

**Women and radio - airing differences.**

**On the importance of community radio as a space for women's  
representation, participation and resistance.**

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## **1. Abstract**

The submission and commentary document an original and significant contribution to knowledge about the history, praxis and methods of how women have found their voice in community radio through participation at structural and symbolic levels; that is, by setting up their own radio station structures and programming, using community radio as a place to contest identity and produce new media narratives for themselves beyond male discourses. The submission finds that women's community radio can be a place for individual empowerment, representation and creativity, as well as a space for resistance – including collective and transnational feminist campaigning and activism. The submission documents historical and contemporary case studies of feminist interventions and women's radio programming in multiple global contexts. It demonstrates how this work has been instrumental in establishing the field of radio studies and within that, the sub-theme of women's community radio practice.

Discussion of methodologies of critical educational pedagogy runs throughout the commentary and demonstrates that specific, holistic, women-centred approaches to radio training and production can enable more women to access and participate in radio, thus raising the status of their on-air 'voice'. It demonstrates that adoption and adaptation of the methodology of ethnographic and participatory action research in partnerships between community radio stations, women's projects and voluntary organisations have developed new ways of understanding how women participate in and engage with radio and radio production.

The submission is situated in the context of its intervention in current and recent debates about women's public voice and the representation of women in media industries. It makes a significant contribution to knowledge about women's community radio as part of radical and alternative cultural production and offers new directions for women's radio practice, education and training.

## 2. Introduction

This submission comprises twelve outputs, including section introductions and chapters from an edited book, book chapters (extracts and full chapters), and journal articles.

The submitted research<sup>1</sup> represents published work over a fifteen-year period, produced after over three decades of activism, production, training and research in community radio, with a particular focus on women. The driving force behind my practice and my decision to work in community radio production and management was a response to the mainstream radio industry's sexist employment and programming policies. From the early 1990s, I developed and led a number of innovative women's community radio initiatives, co-founding *Fem FM*, the first women's radio station in the UK. After that formative experience, and with the move to full-time academia, I undertook a number of studies of how women actively used community radio as a discursive, participatory and creative space, researching how diverse groups of women used community radio.

The submitted work lies at the intersection of a number of fields, many of which were emerging over the period of this research: they include gender studies, alternative media and community media studies, feminist media history, and critical pedagogy. This commentary starts by outlining and defining the historical and academic context of the main fields of study: that is, feminist media studies, radio studies and community media studies, and the part that my outputs and wider work played in shaping those fields. I then go on to define and explain my choice of the approaches and methodologies that led to the publication of the twelve research outputs.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix A lists twelve outputs that will be referenced in the text, i.e. Output 1, 2, and so on. These correspond to outputs contained in Volume 2 of the submission.

<sup>2</sup> During this period I produced work in a number of other areas not directly relevant to this submission: participatory arts, radio station management, teaching media sustainability, European community media and social cohesion and radio work with refugees and asylum seekers, which are not included in this submission but will be referenced where relevant and included in the submission's bibliography.

The main themes that underpin the published outputs will be discussed; they come under the umbrella of the nature of women's and feminist community radio space and praxis<sup>3</sup>:

- 1) How an understanding of gendered radio production and feminist radio practice has been developed. How women can be *represented*, symbolically and materially, in public radio space, both on air (as presenters, through programming of different kinds) and off air (in different roles including that of managers), through community radio.
- 2) How women's community radio has become a *participatory* medium. The methods that have been developed through my research to gain access to and participate in community radio programming, individually and collectively. How 'critical participation' (i.e. participation that is about women speaking for themselves rather than being spoken for) is enabled through specific training and community development methods. How 'women friendly' courses and programme making projects can be facilitated, working with specific target groups of women, including young women, minority ethnic women, migrants and refugees.
- 3) How women have used diverse approaches within community radio to be *agents of resistance* against a range of traditional representations of themselves in radio. This theme is particularly reflected in the range of case studies of women's and feminist community radio contained within the submitted outputs.

In section 5, I explain how I have used *participatory action research (PAR)*<sup>4</sup> approaches framed by *feminist media studies* (Van Zoonen, 2004). The methodology is influenced by critical and emancipatory pedagogies (e.g. Freire's emancipatory

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<sup>3</sup> Praxis is understood as the processes of mediation through which theory and practice become deeply interwoven with one another, or as O'Neill et al. state, 'purposeful knowledge/change' (2004: 205).

<sup>4</sup> PAR is collaborative research, education and action that involves people who are concerned about or affected by an issue taking a leading role in producing and using knowledge about it. Pain, Kindon and Kesby (2010)

and dialogic theory and praxis of education, 1972) and feminist influenced ‘active’ educational approaches to radio participation (for instance Günnel’s ‘action oriented media pedagogy’, 2006). I detail how, as a trainer and participant researcher, I have facilitated collaborations and partnerships between radio stations, women’s projects, community and voluntary groups, NGOs, and training providers in order to access diverse target groups and develop new ways of researching women and community media. I also explain how qualitative research was carried out (with Kim Michaels in 2000, Output 2) to survey female presenters in commercial and community radio as a follow-up to Rosalind Gill’s 1993 research about ‘flexible sexism’ in the radio industry.

I document the *impact* that the research output represents, demonstrating that the research on the radio station Fem FM (1992 Outputs 1, 2 and 11) has a significant impact on how women’s radio has been historicised in the UK and internationally, and how other women’s radio stations and related women’s training initiatives were subsequently established in the UK. I discuss how my curation of the Fem FM Archive (2014 Output 11 and 12) and the educational work surrounding its launch contributes to the way archives of feminist radio activism have become both repositories for and makers of cultural memory. I also show how this work has had an impact in terms of capacity building and method development in successive European funded community media training, education and research projects, and how this praxis has impacted on feminist community media work inside and outside the academy.

### **3. Contexts: Historical contexts and definitions of key terms**

#### **3.1 Community radio in the UK and worldwide**

The main locus of my research is community radio, now a relatively well-established part of the UK media landscape but not legalised in Britain until 2004. As is now well documented (Lewis and Booth, 1989; Howley, 2005; Lewis, 2012), the development of the UK community radio sector was largely in response to specific groups, including women and ethnic minorities, who had been ignored, marginalised,



neglected or misrepresented by mainstream radio channels. Here people wanted to use radio as a forum for expression, discussion and cultural exchange at a neighbourhood or grass-roots level. As Howley states the sector was:

... predicated on a profound sense of dissatisfaction with mainstream media form and content, dedicated to the principles of free expression and participatory democracy, and committed to enhancing community relations and promoting community solidarity. (Howley, 2005: 2)

This 'third sector' of broadcasting, alongside the BBC and commercial radio, was set up as a formal and legal sector under the Community Radio Order in 2004 and is distinct from commercial and BBC radio in that stations are owned and operated by the communities they broadcast to, are largely staffed by volunteers, and are non profit distributing. Key to their ethos is that they offer access to broadcasting and training so that volunteers and user groups can fully participate in station programming and management.<sup>5</sup> It is the nature of this access and participation that I have concerned myself with in this submission.

In 2016 there are over 240 stations across Britain, including small-scale neighbourhood stations in rural and urban areas and community of interest stations set up by and for many diverse communities, including young people, minority ethnic, language and religious groups and cultural and sexual minorities.

