

WOMEN'S (COMMUNITY) RADIO AS A FEMINIST PUBLIC SPHERE

CAROLINE
MITCHELL

Abstract

This article explores how women's community radio can contribute to a "feminist public sphere" and serve as a tool for women's empowerment through the media. Compared to film, TV and newspapers, radio is a relatively under researched and under valued area of the media. An extension of this situation is the paucity of theoretical and empirical studies regarding women and radio. The purpose of this article is to contribute to a theory of women's radio and its relation to practice. Employing feminist "readings" of Habermas' theory of the public sphere, it is possible to develop a concept of a women's or feminist public sphere in relation to women's community radio. This article discusses whether and how this is emerging through the opportunities that women have in terms of access, training and development in community radio. With empirical data from women's radio stations and projects in different parts of Europe, radio as a potential "feminist public sphere" is explored, and a foundation laid for a further grounding of an understanding of how alternative media can be a tool for women's empowerment.

Caroline Mitchell is Senior Lecturer at the University of Sunderland.

Introduction

Research into European radio has demonstrated that there is a disproportionate number of women with functions in radio (Gallagher 1990). In the area of news journalism, for example, there has been an increase in women going into jobs previously dominated by men. The Skillset Report (Woolf, Holly and Connor 1996), points out that women are more likely than men to gain entry into the profession after completing formal training. However, in areas such as music presentation and DJ-ing there are no suitable courses. Community radio stations have become in this area and others a training ground for the mainstream radio sector (Lewis 1994). Research in Ireland indicates that community radio there has become a conduit for women into the commercial sector (Gibbons and NEXUS 1997). The community sector, then, may be an important place to investigate which factors and processes enable women to gain confidence, skills and training in radio.

Feminist media academics (Steiner 1992; Jallof 1992), have emphasised the importance of alternative sites of media practice. These sites promote feminist ideas and counteract what Tuchman (1979) calls the "symbolic annihilation" of women by the mass media, caused by under or mis-representation. Feminist-oriented research into alternative media practice has explored and theorised some of the ways that women have intervened to challenge mainstream media representations of themselves by producing new forms of media where feminist values tend to be central to both the production process and the content of what is produced.

Jankowski (1991) underlines the need for more research in defining the theory of alternative media. Bredin's (1991, 36) review of work on feminist intervention into cultural production, which includes radio stations and programmes, notes the lack of documentation and analysis "of their politics and practices." Her work on women in community radio in Canada constitutes one of the few contributions to the theory and praxis of women's radio.

The central theme of this article is to consider how inequality may be countered by alternative practice. It explores how women's stations forge a gendered space within this practice. Finally, the purpose is to contribute to a theory and praxis of alternative media as a development tool for women's participation in the public arena or in social space.¹

Radio Studies and Developments in Participatory Radio

Compared to film, television and the press, radio is a relatively under researched and under valued area of the media. Radio has only recently established itself as an area where theory is argued about and contested.² It could be argued that as a form of cultural production radio is marginalised. Women and radio as an area of research within radio studies is also undervalued. In one of the few books theorising UK radio (Crisell 1994), the only reference to women or gender is mention of BBC's "Woman's Hour" and its relation to magazine-format radio programmes, but there is no direct addressing of gender issues.

Feminist radio studies has a fragmented research history with no single theoretical "umbrella." Research comes from a variety of disciplines including sociology, psychology, linguistics, women's studies, development studies, media, communications and cultural studies. The main themes in women and radio research include:

- histories of women and radio, both personal and institutional (e.g. Cramer 1993; Hunter 1994; Shapley 1996; Lacey 1996);
- equality in radio employment including the positioning of women in particular roles (e.g. Gill 1993a);
- gendered relationship between producers, audiences and radio texts (e.g. Barnard 1989);
- absence and presence of women's interests and perspectives in radio discourses (e.g. Karpf 1980).

All of these themes impinge on the way that women participate in community radio, both on and off the air.

