, detached, quantitative methodologies. (Bhopal, 2010). Scepticism, with regard to research is surely healthy, whatever the methodology. Even the most measurable, ‘hard’, quantitative data ought to be viewed critically. In this research I diligently recorded, with line numbers, each woman’s story and their later group analyses of these stories, but the final analysis was my own, a feminist, now middle class white woman. However, as Fields (2013) states:

feminist ethnography seems especially well equipped to chart the bounds of what can be said, interrogate how that boundary is established and maintained, and peer over the boundary at what cannot and has not been said (p.496).

c) Ethical considerations

In determining methodology and method to ethically access and explore such elusive concepts as education and empowerment, I also brought to bear the occupational standards and value base of professional community, youth and
social work which centre upon informal education and working towards empowerment. Furthermore, those of us involved in work to facilitate welfare must locate ourselves carefully within the work, acknowledging our own power and oppression. This aspect of community work is crucial to research and intervention. It recognises:

the essential significance of the worker themselves, whose outlook, integrity and autonomy is at the heart of fashioning a serious yet humorous, improvisatory yet rehearsed educational practice with (communities and) young people (In Defence of Youth Work, 2015).

In exposing silent voices, it is crucial to acknowledge the notion of ‘otherness’. As do Tuhiwai Smith (2012), and Wilkinson and Kitzinger who affirm that the researcher should not speak for others as this ‘becomes a form of colonisation’ (1996:1). Their list of ‘otherness’ embraces gender, class, disability and race; but also less acknowledged differences such as weight, HIV status, childlessness. In researching and attempting to represent others, their examples demonstrate that there are no ‘quick fixes’ such as tinkering with research methods. What is important is developing empathy, gaining trust and learning from research participants. In this, a single-authored thesis, it is exceptionally important to be aware of the ethical danger of attempting to represent whole minority groups or even other individuals. My practice as a community and social worker is illustrative of this, in particular when advocating for young offenders in law courts, disabled people or survivors of ritual abuse. Nevertheless, if no-one dared to advocate for those without a voice, or campaign for equality of voice; the future would be somewhat bleak. The building of trust takes great effort, time and much critical reflection as the worker who is disingenuous is quickly found out and rejected – as are authors who appropriate different identities in order to strengthen an argument. In Daring to
Presume (1996) Livia examines the ethics of a straight, white, feminist writer creating Black or Lesbian characters. She raises important questions for me - the single author of a doctoral thesis who might find herself presuming. However, the authors she critiques are often creating imaginary characters, having had little or no contact with any such characters. This, even for fictional works, seems presumptuous and unethical, but Livia determines it to be a matter of semantics: ‘a way of conjuring up new visions’, so conjecture is good, whereas ‘appropriation is singling something out as yours, taking it away from someone else so they can no longer enjoy it’ (p.40).

The ease with which I gained entry into this research group, as described in Chapter 5, as a fellow female volunteer, caused me to caution myself regularly and consider Finch’s (1984) warnings about betrayal: ‘I do not really mean “betrayal” in the individual sense, such as selling the story of someone else’s life to a Sunday newspaper. I mean, rather, “betrayal” in an indirect and collective sense, undermining the interests of the women in general by my use of the material given to me…’ (p.85). Although Finch later retracted some of her ethical fears (2004), it is still crucial for committed feminist researchers to self-scrutinise their actions carefully. In a patriarchal society, ‘women can never be regarded as fair game’. (Finch, 1984:85). Amongst the respondents, there existed a trust in me as a colleague and radio volunteer, another woman, who shared at least one similar interest, a love of radio and a keenness to promote it.

d) Intersectionality in research
Feminists have not succeeded in creating a mass movement against sexual oppression because the very foundation of women’s liberation has, until now, not accounted for the complexity and diversity of female experience’ (McCall, 2005:1778 citing hooks, 1984).

hooks extends her criticism of education to the feminist movement as a whole and McCall brings this to bear on feminist research which, so often views women as an homogenous group. Understanding Intersectionality is integral to ethical research. Winker and Degele (2011:53) also contest the simplicity of popular feminist methodologies, conceding that the ‘matrix of domination’:

extends to the levels of ‘personal biography; the group or community level of the cultural context created by race, class, gender; and the systemic level of social institutions’ (citing Collins, 1990: 227).

They define intersectionality as:

a system of interactions between inequality-creating social structures (i.e. of power relations), symbolic representations and identity constructions that are context-specific, topic-orientated and inextricably linked to social praxis’ (Winker & Degele, 2011:54).

Much research overlooks intersectionality, not because it is unethical, rather for the purpose of depicting a generalised picture of women as an oppressed group; which may be necessary to gain policy change or raise funding. This is certainly the case when presenting evidence for Community Radio Funding, which tends to be short term and target singular homogenised societal groups, demanding measurable results. A recent example was funding for engaging older people in Community Radio:

there was no requirement to target specific kinds of older people. The group that jumps forward is white middle class older men – there are loads of those in radio already. (Community Radio staff member, 2016).
Van der Hoogt and Kingman acknowledge conflicting intersectionalities in their research with indigenous women:

They do not reject their culture, but want to change certain traditions in order to promote justice. The conflict is between collective and individual rights, and the need to link and address social and economic exclusion with cultural discrimination. Holistic solutions are needed. Changing power relations is a long-term process, which also needs to deal with fighting gender-based violence’ (2004:47).

Van der Hoogt & Kingman (2004) concur with practical difficulties in research:

This means, for example, that a project focusing on challenging gender inequality does not simultaneously work on challenging inequality between women from an ethnic majority, and women from an ethnic minority. Similarly, a project focusing on promoting the rights of indigenous people will not necessarily focus on inequality between women and men in the indigenous community. (p.48)

It is clear from this that presumed homogeneity can make genuinely inclusive research and practice difficult and may even exacerbate the problems of marginalised groups. Intersectional practice in education and feminist research, endeavours to restore and highlight nuances and complexities concealed by social amnesia and traditional methodologies. But McCall is sceptical:

‘Are these assumptions about the capacity of different methodologies to handle complexity warranted? Scholars have not left a clear record on which to base a reply to this question. Feminists have written widely on methodology but have either tended to focus on a particular methodology (e.g: ethnography, deconstruction, genealogy, ethnomethodology) or have failed to pinpoint the particular issue of complexity’ (2005:1772).

The narratives of 12 diverse female radio volunteers in this study, are combined with discourse on education, media, empowerment, silence and voice using intersectionality ‘as a major paradigm of research...’ (Mcall, 2005:1771). Mcall
completely rejects ‘the separability of analytical and identity categories’ and
laments that such an important phenomena as intersectionality lacks
discussion on how it should be studied. With this in mind, I have attempted to
give attention to intersectionality throughout each element of the research and it
is overtly presented in the profiles of respondents and the direct use of their
dialogue. My approach acknowledges Spivak’s scepticism in *Can the Subaltern
and it holds with the central argument of the project that society is structured to
create a ‘culture of silence where: ‘oppressed people are silenced, alienated
and a mere object of the director society’ (Freire,1977:16). Furthermore:
‘having no voice, they inhabit the culture of silence and only when that silence is
broken can the oppressed society as a whole cease to be silent toward the
director society (ibid:71).

There is a level of agreement that intersectionality is a vaguely defined concept
which lacks a defined methodology and even introduces new methodological
problems in research (Mcall, 2005; Nash, 2008). This study is a modest
attempt to deploy intersectional practice and research in an (as yet) untested
arena. Whilst scholars continue to wrangle with these important issues and
explore the nature and methods of intersectionality, Geertz points out the crucial
importance of establishing some kind of research framework designed by the
*researched* as well as the researcher:

‘Rather than attempting to place the experience of others within the
framework of… a conception...understanding them demands setting that
conception aside and seeing their experiences within the framework of
their own idea of what selfhood is’ (cited in Hood, Mayall and Oliver
In fact, as seen in Chapter six, the respondents here reframed and redirected the focus of the research.

**Conclusion**

There are some cautionary lessons here, with regard to chosen approaches and some difficult dilemmas for a feminist ethnographer, particularly when researching oppressed groups. In conclusion to this exploration of methodological understandings, I move forward to the primary research keeping in mind the warnings about romanticism (Avishai, Gerber & Randles, 2013) and cautionary messages from Finch (2004):

> And this idea of women’s experience being encapsulated and then made public through research is essentially a debate about the authority of data, and a debate in which some would take the view that it is only the directly expressed experience of individual women, unmitigated and unadorned by the researcher, which can be the legitimate basis for feminist research. Anything else risks being compromised (p.63).

Furthermore, Avishai et al, (2013) note that ‘feminism can operate as a blinder, limiting our ability to see and interpret empirical realities that do not conform with feminist expectations (p.394). They discuss some of the tension ‘between our political sensibilities and goals and our intellectual mission to produce reliable knowledge’ (ibid). Using stories to generate and interpret women’s views about Community Radio and empowerment, is an emotional, unwieldy and lengthy process requiring constant self-reflection, but also a rich learning process where so much else (aside from the research aims) is discussed. Chapter Nine provides a more detailed reflection on this process, alongside respondents.
My learning from the literatures about intersectionality, feminist pedagogy and feminist research direct this research in which I endeavour to highlight the nuances and complexities of lives concealed by social amnesia and traditional methodologies. Whilst this chapter has provided a methodological backdrop alongside a realistic understanding of dilemmas and pitfalls, what follows is an account of the research in practice, from advertising for volunteers through to a group reflection on the material generated.
Chapter 5 Methods

...rather than focusing only on the interpersonal relationship set up within the research encounter, feminist approaches attend, in addition, to wider questions of power as they enter into the funding, popularisation and uses of research. Moreover, they often treat power not as something that can be removed from research, but rather as an ever-present dynamic that needs to be acknowledged as structuring the interaction in diverse ways (Burman, 1994:3).

Introduction

As stated in the introduction to the project, and in symmetry with Burman’s (1994) observation; a central concern is that this research will contribute to raising the popular appeal of community radio as a pedagogical tool of empowerment and a worthwhile cause for funders. The practical detail of the research is described in this chapter, together with more methodological thinking. It outlines the site and context of the research, how research volunteers were engaged, how narratives were collected and analysed using a participatory approach. The questions and prompts are designed to elicit participant’s understandings about community radio, education and empowerment, and to generate discussion aimed at addressing the research questions.

The design is facilitated greatly by the unpublished pilot study with 2 female volunteers conducted as part of this Doctoral course in 2014. Many lessons from the pilot are apparent in this current study with 12 female volunteers (including the original pilot study participants). Using individual interviews, group meetings, email exchanges and a research diary, women’s narratives were recorded and transcribed. Later, the participants met in a group and analysed some of one another’s responses and later still, the group reconvened.
in order to reflect upon the whole research project and discuss their future as radio volunteers. A Timeline for the project can be seen in Appendix 7. For my own benefit, in the transcriptions, I highlighted specific quotations by the women which supported a particular theme (e.g.: feeling silenced). I also used some of these highlighted quotations in the analysis group together with the participants.

In the analysis chapters of the thesis (chapters 6 - 9), I juxtapose quotations from the women, with the conceptual discussions garnered in Chapter 3 in order to give meaning to the data and use it to best effect in the pursuit of the research aims. These analysis chapters elevate the women’s sentiments and combine them with literature in a conceptual framework. For exactitude, I include line numbers from the respondents’ transcriptions and the recorded group discussions. Listening to the respondents and being led by them, enriches the landscape of the research, though it creates a more messy picture of the data. The initial intention to have one analysis chapter with 3 distinct themes, turns out as 3 chapters with a multitude of (sometimes overlapping) themes. For me, this phenomenon of perceived disorder goes to the heart of feminist pedagogy and feminist research and reminds me that the criticism of the women’s movement has been that it is dispersed and disorganised (Kramer & Neale, 1998). It resonates with my professional memory of visiting a women’s refuge with male council officials who were horrified at the excited screams of children running around, women’s laughter, a sink full of washing up and toys and books scattered everywhere. How could anything good be going on in such chaos?
a) Site of the research

Shout FM (pseudonym) is a community radio station and charity, based in an old building converted to house 2 live studios, a green room, kitchen, office, computer and training rooms. Situated in a diverse community in the North of England, it has, over the years, since universal community work funding has been cut, sought funding from a variety of sources to offer free radio production training to marginalised groups in the community. In the U.K. such funding streams, arguably focus on deficiency models of mental health, unemployment, ageing, youth and disability in that the underlying ideology is that the funding will improve these individuals in some way and turn them into useful and valued citizens. After training, many individuals stay on as radio volunteers. Shout FM boasts over a hundred volunteers, one third defining as women; who travel in from nearby and from across the town, many spending the whole day in the warm building, socialising, discussing current events and cascading radio knowledge and technical skills to their peers. Few attend merely in order to present their one hour radio show. The Green Room [the room outside the live radio studios] provides a space for sharing and learning about each other’s lives within the context of poverty and inequality discussed in Chapter two, but also a space for sharing knowledge about radio production, music, poetry and a plethora of diverse cultural mores on a daily basis.

b) Research Design

Access and sampling

My position as a radio volunteer with Shout FM made access to this purposive group relatively convenient. The painstaking work of engaging these women in
the radio training and retaining them as volunteers had already occurred and is reported on in some detail in Chapter 6. Nevertheless, the importance of a sensitive, acknowledgement of power issues cannot be overstated. Both for the pilot project and this, the main research project, I wrote formally to the radio station manager, asking that he make contact with all female volunteers (approximately 35) and asking for volunteers to participate in the research. (Appendix 1). For the pilot project I accessed 2 women and for this thesis I expected only 4-6 responses and so my only selection criteria was to hope for a diverse research group as my request did not state any specific criteria except for self-defined ‘womanhood’. However, his email elicited 12 responses (including the 2 women from the pilot project who wished to continue with the project) and after some consideration and supervisory discussion I decided that such a number was manageable and importantly met my main criteria of diversity. OFCOM [Office of Communications], the UK Government radio regulator demands that: ‘Community radio stations reflect a diverse mix of cultures and interests (OFCOM, 2015,), so I expected no problem in attracting respondents from a range of ethnic, age, sexual orientation and class backgrounds. Nevertheless, I was thrilled to have so many respondents from varying backgrounds. Though clearly not perceived as a representative sample, I hoped this group might reflect some different intersections of oppression and some thought-provoking articulations about the radio experience.

The approach to sample selection was with the explicit aim of garnering a variety of narratives – each offering a unique and valuable perspective. Additionally, such diversity gave great scope for groupwork, through which the
narratives could be shared and analysed. Respondents chose their research name and the description in their profile. All gave permission for their individual and group contributions to be audio recorded.

Meeting the respondents

The manager gave my contact details and asked that those wishing to participate ring, text or email me. I responded with thanks and later, suggested meeting times, dates and venues. Initially, I met with each respondent individually, for 60 to 90 minutes at a place of their choice (often a café) or at a local community centre, where I hired a room. Since the research interest was to capture the women’s stories about their lives, their learning journeys and experience in radio, it seemed important to separate them from the radio building, though this was technically, the organisational setting of the research. The rationale behind this was practical (there being little space in the radio building) but more importantly, I wanted them to reflect upon their experiences from a metaphorical distance and I felt this would be aided by meeting in a neutral space. Additionally, issues of privacy and confidentiality could be better served by a literal separation of the business of research from the business of radio. At midway point and at the end of the research I met with respondents as a group, again in a local community centre.

Data Collection

Being unable to tell your story is a living death and sometimes a literal one…stories save your life. And stories are your life. We are our stories…. Liberation is always in part about a storytelling process: breaking stories, breaking silences. A free person tells her own story. A valued person lives in a society in which her story has a place (Solnit, 2017:19).
I selected narrative inquiry in order to create a picture of the respondents’ worlds: ‘In narrative inquiry, people are looked at as embodiments of lived stories’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:43). Graham (cited in Goodson, 2013:30) agrees: ‘Stories are pre-eminently ways of relating individuals and events to social contexts, ways of weaving personal experiences into their social fabric’.

In order to support the data collection process, I used some community development techniques. The River of Life exercise (Thompson, 2008), developed for use with refugees and asylum seekers, enables participants to tell their stories by describing their journey through life using a vessel which they place into a (drawn) river. As they describe events in their life, they place their vessel and describe verbally, or write which event took place, for example: ‘my country went to war, this was 1990 when I came to UK’. (Appendix 2). I used the river as an aid in the individual interviews.

With regard to the individual interviews, while feminist researchers argue that: ‘research/interview relationships should be non-hierarchical, non-exploitative, reciprocal and work on a ‘participatory model’ in which the researcher shares their own biography with the researched,’ (Bhopal, 2010:188); it is also true that some structure is necessary in order to assist the most fruitful collection of narratives.

I began interviews with something about my own life and introduction to community radio, but followed a structure (using prompts only when necessary)
which had been learned and practiced in the pilot interviews. (Appendix 3).
Once the interviewee felt comfortable with a hot drink I began gentle prompts and questions. All interviews and the group sessions were recorded with permission. A positive aspect of radio presenters is that they generally do not mind (or even enjoy) being recorded. After transcription, line-numbers were added in order to make referencing easy and accurate.

A word about transcription

The recording, transcription and analysis of these narratives are central to the thesis, yet the practice of transcription is frequently neglected in research methods literature (Davidson, 2009): ‘a behind the scenes task’ (Oliver et al, 2005:1273). In this study, each interview and group meeting was recorded and transcribed in full in a naturalist way - including silent moments and emotions. As Ochs (1979) suggested: the selection of specific quotations and the accompanying emotions was done to reflect the concepts and aims of the project. Full transcription, as opposed to note-taking, was time-consuming, but it allowed reflection on each participant’s views and story. Furthermore, selecting quotations for use in demonstrating arguments, was a difficult task since the participants showed themselves to be so thoughtful, humorous critical and eloquent.

The process of reflective transcription gave rise to my changing the focus of the research in order to make it more grounded in the priorities of participants. Loubere (2017), contends that this system also makes the research process more transparent. He refers to it as the SRIR: systematic and
reflexive interviewing and reporting method of transcription and he asserts that this method is ‘ideally suited to research projects that are designed to be open ended and flexible, in order to follow up on new information and potentially even change focus’ (p.1). After transcription I inserted line numbers which enabled a more accurate way to reference quotations and went some way to equalising participant’s narratives and views with those of published authors.

Research Diary

In addition to the above, after approval and with permission from the station manager, I kept an anonymous research diary recording observations of and participation in interactions which relate to my research questions. The research diary is a valuable tool (Silverman, 2005; Burgess, 1981) not only for reflecting upon the research process and the rationale behind decisions taken on a daily basis, but also crucially for noting and analysing interactions which challenge or demonstrate the hypotheses of the researcher. It is: ‘an integral part of the researcher’s knowledge development’ (Browne, 2013:422). A framework for the diary can be found in Appendix 4. The radio project has over 100 volunteers and I had regular contact with about half of them, either at meetings or as a weekly part of radio work. My volunteer day is once a week, but I also attend the station for events and meetings. The aim of the diary was not to focus on individuals but to capture general events, discussions, emotions, aspirations which reflect the overall culture of the project – how community radio volunteers see the world. In the analysis chapters, diary entries provide useful background information, particularly about volunteers commenting more generally on socio-economic and cultural contexts.
Analysis

I set out to analyse the collected narratives thematically, in groups together with
the respondents. The plan to capture emergent rigid themes was soon
thwarted. I wanted the group to analyse each other’s contributions appertaining
to Freire’s themes of Education, Empowerment, Silence & Voice. However, as
can be seen in the analysis chapters (6-9), the rigid plan was derailed as the
respondents often took the thesis into unmapped (but relevant) territory and
themes often overlapped. (Hood et al,1999) I adjusted the framework of
analysis to include some of the major themes suggested by the women – such
as engagement and the importance of telling one’s story. This enriched the
process and made the process of analysis much more participatory, with the
research group setting at least part of the agenda. I later juxtaposed quotations
from the women, with the conceptual framework using literature and published
research in order to augment the analysis. This themed analyses serves the
purpose of raising the profile of the respondents' knowledge and understanding
in order to give a ‘real life’ tangible meaning to elusive concepts such as
empowerment. The group exercise fashioned some new narratives and
different perceptions contributing to the discourse on silence, voice and
empowerment.

World Café

In practice, in order for the group to analyse each other’s individual narratives, I
used a ‘World Café’ method. (Appendix 5). The use of World Café as a
research method grew from community development worker’s commitment to a
non-threatening, collaboration with citizens to discover views, ideas, priorities
and needs in their communities. The research space is set out with tables and chairs, café style and paper table cloths on which participants can write or draw. Refreshments are available and discussion takes place between small groups on each table – with a later opportunity to walk around, chat to different individuals, write on different tables and eventually feedback to the whole café (if they wish). Fouche´ & Light (2010) argue that such a social setting reaps rich results: ‘it enhances the capacity to “dialogue” in a relaxed and familiar environment. Our preference for the café context was that it provided space for people to move around, bump into each other’. (p.35)

When the respondents arrived in the room, anonymous quotations of theirs were displayed in large font around the room. (Appendix 6). After introductions and groundrules the women were asked to choose a quote (not their own); think about it, discuss it on their table and write or say something about it. Afterwards, those who wished to move around to different tables did so – reading written comments and sharing views. Finally, we played ‘pass-the-mic’ (a radio game where the recorder is passed around) and the participants fed back their analysis of the quotations and gave their own views.

As a simple but powerful process, the World Café ‘focuses on intimate exchange, disciplined inquiry, cross-pollination of ideas and possibility thinking. It is a conversational process that helps groups to engage in constructive dialogue around critical questions, to build personal relationships, and to foster collaborative learning’. (Brown & Isaacs, 2005:29)

With regard to critiques of World Café, Aldred (2008:60) points out that when used to determine community or health/social service user need; responses
may be skewed by fear - for example of losing services. In the hands of some researchers, the method could become tokenistically participatory. However, as MacFarlane et al point out (2016), this depends upon the position and value base of those facilitating the research and their skills and style, but as they say:

the commitment to collaborative engagement is an inherent strength because the whole aim of the World Café method is to build collective knowledge through dialogues and to share decision making (p.281).

The group sessions had 3 specific aims, the first being participatory analysis of prior individual responses and secondly to deepen discussion on the themes of the research. The third aim (or rather, expectation), after some years of practicing groupwork with women; was that the women would share experiences, learn and work together, finding commonalities and forming alliances which might galvanise their position in a male dominated organisation.

The rationale behind collective intervention of this kind is well rehearsed in community and youth work literature (Mullender & Ward, 1991; Brown & Caddick, 1986; Ledwith, 2011) and is an essential feature of Freire's dialogic education for liberation (Jeffs & Smith, 2005). Having facilitated many groups as a community and social worker, I aimed, through this method, to maximise the breadth and depth of data collected.

As a researcher and practitioner I am aware that my leaning towards collective pedagogical and research methods could be construed as overly romantic, so it is important to emphasise the significance of strong ground rules within the group, such as respect, confidentiality and most importantly that the underpinning culture of the group is mutually supportive. As a facilitator, I am mindful that some people can be silenced in groups, but overall, my experience
and reading have validated collective methods. This collective approach is useful for different purposes. It is used here to enrich analysis and discussion as the women jointly analyse their life and radio experiences; it is also useful in generating new material - narratives and discourse on women’s lives, community radio and its impact. There is a vital relationship, or crossover between the research methods, methodology and analysis and the practice of feminist pedagogy or community work in addressing the research questions.

A cautionary note about participatory research

I am also mindful that the quotations analysed were not selected by the respondents, but by me; leading to the criticism that a participatory method was used in just one aspect of the research and would not be seen as adequate in defining genuine participatory research. (D’Cruz and Jones, 2013; Cornwall and Jewkes, 2009; Beresford and Croft, 1993). There is general agreement that participatory research should actively involve respondents in all aspects of the research process from establishing the research questions, through fieldwork and analysis of findings (Beresford and Croft, 1993). Beresford and Croft locate themselves as disabled researchers and have a particular axe to grind with regard to ‘tokenism’ in participatory research, exemplified by Arnstein (1969) on the bottom rungs of the ladder of participation which she refers to as manipulation:

Meaningful participation then, must support the establishment of relationships through involving, collaborating with, or empowering public participants in such a way that they can contribute their knowledge, (Morrison and Dearden, 2013:179).
Critiques of positivist approaches to research argue for a participatory, emancipatory paradigm in research, which:

should have as a central aim, the empowerment of research participants, which may include the sharing of decisions about the aims, methods, conclusions – indeed all aspects of any study’ (Truman et al, 2000:3; Beresford and Turner, 1997).

The pilot study prompted me to distinguish between stimulated elicitation and genuine participatory analysis. Despite its limitations in this small study, I decided that it could be an empowering process in-keeping with the spirit of participation which underpins community projects, provided that the researcher is open to working together and learning from the respondents. Inadequacies acknowledged, the central ideal of this research is one of creating a platform of mutual learning and amplifying unheard voices.

*Additional contacts and #metoo*

During the period of the research, some of the women contacted me individually by email, text or through facebook messaging. This was to share additional information they thought may be useful or to check on me personally as at one time, they heard I was ill. During the #metoo campaign (2017-18) I emailed the group to ask for their views on women speaking out about harassment and abuse. Since the thesis focus is on women’s silencing in media and in broader terms, it seems pertinent to position this campaign within it.