Outside the formal licensed sector, there are other stations that self-identify as community: some stream as internet or web radio stations and others broadcast occasionally, using short-term licences to enable project work and training whilst they wait for a broadcast licence to be available.

In terms of this submission, it is the pre-legislation period of the UK community sector that is the first area of focus for research. In the 1980s and 1990s I was part of a long campaign to establish the sector, as outlined by Gray & Lewis, 1992 and Mitchell, 2011 (Output 9)<sup>6</sup> so my narrative is inevitably communicated through the experience of activism and campaigns. During the period of developing UK

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<sup>5</sup> The Community Media Association Charter (<http://www.commedia.org.uk/who-we-are/charter/>) outlines the ten main principles of community media, agreed by its members in 2012.

<sup>6</sup> I was part of the team, establishing the national organisation the Community Radio Association (now the Community Media Association) and Secretary to the Association from 1984 -1986.

community radio, my main concern was to learn how to set up small-scale stations, make programmes in partnership with community based groups,<sup>7</sup> and campaign for licences. During this process I became aware of the difficulties of securing a radio space that was inclusive and welcoming to women in particular, and began to map out a feminist influenced 'manifesto' for women in community radio that was anchored in collective practice and practical feminist activism (Outputs 2, 5 and 6). My active involvement in the sector, with a particular emphasis on supporting stations and projects made for women and other marginalised groups, as well as designing gender appropriate radio training courses, enabled a form of ethnographic and participatory research that was embedded in grass-roots projects. It also enabled me to map an early history of women's community radio, including documentation of the work of Women's Airwaves (Mitchell, 2000, Output 2:55) of which I was a member,<sup>8</sup> Fem FM (which was to become a major focus of my research as evidenced in Output 2, 2000: 94-110), and other small-scale women's radio stations which are presented as case studies in Outputs 5, 6 and 8.

The UK community radio sector is part of an international community radio movement and its development has been influenced by policies and models of practice from countries where community radio has been established for a longer period of time, particularly North America and Australia. Through international conferences and training events run by the world radio association AMARC,<sup>9</sup> and participation in workshops and international meetings held as part of funded transnational training partnerships, I carried out interviews and gathered materials to develop case studies of women's radio and feminist media campaigns. These case studies (Outputs 7, 8 and 10) increased understanding of narratives of European women's radio research started by Jallof (1996).

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<sup>7</sup> During my time as a community media worker at Walworth and Aylesbury Community Arts Trust in Southwark, London, 1980-1985, I made programmes with local residents, community workers and health visitors about women's safety on housing estates, with a Turkish women's group about arranged marriages, and with a local Day Centre for people with disabilities, in connection with which I set up a radio station run by people at the centre.

<sup>8</sup> See also Women's Airwaves Collective, 1983, pp.132-142, which includes an analysis of local radio output in London from a feminist perspective.

<sup>9</sup> AMARC is French acronym for the World Association of Community Radios. AMARC Europe and the Women's International Network of AMARC are two sections of the organisation.

### 3.2 Radio industry contexts and campaigns

My work on women's radio has been instrumental in reconfiguring modern spaces of identity and agency. In order to elucidate the conditions necessary for opening up community broadcast space, my submission also addresses debates about mainstream radio as a space for women as programme makers (and to a certain extent as audiences, although this is not the primary focus of the submission). In the introductions to *Women and Radio: Airing Differences* (Outputs 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d), I set the rationale for how radio space is gendered, and how women have been active both historically and contemporaneously as programme makers and audiences in different programme genres. There are two main themes relevant to this submission in relation to the mainstream radio industry: the nature of programming (Output 2) and the nature of gender equality in employment in the radio sector (Outputs 3, 4 and 11). I started my published research by documenting my own and others' activist intervention in setting up Fem FM, an all-women's radio station in Bristol, the first in the UK (Outputs 1a and 2). This empirical research led me to take an academic interest in how community radio could counteract the structuring influence of women's marginalisation that has been embedded for many years in mainstream radio; in the UK this consists of the BBC and what is known as independent or commercial radio.<sup>10</sup> This ongoing marginalisation in most radio roles, but particularly in on-air presentation, technical roles and senior management, is a concern that has been highlighted by research done by organisations such as the UK pressure group Sound Women/Creative Skillset (2013),<sup>11</sup> and 'revisited', it could be said time and time again, by BBC senior management. As recently as April 2016 the BBC's Director General reiterated the Corporation's commitment to having greater numbers of women in all areas of the BBC workforce.<sup>12</sup> Woman's Hour was a longstanding

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<sup>10</sup> Examples of this hard-to-shift culture from the 1970s onwards include the BBC newsroom culture of 'old men in cardigans' (Luscombe, 2013: 89) and the notion that BBC local radio stations were 'pubs with radio stations attached': the latter is a quip about BBC local radio stations relayed to me by a former editor of BBC Tees.

<sup>11</sup> The author and a University of Sunderland student were involved in this research.

<sup>12</sup> See 'BBC pledges half of workforce will be women by 2020': <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-36120246>

island of women's programming in the BBC and certainly covered feminist issues (Skoog, 2011; Murray, 1996; Murphy, 2014); but, as I write in Output 2 and Output 11, one of the main reasons that women were motivated to set up community programming was the sexism of the mainstream industry, including what could be described as a 'toxic' media culture at the BBC and the commercial local radio (Baehr and Ryan, 1984). Although the pressure groups Women in Media and the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom had started to raise issues about barriers to women entering and getting on in the BBC, they were mainly oriented towards journalism and television, and it wasn't until academics started researching these areas that the underlying discourses of inequality came to the fore and started to become a focus of campaigning and activating for change.

#### **4. Contexts – fields and theory**

##### **4.1 Radio Studies**

In 1989 Lewis and Booth identified radio as

... hardly noticed in academic literature [and] as a result, radio practice and policy lack a language for critical reflection and analysis. Why we have the radio we do, what radio we could have if things were different – these questions are as difficult to debate as the hidden histories are to uncover or the alternative practices to publicise.' (xiii)

Radio Studies has developed over the past three decades starting from a position (for reasons outlined by Lewis, 2002) where radio was almost completely un-theorised by contrast with film, television and media studies. Currently it comprises a significant international body of work representing historical, textual, and audience studies as well as political economy approaches. It has been influenced by a wide range of other disciplines and has the advantage of being an emerging field; indeed in her review of the first ten years of radio studies Lacey concluded that 'in our research ... we are very likely to read a variety of media and other histories precisely because the radio studies "canon" is still in embryonic form' (2008: 12).

The UK Radio Studies Network (RSN, established in 1998), a subject association for lecturers and researchers of radio, and the European associations IREN and ECREA Radio Section,<sup>13</sup> were formed to help raise the profile of Radio Studies within and beyond Media and Cultural Studies. Biannual conferences in UK, New Zealand, USA, Australia and Canada have established the international field and transnational connections. Radio Studies is still an underfunded sector although around the turn of the millennium the academic interest in community and alternative media studies increased (Lewis, 2008) and some funding was allocated to research in these areas. The AHRC 'Connected Communities' programme and the HERA Transnational Radio Encounters programme are examples of the growing status of the area.

Current literature in Radio Studies is international in scope and has developed so that there are now subsets and specialisms, including community radio studies and women's radio studies. My specialist focus has opened up the field to include research on how women have used community radio.