Brecht (1930/1983) first suggested that radio could contribute to a two-way mediated communication process. The link is thus made between the listener being potentially both *producer* and *consumer* of radio. The term "producer" can, of course, be interpreted at two levels, both as a producer of meaning in relationship to the text and at a more literal, practical level as a programme maker. It is the latter which receives attention in this article. One of the most relevant bodies of work to this study within radio studies is in the area of participatory media. Servaes (1996) sees the concept of participatory, interactive communication as an important part of development media. Lewis has written extensively about the philosophies and structures that enable different forms of community radio in Europe, North America and Australia (Lewis and Booth 1989; Lewis 1993). One of the core principles of community radio is the enabling of "ordinary people," often recruited as station volunteers, to participate in the station.

Feminist Research into the Processes of Cultural Production

In defining women's cultural production it is important to discuss the distinction between women's production and feminist production. Bredin (1991) outlines a number of different levels and definitions of feminist cultural production. Feminist production should be *by* women, but the fact that women are involved does not mean that it will be feminist. Feminist production should be about the politicisation of culture in resistance to patriarchal oppression. A recognition of cultural factors surrounding different groups of women (e.g. race, class and sexual orientation) is integral to a feminist ideal of eliminating oppression. A key question in defining feminist radio praxis is the manner in which women negotiate how their lives are defined on the radio.

Bredin argues that feminist production should demystify the role of producer so that the boundaries between producers and consumers of culture are broken down: "A work is never inherently feminist but depends on a feminist consciousness shared by both producer and consumer" (Bredin 1991, 36). Coward talks about how feminism has redefined women's interests in terms of being involved in production, e.g. setting up women's production companies, or as women producers (Coward 1987). The establishment of UK women's radio stations in the early 1990s can be seen in the context of other feminist media enterprises in the 1970s and 1980s, for instance Virago Press, *Spare Rib* magazine and the independent television production company Broadside. Women's community radio stations are also clearly targeted at female audiences but usually at a local level and with a volunteer base. What might the characteristics be of a "gendered structure of media production" (Van Zoonen 1994) at the local level? What contribution might this have to an alternative public sphere or "space"?

Representation of Women's Issues and Feminist Content

In terms of constructing a "public identity" for the women's movement, the relationship between the media and the feminist movement has been complex and problematic. In one of the few studies of this area, Van Zoonen (1992, 453) notes that "feminism has not gained access to the media on its own terms." She found that mainstream media's construction of the women's movement in the Netherlands in the late 1960s and early 1970s showed that certain discourses of feminism were acceptable. The discourse of equal opportunities was acceptable, but political feminism was not. Mainstream media perceived a gap between the interests of "ordinary women" and activists and the movement was "anti men." She notes that even in this framework there was some room for divergent views (Van Zoonen 1992, 474). She acknowledges that the women's movement and definitions of feminism in the 1990s are more diverse. These conclusions might be usefully applied to discussing radio representations of feminism, particularly where women are active producers of radio.

Feminist Interpretations of Habermas

Dahlgren (1995, 7) defines the public sphere as "that realm of social life where the exchange of information and views on questions of public opinion can be formed." Many feminist academics (McLaughlin 1993; 1995) question the usefulness of the concept of the public sphere as developed by Habermas. Feminist readings of Habermas reveal that "the key axis of exclusion from the liberal public sphere was gender" (McLaughlin 1993, 604). A feminist critique is partly based on the binary opposition inherent in Habermas' notion of the public sphere where men are associated with the public sphere and women with the private.

The mass media are integral to any discussion of the public sphere. An awareness of the nature of media ownership and how control over the means of production structures access and representation is crucial. Community stations fit Wasko and Mosco's progressive vision of democratic communication that includes participatory and alternative media forms and media strategies committed to social change (in Dahlgren 1995, 13). McLaughlin argues that feminists have not paid enough attention to the media in their discussions of Habermas. She suggests that media should be placed in the foreground in a feminist theory of the public sphere and that feminist media studies should attend to the public sphere. Women's interests can be transformed through forms of resistance, including setting up oppositional discourses. Women's stations can be seen as examples of "new media developments and alternative forms of media and participation in order to develop new forms of public life" (McLaughlin 1993, 616).

Benhabib supports the discursive model of public space as compatible with feminist ideals. She promotes the idea of bringing areas previously considered to be of private interest in the traditional women's sphere (e.g. housework, reproduction, child care) into the public discursive arena and that through "discourses of power and their implicit agendas" they will be demystified. An extension of this is that practical discourse has to be "feminised" (Benhabib 1995, 95). Can women in community stations who are involved in such discourses in a very practical and everyday level, play a role in this process by defining "feminised" modes of training, production and programming?