*Conclusion*

This chapter has described the site, design and mechanics of the project – how the following material was generated; with some caveats regarding participation
and important ethical information. It depicts a diverse group of women keen to give their time to a project which might, in time, raise the profile of community radio, appeal to prospective women radio volunteers and to prospective funders. What follows, are the observations of participants, together with mine and their interpretations and analysis.
PART THREE - uses the established framework and headings to generate discussion and analysis with regard to the key themes of the title and aims.
Chapter 6 Analysis and Discussion: engagement and narratives

So basically I was 23 years old and I was depressed – I’d just split up with my boyfriend and I was unemployed... I thought: what am I doing here? This isn’t me, I’ve got all this creative talent and I need to get out of here, so I was looking online and I saw this course at XX which was all free back in the day (Respondent Madonna, 2017, lines 12 & 47-50).

Introduction: Structuring the Analysis and respondents’ details

Madonna characterises the grim picture some respondents paint of their lives followed by, what might be described as: a radio epiphany. In the following chapters, the women’s voices are juxtaposed with literature in order to consider the research aims: how and why the women become involved in radio, how they articulate their experience in terms of learning, silence, voice and their views on ‘empowerment’. Initially, the three analysis chapters were one, but I was advised to separate them and have done so partly guided by supervisors, but mostly by the respondents, who stressed the importance of issues which I had not considered substantial. It is not that I dismissed the barriers to engaging women in radio, but I had certainly underestimated the enormity of the task, especially as perceived by the respondents. Since no thesis could be written without women engaged in community radio, the subject became another layer of important reading and analysis. Having worked for many years reaching out to marginalised groups – I should have known better, but these women were already engaged, one of them for over 15 years in radio, and so to my shame, I took engagement for granted until respondents remembered it as such a hurdle, so I set aside my presumptuous initial framework as suggested by cultural anthropologist Geertz (1983), I saw the women’s experiences: ‘within the framework of their own idea of what selfhood is’ (p.59).
Secondly, during the research (2017-18) came the revelations about widespread gendered harassment and abuse in the media industry and beyond, leading to the #metoo campaign, which some have called a movement. (Burke, 2017; Brockes, 2017). Since this issue is highly relevant to a thesis premised upon the global silencing of women in media and beyond – it seemed apposite to include it and to seek respondent perspectives.

Thirdly, I am compelled to include a whole section on the importance of telling our story. This section was always part of the plan, but the issue featured so strongly in the women’s responses that it resonates, not only as a methodological choice, but throughout the project as a pedagogical and relationship building tool. Once again the respondents redirected the emphasis of the research.

I restructured the analyses into chapters six, seven, eight. In chapter nine I conclude the analysis by drawing out main messages. Each of these chapters deals with different aspects of the women’s discussion, interweaving their voices with with the research questions, with the literature; with their analyses and with my own thoughts. For the reader to be acquainted with the respondents, is essential and this chapter begins with a more detailed account of the women’s profiles, in their own words. It begins at the beginning of their radio stories with an analysis of the difficult task of engagement within the context of structural oppression and, for some, at a moment in time when their mental health was fragile. Friere’s (1970) observations about the internalisation
of oppression are illustrated almost on a daily basis in radio, especially with regard to women’s attitude to the technical skills required. The chapter goes on to recount the #metoo campaign as highlighted in the literature review and in the women’s analysis it places particular emphasis on the importance of telling one’s story, having someone listen to that story and take notice of it (Solnit, 2017).

See Appendix 9 for a detailed pen picture of the research participants – in their own words, using their chosen pseudonyms.

a) Engaging women in Community Radio training – despite everything.

Community Radio training is voluntary, though a prerequisite for those who aim to host their own radio show. It can take one day, ten weeks or some years and is generally administered initially by radio staff and later by cascade (fellow volunteers). Manchester’s (2013) research demonstrates that radio staff are generally not educators, but media qualified and/or experienced. Although trainees often acquire certificates, the training is generally characterised as informal; what hooks (1994) and Florence (1998) refer to as engaged pedagogy. However, no pedagogy can occur until women are recruited and engagement refers to both physical and mental engagement; getting women into the radio station – recognising intersections of oppression such as poverty, disability, caring commitments; providing realistic expenses; and retaining them by providing a safe space and a supportive environment: ‘for association, activity, dialogue and action’ (Sallah, 2014:71). The profound impact of structural inequalities on community, individual mental health and identity (Marrington-Mir & Rimmer, 2007) requires acknowledgement when planning a radio course for women: ‘Humans are fundamentally social beings whose
experiences of distress and troubled or troubling behaviour are inseparable from their material, social, environmental, socio-economic, and cultural contexts’ (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018:8). Respondent Priceless (2017), comments on the fact that she decided not to attend the radio training, due to feelings of fear and inadequacy, but the persistent persuasion of the radio trainer combined with her fortitude, compelled her to go along for the first day: ‘and the rest is history’. (lines 34-36). Consequently, the learning environment needs to be a safe space and the pedagogical style needs to engage in dialogue, recognising the significance of accommodating different voices; different kinds of knowledge. hooks’ argues for an engaged pedagogy which ‘avoids the marginalisation of students whose cultural traits and characteristics differ from mainstream values and enables learners to feel comfortable to voice ideas and feelings which may go against the grain.’ (in Florence, 1998:113).

And the ‘starting point for organising the programme content of education or political action, must be in the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people’ (Freire,1970:76). This caution is a reminder that impetus and aims of educational projects need to be those of the participants, rooted in their community, not in the head of the middle class worker: ‘education should be embedded in social, gendered and cultural contexts and must take account of the many factors that enable and constrain the empowerment of women’. (Cornwall & Edwards, 2014:22). It is argued in Development literature that the education of girls and women is crucial to improving lives (Darkwah, 2014; Cornwall & Edwards, 2014), yet engaging women in community radio training is a challenge, partly due to gendered constraints such as care roles or domestic imprisonment as described by Ayisha:

I remember wanting to go out and I remember wanting to go out to Max Spielman’s [photography shop] to get camera films – cos it used to be the real ones that you had to put in the camera – and I wanted to go
Dolcis' [shoe shop] and get some shoes – and I was told ‘No – women don’t go out – women don’t go out!’ (2017 lines 128-132)

But also due to general lack of confidence: ‘I was definitely not confident at all…’ (Sasha, 2017 line 62) and to the technical nature of radio work: ‘I remember my first show – I was like so scared, I was petrified’, (line 69). As girls and women, the group felt they had never been exposed to technical learning and remembered being fearful of disaster if they pressed the wrong button or unintentionally shut down the broadcast. Radio trainers might see this opportunity as a gender neutral pedagogy, ‘combatting the notion that technical skill is equated with masculinity’ (Dunbar-Hester, 2014:54), but the barriers to this are immense, including the: ‘historical legacy of radio and electronics as a masculine pastime’ (ibid) and also gendered differences in individuals’ personal backgrounds with regard to technical skills. The women in this study expressed both fear and excitement about breaking down hegemonic patterns of masculinity and femininity: ‘I was so nervous…massive self-doubt’, (Kimi, 2017, Lines: 66-69); ‘I still think “Aghhhh” I’ve pushed the wrong button or something”, that still happens’ (Lorraine, 2017, Lines 170-171). As respondent Lorraine (2017) points out: ‘the technical side frightens a lot of women – especially older women because they’ve never been technical – it was an era when girls did domestic science and boys did woodwork’, but Lorraine goes onto suggest that the radio training offers flexible solutions to overcoming technophobia: ‘but if you felt you couldn’t do a show on your own, you could do one together with someone and they could do the technical thing’. (Lines 164-169). The breaking down of difficult, frightening individual tasks into co-operative ventures, creates a climate of support and fun for the women in this study. This highlights the issue that: ‘traditional educational systems do not take account of different lives’ (Darkwah, 2014:87).
There is much more discussion about gendered (and other) barriers to learning in chapter 7, but it is clearly essential to break through these barriers if women are to be engaged in radio pedagogy. The importance of creating a safe, and if possible, woman-only space: ‘a space to dream’ (Seller, 2003:26) cannot be over-estimated. In 2017 I was involved in facilitating a women’s radio training course at a local community station. The community work task involved a planned approach, delivery and evaluation. Whilst the creation of inclusive, attractive, inviting flyers, offering care and transport costs were important factors; personal contact and building trust prior to the training was crucial. As Smith (1994) notes, the educator or community worker must put a lot of reflective thought into selecting the correct approach, considering different cultural mores, acknowledging vulnerabilities should also ‘be able to handle their anxieties… the worker should routinely ask “what are these people likely to think of me?” (p.45). Over the years as a development worker, networking becomes almost intuitive, but it is a complex, emotional and political professional tool (Gilchrist, 2009:85).

These careful approaches mirror the considerations when approaching new community groups and individuals as a youth, community or social worker. (Sallah,2014). Popple (2015), emphasises networking as an essential element of facilitating the processes of women becoming engaged and supporting each other. For this new women’s group I approached particular organisations where I had community work ‘friends’, whom I knew to be feminists working with diverse groups of women. These friends brokered my access to the women, some of whom were abuse and mental health survivors; others who were refugees and asylum-seekers and others who contacted me independently.
Hence, a feminist approach to engagement does not only refer to the venue and timing of the radio course or the exclusion of men, it refers also to a value base which acknowledges oppression and intersections of oppression, valuing and accepting woman-based thought, ideas and creativity, and redefining personal problems as structural oppressions. Popple (2015) emphasises that community work skills are not neutral tools and ‘community workers need to be clear about their own and others’ values before practising these skills’ (p.23).

Entering into feminist dialogue may challenge conventional thought and it is the worker’s role to ensure a safe space in which women can participate and share their narratives. In particular, in this study, arose the notion that participating in the technological and public world of radio may be a challenge to ‘womanish behaviour’. In a previous experience of engaging women in community learning in Credit Unions (Rimmer, 1997), their abusive partners became threatened and more aggressive, making feminist understandings and the creation of safe spaces crucial. In Dunbar-Hester’s (2014) study, women in radio ‘attained a sort of mythic status, described as exceptionally “hardcore” or “kickass” (p.55). The downside of this is that such women become ‘superwomen’ and rather than challenging the hegemony, perpetuate it with their newly found (not necessarily wanted) exceptional and heroic image (ibid). U.K. BBC presenter Liz Kershaw relates the masculinist atmosphere in radio and how male colleagues expressed disbelief that she could drive the radio desk (Kershaw, 2014).

The difficulties of engagement are often found in the detailed nuances of life, referred to by Lorde (1991:130) as the dailiness of oppressive experiences in women’s lives where seemingly private and petty injustices block avenues of inspiration, creativity and escape; where convention may disconnect private and
societal injustices, recommending silence. Respondent Ayisha (2017), conveys the humiliation after marriage at seventeen, of having to iron a shalwar kameez on the stair of her new home with her husband's family:

...because it was so hard, especially on the step and it had so many pleats in it – I never understood how it had so many pleats in it – it makes it baggy round the waist – I did my best, but I couldn’t iron the pleats bit and I left it cos I thought, the kameez is going to go over and no-one’s gonna look (but her Mother-in-law did look). She held it up and said “Did your mum not teach you how to iron?” and I said “no” ’cos we never wore it – (we never really wore these Asian clothes ’cos you know – we did on Eid, but our Mum used to iron them for us). She went “Oh who have you brought home?” as if I don’t know anything.’ (lines 166 to 186).

Respondent Maria concurs; when her Mother died she was thrown into the zero-hour contract job market:

So it’s something that affects your confidence really because you do these short term contracts and you never feel like you’re getting the chance to be involved with something long term. (2017:Lines 34-36).

Respondents also report that they entered radio at a stage in their lives when they had almost given up hope: ‘What might seem to be merely the harmless slights or annoyances or inconveniences of oppression, can have a cumulative effect on people’s rational behaviour...’ (Hay, 2013:35). Hay points out the corrosive effects of oppression which are as likely to be gradual and cumulative as they are discrete:

I’d lost all that – all that confidence, when you’re caring 24/7 – it’s not lifting, washing and dressing its more the emotional part of it – because its drugs, alcohol and mental health and it was the emotional part of it draining me and it was becoming groundhog day and I was tired and I was depressed and I was going on a real low. (Respondent Liz, 2017:Lines 39 to 43).
After leaving a violent marriage, Priceless describes: ‘It’s like I started life gradually again – it’s like learning to walk again and somehow I got an email – to this day I can’t remember who sent me that email called “Women in Radio” and at that time I was struggling with confidence, just everything – I was scared to go out (2017, Lines 22-26).

Hay (2013) adopts the Kantian notion that women are under obligation to resist and confront their oppression: ‘I argue that once we recognize that rational nature can be harmed by oppression we will see there is an obligation not merely to respect rational nature but also to protect it’. (p.22). Without resistance, she claims that women will lose their self-respect and fall into their prescribed gender role of self-sacrifice (p.50). More seriously she indicates that if we do not resist, we will never put an end to the patriarchy. However, she places no time frame on building the ability to resist (often after years of violence). Nor, crucially, does she make any mention of intersectionality. Her argument assumes one kind of womanhood where: ‘self-deception and weakness of will…are the most egregious problems of women’s oppression’, (Huseyinzadegan, 2015:153) and no mention is made of structural issues such as racism or poverty: ‘These problems will not strike all women equally, and if they did, many women will often face much worse’ (ibid).

The women’s responses illustrate the documented evidence of oppression and the connection between personal and structural oppression referred to in Chapter 2. (East & Roll, 2015; J.R.F. 2018). Solnit contends that in a patriarchy women begin life with the expectation of subjugation and silence (2017), on top of which come intersections such as poverty, racism and abuse which further steal their confidence and dignity and shame them into silence. The #metoo
issues described in Chapter 2 are exposed as the tip of a gargantuan iceberg, a repository of historical and current evidence of women’s subjugation (Rowbotham, 1977; Davis, 2012): ‘Gender-based inequality remains the greatest global injustice and the struggle against it spans millennia and continents,’ (Holmes, Guardian online, 11.6.14). #Metoo was applauded as testament to the positive potential of media to go some way to achieving social justice. This is not to say that there was harmony amongst respondents about #metoo, its positioning, nor aims as an anti-sexist movement:

Plenty of young actresses flirt with directors to try and win the part (this has been going on since at least the 1930s). It is then so easy for them to cry ‘foul’ when they don’t get the part as an act of revenge. Where do we draw the line? Are we to complain every time a male even touches us - even if in support (e.g an arm around the shoulder [happens in offices worldwide every day] or as a comfort or a hand to help us back up should we fall or stumble)? I would bet that these women get an ego boost if they received flattering remarks about their appearance - by anyone, not just by males (Respondent Jessica, 2018, by email).

Jessica’s contradictory stance on this issue is reviewed in more detail later as an example of what Freire termed nostalgia – clinging to the ‘myth of dominant ideology’. (1985:16) which he claims is internalised by oppressed people. However, her honesty may also be an indication that other respondents fashion their responses in terms of what a strong woman should say, or in terms of what the feminist researcher wishes to hear. (Finch, 1984). Other responses to #Metoo were more positive, with some qualification, particularly from Ayisha, with her experience of reporting hate crimes:

I think it’s great that women are plucking up the courage to open up about such issues...but we’re nowhere near ready to support or have supporting services to deal with the amount of disclosures that are being made. We must ask where is it all leading? This happened with reporting hate crimes... it added to stats but what went on unfortunately still went
on. More is the shame. Not enough or no mental health support was in place to support victims (Ayisha, 2018 by email).

Her insights have, at time of writing, been borne out with continuing publication of harassment revelations, and only some organisations (including the UK parliament) reviewing their sexual harassment policies and providing effective support services. (Harman, 2018). Respondent Madonna felt the campaign to be a positive move towards equality:

I think that it is extremely upsetting that so many men who work in the industry and beyond have thought that it is somehow justified and ok to inflict abuse onto women. Women are becoming stronger and as a collective - this campaign has formed an empowerment of movement. In my opinion this can only help women to keep building and striving forward for equality and to send a powerful message to men that it is NOT ok to be abusive, eventually you will be found out (Madonna, 2018 by email).

Meanwhile, as 2019 approaches, women are, arguably, still invisible or misrepresented in mainstream media. The People's Communication Charter (Hamelink, 2007:211) argues the case for all communities to have ‘fair and equitable access to local and global resources and facilities for conventional and advanced channels of communication’. That this is not the case is an emergent theme here, particularly amongst respondents of colour who viewed themselves as unrepresented in the mainstream media: ‘I visited the BBC and you look around and no-one looks like me, Madonna’ (2017). ‘It’s like I always thought to myself, radio isn’t for the likes of us, the lesser people’, (Collette, 2014). These observations are supported by the broadcaster's own research reports. (Martinson, 2016).
The reasons for female invisibility in media varies, but acknowledgement of gendered oppression, social conditioning and the resultant lack of confidence is essential if more women are to participate in media. ‘The consequences of domestic abuse are often devastating and long-term, affecting women’s physical health and mental well-being’ and gendered violence is said to oppress all women, not just those directly affected (Crawford, Liebling-Kalifani & Hill, 2009:63). For Priceless, abuse left its legacy long after her escape. Just prior to her radio involvement, she describes herself: ‘I was going on – it was as if I was going on without hope’:

On the day of the (radio training) appointment I didn’t go – I was terrified and got discouraged and somehow I got a call from the radio station that day and it keep ringing and ringing and I was so embarrassed I say ‘Oh my god, they’re really wanting me, they’re ringing and ringing to see if I’m interested’ and I was like ‘I can’t do this, I can’t – and then on the Monday there was another call from the radio station saying ‘Priceless where are you did you get lost – are you coming? You need to come’ and when I respond to them it was like - I need to do this and the rest is history – that was history. (Priceless, 2017, Lines 28-36).

But despite the impact of ‘domestic abuse’ and more generally, women’s oppression, it is argued that women do find the strength to resist: ‘striving for a normal life, prioritising their role as a mother and attempting to reconstruct their own identity through the assumption of new roles’ (Crawford et al, 2009:63):

I was getting more and more depressed so I reached out to get counselling – feeling in complete despair about the situation I was in – everything happening at once and it took (with passion) a year for anyone to get back to me and its like – if I was suicidal or anything – a year! … So I signed up for radio training – but I had to cancel it a few times – because of my Mum and other things came in but I had been interested in doing it for a long time. (Kimi, 2017, Lines 22 -40).

Respondents convey their journey into community radio with tears and laughter. For Kimi, Priceless and other women – the other things emerge as complex interactions between racism, poverty, misogyny, disability and more. Ledwith
(1997) cautions that ‘attempting to explain the vast diversity of experience of oppressions according to universal theories has resulted in a fragmented understanding of this complexity’. (p.47). Respondent Collette (2014) is instructive, in terms of the intersectional barriers to engagement and her immense spirit of resistance: ‘My dad was very very strict and physically very violent and I used get some terrible beatings for the slightest thing and music from a very early age…was my salvation’. (Lines 82-97)

Do you know something I don’t even remember where I saw the ad. I’ve always loved radio Well I’m Black, uneducated and I always thought I was a really quiet person and I never ever in a million years thought I could do my own radio show – no more than I could have been a beauty queen, but somewhere I saw this ad and thought I’d come along for the laugh. See what all these knobs did, on the radio desk I mean’ (laughter). (Lines 277-283)

**b) Telling our story is important.**

In the group analysis session, the issue of telling one’s story was not on my agenda as a research question or aim. The group re-directed their narrative, restating the importance of the story-telling act. They gave their rationale for telling their stories and observed that revealing hidden narratives can be the beginning of the process of learning, sharing and empowerment: ‘I feel that my story will help others or motivate people – or it can bring some hope to someone who is in a hopeless situation or feeling there is no lifeline – being able to provide that lifeline – for me that makes it worth telling the story’.

(Ayisha, 2017, Lines 295-298). In 2007 I was involved with WAST (Women Asylum Seekers Together), a group who published a book of their stories entitled: *Am I Safe Yet?:* ‘The stories of such women go almost unheard…even if they have the courage to speak out’. (Sharma & Berry, 2008). The
fundamental benefits of telling one’s story are substantiated in diverse disciplines; in mental health (De Salvo, 2000), general health, (Graham, 1993), feminist history (Scott, 1986) research literature (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000); human rights. (Solnit, 2017) and education (hooks, 2012).

Whist I began this project with the determination that women’s stories would be heard, my plan for the group session was for discussion and analysis of individual responses. The women had a different plan, which was to discuss the act of story sharing at some length. According to Andrews et al: ‘All narratives are, in a fundamental sense, co-constructed. The audience, whether physically present or not, exerts a crucial influence on what can and cannot be said…’ (2011:81). The personal accounts of the women cannot be seen as the ‘expression of a single subjectivity’ (ibid). Their stories are offered to me as audience and also to other women in the group where power issues exist; where willingness to please and sense of commonality and belonging are sought. Illustrative of this is the group session where the respondents selected and analysed each other’s individual quotations. Most women prefaced their analysis with: ‘this is me too’, or ‘I agree’; or ‘this was me nine years ago’. Discovering commonality within a group is as important as learning about difference. (Mullender et al, 2013:49). Members learn that issues seen as personal and individual are often societal. This learning is what Freire terms conscientisation and the telling of personal stories is an essential element towards this. Discovering commonalities and structural oppression is an important feature of consciousness raising in social pedagogy, alluded to throughout community work literature (Mullender et al, 2013; Naples, 1998; Ledwith & Springett, 2010): ‘Peoples' problems can never be fully understood if they are seen solely as a result of personal inadequacies. Issues of
oppression, social policy, the environment and the economy are, more often than not…major contributory forces’. (Mullender & Ward, 1991:31).

But women need to tell their stories at the right time for them, and in a safe place:

I believe everyone’s got a story. This is the first time publically I’m talking about my story…you’re the first person I’m talking to about it in this manner. I think that in life there is a right time to tell your story, (Ayisha, 2017:Lines: 289-292).

Mindful of Finch’s cautionary approach to interviewing women (1984:86), Ayisha’s response in the individual interview reminds me about the contrivances of intersectionality and power at play here, even between two women, one an Asian respondent and the other, a white middle class researcher.

Nevertheless, she brings out the importance of exposing unheard stories, indicating that there are some people, mainly white men, who tell their stories too often, whilst women listen and learn, but the vice-versa rarely happens. hooks considers the hearing of these lost stories as pivotal in a pedagogy of empowerment, lest they be forgotten: ‘our struggle is also a struggle of memory and against forgetting’. (2012:103.) Freire refers to education as ‘suffering from narration sickness’ (1970:52), explaining that the learning relationship is ‘fundamentally narrative’ in its character, but traditionally, the learner is considered to be the ‘patient, listening object… being filled with the contents of his (the teacher's) narration – contents which are detached from (the learner's) reality’.
The women’s comments reflect such issues in their own experiences which are also apparent in global media, where men dominate. Most recently, the absence of diverse women’s stories and pay inequalities in radio, TV and film have been regular news items. (Neate, Guardian online 2018).

I always thought it was educated white middle class people on radio – ok now you’ve got Chris Evans but by and large especially women its plumby speaking women (impersonates posh talker) but it’s not for the likes of us, it’s not people like us who are normally on radio so I never thought for one minute it (the radio training) would lead to what it has (Collette, 2014, lines 292-296)

In the group analysis session, Loraine (2017) gives her view on Ayisha’s comment which pointed out the importance of hearing the stories from people like me:

I agree with that, I think everyone’s got a story. When I first came out, I was involved in local lesbian/gay politics and worked on a helpline and talked to hundreds and hundreds of women who all had different stories and I’m talking about in the 70s when things weren’t as they are now and I went on the radio … because I felt that that was my time to tell my story – because I’d been – well not silenced exactly, but I’d kept it a secret before then and I just think that publicising things on the radio could help some women who are isolated perhaps, vulnerable women whatever their story is and I think radio gives them access to something they’ve previously been denied, and I think older women are very marginalised (of course some older men are too, but we’re talking about women in this context) – and older lesbians are even more marginalised and silenced and I think there’s a need for voices that tell our stories – we need it. (Group analysis, Lines 77 – 92).

The main conclusion to this chapter appears in chapter 9, which draws out the main messages about engagement and narratives. Loraine summarises the significance of sharing narratives, not only as an aid to exploring women’s
reasons for involvement in community radio: ‘they represent women telling it like it is’, (Graham, 1984:105), i.e. for the purpose of researching women’s lives; they are also a quintessential means of social pedagogy. Sharing and learning from each other is central to informal education, for the story-teller and the listener: ‘it extends the teaching role beyond the mere sharing of information, to a more holistic involvement’ (Florence, 1998:110). It means becoming involved in people’s feelings of sadness and joy about their lives. It builds confidence, consciousness and galvanises group solidarity: ‘we are compelled to engage “audiences”, to consider issues of reciprocity…teaching is meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become more engaged’ (hooks, 1994:11).

In Chapter Seven, the importance of critical understanding, engagement and story-telling is demonstrated further, in the respondent’s perspectives on education and empowerment prior to and during their radio experience.
Chapter 7 Analysis and Discussion: community radio as education and empowerment

One of the good things about me teaching you is that I don’t really know that much about radio. I’m not that far ahead of you, as opposed to people who know way more and are basically incomprehensible. (Jaspar in Dunbar-Hester, 2014:74).