#### **4.2 Locating and defining community radio within alternative media studies**

Naming and defining community and alternative media and radio can be a complicated undertaking and throughout the field the terms used are wide and varied. In 2002 community media was described by Chris Atton as a subset of alternative media (Atton, 2002), but by 2015 community media had been welcomed to the alternative media academic 'club', with the publication of the Routledge Companion to Alternative and Community Media (ed. Atton, 2015). Atton provides a reason for this:

As practices develop and the context around them develops, a term might become redundant or might ossify, capable of referring only to specific practices at particular times and places. (2015: 3)

The terms 'citizen media' (Rodriguez, 2001), 'radical media' (Downing et al., 2001), 'advocacy and grassroots media' (Traber, 1985), and 'activist media' (Waltz, 2005) are understood and discussed by many people as part of 'alternative media' (Coyer,

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<sup>13</sup> The International Radio Research Network was founded in 2004, funded through the European Commission's Sixth Framework Programme of Technological Research and Development (FP6). It was replaced in 2007 by the ECREA Radio Research section, which continues to hold biannual research conferences.

Dowmunt and Fountain, 2007). They all indicate media that operate outside and often in opposition to the mainstream media industries – thus, media that are open, democratic, accessible, non-profit-oriented and participatory. My work situating women’s community radio within alternative and activist discourses (Output 2) was cited in the Alternative Media handbook (Coyer, Dowmunt and Fountain, 2007) and Output 6 in the Alternative and Activist Media Handbook (Waltz, 2005).

In this commentary I will usually use the term ‘community radio’ if the project or station is part of an established sector; this includes licensed radio in the UK and many other countries<sup>14</sup>. In Output 5, 2002, I define ‘women’s radio space’ as having a strong connection with community media values. This chapter is included in a volume which was formative in outlining what Jankowski calls the ‘conceptual contours’ of community media (2002: 3). Jankowski notes five general themes that dominate much of the research undertaken with regard to community media: democratic processes, cultural identity, the concept of community, and an action perspective to communication (2002: 360).

Waltz (2005: 33) says that people can find themselves cut off from mass media for many reasons, including gender:

Alternative media offer these audiences a new way to communicate with each other ... when these projects take on an activist nature they can bring the views of marginalized group to the wider public, making media products that are advocates of and actors for change.

Gunnarsson Payne says that Atton ‘wishes to provide a definition which includes not only their critical reactions against cultural stereotypes circulating in the mainstream, but also to create an alternative space which builds on different values’ (2012: 60), and she asks whether feminist media can be considered alternative media: ‘there has been a blind spot/dis-engagement /lack of attention in alternative media studies to feminist production media because of alternative media’s need to distinguish itself from mainstream hegemonic media’ (op. cit., 69).

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<sup>14</sup> Here see also Janey Gordon’s 2012 collection ‘Notions of Community’ for a discussion of the term ‘community’ in the context of community radio

My work (particularly in output 6, 2004:176) argues for the inclusion of a more nuanced definition of alternative and activist media to include partnerships and alliances between a range of women's radio projects and networks of grass roots women's organisations.

### **4.3 Feminist approaches to studying radio**

The selected outputs form a narrative which follows a particular historical and political timeline – from the mid 1980's onwards – thus spanning at least three decades of feminist activism, women's studies and feminist media practice.

When Liesbet van Zoonen wrote *Feminist Media Studies* in 1994, feminism was going through a time of shifting definitions and delineations. Second wave feminism was being replaced by the beginning of the third wave, namely liberal feminism, and the media was still at the centre of feminist critique (op. cit., 11). In *Feminist Media Studies*, radio was given the briefest mention;<sup>15</sup> the main examples and case studies used were about the visual media of television, print media and film. However, I was able to adapt Van Zoonen's framework to study the relationship between women and radio (both inside radio stations and in relation to wider radio industry contexts) from a feminist perspective. As a practitioner/researcher from the early 1980s, my initial response to sexist practices within the mainstream commercial and BBC radio industries was to employ methods with which to critique and reveal inequalities and to provide role models and strategies for encouraging women to enter the industry.<sup>16</sup> Outputs 1d and 3 are evidence of this, the former outlining how the industry could be studied and the latter an empirical study that shows how women were either wholly absent or pigeonholed in gendered radio presenter roles. In Output 2 (2000, with Kim Michaels) we demonstrated how a combination of quantitative surveys and in-depth qualitative interviews with female presenters helped us to explain the continuing imbalance of female presenters in UK music radio and how they resisted the 'flexible sexism' identified by Gill (1993) in her study of the way presenters and managers deflected accusations of sexism when recruiting male radio presenters. This work

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<sup>15</sup> A discussion of research about the low status of local radio as an employment area for women in Western Europe (1994: 50).

<sup>16</sup> My first experience of this was as part of a collective monitoring by *Women's Airwaves* of a week of London's local radio (Women's Airwaves Collective, 1983).

provided a model for later work about the lack of female presenters (unfortunately still needed), carried out in conjunction with Sound Women/Creative Skillset (2013).

My move into setting up and then researching separate spaces – that is, women’s radio stations outside mainstream radio – was in line with what Margaret Gallagher described, in the first edition of the journal *Feminist Media Studies*, as a ‘change of direction within a good deal of feminist media activism, away from generalised criticism of media systems and organisations towards a focus on identifiable media production practices’ (Gallagher, 2001: 14).

In my edited collection *Women and Radio: Airing Differences* (2000, Outputs 1-4), I demonstrate how studies of women’s radio and women’s community radio were a subset of feminist media studies. My research followed on from and in some cases developed the work of scholars who had written some of the first studies of women and radio: Jallof (1992), about European women’s radio activism; Karpf (1980), about BBC’s neglect of women and the women’s movement; Lacey (1994), on women and radio in Germany during the second World War; Riano (1994), on women’s radio as a development tool; and Steiner (1992), on female presenters in the USA. As the cognate area of ‘Radio Studies’ was developing, albeit still in its ‘nascent’ stage (Lacey, 2004), my work had an impact on the establishment of studies of women’s community radio as an important part of feminist media production practice.

In the introductions to each of the four main sections of *Women and Radio: Airing differences* (Outputs 1a,1b,1c,1d), I laid out a case for studying women’s relationships with the secondary, ‘invisible’ medium of radio in the first place, bringing together previously published and emerging research. Secondly, I introduced key areas relating to studies of audiences, texts and institutions, with research coming from fields as diverse as linguistics, sociology of employment, gendered discourses in broadcasting histories, and cultural studies. I inserted my own interests in women’s use of community radio into the narrative of feminist media studies to explore questions about women’s radio production and agency, in particular in relation to the differences between institutional production cultures and practices in the BBC, commercial and community radio. I explored how women’s



community radio and feminist activist radios have been instrumental in reconfiguring modern spaces of identity and agency.

My work emphasises the importance of alternative sites of media practice to promote feminist ideas and counteract what Gerbner (1972) saw as the 'absence' of gender and what Tuchman (1979) calls the 'symbolic annihilation' of women in media (the concept of symbolic annihilation being divided into three aspects: omission, trivialisation and condemnation), as well as offering spaces where hegemonic ideas of femininity can be reworked (Andrews, 2012).