Lacey's (1996) gendered history of early German radio sees a potential for radio "reinvigorating" the public sphere. She notes how, historically, women have been

ideologically situated in the private sphere. The feminist slogan “the personal is political” relocates women into a social space. Lacey quotes Kelly’s re-situating of the public sphere as a social space: “(A) woman’s place is not a separate sphere or domain of existence but a position within social existence generally” (Lacey 1996, 222). It is this social, ideologically defined space that is the concern of this article.

Lacey views radio as “bridging the divide” between public and private and “redefining the boundaries between them” (Lacey 1996, 223). Although she primarily talks about early German radio, it is still a useful way of considering the role of radio in contemporary women’s lives. It recognises the negotiation that continually goes on between the public and the private. The institutional and ideological context in which women’s radio is situated is crucial to how women can use the space discursively. 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.

Women’s Radio Stations as Sites for Representation and Production

Although the focus of this study is on community radio, it is important to acknowledge the existence of programmes like BBC Woman’s Hour as a space where women’s radio is produced in mainstream contexts. Karpf identifies the dilemma of a single programme representing the range of women’s interests:

It negotiates the conflicts in broadcasting to and for women, at times unsure how far to examine and interrogate the “outside world,” without losing its focus on and validation of the domestic world (Karpf 1987, 175).

Much academic discussion of women and radio has taken place in the area of the relationship between male disc jockeys and their perceived constructions of a female audience. A definition of “women’s radio” as a generic form and as a discourse *outside* the area of programmes defined by male DJs needs to be mapped out.

Community radio as a site for women’s cultural production necessitates an understanding of the nature of both women’s alternative media (WAM) and community radio (CR). They share many characteristics, and have experienced the same kinds of pressures (from inside and outside the movements) for change over the last three decades.

Steiner outlines the historical and structural characteristics of WAM by focusing mainly on the United States, but also by using some prominent examples from the UK such as Virago Press and *Spare Rib* magazine. She highlights some of the problems associated with WAM projects in the 1970s and 1980s; for instance, the difficulties projects have during the transition from a short term project to a more sustainable long term enterprise

According to Steiner (1992), the main aim of WAM is to “express and celebrate” the views of a wide range of women while using media as a tool to help the women’s movement achieve its aims. WAM are usually small scale enterprises, addressing geographical or communities of interest. Most WAM products are made by women, often working collectively; they aim where possible to involve women in the production process, including providing training to undertake specialist roles. There may be some involvement of men. There tends to be a feminist ethic, often valued

above a professional ethic. If necessary, work will be done by voluntary or low paid labour. Most activities are non-profit oriented.

Research into how women's community stations in the 1990s have developed their practices and programming is important in terms of updating the history of feminist alternative media and contributing to a deeper understanding of feminist cultural production.

Women's Community Radio Stations and Alternative Media Practice

Community Radio is radio made by and for the community it serves, set up on a non-profit distributing basis, often staffed by volunteers and run with an underlying ethos of enabling participation in all the activities of the station through access and training (Lewis and Booth 1989). Fiske identifies access to small-scale community radio as an important form of resistance for minority groups; it provides at low "entry cost" to the media market (Fiske 1994). Whilst having aims and charters that support equal opportunities, community radio stations often seem to reflect the gender stereotyping of mainstream radio stations in staff and volunteer roles. A pan-European survey found that men out-numbered women volunteers in all work areas apart from administration and finance. Where there were full-time paid staff, only 22% were women (Lewis 1994).

Community radio as a site for alternative practice and the place of women's radio therein has been documented by Jallof (1992; 1996). She defines the different "forms" of women's radio, characterising women's radio production as taking place at several different levels:

(I)n an all women's radio station, in an autonomous collective in a mixed station, in a women's group who are not totally autonomous in a mixed station, . . . an individual women making a women's show, . . . an individual woman working in a mainstream setting with a gender conscious perspective (Jallof 1996, 16).