Introduction

Dunbar-Hester’s quote from a trainer, above reflects on radio learning as the ‘work of pedagogy in technological activism’ in which trainers ‘sought to challenge the association of technical competence with masculine gender.’ (p.55). These radio trainers, or radio activists, (ibid) are paradoxically, not only focused upon a technical ‘work object’ but also on social pedagogy – the building of relationships, referred to by Bell et al (above) as ‘loving people’ in the group, sharing knowledge and experience, but also producing radio: ‘they sought to produce…technical expertise and a politics of engagement; the ultimate goal of these activities was …democratic and participatory social relations’. (p.78). This chapter illustrates community radio in a pedagogical light by juxtaposing literature with the voices of the research participants. It begins with expressions of despondency about traditional education and school life which, critical literature in Chapter three suggests, are designed to domesticate, colonise and are: ‘vigorou...
narratives with critiques and theories offered in Chapter 3. It moves towards breaking down some of the gendered barriers to the acceptance of woman-based-knowledge and strengthening women’s media presence. Radio is discussed as a pedagogical process towards empowerment.

What attracts me to Freire’s (1972;1985) pedagogical approach, and that of his feminist modernisers and challengers, (hooks, 1993; Ledwith, 2011; Luke & Gore, 1992; Mullender et al, 2013) is that it is as much about practice for social justice, as it is about academic theory. It is arguably, overtly political whilst formal education, arguably, so often has a hidden agenda. (hooks, 2003; Mclaren, 1995). Critical education challenges traditional approaches to education, accused by Newton (2008) of: ‘producing individuals totally incapable of thinking in an analytical way’ (p.5). It requires that ‘instructors and students have mutual love and respect for one another’ (ibid). In addition to this, as suggested by Apple (1999), so much educational theory is untested conjecture, imagined or posited in academic papers, sometimes for career advancement or to be legitimised as part of Freire’s (or another educationalist’s) inner circle. Bourdieu (1984 and 1988) endorses the notion that theories are too often related in complex ways to status and to markets in social and cultural capital in academia. Paradoxically, the field of critical education is not immune from: ‘members of the middle class who solve their class contradictions by writing in an elaborately abstract, but seemingly “political” manner’. (Apple, 1999:7). The purpose of theory ought not to be as a membership card to an academic club, but praxis for empowerment. Freire ‘engaged in the hard and disciplined (and sometimes dangerous) work of putting theory and practice together’(ibid). He suffered greatly for his practice, spending time in prison and
exile. The focus here is on the activism of critical feminist pedagogy and how such approaches may combat inequality. Nevertheless, empowering pedagogies alone should not divert attention from understanding 'the dynamics of wider social, cultural and economic inequality.' (Raffo, 2011:2).

a) The Green Room - where it all happens

As stated, the women’s learning and off-air conversations take place mainly in the green room, a lounge area outside the studios which is used for meeting guests, planning, preparation, informal skills learning and discussion. Moreover, these spaces are where the respondents sink into a chair, sigh and analyse the world around them. Most volunteers arrive some hours before their show goes live and often stay for some hours afterwards, partly for practical reasons 'because my flat is freezing' but also to participate in the social and informal educational aspects of radio. In this time and space: skills are shared, friendships built and general dialogue takes place. Respondent Jessica (2016) points out its significance: ‘I often speak to not one person in the week. I’m so lonely that it’s like a physical pain.’ (Research Diary line 16).

Respondent Loraine (2017) describes this as a space for sharing, learning and laughter: ‘It’s a different kind of education, but it’s still education, and now doing the show, I stay ’til 6 or 7pm chatting and sharing issues’. (Lines: 14-15)

b) School wasn’t for me

Since the project is educational in its remit, respondents discussed their experiences of school and their feelings about mainstream education. Some of
them portrayed a vivid contrast between school days and their radio training experience. The purpose of this comparison is not just to re-rehearse critiques of formal education, but to further emphasise the value of a pedagogy sculpted around a group of diverse women. In addition to this, these (very relevant) experiences were poured out as part of each respondent’s narrative. They add to the repository of evidence for reviewing mainstream education. Vee did not discover the cause or nature of her disability until she was in her thirties, but she remembers the humiliation she felt as a disabled child at school:

Ms… the housecraft teacher, she was like the spitting image puppet of Mrs Thatcher – she was a witch. She was giving instructions to the girls and all of a sudden she would stop and say – ‘Hold on we’ll have to wait for Vee ’cos she’s not as quick as the rest of you’. She really humiliated me. (2014, Lines: 66-70).

Similarly, Jessica’s Aspergers Syndrome was ignored:

I couldn’t find a way of mixing with my peers, I would sit every playtime in the playground in a corner with my coat on backwards [hood] over my head and the teachers never said a word in 4 years. (2017, Lines:82-85).

Miles & Singal (2009), argue that: ‘an inability to see disability as part of the human condition tends to mean that disabled people are overlooked’ (p.13), however, the experiences of Vee and Jessica appear as the antipathy of Darder’s (2017) ‘pedagogy of love.’ Freire exposed how, even well-meaning teachers: ‘through their lack of critical moral leadership, actually participate in disabling the heart, minds and bodies of their students’ (in Darder, 2011:180). For Collette, who at school was called ‘Jollywog’, and ‘a tomboy’, the intersections of race, class, disability and gender conspired to make her school life ‘hell’ and have her expelled from school at the age of 13: ‘I never liked school I just felt like I was trapped indoors’:
from a very early age I was always in trouble, just aggressive and I've had it checked --- frontal lobe damage, sometimes I won't remember what I've done … but if you imagine being in the very controlled environment of a classroom. I remember sitting at school looking out of the window. I used to love being outdoors I had so much energy inside of me and to make me sit down was hell (2014, Lines 47 -56).

Graham & Robinson (2015) describe everyday racism, over-disciplining and demonisation of black children in UK schools as endemic: 'These lived experiences enter the processes of schooling in many different complex ways and yet the voices and concerns of students are often silenced or ignored' (p. 655). As Collette (2014) says: ‘Yeah I do understand why you have to go to school but for me they should have saved the money’ (laughter) (Lines: 61-62).

She later explains how experiences of injustice led to the development of a political consciousness: ‘From an early age I’ve been interested in politics…I’ve always believed that everyone’s equal’. (Lines 203-209). Collette finds it hard to pinpoint the cause of her teachers' discrimination and raises issues of classism and racism. However, she is clear about the cumulative alienating effects of her treatment at school. In Why Pick On Me? (2000), Blair hears from Black students:

‘Teachers have preconceived ideas about the abilities of black students (who) pick this up and start reacting negatively. It’s usually a build up of negative feeling in the black student and then it goes to a stage where the school wants to get rid of them anyway, so if they do anything, they’re out.’ (p.84)

Similarly, In We Make the Road by Walking (1990), Freire conveys his hunger and poverty at school and how: ‘I started learning that it was important to fight against this [discrimination]. I did not know yet how to fight (but) I began to be open to this kind of [political] learning when I was a child. I am sure of that’ (p.241). hooks (1994) leaves school with a belief that education is enabling
and that it should be a place of pleasure and ecstasy which enhances our
capacity to be free: ‘despite intensely negative experiences… we were always
having to counter white racist assumptions that we were genetically inferior,
ever as capable as white peers, even unable to learn’ (p.4).

The remembering of these experiences and feelings the failure or at least
negative impact of conventional educational on their lives, attitudes to new
learning, self-esteem and identities; and that they suffered in silence. These
educational experiences, may not be generalisable to all women or minority
groups, but they offer insights into the difficulties of engagement and retention
in educational projects. Critical pedagogues argue that formal educational
institutions are factories reproducing inequalities, repressing or ignoring minority
voices, maintaining the status quo of individualist, capitalist values (Apple,
leaving school unprepared for life as a woman and shortly after leaving, found
herself married with children:

‘When I left school at 16 my ambition was to be a French teacher and
live in France. But my dream didn’t turn out the way I wanted it to – I
ended up getting married, having 3 children and I ended up supporting
them through alcohol, drugs and mental health (2017, lines 2-4).

Liz entered adult womanhood with little discussion about the roles and
expectations awaiting her. Strategies for dealing with the adult world, with
discrimination and prejudice were not discussed at school. Similarly, Black
young people are often unprepared for adulthood in a racist society: ‘So you
couldn’t get a job easily – partly because you were black, partly because you
hadn’t got an O level but what I’m trying to say is that there were a lot of jobs in
those days’. (Collette, 2014, Lines 153-155).
Critiques of formal education are well rehearsed earlier here, in published literature, research and amongst practitioners. (Mclaren, 1995; hooks, 1994). Social pedagogy offers solutions in some simple participatory techniques which teachers and community practitioners may use to build dialogue around subject based and social issues. Disabled respondent Vee, experienced disability discrimination throughout her school life, but perhaps if she had been allowed to discuss her issues, share her experiences, as part of the learning – she and other children (and teachers), would emerge from the school with raised awareness and positivity. As Freire emphasises, there is no ‘one size fits all’ in education and it needs to start where the learner is and use creative techniques based upon the learner’s experience. As Casey (2016) states: ‘rather than employing his (Freire’s) method, educators need to reinvent it for their own context, Freire said: “I don’t want to be imported or exported. It is impossible to export pedagogical practices without reinventing them. Ask them to re-create and rewrite my ideas”’. (p.18). Hope et al (2015) underline the importance of Black young people (and I would add, all young people) starting the educational process where they are and critically analysing their place in society and racism as an important developmental task. They suggest that critical consciousness is ‘an individual level coping mechanism that Black youth can leverage to combat barriers to healthy and optimal development such as racial discrimination’ (p.86). In practice this appeals for a different climate in schools, in which progressive educators nurture a climate of love, caring and co-operation, where a dialogic learning method would ensure that Black (and white) young people are aware of racism and are better prepared to cope in a racist environment. Similarly, girls and their many intersections would be better prepared for sexism – ideas rooted in Freire’s ideology of critical

Shor (1992) observes that teachers themselves are not wholly responsible for the failure of conventional education – they are not trained for mutual, dialogic education. His research examines reasons why many teachers resist dialogic teaching and concludes that their training so strongly emphasises instruction that: ‘they honestly wonder how basic information can be developed in students if the class is participatory’ (p.103). Beck & Purcell (2010) suggest that popular or social pedagogy challenges dominant power structures by offering *critical spaces* for self-reflection. They discuss Freireian practice as listening to each other; generating themes and ideas to challenge and change convention. Beck & Purcell give Freire’s view that popular education: ‘provides a rigorous process for enabling individuals to come together to reflect on themselves, their place in the world, current needs and issues and to identify possibilities for change’ (p.13):

To enter into dialogue presupposes equality amongst participants. Each must trust the others; there must be mutual respect and love (care and commitment). Each one must question what he or she knows and realize that through dialogue existing thoughts will change and new knowledge will be created. (Freire Institute, 2018).
c) The radio training as education for empowerment

My observations of, and participation in radio training in the U.K. are that it unconsciously embraces, recreates and reinvents much of the above critical theory. This intuitive approach to radio learning, is evaluated - without exception, by the research group as being positive: ‘it switched me back on’, (Kimi, 2017); ‘the radio course I totally got into it, it was fantastic’. (Madonna, 2017). These observations challenge the conclusions of Gaynor and O’Brien’s (2017) study of four radio stations in Ireland: ‘We find that democratic participation is still not optimised within the four stations studied’. Reasons given are: ‘the weakness of linkages between stations and their local community groups; and the failure of the latter to understand the unique remit of community radio’, but notably also: ‘a focus within training programmes on technical competencies over content’ (p.29)

Respondent Madonna (2017) went on to train other groups of women:

> There was five women from different backgrounds, there was a black woman, she didn’t have much confidence, another was a nurse who just wanted something new, an ex-bouncer, all wanted something new. They sat in that room on a Friday afternoon for 3 hours a week and I tell you THEY LET THEMSELVES GO! (Lines 163-167).

The educational methods of radio trainers can be analysed through a Community Development lens. Mullender et al (2013) and Preston-Shoot (2007) refer to the all-important value base of empowering practice in collective work: ‘there is no such thing as value-free or value-neutral work; there are only groupworkers who have not stopped to think what their values actually are’ (p.48). Their recipe for pedagogical success is set out in six practice principles, which include a commitment to social justice, a belief in the skills and
knowledge of the group and the power of people working collectively. (p.49).

Whilst radio trainers are not steeped in the academic mores of critical pedagogy, some of its principles are clearly operating:

‘I can’t fault the training. If you didn’t understand anything, they’d go through it again and again so patiently - and that’s the main thing because when you walk into the radio studio and you see all that equipment, you think…‘oh my god – am I going to be able to do that?’ but he had so much patience – he took the time. Now I just walk in and it’s as easy as using a mobile phone so I advise any woman – go along and do it – its great and its fun (Liz, 2017, Lines:110-116).

Little is written about community radio training, which is usually carried out by radio personnel with no educational or community work qualification or experience. Helen Manchester’s review of learning opportunities and pedagogical approaches in the UK community radio sector (2013) revealed that:

Many of the practitioners we spoke to were broadcasters first and had come to radio training from this perspective. They spoke of a skill share. Informality was a key issue in relation to pedagogical approaches and this was thought to be a huge asset of community radio, enabling radio practitioners to engage those for whom traditional educational institutions may not have catered. Learning has to be proactive and interactive, not passive – forget PowerPoint (2013:24).

The idea of sharing knowledge relates closely to the principle of empowering practice proposed by Mullender et al (2013), the belief that: ‘all people have skills, experience and understanding that they can draw on to tackle the problems they face. We understand that people are experts in their own lives and we use this as a starting point for our work’ (p.49)
Manchester goes on to discuss how community radio organisations create a unique learning culture which is very different to school. Unlike the experience of Gaynor and O'brien (2017), Manchester notes that such learning spaces tend to be at the centre of the community, often on the main shopping street or attached to another local service and with an ‘open door’ policy. As Kate relates: 'The thing about community radio is – I love it 'cos it's the heart of the community…There was an opportunity with Shout Fm to do an LGBT show and I've been doing that for about 3 years now. So that was with a co presenter – it’s important to use community radio to be entertaining but to educate as well because I think that's what it can do very well'. (2017, Line 13 & Lines 31-35).

Shout F.M. offers a food bank and access to computers/internet for those who register as volunteers. Although it is old and in need of decoration, it is a warm, welcoming building where hot drinks are free and generally other volunteers are there to welcome newcomers. Nevertheless, some paid staff refer to instances when this culture is ‘abused’. Their judgemental language indicates intolerance in an otherwise understanding culture. One example of this is that volunteers who become homeless, or especially lonely, are told that they are spending too many hours at the station; younger volunteers have downloaded illegal music. Occasionally (and naturally), volunteers argue. The management of community radio stations requires another thesis – especially in terms of the masculinist nature of community radio management and the training and skills of managers. However, conflict (at Shout Fm) is rare and usually dealt with by fellow volunteers and as Gilchrist, (2003) points out – working through conflict is an essential part of relationship building in community development work.
As highlighted in chapter 6, the creation of safe, creative spaces for learning is a simple, but essential step towards social pedagogy. In youth and community work, the provision or sharing of refreshments has always been an essential tool of engagement, especially in marginalised groups. In Soweto, I worked with women learning community development skills to use in their own townships and notably, no session began without a simple meal, nor ended without an uplifting song. Empowerment through social pedagogy depends upon collective, relational processes. (Cornwall & Edwards, 2007:9). Loraine discusses the bonding and sharing which takes place during the radio training and continues afterwards:

We were all over 50. We cared – if someone wasn’t here we’d say where’s so-and-so this week and we’d ring them. The radio training makes you make friends and share problems. It’s a different kind of education, but it’s still education, and now doing the show, I stay ‘til 6 or 7pm chatting and sharing issues so it’s kind of sustainable – and you bring education into your show – to show that Muslim women aren’t all terrorists etc. On my last show I had someone doing American native drumming – if that’s not education, what is? (2017, Lines 59-61 & 92-97)

In radio training, there are essential technical elements and in her chapter The Tools of Gender Production (2014) Dunbar-Hester discusses these in detail. Radio producers and presenters are required to be able to reconfigure the sound desk, find the correct sound levels for each contributor, upload music and other audio to the system and then during the show – drive the radio desk ensuring that there is no ‘dead air’. This is a complex business, and as stated in Chapter 6, a major barrier to the engagement of women and girls in radio. Yet, despite their initial fears, when respondents look back on their training, they tend to minimise the technical expertise they have gained: ‘I’ve learned new
skills but I wouldn’t say I’m technical’ (Liz, 2017, Lines:65-66). Collette (2014): ‘I’ve never been technically minded but I thought it was very light hearted and I learned’ (Lines: 322-325). The reason given is that the radio trainers impart knowledge and skills through a caring relationship, with patience and love.

Dunbar-Hester (2014) points out the pitfalls of trainers who may simply wish to brandish their own expertise or have little patience in training those new to their skill:

Louisa was reduced to tears when she tried to help out: ‘I wanted to learn and I wanted to get involved …and I was kind of like, “which point again?” and he got snappish and was just like “let me do it” and once you start with the “just let me do its” you don’t feel welcome and you don’t want to be involved (p.53).

Dunbar-Hester describes this as an intersection of technical skill and gender, ‘which specifically hinged on issues of gender, pedagogy, novice versus expert status’. (ibid). In Teaching Community, a pedagogy of hope (2003), hooks gives credit to feminist pedagogues for changing the curriculum: ‘Feminist intervention was amazingly successful when it came to changing academic curriculum…it was not Black Studies which led to the recovery of previously unrecognised black women writers…feminist scholars, and this includes black women, were the ones who resurrected “herstory”.’(p.4). The respondents raise the patience of the trainer and the importance of laughter and having fun as essential elements of the learning process which was absent at school: ‘If you didn’t understand, they’d go through it again and again – they had patience, that’s the main thing’ (Liz, 2017, Lines110-111… ‘so I advise any woman – go along and do it – its great and its fun’. (Lines 115-116). hooks (1994) censures feminist and critical educationalists for overlooking the importance of pleasure,
excitement and ecstasy as a major feature in learning. In Teaching Community, a Pedagogy of Hope, (2003), she characterises formal education as being too task focused and disciplined. This ‘dehumanises and thus shuts down the “magic” that is always present when individuals are active learners. It takes the “fun out of study” and makes it repressive and oppressive. (p.43). She continues: ‘In traditional education, excitement was viewed as potentially disruptive of the atmosphere of seriousness assumed to be essential to the learning process’. (p.180). And yet, it is not that the training group (or the research group) never disagree; the discussion with regard to the #metoo movement is a case in point here: ‘But that’s part of the fun of having close comrades who challenge you and keep you honest about your position’. (hooks, 2003:111). Similarly, in Pedagogy of the Heart (1997), Freire tasks democratic educators with conveying serious learning, but always generating happiness.

**d) Feeling 10 feet tall: Community Radio as education and empowerment**

What Community Radio is about is giving ‘lesser’ people (I don’t know how you are going to phrase this) but people like myself who aren’t of the mainstream - giving lesser people a chance. Cos you know yourself that (I’m not going to name any names) but there are people at the Community Radio who will never get a chance in the mainstream and I include myself in that cos I just got turned down for a job but if I can go there (to the radio station) and BE SOMETHING and have people say well done Collette – have my friends and family being proud. I got a really nice text the other week from someone who’d listened to my show and they thought it was really good. That makes you feel 10 feet tall! (Collette, 2014:Lines 366-376).

In her analysis of critical pedagogy, Ledwith (2007) sharpens focus on women’s ways of knowing. This feminist knowledge of the world, the quest for self and voice:
plays a key role in the process of transformation for women...weaving together the strands of rational and emotive thought and integrating objective and subjective knowing...increasingly feeling has contributed to feminist pedagogy as a balance between the inner self and the outer world, between the public and private, the personal and political. (p.162).

However, Nakata et al (2012) criticise notions of de-colonising education by focusing simplistically upon intersectional concerns. They advocate a more dialogic way of transferring knowledge:

We propose that students might be more disposed to understanding the limits of their own thinking by engaging in open, exploratory, and creative inquiry in these difficult intersections, while building language and tools for describing and analysing what they engage with. This approach engages the politics of knowledge production and builds critical skills. (p.121)

Lorde, (1984) supports the integration of personal and political as a way for women to reject suffering and self-negation: ‘our acts against oppression become integral with self, motivated and empowered from within’. (p.58)

Some respondents discuss negative experiences of formal education with resignation – as though everyone knows about this. They could find no place at school where they felt good, were accepted, comfortable or absorbed in learning – particularly, learning about their own history and culture (hooks, 2003). They describe their radio training as an inspirational dialogic model. Collette (2014) who was excluded from school describes herself and ‘Black, working class and uneducated’:

...so I think of Community Radio training and Community Radio as being a sort of education - I do understand why you have to go to school but for
One of the best experiences of education. (Lines 323-326)

hooks (1994) enlists Wilson to emphasise the worth of learning groups where everyone’s voice can be heard, their presence recognised and valued: ‘only by coming to terms with my own past, my own background and seeing that in the context of the world at large, have I begun to find my true voice and to understand that, since it is my own voice, that no pre-cut niche exists for it’. (p.185). Fuller (2007) refers to community media as enabling the expression of ‘a dynamic and evolving Indigenous culture, maintaining language and culture and providing community education. Media participation can be transformative for the individual and society; it can alter the power configurations within which the individual operates and strengthen communities by encouraging understanding’. (p.23)

Part of the reason for this is that empowerment, especially for women, is a relational pursuit – it emerges through dialogue with others. This perspective flows from the idea that people’s lives:

...are characterized by the ongoing conversations and dialogues they carry out in the course of their everyday activities, and therefore that the most important thing about people is not what is contained within them, but what transpires between them. (Sampson 1993: 20).

hooks (2003:2) suggests that women have consistently learned how to choose between the sexist biases in knowledge that: ‘reinscribe domination based on gender or the forms of knowledge that intensify awareness of gender equality and female self-determination.’ Furthermore she argues that traditional
epistemologies continue to hold sway in the minds of workers, teachers or professors ‘who fear getting too close to students and to one another’. (p.129).

The overarching premise of critical feminist pedagogy is that it is not just something that happens in the youth club, community project or classroom – it is a way of living. (Ledwith, 2007; hooks, 2003; McLaren, 1995). ‘Democratic educators show by their habits of being that they do not engage in forms of …psychological splitting wherein someone teaches only in the classroom and then acts as though knowledge is not meaningful in every other setting’. (hooks, 2003:44). As Ledwith (1997) restates:

"We need to identify a feminist knowledge of the world as the basis for social change. Freirian pedagogy stresses the questioning of their experiences by the oppressed in order that they come to an understanding of their own power if they are to transform their world: in knowing it, they can recreate it. In this way, feminist knowledge of the world is the foundation for action. (p.53)."

Collette reflects upon political consciousness, racism and social justice, issues that she was able to share at the radio station and in this research:

"What awoke my interest in politics was, I think, the injustice to my parents and being mixed race. I mean look at my father, he was a violent alcoholic and illegal immigrant - he never did a day’s work and if you judge him as that, that’s fair enough, to say he’s a bad person – but just to judge him as a black man and that’s why he was judged bad. (2014, Lines: 212-216)

Apple et al (2011) define critical pedagogy as seeking to ‘expose how relations of power and inequality (social, cultural, economic), are manifest and are challenged in the formal and informal education of children and adults’(p.1).

Ledwith acknowledges that counter-hegemonic educational practices are difficult in a neoliberal state, but not impossible and she emphasises the crucial collective nature of social pedagogy, of learning together and from each other:
In Freirean and feminist pedagogy, transformative change is rooted in collective action, yet the consumerist individualism that characterises neoliberalism has shifted us away from a sense of the collective. Freire vehemently reminds us that liberation is a collective experience (2007:158).

Respondents concurred – their observations are testament to the benefits of Freire’s empowerment model, but Tuck and Yang question his belief that dialogue and raised consciousness (freeing the mind of oppression) will bring about social action for change:

Freire situates the work of liberation in the minds of the oppressed, an abstract category of dehumanised worker vis-a-vis a similarly abstract category of oppressor. This is a sharp right turn away from Fanon’s work, which always positioned the work of liberation in the particularities of colonisation (2012:19).

They denounce Freire’s theory as a fantasy of mental emancipation, whereby the thinking man individualistically emerges from the dark cave of ignorance into the light of critical consciousness (ibid). Citing Lorde (1984:36), they posit that critical consciousness is found, not in the light, but in the darkness of the cave:

A woman’s place of power within each of us is…dark, it is ancient; it is deep…The white fathers told us, I think therefore I am; and the black mothers in each of us - the poet - whispers in our dreams, I feel therefore I can be free” (Tuck & Yang 2012:20)

Similarly, Ellsworth (1989) questions the claims of critical pedagogy in ‘Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering? She states that Freire’s theory leads to oversimplification which in itself continues to perpetuate cycles of domination and repression:
complex cultural and historical issues cannot be solved in the classroom…teachers must acknowledge that they have a historical, political, and cultural perspective and stake in the dialogue and discussion and allow students to name what they want to be empowered to do (p.297).

She condemns liberatory pedagogy as myth and further, as ‘silencing diversity.’ Furthermore, the goal of empowerment is too abstract, and therefore, unachievable. (p.299) hooks (1994), Ledwith & Springett (2010) and others do attempt the simplification and practical application of complex notions such as conscientisation, however, they are also candid with regard to the many barriers to liberatory education. Freire acknowledges it as: ‘like a childbirth, and a painful one’(1970:43), and agrees that the internalisation of oppression can take years to overcome. He highlights ‘tokenism’ as another immense barrier to genuine empowerment.