In Output 5 (Mitchell, 2002: 88-90) I outline how the definition of women's community radio space could be seen as a feminist 'counter public sphere' where radio bridges the private and public lives of women (this follows from Fraser's 1985 feminist reading of Habermas). Using Butler's notion of 'performativity', where identity is continually being created and disrupted (Butler, 1990), I asked: 'do community stations provide a space that enables women to produce programming and meanings that transcend some of the more limiting mediated constructions of their lives?' (Output 5, 2002: 90).

So my work has opened up discursive space about women's radio space that counteracts the structuring influence of marginalisation embedded in mainstream radio (Lacey, 2004). Radio is relatively cheap and easy to produce, particularly compared to television, video and film production, and in community radio stations there exists a supportive production culture provided by community stations (discussed in section 6 of this commentary). Van Vuuren (2002) discussed the normative ideal of a public sphere 'imagined as an arena open and accessible to all people'. She quoted Forde et al., who argue that a community public sphere 'is the product of contestation with the mainstream public sphere, and that community broadcasting contributes towards cultural empowerment or cultural citizenship' (2002: 57). In my submission (Output 5) I argue that, rather than accepting constraint by structural factors, there is room for agency via community radio. Applying Hannah Arendt's concept of feminist agency and resistance in the public sphere, women can use community radio as a means of airing their public voice. As Andrea Thuma notes:

The subject can experience and perform her identity to the fullest only in the disclosure within a space that is shared with others. Her appearance and visibility in the public space is thus one of the criteria for her agency. (Thuma, 2011)

The study of the absence and silencing of certain types of gendered and accented voices (Karpf, 2006; Moylan, 2013; Ehrich, 2015) has a long history, including work about the exclusion of women's voices *pre* radio (Karpf, 2006; Beard, 2014). Using media for women to access a public voice, presence, and influence (Byerly and Ross, 2008) is now part of the theoretical landscape of third wave feminist media, and my work in defining the underlying contexts and conditions in community radio that enable women to contribute their voices is a part of this.

'Giving a voice to the voiceless' via community media is a claim offered up by community media practitioners and theorists alike (Lewis, 2008; Atton, 2015). In Output 9, 'Voicing the community', I problematise this concept by discussing Spivak's (1988) question, 'Can the subaltern speak?' I conclude that community radio can help people 'to *find* (original italics) their voice rather than adapt to one that is "given" them. This process helps ensure that a respect for both hybridity and heterogeneity is retained' (Mitchell, 2011: 67). In Outputs 2, 5 and 6, I develop one of the key themes of my research, that is, *how* different processes and practices in women's community radio help women find and assert their voice in different ways. I present case studies of women's community radio along with my exposition and analysis of the defining characteristics of feminist community radio practice: that is, holistic, women-centred media training, community outreach and programme development; the importance of collective action; the authenticity of programme content that is based around women's lives; and 'female friendly' radio station cultures. All these contribute to a greater understanding of women's media use in the context of feminist media studies. How these emancipatory uses of community based women's radio training specifically contribute to knowledge will be evidenced further in section 6.

#### **4.4 Feminist radio histories**

If feminism has been about women finding their voices, speaking up, being listened to, and if feminist history has been about telling the stories of the

silenced majority, then which spaces of media and forms of communication have women appropriated to express themselves and to make themselves heard? (Lacey and Hilmes, 2015: 2)

Discursive and historical absences of women in media have been recurring themes in feminist media studies, so much so that now feminist media histories have become a separate field of study (Stamp, 2015). Michelle Hilmes noted that media history writing 'consigned women to the sidelines' (1997: 132), and Kristin Skoog wrote of the need to 're-write' women back into history (2011). In the introduction to the section on Gendered radio (Output 1b, 2000), I argue that women, individually and collectively, have generally been left out of official radio histories, which tend to be 'un-gendered': 'Women are rendered invisible through omission, or because their work is hidden, considered inferior or in the background' (Output 1b, 2000: 11). I justified bringing together what was, pre-2000, a small number of historical writings about women and radio in order to restore women to broadcasting's historical narrative. As part of this restoration, in Output 2, 2000, I produced what was the first history of UK women's community radio stations, charting three decades of activism and programme making. This included an empirical survey of six women's radio stations which broadcast between 1992 and 2000, including *Fem FM*, the first women's radio station in the UK, which I had been centrally involved in as a participant (see section 5 for reflection on methodological issues related to this). In Output 6, 2004, I expanded my research to include international case studies of feminist radio projects. Between 2012 and 2014, twenty years after *Fem FM* broadcast, I worked with archivists in Bristol to digitise the station and work on research and women's training projects relating to this. I used this moment to reflect back and to interview women who had originally been involved in the station so that I could review continuities and changes for the benefit of these and other women working in different parts of the UK radio industry since *Fem FM* aired. Some of the outcomes of this research are included in Output 11, 2014 as part of the *Companion to British Media History* published by Routledge. This review of histories and practices concluded that women were still excluded from areas of mainstream radio and were appreciative of the inclusive practices and cultures of women's radio stations. Finally, in this section on my contribution to feminist radio histories,

archiving women's radio has become a focus of my work. The HERA<sup>17</sup> funded 'Transnational Radio Encounters' project has enabled me to research how women are not only being re-written into broadcasting history but also *re-sounded* so that historical traces, and in particular the voices of broadcasters and their programmes, can be heard.<sup>18</sup> In Output 12, 2015, published in the journal *Feminist Media Histories*, I explore this phenomenon, using international examples of feminist radio archives that have transnational significance. To quote from the introduction to this volume, Lacey and Hilmes say that my work 'places sound's interactive and political potential in historical context as she considers the value of digital radio archives in preserving and maintaining a record of women's radio-based political organizing for future generations and the implications of extending the reach and influence of local soundwork to listeners around the globe' (2015: 2). All the outputs cited in this section have helped to raise the academic profile of women's radio history in general and women's community radio histories and practices in particular. My most recent research on community radio archive practices (Output 12) continues to build the visibility and audibility of women and radio, enabling the past to be used to inform the present.

## 5. Methodological justification

In a field that resists a coherent methodology, I have reflected on whether radio studies and studies of feminist media practice have a leaning towards particular research methods. I use a mixed methodological approach in my research, based on some traditional and some more experimental methods. I have employed historical approaches using feminist and post-colonial perspectives to 'write back' women's radio and radio archives into broadcasting history (Outputs 6, 9 and 12); I have used empirical observation and semi-structured interviews combined with qualitative

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<sup>17</sup> TRE is a 3-year project, funded by HERA (<http://www.transnationalradio.org/>), whose seven partners (from the UK, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands) are looking at the way radio has been a factor in constructing identities within and across national borders. I worked with Dr. Peter Lewis, London Metropolitan University, focussing on community radio in the UK and across the rest of Europe.

<sup>18</sup> *Feminist Media Histories* is available online ([fmh.ucpress.edu](http://fmh.ucpress.edu)) with enhanced features linking directly to archives and sounds.

surveys to map and define women's radio practice (Outputs 2 and 6); and quantitative surveys to assess the numbers and nature of employment of female radio presenters (Output 3).