Women's radio stations and programming within community radio have existed since 1969 when WBAI in New York introduced feminist programming — including taped consciousness raising sessions (Steiner 1992). Other forms of early programmes and stations included Radio Donna in Italy (see Karpf 1980), RadiOrakel in Norway, Radio Tierra in Chile and Radio Pirate Woman in Ireland (D'Arcy 1996). In addition there are specialist news agencies that provide news and features with a women's and feminist agenda. These include Women on the Line in Australia, Women's News Gathering Service in the USA (Werden 1996), Feminist International Radio Endeavour, Costa Rica (Suarez Toro 1996) and Women's Feature Service, India (Anand 1996).

Bredin finds that most urban community stations in Canada have feminist programming of some kind (between 1.5 and 8.5 hours a week) and notes that cities with most active women's movements and other feminist media forms (e.g. a women's press) have the most radio programming. She is, however, critical of the impact of this programming and of the participation of women in programming roles in the stations (particularly minority ethnic women and lesbians). She suggests that action is needed: "something more than complacent lip service to community radio as a 'participatory medium' and 'open forum' is required" (Bredin 1991, 39). She concludes that "despite its current limitations, feminist community radio is actively engaged in the politicisation

of culture and the affirmation of marginal experience that characterises women's resistance to oppression everywhere" (Bredin 1991, 40).

In the UK in the late 1980s, licences were awarded to stations with community remits by the Independent Broadcasting Authority.³ These stations produced what could be called "islands" of women's activity — rarely more than an hour a week, where there were some women presenters and specialist women's programmes, for instance at FTP in Bristol.⁴ However in these stations the majority of volunteers were men and these specialist programmes were often cut if the stations had to "tighten their belts" or were bought out by commercial operators.

In the UK there are few full-time community stations that operate under a community charter. Community radio groups can take advantage of a Radio Authority licence for up to 28 days a year called a Restricted Service Licence or RSL.⁵ These permit groups to learn about all aspects of setting up, financing and programming a community station and serve as a tool for experimenting with new formats and target audiences. Women in community stations saw the chance to set up short term stations-run by women and aimed primarily at women. Fem Fm in Bristol (1992), Elle FM in Merseyside (1995), Radio Venus in Bradford (1995), Celebration Radio and Brazen Radio in London (1994), have all used short-term licences as a way of showcasing women's radio.

Women's Community Radio in Praxis

Three case studies are briefly sketched below of women working in community radio settings in the UK and Ireland: Fem FM, the first women's station in the UK, Radio Venus at Bradford Community Broadcasting,⁶ and Radio Pirate Woman in Ireland. The purpose is to explore how specific and specialist programming, alongside community development and training initiatives, facilitate the participation of a wide range of women in community radio. Another concern is how women can gain experience and confidence so that they can work on an equal basis with men. Finally, the notion of a women's "space" on and off air in community stations, including how organisational structures work for or against this in community radio, is examined.

Fem FM, Bristol. Fem FM was set up in Bristol, England, in 1992. It aimed to give women the opportunity to do a range of work in radio that they had not had before and to provide a space for a "women-defined" and oriented set of radio programmes. The station provided women with a safe space to learn, make mistakes, to get experience and gain confidence. The project lasted a year, culminating in an eight-day broadcast, starting on International Women's Day (Mitchell and Caverly, 1993). The station involved 250 women in total, from a wide range of ages, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientation. Funding for training on the project came from sponsorship and the Gulbenkian Foundation. Local colleges and radio stations donated resources "in kind."

Radio Venus and Bradford Community Broadcasting (BCB). BCB was formed in 1992 and since then has broadcast five RSLs in the Bradford area. In 1995, women at BCB decided that their community station was not doing enough for them and that they were poorly represented in the schedules. Inspired by Fem FM, they set about organising their own programming under the name Radio Venus. About 70 women have been involved in broadcasts for short periods ranging from two day specials to

regular programmes on RSLs and the station's daily cable channel. Like Fem FM they have a policy of women-lead, community-based training, resulting in specific groups of women, like Asian women, making programmes. This enables women who may not have felt attracted to the community radio station before, to participate. It receives funding from a number of local authority and European sources and grants from Yorkshire Arts, and the Gulbenkian Foundation.

Radio Pirate Woman. Radio Pirate Woman in Galway, Ireland, was established in 1987. It is an unlicensed station which broadcasts for short periods each year from its founder's house. The programming ranges from spontaneous discussion, music and poetry sessions to programming about international women's activism. The station breaks a number of radio "taboos;" according to founder Margaretta D'Arcy (1996, 11) it does not care whether anyone listens, it does not have a "proper" studio; it ignores censorship rules (including giving out information about abortion), and anyone who wants to can have a say on air without training or experience.