As a practicing social worker encouraging service-users to join groups, I reflected regularly on the complexities of empowerment - almost to the point of giving up. A Disabled woman challenged me: ‘I haven’t left the flat for years, so don’t think you can come here and try and change me’. After the careful building of a friendship it emerged that previous social workers had advised her that there was no money in the budget for taxi fares, so Disability Coalition meetings and other activities were inaccessible. She had become so isolated by, disempowered by, and disillusioned with ‘helping’ agencies that she became afraid of getting her hopes up. Ellsworth (1989) makes persuasive points about the myth of empowerment. This also signifies the gatekeeping power of individual workers and their need for courage to challenge authority. (Raffo, 2011). hooks refers to this in Teaching to Transgress: ‘We were proud of ourselves, proud of our willingness to transgress the rules, proud to be courageous’ (1994:24) and Shor (1992) also points out that the character,
creativity and confidence of the individual worker is paramount. (p.101). Freire (1970) and Shor (1987) return frequently to the notion of fear. The worker or teacher is often fearful of challenging the status quo:

The more that we were willing to struggle for an emancipatory dream, the more apt we were to know intimately the experience of fear, how to control and educate our fear, and finally, how to transform that fear into courage. Moreover, we could come to recognize our fear as a signal that we are engaged in critical opposition to the status quo and in transformative work toward the manifestation of our revolutionary dreams (p.209).

As for Ellsworth’s suggestion that critical pedagogy reinforces inequality, concealing diversity, Shor (1992) counters this claim in *Critical Dialogue versus Teacher-Talk*: ‘Teacher-talk is a way to deny the diversity of the students, because the differences of the students are bewildering, threatening, or demanding’. (p.103). Furthermore, he claims that traditional education enables educators to ‘hide from problems by portraying students as uncultured, undisciplined, mediocre people’ (ibid), hence justifying an authoritarian structure to put them in their place. hooks (2015, 1994 & 2003) and Lorde (1984) maintain the importance of workers opening up to student experiences - exploring intersectionality. Life for white and Black women can be very different; as Lorde states:

Some problems we share as women, some we do not. You fear your children will grow up to join the patriarchy and testify against you, we fear our children will be dragged from a car and shot down in the streets, and you will turn your backs upon the reasons they are dying. (cited in Martin, 1993:45).

I just remember being told that I was black and that there’s something wrong with you. At about aged 7 a white girl came up to me for no reason at all and says ‘I’m better than you cos I’m white and I went bang (hit her). I never told…[teachers]. Collette, (2014, Lines:224-227).
Au (2011:222) challenges notions of Freire’s naivety, stating that he uses two different approaches to formulate his praxis: ‘problem posing and dialogue’, so mental emancipation is not *empowerment* in its totality, but dialogue and story-sharing *initiate the process* of conscientisation. Hatton (2013) argues that sharing stories means problematising what were previously considered to be almost natural, individual and often secret issues. He asserts that a key way in which people are marginalised is through a process in which their behaviour ‘…becomes pathologised and their human nature is constructed in a distorted way through what Freire describes as process of indoctrination, manipulation and ‘dominated consciousness’ (2013:27). As Respondent Ayisha states: ‘I used to think that – at the back of my mind or maybe society made me think that – if a woman was being abused – it was her own fault. Until then I realised it’s the men judging it’ (Lines:324-326).

In Ayisha’s terms, *conscientisation* is likened to *realisation* and this is a common theme amongst respondents especially in terms of abuse. Freire notes the difficulties in this ‘consciousness awakening’:

> Correcting one’s earlier perception isn’t always easy. The relation between subject and object means that revealing an objective reality equally affects its subjective qualities, and sometimes in an intensely dramatic and painful manner (1985:16).

Freire the internalisation of oppression, how people cling to nostalgia, often resisting the critical examination of their experiences. In synchronicity with Fanon, he discusses ‘a kind of defensiveness…a certain lingering nostalgia for their old (colonial) masters. Conditioned by dominant ideology, those who remain nostalgic, not only wipe out their capacity to see their reality, but sometimes they *sheepishly submit themselves to the myths of that ideology as*
well’. (Freire, 1985:16). Jessica’s observation that women are flattered by men’s comments, might be seen as a submission to nostalgic myths. However, Freire’s observation is uncharacteristically pathologising of oppressed groups. As Solnit (2017) and respondent Sasha point out, women are neither ‘sheepish’ nor ‘cunning and deceptive’ (Scott, 1990:136); they may appear to submit to myths and remain silent for complex reasons associated with fear and shame.

As respondent Sasha points out:

I think particularly from a Nigerian point of view women are very much shamed into silence. It’s a shame if you make it known that your husbands beating you and not only is it a shame, it’s like just get on with it. It happens, it’s been happenin’ – it happened for your grandmother, it happened for your mother JUST GET ON WITH IT (raised voice). That’s life, that’s men for you – and that’s the kind of attitude – they kind of make you feel shamed and they kind of normalise the whole situation (Sasha, 2017, Lines: 43-50).

Respondents raise issues where radio itself plays an important educational role with women hosting shows about FGM [Female Genital Mutilation], well-being, carers, disability, Lollywood films, LGBTQ issues. A Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a regional carer’s organisation asked to be recorded during my research:

I think, rather than the radio benefitting them, these 2 women have benefitted the radio. They bring a real sense of humanity to the radio show- its not rehearsed or false, they present themselves as they are. Keeping it real…Listeners to the show say that they are able to identify with the 2 women presenting it and feel that they ‘understand how I feel and what I’m going through’ and that sense of identity breaks down the social isolation that many carers feel. They then feel ‘I’m not on my own’. (CEO 2017).

Sthapitanonda & Thirapantu (2007) point out that participatory media requires:

heart-to-heart communication. People need to communicate not only by using their brains, but also by their hearts, with an emphasis on sincerity. This process can build the public imagination about community and can
also lead to trust among one another and to the responsibility to cooperate with each other. (p.157)

It is observed at Shout FM and other community radio stations, that women are more likely to present educational, issue based, knowledge-sharing talk shows than men, who prefer specialist music shows. The listener above notes this:

There's a real difference in the way women and men do radio shows and convey a sense of being your friend...Women can talk about anything—even on radio, whereas men tend not to talk about personal things— but might talk about a type of music or a hobby (CEO, 2017).

Though anecdotal, these observations highlight that gendered differences are complementary, rather than competitive. On the separation of feminist pedagogy from Freirean pedagogy, hooks says it is ‘...much like weaving a tapestry, I have taken threads of Paulo’s work and woven it into that version of feminist pedagogy I believe my work as a writer and teacher embodies’ (1993:150).

The respondents’ pedagogical experience illustrates Hatton’s (2013) point that individual issues are often 'symptoms of deeper and more complex social and economic issues' (Ledwith, 2007:154). Here, they find: ‘space to interrogate their actions’. (hooks, 1994:147), to appreciate the commonality of their situation, learn from each other, depathologise their problems. Bright et al (2013:747) examine ‘space, place and social justice in education’, investigating spaces where social justice in education can take place. Implying that most educationalists have come late to spacial perspectives, they raise the notion of spaces of gender, race and class – these may not be physical, but mental and dialogic spaces where social justice pedagogy takes place.
We would speculatively suggest that this tardiness (of formal educationalists considering spacial thought) is related to the fact that questions of social justice in education have tended to be the prerogative of critical pedagogic thought in the lineage of Freire which, while it has been keen to rethink itself has come late to spatial thought (2013:749).

The spaces under discussion here, of feminist thought, feminist research and the radio activist space provide the opportunity for social justice pedagogy:

‘Social pedagogy should stimulate people to change their situations and thereby also develop themselves during the process’ (Hatton, 2013:27). Ledwith endorses this: ‘Praxis is the bedrock of this process: theory in action, building a body of knowledge based on experience’ (Ledwith, 2007:154). And In response to Tuck & Yang’s (2012) criticism, Freire vigorously defends his belief in collective liberation:

Even when you individually feel yourself most free, if this feeling is not a social feeling, if you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free...then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom (in Ledwith, 2007:158).

Respondent Madonna (2017) concurs: ‘On radio you are the voice of the community and that is power in itself but it’s the power of bringing the community together so we can think, “there’s more to life than just existing or just your own individual misery”.’ (Lines 214-216). In the group analysis, Kimi chooses Ayisha’s quote: ‘I think that when one person carries that message of empowerment, you carry that with you and you bring it to other people’. She says:

That stood out for me cos I agree that we all have a voice – and it’s how we use it that can make a difference to other people and this message of empowerment here can influence people in positive and negative ways so when you’re on air it does carry quite far (Group analysis, Lines:51-54)
What transpires from the respondents is that the notion of *voice* features strongly in the process of empowerment; but also the participation in *dialogue*, the sharing of feelings, laughter and ideas with like-minded, trusted women emerges as a powerful feature. This is not to say that these features of education are not present in formal education, but that their potency is not emphasised except in critical (and especially) feminist pedagogy.

The ideas of a common cause ...and of a collective history are created which can serve as a positive grounding for the construction of a new political community. The process is based on dialogue; it works with cultural forms that are familiar to participants; in other words it is based upon an agenda and definitions determined by *participants*, not by workers or researchers. (Banks cited in Packham, 2008:13).

In their article *Happiness Education: a pedagogical commitment* (2017), Brazilian educators, Guiherme & Souza de Freitas contend that happiness education is needed now in order to repair damage done by formal schooling. In the group session, the radio training was frequently referred to as an opportunity to *make light* of shared negative experiences. Respondents selected quotes from each other and wrote or talked through their analysis. Liz chose to discuss a quote about relationship abuse:

> I picked this because this was me years ago. I was in a very abusive marriage and everyone thought everything was fine and I kept quiet about everything, for 7 years I put up with the beatings, and the drink, me kids being hungry, no money, no clothes, no nothing, and it’s like a spark, a light switch goes on and you think ‘I can’t do this anymore, I’m gonna walk’. (Lines: 112-117).

For the respondents, the radio training provides a space in which feelings and ideas are encouraged and respected. This comfortable, loving safe space is a pre-requisite and an integral part of the learning experience. But Guilherme & Souza de Freitas (2017) restate that there are many barriers, not least from
learners themselves who are conditioned to expect ‘banking education’ and adopt (or prefer) a passive learning style: ‘they perceive that the teacher is the trustee of all knowledge’ (p.8), and Eaton (2001) found also that such ‘feminist pedagogy’: ‘is generally marginalised and isolated in the field of media teaching’ and her respondents rationalised resistance to feminist or critical race/ethnicity pedagogy as: ‘too “touchy feely” and lacking in standards…too “narrow” or “too much of a personal agenda”…Many scholars do not value pedagogy that builds critical arguments…or even believe that all teaching and research perspectives are political’ (p.390).

The ‘lightbulb moment’ of raised consciousness is a common concept in the group which is referred to in the next chapter in some detail. Some of the women describe this with regard to the sudden switching on to political ideas which crystalise personal experiences and sentiments. As stated above, Ayisha’s moment came after some years of ‘imprisonment’ in a marriage: ‘I used to think that – at the back of my mind or maybe society made me think that – if a woman was being abused – it was her own fault. Until then I realised it’s the men judging it’ (2017, Lines:324-326). Naples (1998) captures Ayisha’s idea of the lightbulb moment when her respondent Sandra returns from a pro-choice demonstration and begins to make connections between the personal and political. For some years Sandra had kept silent about her abortion, but she now found the words to discuss it: ‘we sat down, and we started talking about feminism. And I was like (clicks her fingers a number of times)…like everything (clicks) just like that…Like a lightbulb…it was like, oh! Oh! Oh!’ (p.147).
e) Radio as pedagogy

The project aimed to explore how respondents articulate their community radio experience in terms of the activism of critical, feminist pedagogy. Freire’s notion of ‘praxis’ captures this in the transformational nature of collective learning and reflection: ‘Praxis is reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. Through praxis, oppressed people can acquire a critical awareness of their own condition, and, with their allies, struggle for liberation’ (1970:33).

Fuller (2007) extends the activism of Freire’s notion to media: ‘Media participation can be transformative for the individual and society; it can alter the power configurations within which an individual operates and strengthen communities by encouraging understanding (p.23).

I just love getting my voice out there – it’s given me a lot of confidence. It’s took years to become me again. I found that while I was doing the caring role, I was somebody’s mum, somebody’s wife, somebody’s this that or the other and I was losing Liz – you know, I was born Liz but over the years lost Liz and now I’ve become Liz again. Somebody said to me years ago ‘there’s a life beyond caring’ and I said ‘yeah right, I can’t see that’. But you know there is – so I can do my caring but I’ve got a life for me. It’s a totally different life now I’m not Liz as a young Liz going out enjoying myself but I’m Liz the 62 year old – mature Liz – I’m me. I like the life (Liz, 2017, Lines:55-63).

In their analysis of their radio training and experience, the women uncover some different dimensions of pedagogy, including the importance of fun, the acknowledgement of feeling, caring for and listening to each other, having the opportunity to tell their stories as a vital source of knowledge. Throughout the study, emerges the notion that ‘we are all a part of everything and it is a part of each of us’. (Newton, 2008:14). This African ideal of ‘Ubuntu’, that we are nothing without each other (Tutu, 1999:29), is key in Community Development: ‘I am we’ (Newton, 2008:151). Central is the idea that empowerment is a
relational, collective, rather than self-serving, individual process: ‘giving victims a voice and rehabilitating their humanity. There’s enormous value in letting people tell their stories’ (Tutu, 1999:29). In both group and individual dialogues the participants talk frequently about their own definitions of education and empowerment as something to be shared; learning to be cascaded, not only amongst radio volunteers, but with radio listeners:

The main purpose of ‘Carers Unite’ (name of radio show) is to reach out to other carers and let other people know about the support there is – to reach out to unpaid carers and the hardest part is that a lot of people don’t know that they are carers, they’ll say ‘no I’m a mum, a wife, a husband, not a carer, or a son or daughter. They don’t realise that when you’re a carer you go beyond what a mum or a daughter normally does. So hopefully on the radio, the people who listen will be able to understand that (Liz, 2017, Lines: 70-75).

You could be a woman listening at home, say you’re from an Asian background or something or from an African point of view, there could be a show talkin’ about domestic abuse – abuse in relationships and marriages and in the African community it’s such a taboo subject to talk about – it’s still happening, but no one talks about it. If an African female host can talk about that issue on radio and bring it to the limelight and make it very clear that if this is happening to you it is wrong, it is not normal and these are the channels you can reach out to for help – you are not on your own, there are so many women going through this and you don’t have to go through this – and it’s through CR you’d get to hear this, you wouldn’t turn on Capital FM and hear such an issue like – do you know what I mean? You wouldn’t listen to mainstream radio and hear those issues being discussed. (Sasha, 2017, Lines 29-41).

In *Feminisms, Empowerment and Development: Changing Women’s Lives* (2014) Cornwall and Edwards present a variety of community projects which underline the importance of women’s empowerment as a collective, dialogic and relational phenomena: ‘empowerment is not an individual resource to be maximised for efficiency’ but depends absolutely on ‘relational dimensions’ (p.9). They challenge the recently adopted use of community development (in the U.K.) as a tokenistic capitalist tool devoid of politics and collective, relational
elements, constructed merely to lift individual women out of poverty creating a climate of competition: ‘what is empowering to one woman isn’t necessarily empowering to others’ (p.23). Such notions of community development, based on individualised economics miss the importance of women working and learning together; building and sustaining relationships, through which to challenge the status quo; empowering themselves and others. Respondents support this notion of their radio work as collective activism towards women’s solidarity. ‘Education in its non-hegemonic sense is fuelled by curiosity and creativity, it is an expansive and never ending process which, rather than educating for obedience does so for full human potential.’ (Ledwith, 2007:112).

Only when this process has taken place, to repeat Freire’s assertion, ‘can the oppressed society as a whole cease to be silent toward the ‘director society’ (1985:71).

Thus, understanding the culture of silence presupposes an analysis of dependence as a relational phenomenon that gives rise to different forms of being, of thinking, of expression to those of the culture of silence and those of the culture that ‘has a voice’ (ibid:72)

It’s letting people know that you’ve been in that situation and that there is loads of support out there and all they have to do is pick up a phone because we give all the support groups out, all the phone numbers – and we say ‘even if you’re not sure you’re a carer, make the phone call. We bring music and laughter into the show so that it’s not just talking (Liz, 2017, Lines: 82-88).

Feminist pedagogy, Liberatory education, as concepts in practice are convincingly argued through the experiences of the group who demonstrate a commitment to humanity, which is not merely: ‘some simplistic or psychologized
notion of "having positive self-esteem, but rather a deeply reflective interpretation of the dialectical relationship between our cultural existence as individuals and our political and economic existence as social beings." Darder, (2011:180).

The final analysis chapter looks more closely at the rationale behind women’s silence or ‘voice poverty’ in media and the role of radio and feminist pedagogy in challenging this.
Chapter 8 Analysis and Discussion: breaking the silence

‘Your Silence Will Not Protect You’ (Lorde, 1984:44).

Introduction

In terms of the thesis title: *Breaking the Silence: Women, Community Radio and Empowerment*, it is important to reconsider women’s silence, some of the reasons behind it, how respondents articulate the nature of their silence, and whether they feel that community radio has enabled the breaking of that silence. This analysis chapter reviews the concepts of, and rationale behind silence and voice in the perception of the research respondents combined with the literature. It focuses particularly on Lorde’s (1984) conclusion that although silence may offer temporary protection to individual women, ultimately, this protection is not sustainable and does not extend to protecting other women in the community, society, nor in the world. Lorde concludes, as does Freire (1972) that only when the silence of oppression is broken, will empowerment take place. Nevertheless, the respondents report a variety of justifications for their silence, driven by internal and external factors. This is followed mainly by relief but also more complex, conflicted feelings, about finding and using their voices.

After hearing the women’s discussion and analyses with regard to breaking the silence; Chapter Nine brings together the three analysis chapters, unearthing the main lessons and thoughts with regard to the research questions. Chapter Ten reflects upon the research process and Chapter Eleven offers conclusions to the whole project, suggesting where its findings might be utilised.
a) **Best to keep quiet? Why women take a while to find their voice.**

It is clear, in the individual and group sessions that gendered abuse, along with its accompanying fear and shame figure strongly in the lives of most participants and much of the analysis focusses on the issue. There is lengthy discussion with regard to staying silent about abuse, prompted by Priceless’ admission: ‘I’ve lived in silence for years during my abuse with my ex and everyone thought I had the perfect marriage’ (2017, lines 86-87). Amongst respondents there is an acceptance of silence as a safety measure and a supposition that hiding abuse is a sad but necessary skill: ‘For many years I was silenced and its difficult – to break out of it when you’re going through it’ (Ayisha, 2017, Lines 318-319).

I picked this quote (Priceless’) because this was me years ago. I was in a very abusive marriage and everyone thought everything was fine and I kept quiet about everything, for 7 years I put up with the beatings, and the drink, me kids being hungry, no money, no clothes, no nothing…(Liz, 2017, Lines:112-115)

There is some agreement that there are different kinds of silence - which can be used to stay safe, to collude, but also that silence can be powerful; not with regard to keeping safe, because that is surely not powerful, as it is a silence forced by power. Foucault (1990) suggests that there is no binary division between silence and voice, what one says and what one keeps to oneself. It depends on who has what power:

…we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorised, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are
an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses (p.27).

Solnit (2017) argues that silence and powerlessness go hand in hand and for women, is often linked with abuse: ‘Violence against women is often against our voices and our stories. It is a refusal of our voices, and of what a voice means; the right to self-determination, to participation, to consent or dissent, to live and participate, to interpret and narrate’ (p.19). Respondent Sasha (2017) concurs, conveying also the complexities involved in the notion of shame as a powerful silencer. Not only are women shamed by abuse into absolute silence, they are also made to feel ashamed about non-collusion with silence, i.e. having ideas about breaking out of an historically accepted and acceptable situation:

I think particularly from a Nigerian point of view women are very much shamed into silence. It’s a shame if you make it known that your husbands beating you and not only is it a shame, it’s like just get on with it. It happens, it’s been happenin’ – it happened for your grandmother, it happened for your mother ...(raises voice) JUST GET ON WITH IT. That’s life, that’s men for you – and that’s the kind of attitude –they kind of make you feel shamed and they kind of normalise the whole situation. (Lines: 43-51)

Despite the intersectional nature of the women participants (Crenshaw, 1991:1241), abusive relationships and being shamed into silence are realised and problematised as a common feature in the lives of women. As Parrott (2012) states Voices are suppressed by: ‘self-restraint, by force or suppressed in translation.’ (p.376). The understanding between women about the complexities of violence and silence is an ‘unspoken knowledge’, a women’s epistemology, and it is ‘meaning making’, despite its quietness or its suppression (ibid). Fanon (1965) noted that women acquire ‘a clandestine form of existence’, but he interprets each woman’s silence and private, quiet
dialogue as: ‘deepening her consciousness of struggle and preparing for combat’ (p.66). At the radio station, it is notable how women’s dialogue often becomes constrained or silent when a male enters the room. In Freire’s terms (1985), this secret woman-talk, is arguably their problematising towards conscientisation. Of course, this is not an original idea; In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) Friedan discusses the mental harm done by women suppressing their voices: “I don't know what's wrong with women today,’ a suburban psychiatrist said uneasily. ‘I only know something is wrong because most of my patients happen to be women’” (p. 390). According to Brooks (2011), Betty Friedan granted a name to this “strange stirring, dissatisfaction and yearning” felt by so many women. She called it, aptly, “the problem that has no name” (p. 387).

As women came together and shared their stories of unhappiness and dissatisfaction, they stopped blaming themselves for failing to comply with the happy housewife image. Instead, they began to critically examine society through the lens of their own experiences and to challenge the social norms and expectations of the woman-as-housewife model…women developed a feminist standpoint—a critical perspective on reality and a position of political consciousness (Brooks, 2011:8).

Lorraine (2017) recounts how many LGBTQ women stayed silent in order to avoid being disowned, harassed or risk losing their children: ‘what older people went through, the harassment and families disowning them (I'm not saying it doesn't happen now) but years ago it was much much worse especially for women – women were afraid of getting their children taken off them whereas that’s not likely now. But that was a real worry which is why a lot of women stayed hidden’ (Lines:157-162). Lorraine goes on to remember how homophobia was an acceptable part of social service’s policy: ‘there was no gay
pride – and we were attacked by the N.F. [The National Front, an extreme right wing organisation in UK] and the police’ (Lines:155-156). She talks about the complete lack of support for Lesbian Mothers and how this contributed to her depression. Szymanski & Kashubeck-West (2008:578) review the evidence of internalised oppression amongst Lesbian women and consider Piggot’s (2004) study of 803 lesbian and bisexual women and her Internalised Misogyny Scale: ‘which reflects three dimensions: devaluing of women, distrust of women and gender bias in favour of men….she found internalised homophobia and sexism to be significant predictors of depression and self-esteem’. Their article supports the view that internalised oppression impacts upon mental health, but it does not consider other intersecting oppressions such as racism, poverty, or class, nor more intricate (but as impactful) gendered roles such as motherhood and caring. Respondent Madonna expresses great joy at passing her radio course and applying to the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] for the one placement on offer: ‘open to Black, minority and mixed race people…and I was in the final interview when I got the call – “it’s your mum at the hospital, she’s got stage 4 cancer”. So I had to go back into the interview after that and I didn’t get it, I came second.’ (Lines78-83). She was not asked about her Mother, the absence of any care and human concern for her situation is depressing. Another thesis would be necessary to critique U.K. mainstream media’s efforts towards improving diversity. Particularly disappointing, is the fact that the BBC is a public broadcaster funded by the British people and tasked to represent all communities, yet Madonna’s anecdote highlights its unsympathetic corporate attitude; lack of acknowledgement of and action to combat the societal factors holding women back. (Segal & Demos, 2018).
Respondent Kate (2017) brings in the notion of trolling – how women are silenced on line and in the media. She feels invisible as a lesbian woman in mainstream media: ‘There’s nothing on BBC for LGBTQ community. I don’t want to ghettoise anybody – in the same way that I think there are so many different kinds of women – but we as women don’t have the same opportunities and while we don’t have that we have to say “we demand this space!” - same for the LGBTQ community’ (Lines: 137-140). As Spivak’s argues (1992:46), the key ingredient of empowerment is not being ‘given’ a voice, but demanding a voice, working with oppressed communities to secure a voice.

Emerging from literature and the participants, is the diverse nature of language used to break the silence. hooks discusses language as ‘a place of struggle’ especially with regard to its place in slavery and colonisation. However, she also extols the power of having a ‘language of resistance’:

Learning English, learning to speak the alien tongue, was one way enslaved Africans began to reclaim their personal power... possessing a shared language, black people could once again find a way to make community, and a sense to create the political solidarity necessary to resist (2008:858).

The participants, women with Northern U.K. accents, discuss their anger that only southern U.K. accents [known as Queen’s English] are acceptable in mainstream media and some attempt to adopt a different way of speaking when on radio (eg Kimi on page 50). Another reason girls and women remain silent is through fear of judgement. As a social worker reading case notes written about young women, I was shocked at the frequency of judgmental statements in reports written by colleagues: ‘she is a manipulative teenager’, and she
‘answers back’, is: ‘cheeky, abrupt, insolent, disrespectful’. Such critical remarks are particularly used for Black young women who Koonce says ‘talk with attitude’ (2012:29). hooks corroborates: ‘racist, sexist stereotypes characterized black females as loud, rude, overbearing’ (2015:preface). In feminist practice and analysis, a reframing of oppressive language is necessary, eg: transforming ‘manipulative’ to ‘strategies of resistance’ or ‘mobilising resources’, so what Kimi calls her ‘big gob’ is her strategy of resistance:

I’ve always had a big gob – a voice, More often than not, if I feel compelled to speak up I can’t help myself, but there has been situations where I’ve felt like yeah – my voice has been cut off or I’ve not been listened to (Kimi, 2017. Lines 92-95).