As a feminist researcher my aim is to further a project<sup>19</sup> of revealing and combatting inequalities in radio based on gender. I have adapted methods relating to praxis (which I define as practical application of theory in action), grounded in the political (Skeggs, 1994), and used ethnographic, feminist and action research methodologies with roots in political activism and intervention. I have developed as a researcher from being a full participant in a project (managing Fem FM) and as part of that project evaluating, writing up and reflecting on the process after the end of the project to working conscientiously as a participant observer and trainer with explicit research aims. A large part of my methodology has been focused on developing a feminist pedagogical praxis approach, with Fem FM and other women's stations as loci of research. For instance, I use tabulation to compare examples of practice across and within radio stations: see Output 2, Mitchell, 2000: 99 and 103 and Output 10, Mitchell, 2012: 232-3. The praxis and processes of how women and minorities find their voice in community radio via educational and community development are developed in detail in Output 8, Mitchell and Baxter, 2006, and Output 10, Mitchell, 2012.

New methodological approaches have grown out of the work, particularly where I have worked in conjunction with women's radio projects to develop methods for utilising 'action oriented' (Günneel, 2006) approaches to explore women's community radio work.<sup>20</sup> The research has been influenced by media development and education work with women (for instance see Riano, 1994) and emancipatory theories, particularly Paulo Freire's emancipatory and dialogic theory and praxis of education and theory of conscientization, 1968. Reason sums up this philosophy:

One aim is to produce knowledge and action directly useful to a group of people – through research, adult education, and socio political action. The second aim is to empower people at a second and deeper level through the process of constructing and using their own language ... This is the meaning

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<sup>19</sup> Recognising that there are many 'feminisms' and 'projects'.

<sup>20</sup> This includes paid and voluntary work, the latter being most common in community radio.

of consciousness-raising or *conscientization* a term popularized by Paulo Freire (1968). (Reason, 1994: 328)

Using aspects of these approaches I have developed a feminist educational 'holistic' approach to radio participation and training.

I have found Freire's concept of liberation as praxis – that is, the cycle of action, reflection, and action through which human beings work to transform their worlds (Lock Swarr and Nagar, 2010), particularly useful in defining praxis relating to women's radio. It is this cycle that I have been able to adapt in research on how to develop women's confidence and skills in programme making in community radio settings. Working over a number of years as a trainer and participant researcher in funded community media training and development projects with international consortia,<sup>21</sup> I have had unique access to women in community radio stations, campaign groups, projects and training programmes. As outlined in Outputs 6 and 7, I have used a 'holistic' approach to women's radio training which includes a form of consciousness - raising about women's representation and their agency: in radio programming, in programme roles, and in wider society. I suggest, and formal evaluation of courses attest to this,<sup>22</sup> that a combination of informal feminist-oriented radio studies with practical radio teaching has enabled women to feel more empowered to participate in stations, thus creating radio themselves and getting their voices, opinions and creativity out in the public broadcast space provided by community radio.

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<sup>21</sup> 1997-2000, 'New Opportunities for Women', European Social Fund: transnational research and training project for women and radio in a Sunderland project (DJ'ing and digital skills.)  
1998-2001, 'Creating Community Voices', research into women's radio as an adult education tool;  
2000-2003, 'Digital Dialogues' Work with asylum seekers about training and representation on radio;  
2009-2011; 'CrossTalk': research into and development of training methodologies that enable marginalised social groups, including women, migrants, and minority ethnic communities to tell their stories and have them heard and valued through community radio;  
2011-13, 'COMAPP': Community Media Applications and Participation, Action Research/Training for trainers that implements intergenerational and intercultural communication in different settings of adult education by using mobile learning and community radio based on low budget technology; For further detail see <http://www.crmcs.sunderland.ac.uk/projects-and-collaborations/caroline-mitchell/>

<sup>22</sup> See for instance Günnel, T., Jankowski, N., Jones, P., Lewis, P., Klug, A., Mitchell, C. and Poysko, A. (1999), *Creating Community Voices: Community Radio and New Technologies for socially disadvantaged groups* (Socrates Programme for Adult Education, Sheffield, UK: AMARC-Europe).

Operating within this framework of research through direct involvement in community radio station settings over several years, I have found two themes that best represent my approach: firstly, feminist influenced 'participatory research praxis', which combines holistic radio training methods and confidence building, and secondly, the use of case studies as a way of presenting research in a way that is accessible to participants in that research as well as to the wider readership.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an approach for involving people in research about issues relevant to their lives and has grown in popularity in recent years for instance doing research relating to environmental issues and public health provision and policy. In community radio PAR has developed from the ethnographic action research (EAR) methods developed by Slater, Tacchi and Lewis (2002). In a joint presentation about PAR and transnational radio research Lewis and Mitchell described this research as follows:

*As action research*, it seeks to bring the research findings back into the station/community being studied in order to develop and plan new activities and new ways of working. In both aspects, the approach is *participatory*, and the key aim is to assist the 'subjects' of research, rather than thinking about research as an activity that happens *to* them, and only at specified points in time, to develop, as an integral part of their continuous cycle of planning and doing, a *research culture* through which knowledge and reflection contribute to the ongoing development of the station. In effect, then, the stations and communities where the proposed research is carried out will acquire the capacity to *self-evaluate* their work

(Lewis and Mitchell, 2014)

My use of participatory research praxis with women in community radio stations and projects is discussed in Output 7: 73. Although this research supports the aims of PAR in that we were working with women and partner organisations to increase their public voice through community radio, the line between what was training and community development and what was research was sometimes difficult to draw. What I have attempted to do is to link the action and training aspects of the community based research to broader research themes. In Output 7, for instance, this is demonstrated by comparing the defining characteristics of feminist radio praxis in the 'Creating Community Voices' project with Gumucio Dagron's characteristics of participatory communication for development (Output 7, Mitchell and Baxter 2006: 74-78).

I am strongly attached to using case studies as a way of communicating research findings. My first contact with the concept of community radio was in the early spring of 1980 when I was browsing in the small radio section in my college library. I happened upon a slim volume by Peter Lewis (1977) which contained case studies of community radio from North America. In the time it took me to read through the book my radio life had changed. I realised that I now had somewhere to redirect my professional and academic interests after being sorely disappointed and frustrated by mainstream BBC and commercial radio station practices and programmes. This led me to understand the power of case studies<sup>23</sup> as a way of providing vivid examples and models of practice in an accessible manner<sup>24</sup>, thereby illustrating and mapping out the territory of an emerging field. Since then I have introduced students and community radio volunteers to different models of community radio via inspirational case studies researched by Bruce Girard (1992), Birgitte Jallof (1992, 1996) and Alfonso Gumucio Dagron (2001). In order to produce my own case studies I took the opportunity to record interviews with radio activists whom I had met at UK Community Radio meetings<sup>25</sup> and international training events and conferences;<sup>26</sup> I also visited stations to observe radio broadcasting and training work in progress and carried out interviews with people in key station roles. Producing comparative case studies of UK stations (Outputs 4 and 7) and international feminist stations and projects (Output 6) has been an important part of my methodology and has increased the impact of my work. These studies have been presented along with contextual information to situate them in their countries' broadcast infrastructure and history. They can be a potent reminder of day-to-day work carried out by station volunteers and can communicate a sense of solidarity with people working in similar situations even though they may be separated by distance, culture or language. The case study method was also used to compare women working in particular job roles in radio (Output 4) and to document comparative radio station cultures (Output 11).