Community Development and Training

Fem FM and Radio Venus had a multi-level, holistic approach to training, integrating training and programme making, and employing community development methods to reach women who might not have been aware of community radio. An essential approach was to make courses, and the whole idea of radio accessible and welcoming to women. The demystification of technology related to programme making and confidence building were core aims of all courses. Development of a feminist ethic of communication in the context of women's radio included strategies developed by the women's movement. Parallels might be drawn between a holistic approach to training and feminist consciousness raising. For instance, they shared the objectives of instilling confidence and re-skilling women, raising awareness of women's oppression; working collectively, developing women's creativity and networking.

Fem FM set up public meetings in community centres in four different parts of the city to explain the project, recruit volunteers and publicise courses. Over 200 local groups were contacted and consultation meetings were arranged to see how they might be represented in station output: as guests, by publicising their events, or by transmitting in-depth features about their projects. Much of this material contributed to daily programmes like "Upfront" that mixed material about women's activities, community and voluntary sector information with music.

At Radio Pirate Woman there is no formal radio training. Information about broadcasts is publicised around the small city of Galway via posters and word of mouth. D'Arcy notes that working class women surveyed in Galway were nervous about speaking out on air: "they didn't feel confident to speak in public until they had at first listened and found out what it was all about" (D'Arcy 1996, 24).

Gill's (1993) discourse analysis of commercial radio programme controllers' talk showed that the "flexible sexism" which prevents women from working as DJs is often multi-layered. Empirical research contradicts some of the myths surrounding women as DJs. By helping women to gain skills and confidence before they went out live on air, Fem FM broke the vicious circle often presented to women wanting to be DJs — that they do not have enough actual on air experience. They used local and national publicity to encourage women to put themselves forward, running workshops on how to put together demo tapes and they held a competition and related training in con-

junction with a local commercial station. As their consciousness is raised through courses and experience, women are finding ways of countering exclusion from the DJ role.

Structures

The structure of Fem Fm was set up to facilitate a year-long project culminating in a radio station. There were no paid workers and almost all volunteers were women (men ran child care support and helped set up the transmitter). Unlike many women's media projects (Steiner 1992), Fem FM was not organised collectively but set up as a 'functional hierarchy' with individuals and groups taking responsibility for different areas of the station and programme making.

Fem FM was never intended to be a sustainable, permanent station, and stations using a similar model in London and Merseyside also only broadcast as "one-offs." At Bradford Community Broadcasting the people involved are developing a model of women's radio which may have a more long-term impact on the way women participate in radio stations and on the way women's issues are represented on air.

The Venus group established itself on and off air at Bradford Community Broadcasting from 1995, and issues were raised about power and space within the station. Radio Venus attracted women with energy and vision who made exciting programming. They were a strong group of women who organised separately, within the station. They found that they were able to attract funding for women's training because they tailored applications to special interests. However all of these factors were seen by some men at the station as a threat. When the women first established themselves, they experienced difficulties in asserting their rights to use station resources and air time.

One aim of Venus is to move women from secondary roles such as administration into primary roles of programme production and presentation. This means developing women's confidence and assertiveness as well as production skills. It seems that women "taking up space," being visible — or audible — on and off air is a key issue. It seems that women are often prepared to do "the jobs that need to be done" off air. While these are often skilled jobs such as producing a community issue based magazine programme, their time is not spent on securing higher profile, more visible, on air presentation jobs.

Radio Pirate Woman allows any woman to walk into a studio based in a house and speak into a microphone in order to debate issues without censorship. The station's aim to allow "each woman to speak freely without being controlled by another woman" (D'Arcy 1996, 5) seems close to the ideal of Habermas' conditions for a public sphere. However, the simplicity of this model may also be its main weakness, as it is vulnerable to the control of one woman (who lives in the house) and as an unlicensed station is vulnerable to closure by the regulatory authorities.