As Spencer’s classic text implored:

It is imperative that we begin to unravel the many linguistic means by which patriarchy has been created…If we are to begin to take it apart we must be able to recognise its form (1980:5).

However, behind the confident ‘big gob’ is an internal conflict, as Kimi continues:

…and coincidentally last year, around the time that the radio training was happening, I was in what was becoming quite an abusive relationship. So I was a bit conflicted. On one hand... I was trying to put out this message of being this confident person, at the same time in my private life, almost accepting things that all my instincts were saying ‘no this is not right – this is not right’ (Kimi, 2017, Lines:95-100).

Collette, as a mixed race woman, remembers dealing with internal conflicts of identity: ‘In the past I used to be embarrassed about having a very white side to my culture -If I gave certain black people a lift in my car I would hide my CD’S [music] by white artists as they would have a dig at me for being a Coconut . These days however, I just say as I am half white and was raised virtually single
handed by my white mother why shouldn’t I have a white side? I feel as I get older, I am able to feel more comfortable as a mixed person’. (2016, Lines 49-53) Priceless discusses how she, and others, become adept at the ‘cunning deception’ (Scott, 1990:136); putting on a show and remaining silent about an abusive relationship:

…you see them, their clothes look good and happy, but you never know the storms that’s brewing on the inside – because I’ve lived in silence for years during my abuse with my ex and everyone thought I had the perfect marriage and my children – (puts on another voice) ‘Oh your beautiful children, your beautiful marriage’ and no-one has ever known, until I break the silence… and move away, because no-one knew – everyone thought everything was OK until I step away from that marriage. It was like ‘what happen, how this happen?’ (2017, lines 85-94).

Freire discussed this conflict as a battle against internalised oppression where ‘liberation is thus, a child birth, and a painful one’ (1970:29). Bullock discusses the ‘suffocating strictures of gender to which girls are subjected’ and how this suffocation can lead to low self-esteem and self-hatred:

Society, identified in these texts as the agent of the engendering process, is implicitly or explicitly figured as masculine, placing women in a subordinate position vis-à-vis structures of power (2010:154).

Kimi expresses this with sadness in her analysis of Vee’s observations that community radio. Vee states:

is the first time I’ve really done something that I can honestly say that without any contradiction that I’m good at… the only time really I’ve been able to say that (2014, Lines: 508-510).

Kimi responds:

My thoughts on this are… to go through life believing that you aren’t good at anything or ever have been seems like a tragedy to me. To find something that sparks all that positive – can do feel about ourselves is
like the happy ending, or if you look at it another way – a happy beginning (group session 2017, Lines 22-26).

For a variety of reasons, respondents discuss self-consciousness about their appearance and how this led to the development of strategies of avoidance and resistance – also a preference for being hidden whilst transmitting their voice. Vee (2014) mentions this early in her life:

At the age of 12 I was 36D…it was scary you know – cos all these boys with raging hormones and me with big boobs. Because of the way I looked I started to develop my personality really because I didn't have much else going for me really apart from my boobs so that was when I started developing my sense of humour and other skills – also because I was always like the 'tag along'. All the other girls would get the boys and I'd tag along. (Lines 135-145).

In Woman Hating, (1974), Dworkin comments: ‘In our culture, not one part of a woman’s body is left untouched, unaltered. No feature or extremity is spared the art, or pain, of improvement…. From head to toe, every feature of a woman’s face, every section of her body, is subject to modification, alteration… From the age of 11 or 12 until she dies, a woman will spend a large part of her time, money, and energy on binding, plucking, painting and deodorizing herself (p.113). Ramazanoglu (1993) argues that although Foucault (1984) and poststructuralist thinkers focused upon women’s struggles with the myths of body-beautiful; such analyses were already a central theme of first wave feminism. As early as 1792 Wollstonecraft drew attention to the plight of girls and women ‘slaves to their bodies…women are everywhere in this deplorable state…’ (Ramazanoglu,1993:185).
The significance of radio as a medium which serves to disembodied voice, is an important issue in the group discussion as follows: ‘I think women – we’re made to feel very conscious of our appearance and so a lot of people say “I love it on radio I don’t have to dress in a particular way, don’t have to do my hair, my make-up or whatever, cos I’m not being judged in that way” – the gender kinda way’ (Group session, Lines:167-170).

I didn’t feel judged on the radio by what I looked like but come to think of it yeah, I have been judged for my Manci Mancness [Manchester accent] loadsa times (laughter from all), but it doesn’t mean I’m gonna squish it, but sometimes my son says ‘why do you put that voice on on the radio?’ and I don’t realise I’m doing it. (Group session, Lines 129-133).

Stewart and Pileggi (2007) along with Foucault (1980) argue that accessibility to communications technology can change power relations by making the invisible visible. (p.242). Aside from uncovering existing power relations in the media industry in terms of women – it is argued in the U.K. that regional English accents are disappearing partly due to the dominant ‘Queen’s English’ and also to the homogenisation of global media.

Me: But do you feel as bothered about that (being judged for your accent)?  
(Group session, Line:134).

Kimi: ‘No definitely not, it feels OK there’. (at that particular radio station) 
(Line:135)

Me: But ‘Manciness’ [having a Manchester accent] isn’t really a negative thing (136).

But neither were the other things I were being judged for but I got tired of being judged for the way I looked (Asian) – everything was about the way I looked’.(Kimi, in group discussion Lines 137-139).
Darder, (2018) underlines the connection made by Freire between language, accent, culture and class, stating that ‘colonisers spent centuries trying to impose their language as a means of social control and cultural repression…It is precisely because language rises out of historical relationships of culture, gender, sexuality, religion, etc; that a revolutionary pedagogy must begin where students are situated’. (p.116).

This extra dimension of voice is present in the women’s responses, particularly from the women of colour. Martin (1993:48), interprets this as: ‘Hatred, particularly self-hatred, and anger …related as a result of the social construction of skin colour, racism, and gender. They create a social death wish (Lorde, 146)’. Respondents disclose the pleasure of vocal disembodiment – the fact that they can remain invisible and simply be heard:

I don’t always make a big deal out of any particular race that I am, I’m interested in so many different cultures anyway, so I find it really nice to just be a voice. There’s a power in that ‘cos it’s just you and what you want to say, sometimes maybe people hold back with their judgements if they can’t see you. I think that could be something that could apply not just to a racial thing – you know how people see you and make assumptions. I do think that whoever you are and whatever you look like, radio can be a way of people just hearing your voice and maybe liking what you say. (Marie, 2017. Lines: 71-85).

Levo-Henriksson (2007) explains this as damage done by mainstream media’s power to define ethnic minorities. She argues that it is only in their own media, that minorities can ‘create their definitions of ethnicity – they can define who they are, or who they feel they are, as compared to what other groups say about what they are and what they think’. (p.58). Only then, do they stop being ‘passive recipients of media misrepresentation’. (ibid). Maria concurs:

...if they can’t see you, maybe they listen more to what you have to say because obviously you can’t put the same judgements on a voice. (Maria in group discussion, Lines: 39-41 group session).
Levo-Henriksson presents 3 functions of ethnic minority media: preservation of linguistic and cultural identity, promotion of integration and education of the majority population: ‘of these, my focus is on the preservation of linguistic and cultural identity, especially cultural traditions of an ethnic minority, threatened with erosion’. (p.60). These are strong features of Community Radio in the U.K. with radio programmes in a variety of community languages, and presenters representing the immensely diverse U.K. cultural landscape. However, within that diversity, women are still under-represented. (Mitchell, 2014).

Liz and Vee end the discussion about disembodiment by emphasising the importance of body language, particularly for women, who, with a variety of cultural variations; are adept at small gestures of resistance viewed by male author Croft (2010) as the secret body language of girls. Outside the studio, it is women’s experience that their body language is frequently misinterpreted and judged in what Treat et al (2016) call ‘maladaptive cue-utilization patterns…particularly among men’ (p.985):

But people are quick to do that (judge) aren’t they cos if you talking face-to-face it’s about your posture and the way you feel you’re speaking, but you can go home and say ‘well do you know?’ (hands on hips) – but on the radio I can do that … it’s not like in meetings cos nobody can see my hands moving or my fist clenched! (Group Lines: 140-144).

‘Nobody can see you going like this either’. (rude gesture with fingers). (laughter) (Vee, Group session Line: 145).

These observations bring out the power the women feel when their bodies are invisible, yet their voices can be heard. There is the sense that women should not express indignation (hands on hips), anger (clenched fists), care, humour,
sarcasm or any raw emotion, but on radio they are permitted to express or temper the intensity of feeling, letting it be seen only by their co-presenter/s in the radio studio. Although participants see the hiding of emotions in a positive way, conversely this is also seen as a negative feature of radio which hides or constrains real emotion or different cultural mores. Levo-Henriksson (2007) asserts that (Western) radio practices can ‘remove expressive powers and/or change natural communication conventions of indigenous languages (Native American)’ due to the lack of tolerance for ‘dead air’ – ‘minute long pauses, which are typical in many indigenous languages where...they are employed as signs of respect and politeness, giving consideration to an alternative point of view’ (p.61).

Szymanski and Kashubeck-West’s study (2008:575) refers to internalised sexism and heterosexism leading to negative body image, low self-esteem and poor mental health amongst LGBTQ women whilst hooks (1989 and 2015) highlights the particular issues for Black women and the need for ‘blackwomen’s voices’. In Talking Back (2015), hooks points out the important difference between Black and white women’s silences. She expresses the need for ‘blackwomen's voices to emerge, not merely from silence into speech, but to change the nature and direction of our speech, to make a speech that compels listeners, one that is heard’.

We ought to understand one thing plainly: the ways in which white feminists have critiqued the ‘right speech of womanhood’ making all women silent, is really a critique about white women's experience and is fundamentally dissimilar to black feminists' rendering of blackwomen’s speech as speech that was not acknowledged as significant speech. The latter is another kind of reality. Refusing to see this difference is what constitutes the operation of the politics of dominance and difference (in Martin, 1993:43).
Martin’s argument emphasises the importance of acknowledging intersectionality. The message about these women radio volunteers, is that they are using their broadcasting voices to highlight intersectionality, combat voice poverty and create the kind of diverse radio they want to hear, which is sadly lacking in U.K. mainstream media. As Priceless points out, in her role as a broadcaster with a Caribbean accent: ‘it’s good to be relatable – so being on radio – “oh I know that song”- hearing a voice like yours – it’s like “wow I can do that too” - because sometimes the intimidation is never hearing a voice like yours and thinkin’ “that’s not for me I can’t do that”. That’s why a lot of women shun away from doing radio ‘cos it's just for certain individuals until I get into it now I think it’s for everyone - get into it and become a trailblazer’. (2017, Lines: 148-154). Denial of voice, according to Pavarala (2015:15) comes from systematic efforts to ‘restrict access to modes of self-expression’. Fanon’s discourse on radio (1967:69) exposes the importance of radio voices which represent marginalised, disempowered people, whether marginalised through class, race, gender or any intersections of oppression. In his classic work: A Dying Colonialism, (1965) Fanon notes how mainstream radio – in his case Radio-Algier, owned and run by the French colonial power:

sustains the occupant’s culture, marks it off from the non-culture, from the nature of the occupied… the voice of France in Algeria constitutes the sole centre of reference…it is a daily invitation not to forget the rightfulness of his (the occupier’s) culture’ (1965:71).

Fanon’s chapter: This is the Voice of Algeria warns against radio dominated by the oppressor: ‘the voice of the occupier’, designed to maintain the colonial status quo: ‘after all, without wine and the radio, we should already have become Arabized’ (ibid:72). The national struggle and eventual take-over of
radio with ‘The Voice of Fighting Algeria’ or ‘Free Radio Algeria’ transformed radio from the voice of the enemy, to the voice of the people. It ‘brought the nation to life and endowed every citizen with a new status, telling him so explicitly’ (1967:96).

Arguably, there is a hierarchy of other axes which lie behind the sound of voice alone. It can be an indicator of class, ethnicity and gender, but as Ehrick (2012:18) points out it can also challenge conventional gender roles and constructions. She cites ‘Antena’, Argentina’s radio magazine: ‘A woman singing what is meant for a man is ugly, but a man acting like a little woman is intolerable’, and goes on:

What if it’s a transgendered male blurring the boundaries of vocal heteronormativity? What if it’s a female speaking in an authoritative style historically associated with a male voice? The relationship of the human voice to the body, in other words, is highly unstable and complex. Radio renders it more so…as listeners we ‘conjure up a body we don’t get to see’ cultivating both fantasy and anxiety among the audience (2012:22).

b) The lightbulb moment

‘Women are sick of being silenced and controlled’, (Moore, Guardian Newspaper, 5.10.18)

Chapter two of this thesis laments the lack of diverse voices on mainstream U.K. radio and attributes its pitiful progress mainly to tradition and sexism. Fanon argues that the silencing of non-traditional radio voices arises from a deeper fear about the rupture of all societal norms. Fanon regarded ‘Free Radio Algeria’ as the ‘voice of the voiceless.’ In his analysis, Renault (2011) understands Fanon as seeing, in the radio movement, the discourse of rupture, an alternative voice which challenged the mainstream:
the emergence of the words of the colonised...that each man feels rising within him...the defence strategy of the colonised subject who, still powerless to emit his own words, refused to listen to the master’s voice...The power to then name oneself by one’s own name, bringing men towards freedom...bringing them to speak themselves (p.114).

That lightbulb moment; the notion of realisation about our place in the world, a raised consciousness through dialogue with, learning from and listening to others, is alluded to in critical theory as ‘transformative’ (hooks, 1994; Ledwith, 1997): ‘Interaction which is respectful restores dignity and self-esteem. It reverses the process of alienation by accepting individuals in their wholeness...’ (Ledwith, 1997:72). Voice, is highlighted in individual and group discussions amongst respondents. But it begins with the important decision to change things:

For many years I was silenced and its difficult –to break out of it when you’re going through it. But the minute you realise you are being oppressed or silenced – that’s the first wake up call for the individual – then its onwards and upwards and getting yourself out of it. Nobody can get you out of it, you can only get yourself out of it (Ayisha, 2017, Lines: 318-323).

I say ‘It’s been happenin’ for years but there’s a point in your life when you just can’t take any more. (Priceless, 2017, Lines 93-94).

...and it’s like a spark, a light switch goes on and you think ‘I can’t do this anymore, I’m gonna walk.’ (Liz, group discussion, 2017, Lines: 115-116).

Fanon discusses this ‘mental liberation’ as the radical change in consciousness required to revolt and break out of oppression. Liberation begins with:

The revolution in our minds, questioning everything that has been hitherto taken for granted... what had been normal for so long is fundamentally shaken (1967:100).

Whilst Fanon refers to the ‘psychology of colonisation’ (1967:47), Freire raises the notion of ‘internalised oppression’ and both theorists highlight the struggle
for and pain of empowerment, which can be a long term process of learning and development of consciousness:

The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom…Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift (Freire, 1970:29).

So, the lightbulb moment does not come suddenly – consciousness raising and empowerment are long term processes. The deeply internalised feelings of oppression, leading to a fear of freedom are alluded to by the research group in terms of an internal conflict. Kimi’s statement (2017) alludes to this and is worth repeating here:

…the voice has been cut off or I’ve not been listened to and coincidentally last year, around the time that the training was happening, I was in what was becoming quite an abusive relationship, If you like. So I was a bit conflicted. On one hand… I was trying to put out this message of being this confident person, at the same time in my private life, almost accepting things that all my instincts were saying “no this is not right – this is not right”. (Lines: 94-100).

Vee spoke of her conflicting yearning for, yet fearing of independence and her parent’s resistance to her growing up as a disabled woman and leaving home ‘because no bloke would ever marry me, basically, they didn’t think I’d want a life of my own – I was 34’ (2014, lines:270-272).

Amongst the respondents, different time-frames and interpretations of empowerment and transformation are apparent. There is no blanket prescription for empowerment. hooks (2015) posits that diversity is constructed in an oppositional way and not in a positive way, causing women to experience internal conflicts about confronting their oppression. However, being part of a marginalised group can also be the space for the formulation of an oppositional worldview where:
the confrontation of difference, in part, is the context in which we learn the true meaning of solidarity. To confront the fear of difference as division means we can more effectively deal with the alienation and estrangement from one another that the interlocking systems of oppression perpetuate to keep us blind to and ignorant of each other. Otherwise, solidarity is not possible, and organized, conscious new configurations of power remain unimagined and untested. (p. 25)

Notwithstanding their differences, Ayisha, Priceless and Liz agree that: ‘Nobody can get you out of it, you can only get yourself out of it’; i.e. that one reaches the point of ‘walking away’ in one’s own time and in one’s own way: ‘It’s like started life gradually again, like learning to walk again’. (Priceless, 2017, Line: 22). The notion that power is taken, not given (Spivak, 1992), is emergent from some of the respondents and demonstrates the fortitude and determination of women, when their subdued anger finally erupts.

It is acknowledged here that radio is not the panacea – and that the procurement of a radio voice may be no more than a first step on the road to liberation. However, engagement in problematising dialogues and seizing the opportunity to break silence, is in this analysis, the beginning of the empowerment process, which can take months or years – it is a long term affair. (Eyben et al, 2008). In their book *Dialogical Community Development* (2010), Westoby and Dowling develop the notion that problematising dialogues as development practice, embrace depth and lead to solidarity. ‘Empowerment is a journey, not a destination,’ (Participatorymethods.org, 2018). It is evident from the individual and group discussion that respondents are at different stages in the process, and there are still conflicting feelings about breaking out. hooks (2003) and Lorde (1984) give credence to the ideas that conflict is within and without and that intersectionality can produce conflict, but ultimately part of
a critical pedagogical approach is to enable dialogue about conflict, which externalises it and often finds common ground – ‘our notions of social relations, or mutual right relations require womanists to see “the other” not as problematic…but as whole people…because we do not live “single issue” lives. People’s struggles must be seen in their particularity and complexity as well as in their commonality’. (Martin, 1993:49)

Gibson (2011) discusses Fanon’s resonance for today and his demand for action against oppression (p.7). Similarly, Freire demanded cultural and educational action for freedom and transformation and was convinced that the impetus for this must come from the oppressed, not the oppressor. As Priceless relates, she now feels confident to share her experiences of abuse with her co-presenters at the radio station:

Me: Have you learned about their lives?

Yes – because I’ve told them about mine because I’m learning not to be quiet about things – yeah I’ve let them know about my life. And I feel free talkin’ about it – I feel free (2017,Lines 103-105).

She qualifies this when asked if she discusses her experiences on air: ‘No, I’ve not reached that point yet’ (Line 98). The concepts of freedom and transformation through feminist pedagogy in Chapter three laid the foundation for this chapter, where the research respondents express their feelings about community radio and empowerment. It seems fitting that before moving to the conclusions of the three analysis chapters, attention is given to one participant’s response to the question: ‘How do you feel about community radio?

it has helped me so, so much, It has helped me in every aspect of my life. I can laugh again, talk again, meet new people because I couldn’t
before I was suffering from depression and anxiety – I’d gone through a lot and decided to go into radio – and the thought of …

You’re gonna do live shows! I didn’t dream of me doing that, being there lettin’ my voice project out into the atmosphere where others can hear me so radio has helped me, give me a kick start – a boot – everything – and I’m still finding it real real good and helpful – It’s like therapy for me.

It’s really therapeutic for me because it’s like I discovered that part of myself that I didn’t know about – I didn’t know about that part of myself- the part of myself with confidence – though I figure my confidence is still way down there, but I consider my confidence has come alive.

When I sit down in the studio on my own it’s like the world is watching – the world is seeing what I’m doin’ but I’m trying to conquer that fear and my self esteem has grown, my confidence has grown and I still have a bit of fear, but not that deathly fear that used to torment me and challenge me. (Priceless, 2017, Lines:36-52)

Priceless expresses the pride of her daughters and how they too, had been silenced during the years of her partner’s abuse: ‘Now they say “Mum, you’re good”.’ (Lines: 182-186)
Community Radio is 10% radio and 90% community. (Zane Ibrahim, Bush Radio, 2005).

It’s not just about me. (Respondent Maria, Shout F.M. 2017).

This summary reflects key lessons framed in the three analysis chapters. It is structured to revisit the initial research questions which set out to explore: \textit{the reasons women get involved in a radio project; how they become engaged in the training; how they articulate their experience in terms of learning together, empowerment, silence and voice}

\textbf{a) Why radio?}

The reasons this group chose to become involved in radio are multi-layered, but the specifics appertain to activities unavailable in other community projects. For example, most participants named a love of radio and also of music prior to their involvement. Others referred to the disembodiment offered by radio and the idea that this would confer less judgement and more respect for their words as women. In addition to this, either from the start of their involvement, or later, some wished to develop their radio skills as a means of reaching out to, educating and supporting particular communities. For Sasha – this meant young Nigerian and other Black young people; for Loraine and Kate, the young and older Lesbian community; for Priceless, Caribbean people; for Kimi, Marie and Liz, carers in the community. Vee opens the air-waves to Disability groups whilst Collette and Ayisha open debate on diverse cultural, political and language issues. Madonna and Jessica see radio as a creative outlet, with Jessica wishing to focus on bringing ‘better music’ to the public ear.
Further analysis reveals more personal reasons for seeking involvement: Jessica describes her loneliness as ‘a physical pain’. Kimi talks about depression; Liz refers to her life as a carer as ‘groundhog day every day’; Priceless admits to ‘going on without hope’. Despite their love of radio, this layer of reality presented barriers to their initial engagement. In addition to the dismal findings of the international #metoo campaign (2018), what emerges here, is a bleak picture of some of the women’s lives described variously as ‘going on without hope’ and ‘imprisonment’.

Negative educational backgrounds, abuse, caring roles, hopelessness, depression and the masculinist nature of technical learning are conveyed by the respondents as barriers to participation. Paradoxically, these experiences also become the motivation for involvement with respondents listing stimuli such as: a new start in life; a positive will to learn new skills, to gain confidence, to make friends and share knowledge through broadcasting, help others and to feel proud of achievements; to break through the negativity and silence.

b) Engagement against the odds and telling our story

I wonder why we take from our women, why we rape our women, do we hate our women? I think it’s time to kill for our women, time to heal our women, be real to our women (Keep ya head up, Tupac Shakur, 1993).

‘You hate me cuz you ain’t me fellas’, (Ocasio-Cortez, 2019)

It is crucial to acknowledge the complex myriad of obstacles to women’s participation in radio. The respondents’ insistence upon discussing their initial, problematical, engagement is revelatory and instructive, for how can women participate in feminist, critical, or any other pedagogy, if the pedagogue is
unable to engage with them? Yet the literature on community engagement (Cornwall, 2008; Mayo & Annette, 2010) rarely probes the complexities and intersections of women’s oppression which forbid or constrain their participation. In this project, the respondents themselves insisted that the difficulties of engagement be recognised. Acknowledging oppression and conflict, creating understanding through networking, outreach work, relationships and trust, are essential precursors to radio training. As Gilchrist (2003:16) states: ‘At its most basic, community development is about the development of community’.

Collette (2014) challenges romanticism:

> When I grew up and there was so much racism - there’s a facebook page now Hill Side in the 50s and 60s and 70s and do you remember Joe blogs or...so&so? It’s all rose coloured specs. People don’t remember the prejudice against the Irish. We used to have a little Jamaican woman living next door to us and she would see that the white kids would get a 6 pence ice cream so she used to give us a shilling so we could get a better ice cream than the white kids. I grew up when it was Black versus White, Jamaicans versus Africans, it was so racist (Lines 215-221).

Gilchrist (2003:24) concurs, community development is solidarity ‘built on the ideal of bringing tensions out into the open and turning them into informed dialogue’. The reality of development is fraught with the intersections of oppression; with anxieties, but strengthened by resilience, love and laughter. It ‘can in no way move simply to a collectively orientated consciousness if it is devoid of love for people’ (Westoby & Dowling, 2010:29).

The provision of a safe creative, female space for unhampered, unmonitored dialogue – an ‘oppositional space’ (Popple, 2015:84) is essential for feminist pedagogy. This refers, not only to physical space, but to mental space for the acceptance and validation of women’s narratives and knowledge which are, in
themselves, an effective research method and a feminist pedagogy. In terms of engagement, the women insist upon the importance of being able to share their stories, not only for their self-validation; but also: ‘it can bring some hope to someone who is in a hopeless situation or feeling there is no lifeline – being able to provide that lifeline – for me that makes it worth telling the story’. (Ayisha, 2017, Lines: 296-298).

The narratives exemplify three key elements to critical pedagogy: ‘dialogue; problematisation; and conscientisation’, (Mullender et al, 2013:16). Dialogue breaks down the traditional relationship between teacher and taught, groupworker and member: ‘creating knowledge through critical reasoning…problematisation enables people to break out of the demoralising and self-perpetuating narrowness of introspection and self-blame created by poverty, lack of opportunity and exclusion…conscientisation goes beyond merely raising awareness to the development of strategies for bringing about change’. (ibid). Respondent Kate brought her gay activism to her radio training, so clearly, engagement in radio is part of her strategy for change. Respondent Jessica shares other reasons for becoming involved – to improve the [restricted] music pallet available on radio, but she also speaks of the ‘physical pain’ of loneliness and the fact that she sees no-one except on her radio day. Despite superficial commonalities in the reasons for women’s involvement in radio, ie: love of music, loneliness, escape from abuse, desire for a new start or a voice; deeper scrutiny reveals nuanced, sometimes inscrutable differences.

c) Learning together, education and empowerment

We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in present day society…without knowledge of self…the you will have little
chance to know anything else. *Black Panther Party’s Ten-Point Programme 1972.* (Newton, 2008:74)

Moving on to chapter seven, the analysis considers how the women articulate their learning and experience of community radio in terms of education and empowerment. They share some disillusion about their experience of conventional education. The thread running through this chapter is that intersectional knowledge – the nuanced knowledge of excluded or oppressed groups; is often ignored, undervalued and/or dismissed in mainstream education, which for a variety of reasons, is compelled to scaffold the dominant socio-political order, (Mclaren, 1995; hooks, 2003: Newton, 2008). Collette was expelled from school aged 12, felt hated by teachers and questions the rigidity of daily school life: ‘They couldn’t have liked me worse if you know what I mean…and the daft thing was I was quite bright, but to marry brightness up to sitting quiet and still and discipline…’ (2014, Lines: 64-77).