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<sup>23</sup> This is also discussed by Van Vuuren, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> See for instance Tachi Arriola's account of Peruvian women's radio (1992).

<sup>25</sup> I was a founder member and then active as a member of the Community Radio Association from 1988 to the present. I am currently an advisor to the CMA board.

<sup>26</sup> I attended AMARC conferences in Dublin, Ireland, 1990; Dakar, Senegal, 1995; and Milan, Italy, 1998. In 1995 I conducted AMARC Europe Knowledge Transfer Seminars for Radio Trainers at Radio Echo Moscow and the AMARC Europe Ukraine Seminar for Women Radio Trainers at Lviv, Ukraine. (AMARC is the World Association of Community Radios, an international non-governmental organisation for the community radio movement, linking more than 5000 community radios and their federations in over 120 countries.)



## **6 Characteristics of women's community radio space: representation, participation and resistance**

### **6.1 Representation**

Representation as a cultural process establishes individual and collective identities, and radio has had a key role in producing symbolic representations and meanings of women's lives through discourses that construct how women position themselves, and, in particular, how they speak. I have contributed research that has increased the understanding of how women can be represented, symbolically and materially, in community radio space on air (for instance as presenters and guests, through women-centred programming of different kinds) and off air (in different roles including those of managers and trainers). I have demonstrated (Outputs 2, 6 and 8) how women's community radio produces innovative on-air narratives about women's lives, along with new cultures of production and uses of networking technologies that are more inclusive of women. In Output 9 I discuss and give examples of how minority ethnic women have used community radio to raise their voices in different ways. Due to the research being largely community based it has left a legacy, in the stations that I have worked with, of empowerment for women whether they are volunteers, managers, or members of partner organisations.

My submission presents a variety of arguments for, examples of and praxis about gendered radio production and feminist radio practice that I have developed in relation to the community radio sector, thereby enabling the representation of diverse content to diverse audiences through diverse practices (adapting the underlying definition of alternative media by Chris Atton, 2015).

Throughout, the submission makes a strong argument for radio stations, radio programmes and training groups that create separate spaces for women, if they so desire. This is particularly discussed in Outputs 7 and 10.

I can give two examples of the impact here, one of impact on an individual level and one that has resonance with a larger group of people. In my discussions with

students about how women might be better represented, I have encountered, particularly amongst younger students (female and male) a resistance to being separated. I quote from a blog that one of my students wrote to show the process of her self-conscientization in relation to this:

... I didn't see why anyone would want to present radio in a women-only space without the ultimate goal of taking that into the mainstream; why would I want to work on a women-only radio station without eventually working on Radio 1? Surely addressing the imbalance of the sexes meant *finally* being part of the spaces that men had always occupied?

Fast forward a few months and I helped to facilitate a series of 8 radio shows involving a women's Black and Minority Ethnic community group from Sunderland. The women had identified 16 unique stories they wanted to speak about – from stories of immigration and education to domestic violence – and we battled through the usual technical and organisational issues of a community radio station to get them heard on air. As a white, non-immigrant, cisgendered woman I had been naive; they had issues I had previously balked at. In the past I would curse and sigh heavily if a feminist meeting had to be planned around childcare, for instance, as if this was a horribly weathered stereotype. But it's not. Women – at the very least, women in *this* group – did have issues about childcare. They *did* have issues about confidence, and language barriers. And now, looking back, 8 hours of radio discussion involving such a previously unreachable group – largely immigrant, ethnic minority women – seems an indescribably big achievement. I am so fiercely proud to have helped bring this to Spark FM.<sup>27</sup>

The initial concerns of this student are valid; her story shows that there was cognitive dissonance between her sense of herself and her own ambitions as a woman in radio and the needs of the group she was working with. Once she was introduced to the realities of women-centred radio work and being open to the desires of the group she was working with she showed self-reflexivity as a trainer and producer and

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.verbalremedy.co.uk/safe-spaces/>

changed the way she worked with the group and how she understood women's spaces in radio.

The second example relates to a training course I developed as part of the META Europe programme.<sup>28</sup> This was funded initially to develop research and, based on this design, courses and online materials to 'train the trainers' in European community radio stations.<sup>29</sup> I was part of a group that developed a unit about working with specialist interest groups and I developed (with Ann Baxter) a unit called 'Practical Ideas for Involving Women in Radio', based on the work discussed in Outputs 7 and 10. This course trained around 200 people from community stations all over Europe and, although no long-term follow-up research has yet been funded, I can point to specific examples of training and related programme making in UK stations and in projects in stations in Finland, Turkey, Spain, Hungary and Poland that were influenced by my work in this area.

One of the recurring themes of research about representation of women in radio work is the enduring dearth of female radio presenters on the airwaves. My introductions to sections in Women and Radio (Outputs 1b and 1d) bring together research about the female voice, perceptions of women as presenters at different times of the day, and a debunking of the enduring myth (also researched by Gill, 2003) that women don't want to work in radio or are reviled by audiences, male and female. The methodology used in my research (with Kim Michaels) into reasons for low numbers of female presenters in commercial and community radio in the late 1990s (Output 3) was used as a basis for 2013 research by Sound Women.<sup>30</sup> Output 11 gave me the opportunity to review this research, by interviewing women who had started their presenting, producing or production careers at Fem FM in Bristol in 1992 about cultures of sexism in radio twenty years later. Their pessimism over the lack of change is echoed in a recent article by Veerkamp (2014) quoting research in

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<sup>28</sup> 2004-2014 'META Europe' – Media Training in Europe, development of materials and 'training for trainers' for annual community media training/summer school attended by station managers and volunteers across Europe. See <http://www.meta-europe.de/>

<sup>29</sup> I have not submitted the numerous courses, resources and handbooks in this submission – all of them collaborative projects with radio stations, universities and civil society organisations. A full list of projects can be found here: <http://www.crmcs.sunderland.ac.uk/projects-and-collaborations/caroline-mitchell/>

<sup>30</sup> This found that there was still a dearth of female presenters on BBC and commercial local radio breakfast shows.

the USA by Crider (2014)<sup>31</sup> about male dominance of presenters in mainstream music formats, and by Shapiro (2013) about the culture of (male) egoism and entitlement amongst podcaster hosts.

Raising awareness of representational issues relating to roles and practices through research and praxis influenced training in community stations has been a core theme of this submission. I conclude (Outputs 11 and 12) that women's community stations, programmes and archives have opened up a representational space that can be closer to the lived and authentic experiences of women.

## 6.2 Participation

The contribution to knowledge that has been developed through my research focuses on methods and case studies of how women gain access to and participate in community radio programming that individually and collectively underpins community radio's participatory culture. In Outputs 7 and 10 I identify how specific training and community development methods such as 'tandem training', 'peer tutoring', and developing 'women friendly' courses and programme making projects can be designed to be inclusive of target groups of women, including young women, minority ethnic women, migrants and refugees.