Discussion and Conclusions

In presenting models of women's community radio within the context of a history of women's radio outside mainstream broadcasting, I have concentrated mainly on factors related to training and development strategies, and their contribution to women gaining a sense of space, independence and empowerment on and off the air in community stations. How women produce radio must be seen in the context of a complex range of influences: how they have grown up with radio use, role models,

how confident they are in broadcasting and the institutional context in which they are producing radio.

Media production at the local level can be structured by gender. Women's radio production is facilitated by women-oriented training and community development strategies. Women's community radio training is based on the premise that women are able to *participate* in programme production and are given access to broadcasting time-space on the airwaves. This participation is achieved through training and confidence building taking place inside and outside the radio stations. Community-based training means that courses and workshops are located where women meet as part of their daily lives. Participation is further facilitated by programme lead training where broadcast technology is demystified through women-only training and confidence building. Training has led to a wide range of women producers in terms of ethnic and class background.

Women's radio activity can be structured through two main models - a women's radio station organising separately and women's radio as part of a mixed station. What is shared with both Fem FM and Radio Venus is the value of working towards a collective goal and getting broadcasting experience and space on the airwaves. Women involved in both stations were positive about the amount of publicity and audience response that a women's radio activities achieved. This added to their image of themselves as confident women; they were pleased with the positive reflections of themselves that they were seeing and hearing on the airwaves.

Fem FM has been used as an inspirational model of women's radio for UK stations that have developed since 1992. The women's station organised in the separatist model of Fem FM has a function of exciting, enthusing, focusing on and publicising women's radio in a short term burst. Woolf (1993) cited Fem FM as an example of "power feminism." Clearly, collective action by women in mixed stations, while "making waves" when they asserted their rights to resources, left them with a feeling of empowerment and satisfaction at having achieved the space they have. Where community stations compete for scarce resources, the longer, less glamorous slog of women carving out a space within a mixed station may be more sustainable in the long term. Certainly women need to have control over the structures that influence their "on air" space to match the work that they are doing to gain the space "off air" in community radio stations.

Community radio is a space where alternative publics can gain access to debate in a media space produced by people who have a local interest in the debate. How politicised or feminist this space can be depends on the ideological discourse of the space and how feminism or women-oriented subjects are understood. Women's perceptions of their own identity in relation to feminism is integral to this and Lacey's (1996) conclusion that women should carve out a separate space as citizens rather than as women is pertinent. Women find the community radio environment more accessible because of its open structures. However, in mixed stations, maintaining that space and translating off air activity into on air programming is often hard fought for and has to be continually asserted.

It may be valuable to look outside the UK for structures and models of long term success that exist within different broadcasting systems. RadiOrakel in Norway, for instance, has survived as a women's station since 1982. It allows men airspace provided that the station as a whole prioritises women in its management and scheduling. Licensed community stations in Ireland have a statutory quota of women on their

board of management. The survival of community radio in the commercial media landscape remains an issue and more research is required into the viability of women run stations as permanent entities.

How much freedom women have on air is related to institutional constraints and audience expectations that surround their space. In mixed stations that depends on how the women's space is valued in the station. More research needs to be done in these radio stations around patriarchal station cultures and employment, scheduling and programming.

Programming made by women in community radio has to be seen in the context of all the above. An analysis of the programme schedules of women's radio would be a valuable research project in itself. Community radio can provide a space for women; its participatory processes may have a transforming function with the potential to enable women to produce programming and meanings transcending some of the more limiting ideological constructions of their lives. I suggest, however, that "different" and radical discourses of women's radio conflict with the radio discourses that audiences are used to. Radio representations of feminism in its most political and oppositional stance are rare in the UK community radio setting.

Within mixed stations like Radio Venus on BCB there is a mismatch between the amount of feminist radio consciousness raising, training, organisation and development work being achieved in the space *off air* in the radio stations and the *on air* radio discourse. Clearly, women are moving out of the domestic space into a new community radio social space "off air." But it is hard for women to bring the discourse of their everyday lives into the radio studio and into the "on air" space. At Fem FM, where women had a high level of structural control, the discursive space of programming was still designed and made through women negotiating a version of women's radio that was acceptable to the audience. It was affected by a complex range of expectations from both producers and consumers which, I would argue, limits the extent to which the programming discourse can be radically feminised.