The emergent message is that school offered little or no space to learn about self and others, to share their diverse stories, for example stories of growing up in a climate of poverty, racism, drug culture, sexism, disablism, homophobia or transphobia: ‘I was seen as a boy, but would parade around the playground in a skirt and high heels – they didn’t know what to do with me’. (A.T. 2017. Research Diary line 17-18).

This is not to dismiss the significance of formal curricula, but to emphasise the importance of social and cultural spaces in education, spaces which offer opportunities for narrative and strategy-sharing, validation and peer support.
Amongst other ignored intersections, the chapter highlights the racial and gendered nature of the formal curricula, which often reinforces white supremacy, binary notions of gender and the masculinist nature of technological learning. Dunbar-Hester (2014:55) proposes radio training as ‘technological activism’ which challenges mainstream gender roles. Furthermore, respondents comment upon the inadequacies of their education in terms of strategies to challenge oppression and the prescribed roles of womanhood. Liz laments the lost dream of being a French teacher:… ‘I ended up getting married, having 3 children and I ended up supporting them through alcohol, drugs and mental health’. (2017, lines 2-4).

The importance of critical consciousness; knowing one’s self and one’s place in the world, articulated by Biko (1971), Newton, (2008) and hooks (1994), is naively or wantonly absent from mainstream education. Arguably, this absence is lamentable in terms of healthy individual and community development. Perhaps a feminist pedagogy could offer a defence against or resistance to patriarchal dominance – just as Biko’s (1971) and Newton’s (1972) educational policy were defences against racism. Of course complex cultural and historical issues cannot be solved in the classroom, but: ‘teachers must acknowledge that they have an historical, political and cultural perspective and stake in the dialogue and discussion and allow students to name what they want to be empowered to do,’ (Ellsworth, 1989:297). After all, educational space is, as described by Hall, a cultural space for self-reflection: ‘where there is struggle for and against a culture of the powerful; it is the arena of consent and resistance. It is one of the places where socialism [and feminism] might be constituted’, (2019:361).
Respondents promote their radio training as a space of creativity, laughter and validation – it becomes what Seller notes is an essential, positive ‘space to dream.’ (2003:26)

The argument for a more dialogic, relational feminist pedagogy is not original, nor is it ground-breaking and yet a worrisome lesson from this chapter, is the towering monolith of resistance to it and the strong defence of the formalised, racialised, gendered, uncritical, competitive and overwhelmingly instructional mainstream, particularly amongst Western policy makers (Mclaren, 1999), but also in the academy where educational research takes place and teachers are trained. (Eaton, 2001; hooks, 2003; Shor, 2017). Recent evidence reveals an emerging ‘crisis’ in U.K. Education with increased privatisation, competition for funding and an estimated 15,000 teachers leaving U.K. each year complaining of stressful 65-70 hour weeks. (Ferguson, Guardian Education, 2.10.18). One teacher interviewed states that she was ‘more of a social worker than a teacher’ and that children were excluded [dismissed from the school] due to emotional issues (p.28).

Eaton (2001) suggests that feminist pedagogy in media and other disciplines, is treated as a separate entity – belonging to women’s studies and not relating to pedagogical theory and in any case, it is too ‘touchy-feely’ to be taken seriously as an approach to learning. She posits that resistance may be to do with: ‘…corporate industry donors expecting their money to be used for research and teaching that benefit the applied interests of their field (versus critical
race/ethnicity and feminist approaches that typically work to challenge the status quo’. (p.390).

Shor (2013) proposes that: ‘discourse is a material force for the social construction of human subjects’ (p.57). Bourdieu called this construction of our humanity ‘the habitus’ (1980) – who we are depends on the kind of discourse we are subjected to. Similarly, Gramsci framed this unconscious way of being: *hegemony* (1972). ‘Consciousness is built by our serial experience in discourses’. (Shor, 2013:57). Nevertheless, Establishment fears about conscientisation were arguably borne out in dramatic fashion during the 2011 ‘Occupy’ demonstrations [Global activism against the ownership of 99% of global wealth by 1% of the population]. Shor refers to this as ’59 days when the political world was turned upside down and the global reaction, by established governments was immediate: ‘The billionaire Mayor (of New York) ordered a massive police assault after midnight to destroy the…campaign’. (2013:54).

In 2019 across Europe, children and young people organised school strikes protesting about Governments’ inaction on climate crisis. Banners read: ‘If you don’t behave like adults, we will’ and ‘there is no planet B’. In the U.K. Prime Minister May admonished the movement, stating that they were: ‘wasting lesson time’. (Watts, 2019). The response reveals how social education is variously devalued, humoured, suppressed despite its remit to deal with issues of such critical importance, such as relationship and sex education, anti-oppression, and (so called) *anti-radicalisation*; aside from climate change awareness which is arguably the greatest threat on Earth today (ibid). As a youth and community
worker, having been employed by several statutory educational authorities with the remit of critical/social pedagogy, I have watched with dismay, the closure of youth work degrees at U.K universities and youth work departments in local education authorities: ‘Youth services went first in the post-2010 slash-and-burn of council budgets’. (Toynbee, Guardian online, 2018). This reflects a general reduction in Government grants to U.K. local authorities, but also specific choices which demonstrate formidable resistance to what might be called *politicising pedagogies* in a global shift to the political right. (Diaz, Blog, 2018).

On a positive note, although it is late in the day for some of these respondents, the chapter discusses radio training as the practice of activist feminist critical pedagogy in terms of its inclusivity, its recognition of intersectionality and its welcoming of the narratives and shared knowledge of participants. Mullender et al (2013) refer to these principles as key in empowering practice: Whilst the groupworker or tutor may have some specialist knowledge, this does not accord them privilege as all group members will have knowledge: ‘We are not leaders, but facilitators…everybody’s contribution is equally valued.’ (p.49). The learning space is safe and the atmosphere one of love, as Loraine shares: ‘we were all over 50. We cared – if someone didn’t turn up, we’d say “where’s so and so?” and we’d ring them. The radio training makes you make friends and share problems. It’s a different kind of education, but it’s still education’. (2017, Lines 59-97).

In *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), when hooks discusses the importance of feelings, laughter and love in feminist pedagogy, she is referring to both a
passion for subject and for the learner. Bauer (2000) is quick to point out hooks’ meaning which should not be misunderstood as an erotic love, but the usefulness of love: ‘in terms of generating excitement and fostering a bond between teachers and students…that embraces our overall effort to be self-actualising…and it can provide an epistemological grounding informing how we know what we know’. (p.273). Whereas in conventional education there is the: ‘perception that the teacher is the trustee of all knowledge…and the traditional ‘didactic contract' often remains unquestioned in its banking nature, making it problematic for meaningful relationships and knowledge to emerge, (Guiherme & Freitas, 2016:8). In addition to research and script-writing, radio training contains elements of highly technical knowledge and broadcasting law which require absolute adherence and yet this knowledge is taught through meaningful relationships and humour.

Relationships lie at the heart of women’s empowerment – women’s families, partners, friends and colleagues, and women’s organisations, networks and coalitions can be crucial in supporting and enabling women’s pathways of empowerment. (Participatorymethods.org, 2018:13).

In We make the road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change, (1990) Freire crystallises the aim of education which either: ‘mystifies reality by rendering it impenetrable and obscure - which leads people to a blind march through incomprehensible labyrinths, or it unmaps the economic and social structures which are determining the relationships of exploitation and oppression among persons, knocking down labyrinths and allowing people to walk their own road. So we find ourselves confronted with a clear option: to educate for liberation or to educate for domination.’ (p.78). However, hooks contends that there is often resistance to this ideal of liberation among learners. In Talking Back, thinking feminist thinking black (1989), she recounts the
defiance of learners to the idea that they must confront their own stereotypes and engage in education for critical consciousness. Just as people internalise oppression (Freire, 1970), she argues that they also internalise superiority:

...privileged students are often downright unwilling to acknowledge that their minds have been colonized, that they been learning how to be oppressors, how to dominate, or at least to passively accept the domination of others. (p.102).

In general lecturing and also radio training In the U.K. I have observed resistance to and naivety about owning power and prejudice. In one radio training group, two members told me that a white group member, had complained that their (Pakistani) music did not fit into a radio show in which each group member had been asked to choose their music. (Research Diary, 2016, Line: 14).

Whilst for some, it may seem just and natural, the activism of feminist, critical pedagogy is considered radical and anarchic by others (Bauer, 2000). In an educational climate favoured and dominated by patriarchy and privilege: ‘we should not underestimate the pervasive effect patriarchal education has had’ on teachers and learners alike’ (Webb et al, 2002:68). Since empowerment is the goal of feminist pedagogy, rather than domination, it becomes the practice of freedom, building trust, love and co-operation through dialogue: ‘teaching men and women to deal critically and creatively with reality and to learn how to participate in transforming their world’. (ibid). Through this emancipatory approach to radio pedagogy, women’s personal experiences are valued and turned into a central component of learning and together, they support each
other to challenge, with laughter, the conventional view that learning is serious
and the gendered view that technology is male.

Two cautionary footnotes to this analysis are: firstly, that an emphasis on
personal narratives is not the be-all and end-all of conscientisation. hooks
(1989) warns that individualistic and inward-looking notions and describing
one’s experience of oppression does not, in itself denote political
consciousness: ‘What feminist politicisation requires is linking efforts to socially
construct self and identity in an oppositional framework that resists domination’
(Wilson, 1989:96). Secondly, I did not ask the participants if they felt more
powerful in their domestic life, though Priceless and Ayisha indicate that they
felt empowered to escape domestic oppression. Dohmwirth and Hanisch
(2017) call for more rigorous examination of women-only co-operatives as
beneficial in this way. They found that women’s dairy co-operatives had
minimal impact on power within the household, but this varied according to
class and poverty (with better-off households more likely to apply strict gender
norms (p.685).

My own Credit Union research held that women’s involvement in such groups
initially, made them more vulnerable at home as their menfolk felt threatened by
newly found confidence (Rimmer, 1997); but Jessica (2017) crystalises her
notion of personal empowerment as the release of creative flair: ‘My show is my
little weekly creation, I like to pick tracks that are both complementary and
contradictory to each other, for example I might play a nice quiet slow Strauss
waltz and I might follow that with Caravan by Black Sabbath’. (Lines:116-120)
d) **Silence, Voice and Breaking the silence**

To repeat Lorde’s caution that: ‘Your silence will not protect you’ (1984:44).

The evidence from the respondents, combined with literature (Solnit, 2017), is that remaining silent may offer some temporary protection to individual women, but sharing narratives and learning from each other produces collective strategies for resistance.

The chapter demonstrates the necessity to remain silent, sometimes for years, in order to protect self and children from physical harm – but ultimately there is a need to speak out. Respondent Liz describes how she ‘put up with beatings and the drink, me kids being hungry, no money, no clothes, no nothing…’ (Liz, 2017, Lines:112-115) for seven years. Although silence can offer physical protection, the damage done to mental health emerges as immense - as volcanic: ‘there’s a point in your life when you just can’t take any more. (Priceless, 2017, Line: 94). ‘…and it’s like a spark, a light switch goes on and you think ‘I can’t do this anymore, I’m gonna walk.’ (Liz, group discussion, 2017, Line:116). Other respondents concur and the notion of ‘unspoken knowledge, a women’s epistemology’, emerges only after the silence is broken and the knowledge is given value in a collective domain: ‘The revolution in our minds, questioning everything that has been hitherto taken for granted… what had been normal for so long is fundamentally shaken’. (Fanon,1967:100).

The chapter also recounts the impact of the #metoo movement (2017-2018) in the global North, which is ongoing at time of writing, with much skepticism in terms of combating gender inequality in media, in policy and in daily life
(Harman, 2018). Respondent Kate (2017) observes that the BBC and mainstream media: ‘it’s terrible – what you have to be like as a woman to get into the BBC, slim, good looking, posh – and you think – this is radio, no-body sees you, but they’re all much of a muchness. You should have 70 year olds, they don’t have to all be from Islington… you are constantly pushing at a closed door’ (Lines: 169-175).

The ‘lightbulb moment’ [sudden enlightenment about power and oppression] is accompanied by internal and external conflicts highlighted by respondent Kimi: ‘I was in what was becoming quite an abusive relationship, If you like. So I was a bit conflicted. On one hand...I was trying to put out this message of being this confident person, at the same time in my private life, almost accepting things that all my instincts were saying “no this is not right – this is not right”.’ (Lines: 98-101).

But for this group, indications of transformation through radio learning are palpable through descriptions of empowerment, of making new friends and their analyses of the importance of having a voice: ‘I think its great, I absolutely love it and I hope to carry on doing it until I get my wings. It’s having fun and socialising – you’re socialising with the listeners and we [Liz and her co-presenter] bounce off each other – especially have a laugh when we get something wrong’ (Liz, 2017).

What emerges in the dialogue of the group are some different dimensions on voice and empowerment, for example, that radio offers the opportunity of
disembodiment, denial of a woman’s image as an object, unbound by ‘the symbolic in which man can live out his fantasies and obsession through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer and not maker of meanings’ (Mulvey, 1975:6). In addition, skin colour becomes irrelevant unless there is a choice by the speaker to discuss it. Assumptions cannot be made about identity. As Kimi (2017) repeats with passion: 'It’s like I don’t think identity should be dictated to you and my show is all the things that make me up’ (Lines: 135-136).

What is also important about voice is that it has to be ‘relatable’, and can be, as Priceless states: ‘music to your ears,’ because some women hardly hear voices representing their gender, class or origin – Caribbean, Asian or Chinese languages, or even Northern U.K. accents.

The feeling of empowerment is particularly strong in terms of conquering the fear of technology: ‘I know the technical side frightens a lot of women – especially older women because they’ve never been technical – it was an era when girls did domestic science and boys did woodwork’ (Loraine, 2017:164-166). As Priceless (2017) says of the technical knowledge: ‘that’s why a lot of women shun away from doing radio ’cos it’s just for certain individuals until I get into it now I think it’s for everyone – I’m a trailblazer’ (Lines:152-155).

The topics of the radio programmes take on great importance as they relate women’s subjects and women’s ways of knowing, ie: information and discussion about F.G.M [Female Genital Mutilation], gendered violence, being a carer or an
older lesbian: ‘and I’m not on my own and that’s what’s so special about
community radio - you get to feel part of a community – that’s why it’s called
*community* you get to feel that you’re not on your own... if you wanna speak
your own language on your show, you can, so you can reach out to different
women who probably wouldn’t have been able to have a public platform – or
even to hear their kind of voice for them to reach out to you from’ (Sasha, 2017,
Lines 22-27).

Other respondents discussed their new role as *the voice of their community*.
And the notion of sharing power becomes integral to the notion of
*empowerment*:

I can invite them [other women] onto the show and make them feel
special and give them more confidence and it’s something they can say –
that they’ve been on community radio and in that way *It’s not just about me.* (Respondent Marie, 2017, Lines:111-114)

Finally, empowerment emerges as something taken, rather than given – and as
a long term process, not an overnight miracle. The women in the study are
varied in age, between their 20’s and 70’s but amongst them there is a tacit
agreement about conflicting internal feelings and ongoing struggle that is the
pathway to empowerment – this is despite some dramatic changes they have
seen in themselves.

The global community development website [www.participatorymethods.org](http://www.participatorymethods.org)
compiled by numerous feminist researchers and women’s organisations,
publishes regular studies on women’s empowerment called *Pathways of
Women’s Empowerment*. They point out several emergent themes: ie that
culture has great significance in women’s empowerment ‘forms of popular culture – music, radio and television programmes and films – are very much a part of women’s lives…and recognition of the significance of culture in shaping women’s imaginations of the possible, and challenging stereotypes gives us promising new directions for women’s empowerment work.’ (2018).

My reflections on the research project, in the following chapter, harness some of the cynicism and optimism contained in the analysis chapters, and identify some personal and political impacts of the project.
**PART FOUR** - reflects upon the whole project, drawing out personal and professional learning. It summarises findings with regard to the initial research questions and offers modest contributions to various academic and professional fields. Most importantly, at their request, it demonstrates how the testimonies of respondents will be utilised to ‘spread the word’ about the significance of community radio in women’s empowerment.
Chapter 10 Reflections

Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenki.

It is not wrong to go back and fetch what you forgot. (Moyo, 2012)

Introduction

Reflection is an obligation in every discipline and profession of my career. In Community Development, the mythical Sankofa Bird referred to in the Ghanian quote above, flies forward, always looking back – and carrying with it an egg, symbolising new birth or new learning and practice. In Social Work, Schon’s (1983) work is classic whilst Freire’s (1970) notion of praxis takes reflection from learning from the past – to action for changing the future: ‘praxis is reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it’ (p.33). In research, Wolf (2011) argues that before reflexivity became a fashionable term: ‘feminists were examining “process” in our dealings with one another – questioning the use of power and powerlessness, examining closely the politics of seemingly apolitical situations, evaluating the responsibilities we bore toward one another’ (p.429).

a) Some personal reflections

Research reflection began with my first experience of researching women’s participation in credit unions (Rimmer, 1997), in which I noted the lack of trust placed in women’s knowledge and abilities: ‘the biggest barrier to such projects is social scepticism about ordinary people taking on powerful roles’ (p33). The dialogue of the women in this thesis demonstrate how their internalised scepticism moves to astonished incredulity that they have become radio broadcasters: ‘You’re gonna do live shows! I didn’t dream of me doing that.’ Whilst acknowledging that my analysis throughout the study is subjective and
interpretive, these expressions of incredulity have impacted upon me greatly and compelled me to reflect cynically upon the hegemonic forces holding women back from girlhood onwards:

Many declare they are revolutionaries, but they don’t trust the oppressed whom they pretend to liberate. Many want a humanistic education, yet they also want to maintain the social reality in which people find themselves dehumanised. In brief, they fear liberation. And in fearing liberation they dare not risk constructing it in brotherhood [and even less so in a sisterhood] with those who are deprived of freedom. (Freire, 1985:119)

Such cynicism is reflected in Luke & Gore’s (1992) pursuit of a feminist pedagogy within a gendered social and academic reality. They describe their political struggle to introduce women authors and feminist perspectives on reading lists other than women’s studies. They warn that the rejection of grand pedagogical theories: ‘may have serious political consequence for all marginalised groups which attempt to redefine their subjectivities and identities’ (p.257).

My learning from the reading and primary research for this thesis is immense and this chapter reflects on some specific realisations; but none have unsettled me more than this ongoing scepticism and disbelief in the skills, talents and knowledge of womanhood.

Even in critical emancipatory education, feminist, intersectional perspectives are still struggling to be heard as effective educational theories in their own right:
‘the moment they [women educators] open their mouths…they are immediately asked what theoretical standpoint they are speaking’. (ibid). bell hooks (1994;2003) constructs a feminist pedagogy by working together with a male educator in Freire; she produced a rich repository of educational volumes which influenced grand theories of pedagogy, yet rarely is her name ascribed any grand credentials. Grandiose standpoints and notions of heroism may be the antipathy of feminism, but hooks used courage (Raffo, 2011) in uncovering her own racist, sexist education and built upon it a relatable, feminist, liberational standpoint which challenged critical orthodoxy. Additionally, in the U.S. the Black Power educational movement towards Black consciousness and Biko’s educational theories for liberation in South Africa – are not acknowledged in terms of grandness, yet these pedagogies sowed seeds of consciousness and transformation for communities and nations.

I have been moved, in this study, to reconsider Freire’s pedagogical principles (and after practicing them for 30 years, this reconsideration was well overdue), but I continue to reinvent them in my academic teaching and especially in my radio training work, enriched by intersectional principles, feminist theories, and particularly by women learners. There is a symmetry between feminist educational practice and feminist research, both acknowledging the patriarchy, both hinging upon trust, equal relationships and mutual learning; both rejecting the social scepticism which perpetuates erroneous ideas about women’s knowledge and worthiness – both illustrating the importance of sisterhood and solidarity, of improving women’s relationship with the world. The learning has been, for me, sometimes depressing, but mainly joyous and invaluable. Working on this project has restored my own sense of worth.
Nevertheless, mistakes were made, mostly in my preconceived notion of what is important for this research group, what commonalities would be expressed, and also my mistaken and selfish belief that the respondent’s narratives should begin at exactly the starting point of my research – ie: at the commencement of radio training. At the insistence of the group, I had to back-pedal and examine more closely their prior lives, the back-story of their low self-esteem and the difficult processes involved in their initial engagement in radio. Using a narrative approach in research is not a one-way process. The group taught me that I was of use to them – as a receiver and conduit of their untold stories. Their aims for this project were to disseminate more widely the benefits and excitement of community radio.

When I began this project, I was attempting to establish myself as a freelance radio producer whilst working part time as a youth and community lecturer and volunteering with various radio projects. I struggled to earn my keep and felt anxious and torn between my newly found radio skills, my teaching, my excitement about researching and the grim prospect of being compelled to return to salaried, statutory social work. When the Youth & Community course, my work base, closed down, after much student and staff protest, I, and others in the teaching team, were devastated.

The closure of this professional degree course underpinned by critical pedagogical theory and attracting diverse, mainly female students from disadvantaged areas, was a loss to the university and the community. For me it
was also a loss of a feminist community of colleagues, practitioners and students; friends with whom I shared and from whom I learned, on a daily basis. This sense of loss reflects something rarely referred to in literature: ‘the significance of social relationships and solidarity in women’s lives and their relevance to the processes of change in an organisation’ (Cornwall & Edwards, 2013:250).

After a shaky start (I was advised that I was too old to do a funded PhD), the project has lifted me and new friendships have been formed; through it, I have come to find or reinvent my own identity when, in a post-modernist, post-structural world – many people seem to be eschewing theirs. As hooks (1990) notes, you have to have an identity before you can decide to give it up (p.28). As an older white woman I now feel a renewed sense of pride in calling myself a feminist researcher, radio producer and trainer, a radio volunteer and community development worker. This reflects the conclusion to this thesis where I extend the importance of relationships to notions of pedagogy and empowerment; relationships with comrades, with the community, the world and with systems of power.

b) Reflections together with participants

In terms of analysing the data, I struggled to categorise the respondent’s diverse responses and analytic discussion into an ordered framework. My reading around feminist and post-structural analysis tells me that its messiness does not necessarily detract from its value (Taylor and Lvinson, 2013).
What added to this messiness, was my decision to gather the participants together for a final joint reflection on the whole project. This took place in a community centre and I recorded the women’s sentiments. However, much of the dialogue which took place was a repeat of their views on community radio, and although I encouraged criticism, the participants were overwhelmingly (and embarrassingly) positive about the administration of and need for the research. In future, such a reflection would work better as an evaluative exercise facilitated by an external agent. I include here just two statements from the final meeting:

Looking back – I enjoyed talking about radio with bunches of women – thought it good to hear each other’s stories – it brought us together. (Reflections meeting, 2018, Marie, lines: 148-150)

We learned about each other’s lives and we want you to do some good and get more women into radio. Tell more women how good it is. (Reflections meeting, 2018, Kate, lines: 152-153).

These sentiments prompted me to conclude that the project could be beneficial to others provided that I disseminated its findings and used the material generated to gain funding for further research and women’s training. In the next chapter, I summarise the main learning points from the project and how these might foster women’s empowerment through radio.
Chapter 11 Conclusions and Contributions

I think if I had to put a finger on what I consider a good education, a good radical education, it wouldn't be anything about methods or techniques. It would be loving people first (Bell et al, 1990:177).

When some well-tanned, well-fed person with a ‘great white hunter’ attitude looks at me with suspicious eyes and asks me to explain why I need R200 for a new microphone, I count to 10 and ask myself: “Is this worth it?” I then think of the new teenage mothers who will learn about postpartum depression; the elderly people who will find out about the latest relief for the pain of gout or rheumatism…the young men we speak to daily about the uselessness of crime…and it’s a bloody shame, but it's worth it (Ibrahim, Bush Radio, 2000:203).