Participation is a much used and defined term in 21<sup>st</sup> century Media and Cultural Studies; indeed Beryl Graham (2010: 3) has suggested that 'the rhetoric of both "audience participation" and of new technologies has tended towards hyperbole'. I have found Spurgeon and Burgess's (2015) use of the term *critical* participatory media to distinguish it from other participatory media forms (for example user-generated content and social media), and Hochheimer's (1993) community development mode of participation useful in framing the way I work with women who participate in radio as volunteers in community stations. In Output 7 I use Utrera's definition of three levels of participation: production, decision making and planning (cited by Peruzzo, 1996: 173); this perspective was extended into training work so that participants saw their own levels of participation growing during their time in

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<sup>31</sup> His analysis of lead vocalists on the radio in the USA showed that men starkly outnumber women across all music platforms. 80% of lead singers on Urban formats, 82.8% on Country formats and more than 98% on Active Rock formats are male (Crider, 2014: 14), quoted by Veerkampf, 2014: 310.

workshops. Ultimately, as Rennie states, representing oneself through community media:

is an act of participation. It shows us what is occurring in civil society, through personal stories, local concerns or just through straightforward, unhindered commentary. And that has consequences for democracy. (2006: 187)

I have highlighted how new production and distribution technologies have changed the way participation was possible in women's media work. In project work with Asian women in Bradford at a time when digital technologies were just starting to be introduced (Output 7: 90), women were able to take laptops home to edit their interviews rather than travelling to the studio. This flexibility to re-locate production work out of the radio studio and into the home was a key moment in their radio participation. Locating media to where women are is key – in Output 6 a community journalism educator from South America told me that microphones had to be placed where women are present: 'in the main square, in parliament, in the bedroom, the jails, the kitchen – all places where women are present' (2004: 179).

The methods that have been developed through my research show how women in a variety of community radio stations in different cultural and geographic contexts gain access to and participate in community radio programming, individually and collectively. Several outputs demonstrate how participation is enabled through specific training and community development methods: this includes how 'women-centred' and 'women-friendly' courses and programme making projects can be facilitated, how to work with specific target groups of women, and the benefits of working collectively and collaboratively. The use of new technologies as they become available to work flexibly in spaces that are not necessarily radio spaces but places where women feel at home, whether this is their actual home or a community space that is familiar to them, is a key finding. Rosalind Gill suggests that 'new participatory cultures of production' are needed within which feminist media producers 'create and engage in participatory spaces, networks and cultural practices ... to assume a cultural citizenship and initiate processes of social change' (2007: 10). My work adds new examples of this participatory work in praxis.

### 6.3 Resistance

Community radio stations are considered as local sites of resistance to an ongoing attempt by the mainstream media organisations to homogenize media and culture (Howley 2010). This submission's outputs highlight women's community stations and programmes that resist legislative and infrastructural barriers to broadcasting by occupying media airwave space in different ways. In conditions where community radio is not legislated for this may be accessed illegally: for instance I produced the case study of 'Radio Pirate Woman', (Output 5, 2002: 96). However since community radio has been established as a legal sector in most countries and there are increasingly opportunities for using the internet to webcast, resistance needs to be defined more widely as both providing alternatives to mainstream discourses of representation for specific groups and to act as a process for representing diversity within community stations themselves.

My submission contributes to knowledge through case studies and analysis of how women have become 'agents' of resistance using community radio in different ways and how equipping women to broadcast (technically, and in terms of skills and knowledge and confidence), can ensure that they are in a strong position to represent their own interests, on their own terms. Issues of intersectionality come into play (I use Choo and Ferree's [2010] 'inclusion/voice' model of intersectionality here) and in Output 2, I give the example of debate by teenagers, Asian women and lesbian women about their agency in deciding the kind of programming they wanted at Fem FM that gave voice to their experiences and perspectives.

In Output 6 and 12 in particular I document the way women have succeeded in entering the broadcast space with programmes (and subsequently archives of programmes) that at the time were radically resisting normative ways that women were perceived. In Output 6, I document international examples and case studies of instances where the content of women's broadcasts was seen as transgressive: I cite a women's health programme called 'The Conscious Cunt' on a student station in Edmonton, Canada for instance (2014:165). In Output 12 I note the significance of being able to access online archives of radical broadcasters Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE) who set up short wave transmitters to broadcast alternative

women - focussed commentaries from international conferences in the 1980's and 1990's.

#### **6.4 Fem FM's enduring impact**

My research about Fem FM, the first women's radio station in the UK, a major project that I was instrumental in developing in 1991-2, appears as a frequent point of reference throughout the submission (Outputs 1, 2, 5, 11 and 12). Fem FM was described by Naomi Wolf (2003) as an example of 'power feminism' and my work about the station has had a significant impact on how women's radio has been historicized and theorised in the UK and internationally, and has shaped how other women's radio stations and related women's training initiatives were established. The approaches used to enable over two hundred women to participate in Fem FM were then adopted and adapted in subsequent stations and projects, including Celebration Radio and Brazen Radio in London, Elle FM in Liverpool and Radio Venus in Bradford. The model of having an 'all women' staffed station on International Women's Day each year that was pioneered by Fem FM and written up as a model in my publications has been taken up by BBC and commercial stations since 1992.

As demonstrated in output 7, the research about feminist pedagogical praxis and the methods used to design women's radio training programmes and capacity building have been used in successive European funded community media training, education and research projects and resulted in handbooks and training materials that are in use by women's radio training projects all over the world<sup>32</sup>

In Output 11 I discuss my curation of the Fem FM Archive which was launched in Bristol 22 years after Fem FM broadcast there. Contemporary interviews with former Fem FM volunteers now working in different sectors of radio contributed to a cultural memory of the station and led to high profile educational and campaigning work around its launch<sup>33</sup>. The final output (12) completes the corpus of submitted work over the 15 year period. This discussion of the archiving practices of Fem FM and

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<sup>32</sup> See note 21 on page 22 for a list of these projects.

<sup>33</sup> For evidence impact in local press about archive research and related educational work with young women see <http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Women-Waves-Ujima-Radio-Fem-FM-present-generation/story-21090158-detail/story.html>

other feminist radio archives was published in *Feminist Media Histories* in multimedia format and it outlined the contribution of women's community radio archives to the field of feminist media history. This demonstrated how Fem FM's 1992 broadcast had contemporary resonance for Radio Studies and Feminist Media research. The body of work about Fem FM increased documentation and research about women's community radio representation, participation and resistance through the key stages of the station's development and through its production practices, cultures of management, transnational networking and archiving.

## **7. Further Assessment of Impact**

In previous sections I have provided a critical review of the main themes of my research contained in the twelve outputs and have indicated in a systematic way how they have made a significant and original contribution to knowledge and the field of feminist radio studies.

The publications in the submission have made an impact inside and outside of the academy. Output 1, the edited collection *Women and Radio: Airing Differences*, and my chapters therein, have become a unique reference point for anyone wishing to write about, research or study women and radio. Anne Karpf said that the book is 'the single most important and quoted text on women and radio' (2016: 53). It has been cited in numerous papers and publications and recommended as an authoritative guide to the field in handbooks of Radio (Chignell, 2009; Fleming, 2010) and Community, Alternative and Activist media (Atton, 2015; Coyer, Dowmunt, and Fountain, 2007; Howley, 2005 and Waltz, 2005). Jenni Murray, long time presenter of BBC's *Woman's Hour* said: "This book is a celebration of our contribution as women to radio and a clarion call for its powerful voice to be shared equally between women and men." It was positively reviewed in several academic journals: Chignell (2002) said it was "an extremely well-presented and informative collection in an area that has significance far beyond the world of radio." Output 2 by Michaels and Mitchell about women DJ's was used in its entirety as a case study for a well respected media studies text book (Raynor, Wall and Kruger, 2004).