The programming at Radio Pirate Women shows that women's community radio has the ability to produce sound scapes or narratives based on women's experiences, embedded in the local and the "everyday." This feminist radio praxis happens when women are in control over every aspect of the station, including choosing the broadcast frequency, programming, scheduling and decision making about who gets on air. Importantly, mainstream notions of accepted radio discourse have been completely rejected at this station. The notion of radio programme discourses, and indeed the whole sense of the radio space/airwaves as being fundamentally, historically and culturally, "male" deserves more research. Models of feminist radio praxis and discourse outside the UK need to be explored, particularly in countries with radio regulatory structures and political economies more sympathetic to community broadcasting.

Notes:

1. I would like to thank Nick Jankowski and Anna Reading for their helpful comments in the preparation of this article.

2. The Radio Research Project was launched in the UK in 1997 as a consortium of universities and radio industry bodies "to encourage the study, understanding and enjoyment of radio." It has an email discussion group for radio teachers and lecturers (<http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/radio-studies>).

3. The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) granted incremental licences to ten stations with community remits. See Lewis and Gray (1992) for further discussion of licencing and regulation of community radio under a commercially oriented regulatory system.
4. FTP — For the People Radio — originally broadcast as a pirate station in Bristol, aiming mainly at Black and Asian Communities. It broadcast a weekly programme made for and by women called “Woman to Woman.”
5. RSL: Restricted Service Licence. This is a short term licence granted by the UK Radio Authority for small scale radio broadcasts of up to 28 days a year. There are three categories of licence-aspirant radio groups (no distinction is made between commercial and community), academic and training institutions and licences for special events e.g. festivals and sporting events.
6. Bradford Community Broadcasting/Radio Venus. Bradford Community Broadcasting (BCB) was set up in 1992 to provide broadcasts related to the Bradford Festival. It is a radio training project which broadcasts regularly in Bradford and is the base for other short-term radio stations including stations for Adult Learner’s Week and for home games at Bradford City Football Club. Radio Venus is the women’s radio project within BCB. It has broadcast programmes within BCB programming as well as having separate broadcast, for instance, “Weekend on Venus” in 1995.

References:

- D’Arcy, Margaretta. 1996. *Galway’s Pirate Women, a Global Trawl*. Galway: Women’s Pirate Press.
- Anand, Anita. 1996. Starting up, Staying there and Moving on, the Women’s Feature Service. In A. Sreberny-Mohammadi, D. Wynseck, J. McKenna, and O. Boyd-Barrett (eds.), *Media in Global Context*, 293-305. Leicester: University of Leicester Centre for Mass Communications Research.
- Barnard, Stephen. 1989. *On the Radio: Music Radio in Britain*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Benhabib, Seyla. 1995. Models of Public Space. In C. Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, 73-98. London: MIT Press.
- Brecht, Bertholt. 1930/1983. Radio as a Means of Communication: A Talk on the Function of Radio. In A. Mattelart and S. Siegelau (eds.), *Communication and Class Struggle, 2, Liberalism, Socialism*. France: IMMRC.
- Bredin, Marian. 1991. Feminist Cultural Politics: Women in Community Radio in Canada. *Resources for Feminist Research* 20, 1-2, 36-41.
- Coward, Rosalind. 1987. Women’s Programmes: Why Not? In H. Baehr and G. Dyer (eds.), *Boxed in: Women and Television*, 96-106. London: Pandora.
- Cramer, Judith A. 1993. A Woman’s Place is On the Air. In P. Creedon (ed.), *Women in Mass Communication* (2nd edition), 154-166. London: Sage.
- Crisell, Andrew. 1994. *Understanding Radio* (2nd edition). London: Routledge.
- Dahlgren, Peter. 1995. *Television and the Public Sphere. Citizenship, Democracy and the Media*. London: Sage.
- Fiske, John. 1994. *Media Matters. Everyday Culture and Political Change*. London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gallagher, Margaret. 1990. *Women and Men in Broadcasting: Equality for the ’90s*. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities in Broadcasting.
- Gibbons, Maria and NEXUS Research Co-operative. 1997. *Breaking Glass Walls, Gender and Employment Issues in the Independent Radio Sector in Ireland*. Galway: Women on Air.
- Gill, Rosalind. 1993. Justifying Injustice: Broadcasters’ Accounts of Inequality in a Radio Station. In E. Burman and I. Parker (eds.), *Discourse Analytic Research: Readings and Repertoires of Texts in Action*, 75-93. London: Routledge.
- Gray, Peggy and Peter M. Lewis. 1992. Great Britain: Community Broadcasting Revisited. In N. Jankowski, O. Prehn and J. Stappers (eds.), *The People’s Voice: Local Radio and TV in Europe*, 156-169. London: John Libbey.
- Hunter, Fred. 1994. Hilda Matheson and the BBC, 1926-1940. In S. Oldfield, (ed.), *This Working Day World — Women’s Lives and Cultures in Britain*, 169-174. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Jallov, Birgitte. 1992. Women on the Air-Community Radio as a Tool for Feminist Messages. In N. Jankowski, O. Prehn and J. Stappers (eds.), *The People’s Voice: Local Radio and TV in Europe*, 215-224. London: John Libbey.