Introduction

This project has lived alongside me for six years, but in truth, it has been part of me for more than thirty. As hooks (2003) notes: a socialist activist is not someone we turn into when we leave the classroom or community centre (p.44). Initial motivations for the project sprang from my education and consciencisation; my life and work experience, and my singular research experience (Rimmer, 1997) with women and credit unions. Latterly, a period of depression led to the opening up of new horizons through community radio. The project is significant, locally and nationally as one of few U.K. studies revealing the potential of community radio as an emancipatory pedagogy, particularly appropriate for the development and amplification of women’s distinct identities and for drawing them into technological fields. Its obligation is to activate theoretical, methodological and political principles to: ‘show how these work together in the service of subjective and societal change’ (Burman, 2019:38). In Global terms, the thesis learns from and expands well-documented radio projects in the U.S. and especially in the majority world.
The conclusion is a concise summary of what has been a rich, complex and wide ranging learning journey. The journey has not been an individual affair, which would make it meaningless in terms of its stated social justice goals; it has been a feminist, collective and relational exploration of how a critical feminist pedagogy might engage women in radio, aid the breaking of their silence, and lead to their empowerment in media, in community and in the wider world. This final chapter is the starting point for another journey with regard to the material generated here - its dissemination and modest contribution to academic and professional fields, including: Media, Education, Research, Community Development, Social Work and specifically women's mental health where there is growing evidence of a crisis amongst young women. (NHS, 2018). I will also discuss its legacy for the women radio volunteers who made it happen.

a) The structure of the thesis

The thesis title, Breaking the Silence: Community Radio, women and empowerment reflects my observations of women’s astonishment and delight, at their newly found skill and power to become radio broadcasters. It characterises radio as a metaphor for women breaking free of low self-value, voice poverty, and on a deeper level, their oppression. I began by asking: how and why women became engaged in radio, how they articulate this experience and how these findings might be useful in community practice. The literature set the scene of poverty and gender oppression in the U.K. and how poverty is ‘intimately connected to…cultural, social, economic, political and spiritual powerlessness’ (Westoby & Dowling, 2010:82). I learned from the Majority World that radio was already seen as a vehicle of empowerment. The title set in motion a critical exploration of each complex concept within it. What arose
from this conceptual discussion was a framework of headings devised for gathering and analysing the primary data together with respondents. Those headings form individual chapters analysing each process from engagement, through education and empowerment, to breaking the silence.

b) **Dimensions of empowerment**

The feminist, ethnographic approach elicited some common views about conscientisation and empowerment; that power is taken, not given: When you are suffering: ‘nobody can get you out of it, you can only get yourself out of it’ (Ayisha, 2017). To have twelve willing volunteers was positive, but it heightened my ethical concerns about colonisation and the exploitation of existing female relationships. However, I quickly learned that this group had their own agenda – they understood that this research may lead to community radio being more widely promoted and to more women becoming engaged. Their willingness to participate mirrored their view of empowerment as something to be shared, a collective and relational concept. If you don’t use your voice to help others, what is the point?

Amongst other conceptions of empowerment raised, was *creativity*, the power to be creative, and to express that creativity, which I and some of the group had never experienced. One respondent describes her radio show as ‘my own little creation’ in which she creates a playlist of popular and classical music to share with listeners. The absence or denial of opportunities to develop and express our creative selves is an important historical and current feature of women’s oppression. Culture and creativity in women’s lives are active processes ‘which free the imagination, challenge the hegemony’ (Hatton, 2013:31), and are effective tools of empowerment.
In terms of breaking the *culture of silence*, while *voice* emerged an essential feature (and prerequisite) of empowerment, respondents specifically highlighted the opportunity of disembodiment proffered by radio which, in their terms, prevented images and identities being imposed upon them, prevented objectification or in Lacanian terms, the *male gaze* (Usher, 1997:105). In particular, the women of colour were strengthened by the idea that they could be *themselves*, unbound by racial or gendered stereotypes with one suggesting: ‘maybe they listen more to what you have to say because obviously you can’t put the same judgements on a voice’. (Maria, 2017)

**c) There is no one womanhood**

Intersectionality was brought into sharp focus by the literature and respondents, reshaping the analysis, especially with regard to the reasons behind women’s silence and reluctance to participate. Assumptions about the homogeneity of womanhood were dispelled. Whilst some of my feminist expectations about commonalities in the group were founded, including some negative educational experiences, ‘domestic’ abuse, caring roles, fear of technical learning; there were also many distinctions. Those who identified as Learning and physically Disabled drew specific attention to some very different, but appalling experiences of school, and consequential feelings of worthlessness. Those who had experienced relationship abuse brought out nuanced variations of its shape and form and how, in some cases a partner’s whole family can become your abusers.

The notion of being silenced by shame was explained vividly by a Black participant who felt her community’s attitude towards gendered abuse was: *it’s normal, get on with it* - so in addition to the shame of the abuse, attempting to escape was seen as a shameful act too, especially since speaking out might
attract more racist attention to an already besieged community. The caring role was also common, but could not be referred to in general terms such as *Motherhood*. It was characterised in all its diverse forms, eg: leaving jobs to care for terminally ill relatives, or those with mental health, drug and alcohol issues (often in addition to Motherhood). The version of Motherhood described by an older lesbian recounted years of enforced silence about her sexuality for fear that her children would be removed.

Through this project, I have learned that a feminist liberational pedagogy should not just understand and include, but should centralise intersectionality. What is empowering for one woman, may not help another and so ‘understanding empowerment needs to begin from women’s own experiences, rather than focus on a predictable set of outcomes’ (Participatorymethods.org, 2018:11). McCann (2018) discusses the danger of constructing politics: ‘around the idea of communal identity’ (p.25), when this identity is false. He also indicates embarrassment about previous political papers, admitting: ‘some of my references to women now make me squirm, not to mention my scant recognition of the role of women activists’ (p.27).

None of the women in this study have entered council or parliament as a result of their radio experience; they measured empowerment in terms of increased confidence, speaking out, being creative and empowering others. Radio is not the panacea for the ills of gender oppression, but an additional tool in the repository of community development.
d) **Engagement through care**

Exposing and understanding intersectional experiences as reasons for women’s silence and low self-esteem, is essential to engaging women. In combining respondent’s narratives with published research and literature, I gained new insights into the careful, sensitive processes required to engage women in research; pedagogy and in radio. Genuine care and concern for and amongst the group is an essential feature; relationships which form the basis of a pedagogy of love, a phrase coined by Darder, (2017); Freire, (1985) and hooks (2003) which I previously viewed with cynicism. These key learning points about engagement, compelled me to include a section in the thesis where the respondents could elucidate the barriers to their engagement in radio training; and where the understanding, persistence, caring and reassurance of the radio trainer opened the door to new learning, new friendships and new hope. In addition, respondents emphasised the significance of the actual act of sharing their stories. Whether in research, or as pedagogy, having stories valued as never before was seen as revelatory; as breaking their silence.

e) **It’s all relational**

The relational nature of feminist pedagogy and empowerment is central to and developed throughout the thesis. ‘Relationships lie at the heart of women’s empowerment’ (Participatory Methods, 2018:11). Whilst I expected to find this in the familiar literature of my professions – ie: education, development, mental health, social work, psychology; it came as a surprise to discover its centrality in media literature: ‘Love and solidarity are the same’. (johnpilger.com, 2019). I initially assumed this relationality to be a youth worker’s intuition, ie: that effective learning occurs through the conduit of mutual learning relationships and also that it must be relational to the socio-economic reality, culture and
context in which it is based. In *Fanon, Education, Action* (2019), Burman notes Fanon’s ‘exploration of the conditions for being open to learning – through relationships, and relational approaches… it is about bringing to the fore subjugated voices, histories, and experiences’ (p.34).

Respondent’s narratives revealed the connectedness of personal powerlessness with structural power systems and how formal education systems had reinforced oppression. The study has developed and strengthened my understanding of feminist pedagogy as a relational concept, where we engage with and value women’s stories. As one respondent stated: ‘it has to be relatable.’ It has to create a space for women ‘to make meaning of the events of their lives’ (Darder, 2017:192). Moreover, it should be a space of women’s solidarity and social action in which the gendered ‘monstrosity’ of individualist neo liberal capitalism may be challenged. (Deleuze, 1995:178).

The notion of feminist pedagogy as a defence against patriarchy is apposite. One of the most overlooked aspects of the Black Panther’s work, was their struggle for anti-racist education. (Newton, 2008)

**f) Feminist radio pedagogy**

Despite his early obliviousness to gender and race oppression, Freire came to join with hooks and others in pursuit of a relational feminist pedagogy. Apple (2013) came to retract his allegations of Freireian romanticism and lack of curricula focus. Freire insisted that progressive educators should reinvent, recreate and rewrite his theories according to their own context. He expressed dread at the idea of being imported or exported. In media pedagogy Freire is reinvented to challenge the masculinist nature of technical learning by incorporating mutual love and respect between worker and learner and amongst
learners in the group. (Dunbar-Hester, 2014) Feminist Radio activists focus not on the *work object*, nor on technical expertise, but on building trust, caring interactions and participatory social relations. The project extends evidence from the majority world that feminist pedagogy and community development methods could be utilised to engage diverse women and enrich, what is currently, an unrepresentative, patriarchal media world. It challenges UK commercial and public broadcasters to consider exploring this approach.

As for the phenomenon of *feminist pedagogy*, it reveals itself here as a phenomenon in its own right and not necessarily derived from (nor deviating from) any male authored *grand theory*. Neither is it merely an *add-on* to the list of anti-oppressions named in critical pedagogies. It has its own epistemology; its own research and practice arsenal which do not compete with, nor threaten, but rather enrich and enhance the pedagogical landscape.

The small, but vociferous research group in this thesis is testimony to the process of empowerment. They describe being fearful of the technical aspects of radio - but the activism of feminist radio pedagogy enables them to break free of that fear. Empowerment is described as *feeling ten feet tall*. The expression characterises joy about broadcasting on radio, but also, incredulity at being technically skilled. Ratification of empowerment lies in its extension to others, stressing the collective, relational aspects of feminist pedagogy.

As stated, empowerment is a long term process, a journey, rather than a destination it is recognised that community radio is not a panacea for addressing complex, historical, deep-rooted, structural issues involved in women’s silencing and oppression. However, the project has marshalled
literature and amplified the collective voices of diverse women who offer their views, experiences and analyses – as a template for empowerment through community radio. In doing so, they challenge the 'interlocking, interdependent nature of systems of domination' (hooks, 2008:290) and enhance the role of the social and solidarity economy.

To be honest, the radio’s got me through a lot of bad times in my life I think. It’s given me opportunities. It’s the first time I’ve really done something that I can honestly say that without any contradiction that I’m good at it. I’m really good at this. I am really good at what I do. And I can say that with a lot of confidence, the only time really I’ve been able to say that with a lot of confidence. I just love it. I just love my show and the great thing is it’s all been off my own bat, no body’s told me what to do or what to put in it, it’s all come from my ideas it’s been great to be able to channel my ideas into something that’s actually tangible, it’s audible. (Vee, 2014 Lines: 506-516)

**Contributions**

I have no wish to leave the grass roots to work for the establishment…it’s back to front, the wrong way round. The grass roots is where my heart is. Nuff said, so here’s a full stop. (Zephaniah, 2018:275)

Having strayed from grass roots into professional and academic fields, I witnessed a need for conduits to bridge the chasm between these worlds when, as a lecturer, I organised informal training for citizen groups (i.e. mental health and children’s service users) to build confidence to research, write and co-teach social work students (Citizens as Trainers, 2004). University heads, at first failed to understand that the groups might need payment for their work and when persuaded that this was necessary, none of the benefiting institutions could find a means, in their bureaucracies, of paying ordinary citizens to share their knowledge. Beresford & Turner (1997) and others highlighted this issue.
Furthermore, the university managers expressed shock that this group of citizens had the nerve to request payment, when bestowed the grand honour of university work. For me this epitomised the immense distance between – on the one hand: research, theory, and social service provision – and on the other: ordinary citizens, experts in the field of their own lived experience. Their expert knowledge was valueless in academia.

Aside from the need for this conduit, in terms of academic and practical contributions to varied fields and professions, the thesis adds to conceptual discourse about the nature and efficacy of education and it considers some different dimensions of empowerment, silence and voice. It contributes to the growing repository of feminist discourse about the activism of feminist pedagogy. As stated, it represents some different dimensions of and uses for this model; a way of increasing diversity in media and technical subjects; a strategy for engaging more women, particularly in technology. More generally it argues for changes in U.K. educational policy to recognise, value and utilise social education in schools. It calls for the re-establishment of statutory youth and community educational services and underlines the importance of intersectional practice in research, education, community development and in media. Some of my contributions to conferences and publications 2016 to 2019 are as follows:

Since 2016, the thesis has formed the basis for papers presented on media programmes at Sheffield Hallam and University of Central Lancashire (U.K.);
the Psychology of Women Conference (British Psychological Society) in 2016; the World Community Development Conference (International Association for Community Development), 2017 and a chapter in Nayak & Robbins’ *The Activism of Intersectionality in Social Work* (2018). Abstracts are currently in process (2019) to be considered by academic journals and conferences: *Gender and Education, Feminist Media Studies, Community Development* and at the 2019 BERA [British Educational Research Association] conference in U.K.

In terms of professional legacy, as advocated by the research participants, I am pursuing more radio training opportunities for women. In 2017 I secured university ‘Science Week’ funding for a one day radio training session for women. Demand turned this into a two day course. In 2018 I submitted a major funding bid for women’s radio training to the U.K. Government’s *Women’s Vote Centenary Grant Scheme*, which offered £5m to women’s community groups. The bid failed and the administration of the fund was ridiculed by women’s groups as ‘shambolic’ (Guardian, 4.2.2018).

In 2018 and early 2019, 3 of us female radio volunteers hosted 3 women only training events which attracted thirty women. Funding for community radio, as stated on page 182 by Zane Ibrahim – is elusive and in the U.K. generally charity driven and attached to governmental deficiency-models of disadvantage such as unemployment, poor mental health and latterly, ‘combating radicalisation’. But the information collected here is a positive aid for funding applicants. For example in Mental Health, the thesis offers an additional tool
with which to support women in overcoming distress through new learning and sharing narratives. It is a critical intervention into the discourses of collective, relational empowerment in an increasingly individualistic world and in my perspective as a professional radio producer with a community development background, the material generated here has already kick-started actions for the future.
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APPENDICES
Appendix 1 - Email to Radio Station manager

To: Mr XXX, Manager  
XXX Community Radio,  
XXX,  
xxxx

Dear XX,

*Research project: BREAKING THE SILENCE: Community Radio, Women and Empowerment*

As you know I have been studying for my Doctorate in Education. I am now about half way and would like to ask your permission to conduct further research using the radio station as the site of study.

With your permission and that of the Volunteer Steering Group, I will advertise on our notice board for 4 to 6 women volunteers to help me. I want to find out about the radio training and the empowerment potential of community radio specifically for women.

I will arrange 1 or 2 individual and 2 group meetings with the respondents and these meetings will be held at a local community centre (not at the radio station). I attach the university ethical approval forms, consent forms and other relevant documents.

My supervisor for the research is Professor Erica Burman and her contact details are listed on the University of Manchester ethical approval form. Please don’t hesitate to contact me or her if you have any questions or concerns.

I will emphasise the anonymous nature of the project, so no real names of individuals, nor the real name of the Community Radio Station will appear on the final paper. I will also state clearly that the respondents can withdraw from the research at any time, even half way through or at the end. I will go through with them anything I intend to write up in the final paper and check that I have understood them correctly.

If you are interested in receiving the paper, or a summary, I can provide that for your own use and ultimately my aim is to disseminate a paper which raises awareness about community radio.

Many thanks again, Annette

Annette Rimmer Doctoral Student  
University of Manchester  
Applied Community and Youth Work  
The Manchester Institute of Education  
School of Environment, Education and Development  
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Manchester M13 9PL

Attached: Ethical Approval/Consent forms, River of Life exercise)
Appendix 2 - River of Life research exercise

River of life

The 'River of Life' exercise is a visual narrative method that helps people to reflect on their lives and tell their stories. It focuses upon pictures, dialogue and people sitting together and discussing each stage of their journey down the river of life.

I have used this exercise in community and youth groups, particularly refugee groups. (with thanks to Dhara Thompson for permissions and The Federation for community development learning.

1. Prepare the room by setting out the river on flip chart paper and providing various coloured pens and symbols. After the respondent has entered, had a drink and is comfortable to begin, explain the research again as a reminder and check that they have signed the consent form, understand the process, do not mind being audio taped and are happy to proceed. Ask them what name they would like to use for the purpose of this study.

2. Make it clear again that if they wish to withdraw at any time then it is their right to do so.
3. OK so here is the river of your life and you can choose a coloured pen to draw your boat/submarine or other vessel (you can have a water-car or any object). The bridge signifies your entry to community radio.

4. Let’s start where you want to start – year of birth, year you were 18............. then think about your life and write on the river significant events/key moments + let’s talk about them as you row down the river. I won’t be saying much as this is your story, but I may prompt you or ask questions occasionally. When you reach the Community Radio Bridge – we’ll slow down a bit.

Questions and prompts could include: Did you enjoy your travels? How long were you working there? How did you feel? What are your views on that? Tell me more…

5. So you’ve reached the bridge – what was happening in your life then? What made you get involved with the training?

Tell me more about your community radio training… how many were in your group and what kind of people were they? What was the trainer's style?

6. And afterwards - prompts re experience: So what is a radio volunteer + what do you do at the station? How is volunteering here different from volunteering to work in any community project? What other things do you do nowadays since you became a radio volunteer?
7. Towards the end (coming up to the present) ask the respondent to take a look at the river ahead and ask about their plans for the future.

8. Leave 10 minutes for the respondent to stand back and look at the whole river and ask for any overall conclusive or general reflections.

9. Ask if you can take a photograph of the river (not them) – they can choose if it goes into the final paper as an appendix or not and I will delete the photo when the study is over. I will take the river, but return it to them if they wish.

Leave 5 minutes for a debrief and a cup of tea before making sure that the respondent can get home OK.

Annette.rimmer@manchester.ac.uk
Appendix 3 - Individual interview introduction and prompts
BREAKING THE SILENCE: Community Radio, Women and Empowerment

Prompts for individual meetings
Breaking the Silence; Community Radio, Women and Empowerment
Annette Rimmer

1. Thanks and welcome- reminder of the aims of the project and renewed consent.
2. I hope you received the CD and written transcript of your last interview with highlights of really useful statements to discuss today? I've also included some issues from my research diary and I'd really like your views on those too.
3. Are there any other comments you want to highlight, discuss, question?

4. Let’s start with ...........

5. Thanks + break

6. The second part of this session – I’d like to hear more reflections from you about your story/other’s stories - what’s happened since you made those comments/since we last met… activities, changes, anything you think relevant since we last met.

7. Summary of things discussed today – check out if you think my summary is accurate?

8. Final thanks – I will send you a CD and transcript of this meeting with highlighted quotes.

9. Check getting home arrangements/transport costs.
Appendix 4 - Research Diary framework
BREAKING THE SILENCE: Community Radio, Women and Empowerment

RESEARCH DIARY

The research diary will be flexible and anonymous. It will record my personal observations of interactions, meetings and other events taking place at the radio station over the research period.

Format: the diary will have headings covering general perspectives on:

Life in general for radio volunteers & daily life and events at the station

Radio training + technical skills + knowledge

Empowerment & disempowerment (different experiences of and dimensions on),

informal education

intersectionality

General thoughts on community radio + its place in the community

– the concepts which form the framework for the study. Other headings will be grounded in observations.

Some of the observations will be discussed/analysed together with the respondents.
Appendix 5 – What is World Café?

With thanks to http://www.theworldcafe.com

During the research meeting, we used paper table-cloths for people to write on

In a World Café we host intentional conversations around a question or issue that matters. The basic concept is to create a café like atmosphere (e.g., tables of 4 or 5 people, refreshments) where participants have a series of conversations with different groups of people. (How often have you solved the problems of the world over a conversation at a café?) Sometimes the conversations go for 20-25 minutes although we often use shorter periods.

After each conversation, people move to different tables and continue to have a conversation around the same question or a new question. Often one person remains at the table to welcome new people to the table and to provide a brief overview of the conversation held at the table, but sometimes everybody moves. (There’s a step-by-step description of a World Cafe in a school HERE.)

There are seven design principles for a World Café:
1. **Clarify the purpose.** It helps to be clear about the reason you are bringing people together and what you hope to achieve by hosting the conversations. I find World Cafés particularly useful for generating ideas, discovering what people are passionate about, deepening relationships, and exploring questions in some depth. It is important to pay close attention to the question(s) you will ask and to find a question that encourages reflection.

2. **Create a hospitable space.** We want to create a safe, welcoming space where people feel comfortable and can do their best thinking. I’d like to be better at creating the visual touches (like flowers and candles on the tables) but I think I am good at creating a safe, welcoming atmosphere which is also vital.

3. **Explore questions that matter.** World Café’s work well when they explore questions that matter to participants. We want to create powerful questions (or a series of questions) that are thought provoking, encourage deeper reflection and opens up possibilities. I find that strength-based or appreciative inquiry questions are a solid starting point.

4. **Encourage everyone’s contribution.** World Cafés are an inclusive group process that values everybody’s contribution. The conversations are ideally held in groups of no more than four or five to encourage participation. We don’t want only one note-taker so everybody at the table is encouraged to jot down thoughts, highlight comments by others or to express themselves through drawing or doodling. Some people are quite visual thinkers and it is can be liberating to encourage alternative forms of expression.
5. **Cross-pollinate and connect diverse perspectives.** After each round of conversation, participants are invited to go to different tables so that they can hear from a range of people. If the same question is used for more than one round, the subsequent conversations usually help people to explore the question in greater depth. By moving people around we create a web of connections, ideas and insights. There can be quite dramatic shifts in thinking as people hear from a range of perspectives.

6. **Listen together for patterns, insights, and deeper questions.** We want to encourage active listening so that participants help each other reflect deeply on the questions being asked. As conversations proceed, participants are encouraged to identify themes, insights or deeper questions.

7. **Harvest and share collective discoveries.** Reporting back to the larger group is an important part of small group processes, but they can also be mind-numbing. We normally ask tables to reflect on their conversations and identify two or three pieces of gold (on a large post-it note) they can bring back to the rest of the group. Rather than asking for an in-depth account of the conversations, we encourage tables to report the essence or key themes of their
conversations. The process of identifying the pieces of gold (we normally ask for two or three) can be a powerful process in its own right.

Based on a World Café I helped facilitate with local youth (as part of a consultation called Shout Out), a World Café might go something like this:

1. Participants were welcomed, everyone was introduced and the context was set
2. We provided an overview of the process and café etiquette explained
3. Conversation 1: What time is it for Newcastle? After the conversation the people were invited to move to a different table except for one person (the host – we suggested the person with the longest hair) who stayed to provide a BRIEF overview of the conversation to the new people at the table.
4. Conversation 2: What time is it for Newcastle? After the conversation, each table (there were around 10) was invited to share a couple of pieces of gold before everybody but the hosts changed table.
5. Conversation 3: What makes Newcastle unique? Again after the conversation each table shared a couple of pieces of gold and then found a new table (except for the hosts).
7. We then moved into Open Space to explore some of the ideas in more depth.

Some of the features that helped the World Café work well included:

- We had small round tables that sat four people comfortably
- Each table had a variety of coloured textas and everybody was encouraged to doodle or draw (so we often end up with some great sheets of paper)
- We had around 10 youth who had met before the forum and had discussed the process and how they could help the day. While they didn’t necessarily act as hosts, they were able to ensure everybody had a chance to contribute and helped with the smooth running of the Café

You can read more about World Café at http://www.theworldcafe.com/ and http://www.co-intelligence.org/P-worldcafe.html.
Appendix 6 - Group analysis transcribed

BREAKING THE SILENCE: Community Radio, Women and Empowerment

Researcher explained the aims of the research – the questions, consent issues, that anyone could leave etc.

Around the room I stuck anonymous quotes (large font) I had selected from the women’s individual narratives and asked them to choose one or 2 quotes (all anon) and comment upon them on the white paper tablecloths provided and/or discuss them for the audio recording. What follows is a transcription of the recording.

Quote:

*It’s the first time I’ve really done something that I can honestly say that without any contradiction that I’m good at it. I’m really good at this, I am really good at what I do. And I can say that with a lot of confidence, the only time really I’ve been able to say that with a lot of confidence. I just love it. I just love my show and the great thing is its all been off my own bat, no body’s told me what to do or what to put in it, its all come from my ideas its been great to be able to channel my ideas into something that’s actually tangible, it’s audible*

My thoughts on this are… to go through life believing that you aren’t good at anything or every have been seems like a tragedy to me. To find something that sparks all that positive – ‘can do’ feel about ourselves is like the happy ending, or if you look at it another way – a happy beginning.

So the quote I picked was this: *You’re gonna do live shows! I didn’t dream of me doing that, being there lettin’ my voice project out into the atmosphere where others can hear me so radio has helped me, give me a kick start – a boot – everything – and I’m still finding it real real good and helpful – It’s like therapy for me*

And what I’ve wrote in response to that is: Radio is a great way of breaking the silence turning your thoughts and ideas into a radio creation –it just brings new meaning into whatever you’re doing in everyday life – because you can turn it into a show.

The quote I’ve chosen is: *I do think that whoever you are and whatever you look like, radio can be a way of people just*
hearing your voice and maybe liking what you say. Not so much your voice but if they can’t see you, maybe they listen more to what you have to say because obviously you can’t put the same judgements on a voice.

And what I’ve put is – I agree especially cos I look nothing like I sound on radio, even though I’ve been told my voice is my unique selling point. I like surprising people and they’re always surprised when they find out what I do and who I am. Am also surprising myself through listening back to the shows I’ve done because I think radio is ageless, classless and genderless – and long may it continue to be so.

The quote I picked was:  

I think that when one person carries that message of empowerment, you carry that with you and you bring it to other people.

That stood out for me cos I agree that we all have a voice – and it’s how we use it that can make a difference to other people and this message of empowerment here can influence people in positive and negative ways so when you’re on air it does carry quite far. As I sat here I was just doodling and I wrote the word RADIO and underneath RESEARCH, ANALYSE, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION and OPERATIC.  (laughter).