The development of methods and approaches to innovative ways of working with women in community radio described in Outputs 7, 8 and 10 has been recognised by



funded work in successive European research and radio training projects since 1996 (see note 22 on page 22 and notes 28 and 29 on page 26 for list of projects). Output 12 was produced as a result of my research as Principal Investigator of the HERA<sup>34</sup> funded Transnational Radio Encounters Project, 2013-16<sup>35</sup> and is the first refereed publication about transnational feminist radio archives.

My leadership in the areas of women's and feminist radio research has been acknowledged by radio research and industry organisations, for example since 2015 I have had responsibility for research and community radio at the national radio organisation Sound Women and I am an expert advisor to the board of the UK Community Media Association. As founder member of the Women's Radio in Europe Network (WREN) I have worked on major funding applications to progress the project of European women's radio research and have compiled an online bibliography of resources and texts about women and radio for the organisation's website<sup>36</sup> which is a key resource for the subject area.

## **Conclusion**

The 'arc' of women's radio research, praxis and community radio activism represented in this body of research started with the publication of *Women and Radio: Airing Differences* in 2000. The rationale for spanning almost fifteen years of research outputs in this submission can be mapped against key outputs over the research period. In the introduction to Output 1, Anne Karpf, (former Guardian radio critic and now esteemed academic in research about the human voice) said:

'Mitchell put women and community radio – at best usually a footnote in academic analysis- at the core of the book ... she provides a valuable history of women's radio stations and discusses women's struggle to secure space within community stations" (Karpf, 2000: xvii).

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<sup>34</sup> HERA: Humanities in the European Research Area funding programme

<sup>35</sup> 2013-2016, Transnational Radio Encounters project funded by HERA ([www.transnationalradio.org](http://www.transnationalradio.org)) investigating minority radio expressed in social and cultural identities.

<sup>36</sup> <https://womensradioineurope.org/resources/bibliography/>

Moving forward fifteen years, in the introduction to the themed issue of *Feminist Media Histories Journal* (Output 12), the editors Michelle Hilmes and Kate Lacey wrote:

‘Mitchell’s essay is also marked by the self-reflexivity of a pioneering activist revisiting the soundwork she was involved with at a different historical moment contributed to how archives of feminist radio activism have become both a repositories for and producers of cultural memory’ (2015: 4)

The submission represents an original, sustained and systematic attempt to map and establish a sub field of feminist community radio studies as a trans disciplinary, vibrant area of study whose methods and reach span theory and praxis. It reinforces and develops the societal and cultural importance of community radio as a resilient global phenomenon and the research has produced rich case studies of women’s radio activity and leadership as examples of the vital agency that women have had in producing new symbolic and material radio narratives and radio station cultures.

The ideas generated by this research are already in circulation in academia and are used by national radio industry organisations (such as BBC, Sound Women and Skillset) to inform discussion and policy about the position of women as workers and participants in making radio. Research about women’s community radio spaces and cultures has contemporary resonance because it speaks into current and continuing industry and academic debates about the enduring problem of representation of women in the public sphere. It has highlighted barriers to women’s participation in radio and produced practical measures for achieving gender equality in the new digital production cultures. It provides evidence for the need for continued monitoring and research in regards to women’s work in all sectors of radio.

The innovative methodological research framework has created new opportunities and tools for action research about women’s empowerment through radio. It has been used and applied as a research and development tool in numerous radio stations and training projects and as outlined in Section 5 has been particularly valued in transnational community media training programmes funded through European grants. Its application for use in new settings (for instance relating to the

current priorities of the Arts Council's work in cultural participation<sup>37</sup>), has relevance at a time when there is a need for innovative and accessible methods to research and evidence women's participation and voice in public and media spheres.

The acknowledged need for change in mainstream radio station cultures if diversity is to be attained, demonstrates the ongoing relevance of this research and a continuing need for robust vigilance in this area. When the research contained in this submission started over fifteen years ago the overwhelming concern was that women in community radio were fighting for the *right* to access broadcasting spaces previously dominated by men. This submission demonstrates women now have increased *agency* through physical, institutional and discursive spaces of community radio and that feminist and participatory research praxis about and with women in community radio is providing new methods for engagement with the authentic voices of women, locally and globally.

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/our-mission-and-strategy>

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## Appendix A - List of outputs submitted for PhD by prior output

1. Mitchell, C., ed. (2000) *Women and Radio: Airing Differences*. London: Routledge.

1 a) Introduction to edited collection.

1 b) Section introduction to Part 1: Gendered Radio – hidden histories and the development of programming by and for women.

1 c) Section introduction to Part 2: Radio Texts and Audiences and the Rise of Feminist Radio.

1 d) Section introduction to Part 3: Women working in Radio.

2. Mitchell, C. (2000) Sisters are doing it ... From Fem FM to Viva! A History of Contemporary Women's Radio Stations in the UK. In: C. Mitchell (ed.), *Women and Radio: Airing Differences*. London: Routledge.

3. Mitchell, C. and Michaels, K. (2000) The Last Bastion: how women become music presenters in UK radio. In: C. Mitchell (ed.), *Women and Radio: Airing Differences*. London: Routledge. (Mitchell contribution 50%)

4. Mitchell, C. (2000) Sound advice for women who want to work in radio. In: *Women and Radio: Airing Differences*. London: Routledge.

5. Mitchell, C. (2002) On Air/Off Air: Defining Woman's Space in European Women's Community Radio. In: Nicholas W. Jankowski and Ole Prehn (eds), *Community Media in the Information Age: Perspectives and Prospects*. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press.

6. Mitchell, C. (2004) 'Dangerously Feminine?' Theory and Praxis of Women's Alternative Radio. In: Karen Ross and Carolyn Byerly (eds), *Women and Media International Perspectives*. Oxford: Blackwell.

7. Mitchell, C. and Baxter, A. (2006) Organic radio – the role of Social Partnerships in Creating Community Voices. In: Peter M. Lewis, and Susan Jones (eds), *From the Margins to the Cutting Edge, Community Media and Empowerment*. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press. (Mitchell contribution 70%)

8. Mitchell, C. (2006) (with Susan Jones) Networking Community Media – Web Radio as a participatory medium. In: Peter M. Lewis and Susan Jones (eds), *From the Margins to the Cutting Edge, Community Media and Empowerment*. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press. Extract. (Mitchell contribution 70%)
  9. Mitchell, C. (2011) Voicing the Community: Participation and Change in Black and Minority Ethnic Local UK Radio. In: Rosalind Brunt and Rinella Cere (eds), *Postcolonial Media Culture in Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Extract.
  10. Mitchell, C. (2012) Praxis and participation in community radio training in Europe. In: Janey Gordon (ed.), *Community Radio in the 21st Century*. Bern: Peter Lang.
  11. Mitchell, C. (2014) Breaking the sound barrier, histories and practices of women's radio. In: Martin Conboy and Dr John Steel (eds), *Routledge Companion to British Media History*. London: Routledge.
  12. Mitchell, C. (2015) Re-Sounding Feminist Radio A Journey through Women's Community Radio Archives. *Feminist Media Histories Journal*, Vol.1, Number 4. University of California Press.
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