- Jallov, Birgitte. 1996. *Women's Voices Crossing Frontiers. European Directory of Women's Community Radio Stations and Women's Radio Production Collectives*. Sheffield: AMARC, Europe Women's Network.
- Jankowski, Nicholas W. 1991. Qualitative Research and Community Media. In N. W. Jankowski, and K. Jensen, (eds.), *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research*, 163-174. London: Routledge.
- Karpf, Anne. 1980. Women and Radio. *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 3, 41-54.
- Karpf, Anne. 1987. Radio Times: Private Women and Public Men. In K. Davies, J. Dickey and T. Stratford (eds.), *Out of Focus: Writings on Women and the Media*, 168-175. London: Women's Press.
- Lacey, Kate. 1996. *Feminine Frequencies: Gender, German Radio, and the Public Sphere, 1923-1945*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Lewis, Peter M. and Jerry Booth. 1989. *The Invisible Medium-Public, Commercial and Community Radio*. London: Macmillan.
- Lewis, Peter M. 1993. Neither the Market nor the State: Community Radio — a Third Way? In O. Manaev, and Y. Pryliuk (eds.), *Media in Transition: From Totalitarianism to Democracy*, 200-218. Kiev: Abris.
- Lewis, Peter M. 1994. *Community Radio — Employment Trends and Training Needs. Report of Transnational Survey*. Sheffield: AMARC Europe.
- McLaughlin, Lisa. 1993. Feminism, the Public Sphere, Media and Democracy. *Media, Culture and Society* 15, 599-620.
- McLaughlin, Lisa. 1995. From Excess to Access: Feminist Political Agency in the Public Sphere. *Javnost-The Public* 4, 37-50.
- Mitchell, Caroline and Trish Caverly. 1993. *Fem FM 101-First in Women's Radio*. University of Sunderland: Fem FM.
- Servaes, Jan. 1996. Introduction: Participatory Communication and Research in Development Settings. In J. Servaes, T. Jacobson and S. A. White (eds.), *Participatory Communication for Social Change*, 13-25. London: Sage.
- Shapley, Olive. 1996. *Broadcasting. A Life*. London: Scarlett Press.
- Steiner, Linda. 1992. The History and Structure of Women's Alternative Media. In L. Rakow. (ed.), *Women Making Meaning, New Feminist Directions in Communications*, 121-143. London: Routledge.
- Suarez Toro, Maria. 1996. Feminists International Radio Endeavour. In R. R. Allen, D. Rush, and S. J. Kaufman (eds.), *Women Transforming Communications*, 226-232. London: Sage.
- Tuchman, Gaye. 1979. Women's Depiction by the Mass Media. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3, 528-42.
- Van Zoonen, Liesbet. 1992. The Women's Movement and the Media: Constructing a Public Identity. *European Journal of Communication* 7, 453-476.
- Van Zoonen, Liesbet. 1994. *Feminist Media Studies*. London: Sage.
- Werden, Frieda. 1996. The Founding of WINGS-A Story of Feminist Radio Survival. In R. R. Allen, D. Rush, and S. J. Kaufman (eds.), *Women Transforming Communications*, 218-225. London: Sage.
- Woolf, Myra, Sara Holly and Helen Connor. 1996. *Employment Patterns and Training Needs, 1995-6, Broadcast Journalism*. London: Skillset.
- Woolf, Naomi. 1993. *Fire With Fire — New Female Power and How it will Change the 21st Century*. London: Chatto and Windus.