The quote I picked is: I find it really nice to just be a voice there’s a power in that ‘cos it’s just you and what you want to say, sometimes maybe people hold back with their judgements if they can’t see you. I think that could be something that could apply not just to a racial thing – you know how people see you and make assumptions.

My answer to that is – it’s true to a point, but you still have to temper what you say and don’t be controversial – some people will judge you anyway especially if you have a strong accent or sound different. People are much too quick to jump to conclusions based just on appearance and a voice makes people think what you can do.

I chose this: I believe everyone’s got a story. This is the first time publically Im talking about my story. Im writing about it privately but you’re the first person Im talking to about it in this
manner. I think that in life there is a right time to tell your story and I also think it’s not necessary for everyone to tell their story

Now I’m in the public eye if I feel that my story will help others or motivate people – or it can bring some hope to someone who is in a hopeless situation or feeling there is no lifeline – being able to provide that lifeline – for me that makes it worth telling the story

I agree with that, I think everyone’s got a story. When I first came out, I was involved in local lesbian/gay politics and worked on a helpline and talked to hundreds and hundreds of women who all had different stories and I’m talking about in the 70s when things weren’t as they are now and I was on the radio + I was interviewed lots of times because I felt that that was my time to tell my story – because I’d been – well not silenced exactly, but I’d kept it a secret before then and I just think that publicising things on the radio could help some women who are isolated perhaps, vulnerable women whatever their story is and I think radio gives them access to something they’ve previously been denied, a resource that they’d previously may have been denied and I think older women are very marginalised (of course older men are too, but were talking about women in this context) – and older lesbians are even more marginalised and silenced and I think there’s a need for voices that tell people’s stories, whether its about what you’ve talked about – we need it.

The quote I’ve picked is:

**To be honest I never ever dreamt that I could do a radio show. I would never have thought in a million years that I could be sat there shouting my mouth off over the radio.**

And I’ve wrote is:

Definitely this is me as I lack confidence and its ok to chat on the radio cos no-one can see you.

I picked 2 quotes but XX picked the same one as me, so the other one is:
...you see them, their clothes look good and happy, but you never know the storms that’s brewing on the inside – because I’ve lived in silence for years during my abuse with my ex and everyone thought I had the perfect marriage and my children – (puts on another voice) ‘Oh your beautiful children, your beautiful marriage’ and no-one has ever known, until I break the silence... and move away, because no-one knew – everyone thought everything was OK until I step away from that marriage. It was like ‘what happen, how this happen?’ I say ‘Its been happenin’ for years but there’s a point in your life when you just can’t take any more

I picked this because this was me years ago. I was in a very abusive marriage and everyone thought everything was fine and I kept quiet about everything, for 7 years I put up with the beatings, and the drink, me kids being hungry, no money, no clothes, no nothing, and it’s like a spark, a light switch goes on and you think ‘I can’t do this anymore, I’m gonna walk. And what really stuck out in this – it’s breaking that silence and I think that’s what radio does because on the radio you can talk about your experiences and like xx says, ‘everyone’s got a story to tell’ and a lot of these stories are hidden and I think on the radio you can open those stories so that anybody that’s going through anything you can give that information out on the radio and its like YY said, people do judge but they can’t judge you by voice and a lot of people listen to the VOICE MORE THAN the actual person more to a voice rather than listening to you face to face.

Discussion: Is it the same – people do judge your voice – if they’ve got an accent. Some parts of the country are stereotyped by what they sound like.

I agree with that – I didn’t feel judged on the radio by what I looked like but come to think of it yeah, I have been judged for my manc mancness loadsa times (laughter from all), but it doesn’t mean I’m gonna squish it, but sometimes my son says ‘why do you put that voice on on the radio?’ and I don’t realise I’m doing it.

But do you feel as bothered about that as being judged for your accent?

No definitely not, it feels OK there (at that particular radio station)
But ‘Manciness’ isn’t really a negative thing

But neither were the other things I were being judged for but I got tired of being judged for the way I looked (Asian) – everything was about the way I looked.

But people are quick to do that aren’t they cos if you talking face-to-face it’s about your posture and the way you feel you’re speaking, but you can go home and say ‘well do you know?’ (hands on hips) – but on the radio I can do that … its not like in meetings cos nobody can see my hands moving or my fist clenched!

Nobody can see you going like this either (rude gesture). (laughter)

It’s like xx said to me once ‘you’ve once of the sexiest voices on the radio, how do you get your voice to go like that?’ and I said, well I just open my mouth and there it is.

You should have said: ‘because I am a dead sexy person

Do you think its because,(I know this is gonna sound really silly) but do you think it’s because when you are on the radio you are actually ‘you’ so you just speak and you just you – it’s like when I go to meetings I’m so totally different, I speak (puts on posh voice) ever so nicely. When I’m on the radio I say ‘well dya know what?’ It’s no one else, its just me.

That’s a sign of how good it is cos you can feel relaxed, (yeah – all agree) and if you can make people feel relaxed, so much so that they open up and tell you things that they wouldn’t normally say, cos they’ll keep it to themselves, then that is a sign of just how good you are.

Yeah well I know that too

You bring out the best in them, cos that’s happened to me a couple of times, people have told you things on radio that you just wouldn’t expect and they never expected that they’d talk about it either. And I feel privileged because, you don’t have to tell me stuff like that and I was thinking, you know, the fact that they feel relaxed enough to tell me things like that and they don’t mind it going out on radio, that’s something we can feel really proud of – if we’ve got the ability to do that.
I think, as well, women – we’re made to feel very conscious of our appearance and so a lot of people say ‘I love it on radio I don’t have to dress in a particular way, don’t have to do my hair, my make-up or whatever, cos I’m not being judged in that way – the gender kinda way.

It’s like if you make a mistake on the radio – or if me and xx (co presenter) make a mistake, I say to xx, bang a record on! You can’t do that if you’re in a meeting or anything.

Or if you want to burst into tears –

Yeah – we’ve done that as well

I think you can be yourself on the radio as well, you don’t have to hide behind anything because if you’re not genuine it comes across that you’re being false and I think all these comments that we’ve picked they all relate to each other, cos if you listen, xx relates to yy and what you said relates to this + we’ve all picked similar things.

Yeah – we’ve all said such similar things – especially about judging you on your appearance – and that goes for race, gender, everything

I think as women in radio were very unique and we have to keep pushing it forward because we’re pushing boundaries right now and the fact that we’re all sat in this room its really good.

Yeah, I think women are more open as well

Yeah men have that old jokey bit about it don’t they, but with the issues we speak about its all pretty real – we might have been affected and we can relate to it, speak it out whereas a man might just joke about it. They don’t have to do they? They’re not pressured into dealing with things like we are.

Any other comments? (researcher)

Yeah – long may we continue (to meet like this)

Some of the group took down the names of the theorists I wrote on the flip chart.
### Appendix 7 - Timeline for the project

**BREAKING THE SILENCE: Community Radio, Women and Empowerment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annette Rimmer</th>
<th>Doctorate in Education</th>
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</table>

**TIMELINE 2013-2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2014</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th July</td>
<td>Research paper 1 (Literature Review) submitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August to December</td>
<td>Pilot study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2015</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26th Feb</td>
<td>Research paper 2 (Pilot study) submitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th October</td>
<td>Research paper 3 (Thesis proposal) submitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21st December</td>
<td>Feedback Research paper 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2016</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January onwards</td>
<td>Begin writing thesis introduction and literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd August</td>
<td>Submitted application for ethical approval and Fieldwork Risk Assessment forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29th November</td>
<td>Gained ethical approval from University of Manchester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th December</td>
<td>Letter to organisation manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th December</td>
<td>Gained permissions to access participants and to start anonymous research diary. Began putting these notes in order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th December</td>
<td>Application for fieldwork support (for room hire, refreshments and travel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2017</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th January</td>
<td>Manager sends email to all female radio volunteers asking interested volunteers to contact me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Discussed adjustment (4-6 participants changed to 12 participants) with supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January to March</td>
<td>Individual interviews with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January onwards</td>
<td>Writing up <em>Methods and Methodology</em> chapter, transcribing and initial analysis, selection of quotations for participants to analyse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th to 14th July</td>
<td>BPS Psychology of Women Conference present paper Breaking the Silence: Women, Intersectionality, Community</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Radio and Empowerment
First Group meeting of participants in Community Centre

Continued:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annette Rimmer</th>
<th>Doctorate in Education</th>
<th><strong>TIMELINE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DATE</strong></td>
<td><strong>ACTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>July onwards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcribing their discussion and analysis, plus combining my analysis. Begin writing up <em>Analysis chapter</em>. Continue reading and writing thesis. Continue writing book chapter for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>November 6-8th</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>metoo</em> campaign</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>16th January</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email correspondence with participants regarding <em>metoo</em> campaign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January onwards</td>
<td>Continue reading and writing thesis: ongoing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st March</td>
<td>Final group meeting for reflection on whole research process and additional thoughts on women and radio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April-May</td>
<td>Transcribing and analysis. Work on book chapter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th April</td>
<td>Production of first rough draft of thesis Submit book chapter to Editors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th April</td>
<td>Supervision discussion. Erica’s advice to separate thesis again into chapters, to tighten arguments and focus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29th May</td>
<td>Supervision discussion. Agree timetable &amp; discuss items for Annual Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th June</td>
<td>Submit to Helen and Erica -1. a brief narrative about progress, 2. The Intro &amp; lit review &amp; Methodology with a short summary of the analysis chapter (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th June</td>
<td>Annual Review with Erica and Helen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Complete chapter 4 and most of conclusion/reflection chapters. Send final draft of whole thesis to Erica first week in August</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td></td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 16\textsuperscript{th} August - 24\textsuperscript{th} August | Supervision  
| August - October | Writing up, correcting & proof reading draft 2 for consideration  
by Carlo Raffo & Erica Burman end October and possible submission in February/March 2019 |
Appendix 8 - Consent Form

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?

Annette Rimmer, Doctorate of Education Student, Manchester Institute of Education, School of Education, Environment and Development

Breaking the Silence: Women, Community Radio and Empowerment

This is a study exploring women’s experience of involvement in community radio.

What is the aim of the research?

The researcher is studying part time for her Doctorate in Education. The aim is to hear women’s stories and views about their involvement in community radio. She would like to find out how this involvement has affected your life, if at all.

Why have I been chosen?

You were selected because you responded quickly to the appeal for help, also because you are an experienced community radio volunteer and a woman. You offered to help and also you are keen and willing to talk about community radio. This is a small study and only 4 or 5 other volunteers have been selected.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

In this study, you will be asked to take part in 1 or 2 group meetings (with Annette and other volunteers) and 1 or 2 individual interviews/discussions with Annette Rimmer. The meetings will take place at a time of your convenience at a local community centre and in the group we will use a ‘River of Life’ game to
aid the process and to make the group discussion less formal. In this game you will be given a drawing of a river and asked to mark out events in your life which are memorable (eg your first day at school, your first radio show). There will be a bridge on the river and that will denote the time of your involvement with community radio – after the bridge, you will talk about subsequent events and how (if at all) you feel you were affected by your time as a volunteer at the radio station. Annette will be interested in your observations and views about community radio in general and also for you personally as a woman.

If you prefer just the individual interviews, then that’s fine. Annette will ask you to tell the story of how you became involved in community radio, your experiences at the project and any observations you have made or comments you have about the experience of community radio. During this discussion, Annette may ask you for more detail about your observations. She will always check that she has understood you fully before moving on.

If you agree to it, she will record the interview.

Annette and her supervisor have considered carefully if there is any risk to you through taking part in this research. Annette will always conduct sessions in a very supportive way. As for the benefits of this study, it is hoped that you, personally will enjoy the discussion and the opportunity to share some of your insights on the community radio experience. The wider benefits include improving awareness about the existence and value of community radio and informing the community and youth work field.

What happens to the data collected?

Annette will take notes and with your permission record your views. She will transcribe (type up) the tape recording. She will then write her paper for submission and assessment by The University of Manchester. Before doing this she will confirm with you that you are happy with everything she has written based on your responses. She may also use your responses in articles or papers for conferences, with your permission.

How is confidentiality maintained?

This study is anonymous, so no-one, apart from Annette, the small group and yourself will know your real name. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym. The name of the radio station will also be changed. The tape recording and notes of the interview will be locked away in the university and the tape will be wiped as soon as interviews and group meetings have been typed up.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving an explanation. You also have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you. You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, please ask the researcher before the study begins.
Will I be paid for participating in the research?

No payment will be made for participation in this research. The researcher will provide refreshments.

What is the duration of the research?

The research will take place over 8 to 12 months. The individual interviews will take 1 hour and the group meetings 2 hours. After the sessions if you wish to meet again to discuss what Annette has written, that will take about an hour. Alternatively she will email, write or ring you with a summary of what she has written. She will always check that you are completely happy with the parts of the interviews/meetings she will be using.

Where will the research be conducted

The interviews and meetings will take place in a private room in a local community centre.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

If there is an opportunity to present the final paper, or part of it for publication or conference delivery, Annette will contact you again to check that you are happy with this.

Criminal Records Check (if applicable)

Annette has undergone a criminal records check with the community radio station (2013) and prior to that has worked as a qualified social worker and youth worker with vulnerable people.

Contact for further information

Professor Erica Burman is Annette’s supervisor and will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact her at the university of manchester erica.burman@manchester.ac.uk Tel 0161 2753636

Contact details for Annette: Annette Rimmer Annette.rimmer@manchester.ac.uk or via her supervisor.

What if something goes wrong?

If you feel worried about any aspect of this research and feel you need to talk to someone or obtain advice and support, Annette is qualified as a Social Worker and Youth and Community Worker. If she is not the right person, her supervisor Erica is available or both can offer alternative agencies for support.

If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with members of the research team, please contact the Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator by either writing to ‘The Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator, Research Office, Christie Building, The
University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, by emailing: Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk, or by telephoning 0161 275 7583 or 275 8093.
Breaking the Silence: Women, Community Radio and Empowerment
CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

3. I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded.

4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

6. I agree that any data collected may be passed to other researchers

7. I agree that any data collected may be passed to other researchers

8. I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of participant ___________________________ Date __________ Signature ________________

Name of person taking consent ___________________________ Date __________ Signature ________________
Appendix 9 – Detailed pen picture of research participants

My name is Sasha. I’m a 25 year old young adult I’m from a Nigerian, West African background but I’ve grown up in the UK so I see life from 2 views shall we say? I see things from 2 different perspectives. And me as a woman in particular I’ve seen shows like here at Shout FM – there’s a particular show called Flowers, for example and the host of that show she talks about issues specifically related to young girls, teenage girls- and young teenage adults and the issues that we go through and that is what the whole show is about and it's so great because it really.. you really listen to the show, you get advice.

I'm Jess, Welsh background, from a sheep-farming community, part of the LGBT community, moved to England when I was 6 – still don’t like it (laughter). I'm Aspergers and the best way to describe how it feels is to use an analogy – if I were to place you amongst a group of Bulgars, Egyptian people, you haven’t any idea how they live their lives so you’d find it very hard to mix with those people and understand how and why they do things – that's how I see society. I don’t understand how friendships are made and maintained and because I never got the chance to learn growing up, now it’s more difficult and people don’t give me the time. (with passion) they expect me to know these things and I don’t, so I can’t contribute to conversations so I’m always left out... I got so sick and tired of mainstream radio not playing what I like and I thought ‘I can do better than that’ and I've got so much good music at home I thought – ‘I'll put the 2 together so I bring in all my obscure stuff and say to people – here’s an alternative – for god’s sake listen’.

Lorraine, I’m from a working class family. I went into a depression about my redundancy – it took me about 2 years to get over that. I applied for every single job I could think of. Then I decided to dye my hair. I’m not into looks and how people look – but I really did feel that grey bits in my hair was holding me back. So I dyed my hair and the other thing was I didn’t want to pretend that my hair was my natural colour – ’cos I’m not ashamed of it being dyed so I dyed it red – and the next interview I went for I got the job. Being lesbian – radio is a voice for LGBT – it’s important – especially for older people like me – it’s different for younger LGBT people nowadays though I know people are still silenced, but there’s a lot more going on for young people coming out, more support and help and people aren’t looking at them as though they’ve got 2 heads.

My name is Priceless. I was born in Jamaica but I’m now residing in the UK. I’ve got 3 daughters. They’re all grown up and the youngest is still in high school. I’ve been through a lot of challenges – I’ve been through Breast cancer and during my stages of chemotherapy my husband became abusive – But somehow, I’ve decided I need to get out of this marriage because I don’t think I would be alive today or maybe I’d be in some mental institution if I didn’t. On radio it’s good to be relatable – so being on radio – ‘oh I know that song’ and hearing a voice like yours (Caribbean) – it’s like ‘wow I can do that too’.
because sometimes the intimidation is never hearing a voice like yours and thinkin’ ‘that’s not for me I can’t do that.’

**I’m Kate,** I’m a British born woman – I came out in my 20’s – I’m a politico, I’m an activist, I’m a trade unionist I think it’s very important that through solidarity we get change and we get good change. I’m a singer song-writer. I think radio is phenomenal, it’s one of the best mediums – it doesn’t matter what you look like, it doesn’t matter how old you are, it doesn’t matter about your ethnicity – and it shouldn’t it’s not about your image it’s about what you do and what you say and what you can learn all the time, so I think one of the things about being a presenter on radio is that it’s not about you – it’s not about talking, it’s about listening, the whole point of radio is about listening – so the whole point about someone who leads a show is it’s not about them, it’s always about the guest or the contributor, it’s *their story* it’s their information because as people say, you learn nothing from talking, you only learn from listening and that’s how I see radio working and community radio working really well and especially because I live in a very diverse area and I think community radio is immense at managing to cover all of those different communities.

**Collette:** You can’t use my nick name of the ‘jolly wog’ so just use Collette. I wasn’t interested in dolls or anything like that but my main interests were music and football. I was born in XXX in the old terraced houses near the brewery and as far as I know my parents lived in one room and they weren’t married so in those days it was shocking…and not only weren’t they married but they were an inter-racial relationship – my dad was black Nigerian and my mum was white English so it was a terrible shocking thing. Well from a very early age I was always in trouble, just aggressive and I’ve had it checked --- frontal lobe damage sometimes I won’t remember what I’ve done and it’s not ADHD it’s just this frontal lobe damage. What Community Radio is about is giving *lesser* people (I don’t know how you are going to phrase this) but people like myself who aren’t of the mainstream - giving lesser people a chance. Cos you know yourself that - I’m not going to name any names - but there are people at Shout FM who will never get a chance in the mainstream and I include myself in that cos I just got turned down for a job but if I can go there (to Community Radio) and BE SOMETHING and have people say well done Collette – have my friends and family being proud.

**I’m Liz.** I’m nearly 62. When I left school at 16 my ambition was to be a French teacher and live in france. But my dream didn’t turn out the way I wanted it to – I ended up getting married, having 3 children and I ended up supporting them through alcohol, drugs and mental health. Now my husband’s got COPD so that dream of going to live in France didn’t happen – but I’ve got 3 children and 9 grandchildren so yeah, that’s my dream now, my grandchildren – watching them grow up and seeing them have their lives. I was born Liz but over the years lost Liz and now I’ve become Liz again. Somebody said to me years ago ‘there’s a life beyond caring’ and I said ‘yeah right, I can’t see that’. You know when you walk into a radio studio and sit there (I don’t like the mickey mouse earphone things) and to say exactly how you feel and exactly what’s goijng on –
and you think ‘how many people are listening to me talking’? Yeah it really gives you a boost. It’s letting people know that you’ve been in that situation and that there is loads of support out there and all they have to do is pick up a phone.

I’m Madonna, I’m 40 years old and I’m xxx born and bred and yeah I’m just living my life to the full. I’m mixed race, light-skinned, my decent is from Sierra Leone, my mums half Black and I’m a quarter, but I see myself as mixed race. I’ve always worked, all my life and I thought ‘what am I doing here? This isn’t me, I’ve got all this creative talent and I was thinking ‘I need to get out of here’ so I was looking online and I saw this radio course. I went on this radio course and YEAH it seemed to be me. I totally got into it – it made me feel that ‘this is me, I have got a skill here and I’m good at it’.

Kimi: I’ve done some acting and been asked to wear hijabs etc because I’m brown. I have been looking after my mother who went to stage 4 with xxxx and had to start chemotherapy and other treatments. Previously I was doing a job where I had to travel and I had a 10 year old child. Basically I don’t have much family support and something had to give so I quit my job. I was completely deflated and I suppose I was again, sacrificing myself to look after my mum. I was getting more and more depressed. Radio would mean that I would be judged on me and my voice and nothing at all to do with what I was lookin’ like. (With passion and laughter) - At first I didn’t want anyone taking any photos of me at the radio station – I wanted to use only my first name, not my whole name just so I was judged on what I was putting out there.

My name is Marie and for the past 15 years I’ve been a carer for my mum who sadly passed away in 2015. Radio has always been a thread throughout my life in different ways and when my mum got quite ill and she couldn’t sit up for long periods of time watching the TV, one of the things she got a great deal of enjoyment from was listening to the radio, so that was something we’d do quite a lot together. And I found with the radio – when I couldn’t be with my mum, the radio was a great source of comfort to her – and I was very aware of that and it meant that when I’d go back and see her she had like all these amazing things to tell me that she’d heard on radio and stuff. She’s the main reason that I became involved with Shout Fm because she’s the reason I became aware of Shout Fm – she’d listen to the ‘Big Irish show’. I’m Irish and African.

Hi my name is Ayisha - being from an Asian background, I’m British Asian… the most difficult thing…I went through divorce…and leaving all material assets behind, you know, house, cars, business everything just for self peace of mind. I thought to myself I was young enough but I was the single mother of 4 children… We’re 4th generation British Pakistanis, so were kind of finding our own way. It’s a new culture, it’s a different culture because it’s open to lots of new ideas. British Asians are quite flexible, they’re very easy going, take on board the challenges, we’ve got the missing links that the Asians and Pakistanis never had. If they were lacking in their countries, which were then classed as
third world countries, if they were lacking education – we had that education when we came here – if they were lacking opportunity, well we had those opportunities – if they were lacking in language, well now we have that language so were more equipped and we have the best of both worlds. Radio was music because my parents used to listen to radio. My mum used to work and the radio was always in my room and I’d always hear it whether Asian Sound radio or other stations.

I’m Vee ... Anyway there was this huge big scandal – anyone who took Phenobarbital ran the risk of having babies with birth defects. I was one of them. I was very naïve and believed that I could get pregnant by someone holding my hand. And I was well developed. At the age of 12 I was 36D so you can imagine what that was like. Because of the way I looked I started to develop my personality really because I didn’t have much else going for me really apart from my boobs so that was when I started developing my sense of humour and other skills. I found out that when I was playing records I could be anyone I wanted to be really. We set up our own little radio station (at college) - we called it Arundel Radio Station and our tag line was ‘We are ARS and if you don’t like it you can kiss it’ (uproarious laughter).
Appendix 10 - My detailed profile

A white European woman with a working class background, I trained as a teacher in the late 1970’s, but instead used my qualification to enter statutory Youth and Community Work (in U.K. Youth & Community work was then an essential sub-division of Local Education Departments). Grounded in Freirian theory, I worked for many years with individuals, but mostly in groups applying the theories of critical pedagogy and adhering to a national curriculum which included headings such as *relationship & sex education, anti-sexism, anti-racism, citizen participation*, in addition to stereotypical youth and community work activities such as lunch clubs, parent and toddler groups, table tennis, snooker, canoeing, mountaineering and game-playing (all essential to relationship-building and critical pedagogy; central themes of this thesis).

Working in Youth Justice, I found my Youth Work qualification did not entitle me to write Magistrates/Crown court reports on behalf of young people, so, (somewhat reluctantly – since my family had experienced the judgemental side of social work), I qualified as a Social Worker. In the U.K. the Social Work qualification is generally based on Freirian theory and, at the time had a rights-based, empowerment approach. I continued to work individually and collectively alongside citizens in mental health, youth justice and child protection. (These are the groupings used to organise statutory social work).

In the 1990s I entered academia as lecturer in Social Work; latterly in Community and Youth Development, but continuing also as a volunteer with grassroots community groups. In my role as a social work lecturer, together with local people, I initiated systems in two Universities, whereby service users could receive training and remuneration in order to ‘teach’ students from their own perspective and knowledge base. This work has been the subject of conference and journal papers, (*Citizens as Trainers* et al, 2004) and is relevant in that it provides a another example of the important action of valuing the epistemologies of oppressed people and their capacity to share their knowledge and empower others.

In 2009, along with colleagues, after 30+ years of full time work, my Community Development course was closed and I suddenly became redundant and depressed. It was the worst and best thing which ever happened to me. I responded to an advert for free radio training in the ‘Big Issue’ [U.K. Homelessness magazine]. I was the only woman on the radio training course, but I can only describe it as an awakening. It rejuvenated me. The trainer, and the rest of the group nurtured and encouraged me and (hopefully), I them. From this group’s daily dialogue, I began to understand that we were all in a
fragile state. This assumption arose from our frank exchanges about the state of society and our place within it. The other learners were long-term unemployed, some with mental or physical health issues which quickly put my problems into perspective. My experience and assumptions in that radio training group form the springboard for this thesis. Since then I have continued as a radio volunteer, qualified with a degree in radio production, reinvented myself as a freelance radio producer and embarked upon this research project.