A grounded theory of radio listening as company among older listeners

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ABSTRACT

Despite the ubiquity of the idea that radio listening provides company, there is little understanding of the mechanisms by which this is achieved. This study aims to understand how older radio listeners experience the radio as company. This research is conducted using a feminist, constructivist grounded theory methodology. Participants were recruited using snowballing, word of mouth, advertisement, and media promotion. All participants were living independently in Auckland or the Waikato in Aotearoa New Zealand. Data were created using interviews and photography with the 15 radio listeners aged 75+ years who identified as using the radio for company. Of these listeners, 12 were women, 3 were men; 1 participant was Māori and 14 were not. Research conversations were conducted in participants' homes, with one exception. Participants' radios were photographed where they were commonly used. Data were analysed using grounded theory methods including coding, memoing, and diagramming. These methods were applied to both the textual and visual data. Data generation and analysis were concurrent, allowing for constant comparative analysis for the duration of the research. Radio listening offered a means for older listeners to remain in dialogue with a self, and to see that identity reflected and contextualised in the listening community. In this way, radio listening was experienced as company. Listeners used time, space, and taste as boundaries in which to manage their identity work while listening. For these older listeners, radio listening was a tool with which to undertake identity work, and through which to appreciate their sense of social identity. Since a sense of social identity is a proactive factor in avoiding loneliness, radio could be a powerful tool in mitigating the conditions which give rise to loneliness. This research has implications for how radio frequencies and broadcasting infrastructure as public utility might be used to alleviate or curtail older people's loneliness.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Originators

Without the kindness and courage of Nancy, Marta, and Nicole who opened their homes and lives to me, I would never have asked these questions in the first place. My thanks to them for their candour and trust.

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Work team

Working at a distance from the AUT campus meant finding workspaces that worked for me when I needed them. As such, much of this work was undertaken in the picturesque quiet of the Te Whare Pukapuka at Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato. For a time, I had a desk space at The Meteor in Kirikiriroa Hamilton. This shared workspace was a great place for me to focus on my work in the company of others doing the same, and, unexpectedly, proved fertile ground for

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ETHICS APPROVAL

This research was granted approved on 19 August 2019 by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee [19/267]. See Appendix A.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to better understand how radio listening is experienced as company. Feelings of company are incredibly valuable and without them we are at risk of loneliness. Experiences of loneliness and feelings of isolation have taken on new proportions globally since I began this research in 2018. Prior to the pandemic, many people had an academic or policy interest in these phenomena. Mid-pandemic, when our greatest defence against death and disease has been to isolate ourselves from others, vast swathes of us understand the scourge of isolation in new and visceral ways. As the threat of death from this disease has waned, we have rushed to emerge from this isolating, lonely experience and return to 'normal'. It behoves us all to remember, however, that loneliness and isolation were rife before the pandemic and they will remain so after if we cannot address ourselves to the urgent task of connecting people as inclusively and generously as possible. It is tempting to look forward, putting our pandemic experiences behind us, declaring them finished. Before we relegate those isolated times to memory, however, better that we appreciate and learn from them how truly urgent and essential it is to support those who want to, to remain connected wherever and however possible.

Media have a role to play in connecting people and perhaps none more so than radio, whose primary purpose has ever been to connect people separated by distance. I have sat, walked, studied, cooked, gardened, breastfed, danced, wept, cleaned, and laundered within earshot of a speaker from whose issue I have conjured company. I have spoken with others—friends, strangers, colleagues—about the companionship, joy, and community to be found at the listening end of the radio. I have sat on the presenting side of a radio microphone with other volunteers making content for our imagined audiences. Yet it is not at the point of broadcast that the radio becomes company. Yes, the input matters, but to make company from radio listening requires a process of construction, performed by the listener, at the point of reception. I am, before anything else in relation to this research, a listener.

With experiences of isolation so fresh in collective minds, now is a perfect time to delve into this experience and its remedies. That is what this research sets out to do. My own experience has convinced me that radio can be company, should a listener choose and be able to construct it as such. What I am seeking to uncover in this research is *how* that is achieved by the listener at the point of listening. What follows is my contribution to extending our understanding of listening as company, with a view to understanding how radio contributes to our feelings of connectedness, that we might address isolation and loneliness at the root.

This introductory chapter offers some background to the areas of interest to this study: radio listening, loneliness, and later life.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to understand how older radio listeners experience the radio as company. While experiencing the radio as company is an idea that may seem second nature to many people, there is little understanding of how this sense of companionship is achieved. Insight into the listening habits of listeners in Aotearoa New Zealand aged 75+ years, a growing demographic, is particularly limited as these people are not included in the regularly published national radio listener data.

Company is the antidote to loneliness, a wholly negative experience with life-limiting and potentially deadly consequences (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). This research arises out of the conviction that it is wholly unacceptable that the lives of people in one of the wealthiest nations on Earth are at risk for want of society. Broadcast infrastructure is a public utility. This research is concerned with how this public utility might be used in service to alleviate or avoid experiences of loneliness.

Background to and rationale for the study

This research represents a focused, disciplined enquiry into an aspect of communications which has permeated my career: Understanding how people in under-served communities access and use different media and communication channels to gather and exchange knowledge and information, to hear and be heard, to give what they can and get what they need. This PhD grew out of my MA dissertation submitted to Queen's University Belfast in 2017. That research argued that radio could

> side-step many of the barriers which prevent people accessing other interventions against loneliness ... Radio is accessible, can support existing relationships and enable new connections, can operate as a 'gateway' to other services and, in some cases, provide volunteering opportunities. Relationships with the radio can be anonymous: becoming a radio listener … does not require any disclosure or 'outing', but it does provide opportunities for broadcast and other, non-broadcast interactions with others. (Hammill, 2017, p. 2)

These findings reflect my perception of the discourse on loneliness at the time, and so my position in relation to the research at the time. In the United Kingdom (UK), where this MA was undertaken, loneliness was squarely framed as a public health issue in the popular discourse. When I began this work, studies on loneliness seemed to be focused on the success or otherwise of interventions after the fact, that is, ways to help people already experiencing loneliness.

Over the course of designing this doctoral research, I have undergone a shift, away from a focus on alleviating loneliness to centring my enquiry on company, and the role of radio in enabling that sensation. I came to understand that, in researching loneliness, prevention is better than a cure: I wanted to look at ways we, as societies, organise ourselves to successfully avoid the depths of loneliness, rather than considering how we might be pulled there from them once we reach them. We have tools and mechanisms available now which might bridge these social gaps, or not, and this research seeks to explore one tool with precisely this commonly cited attribute: Radio. This is not to imply that work on loneliness interventions is in any way futile, indeed it is essential, since so many of us are already there, deep within the experience of loneliness. For my part, however, I could not commit to a study of ways in which radio might *alleviate* loneliness, but rather how it might help listeners to *avoid* loneliness in the first place.

Objectives

This research will work to build a substantive theory of how people construct company through radio listening, and seeks to improve our understanding of the mechanisms at play in doing so. The study will seek to work with older radio listeners who use the radio for company. Using feminist grounded theory, this study will generate data through interviews with older listeners, and by taking pictures of their listening devices in situ.

Significance

This research aims to offer contributions arising from its findings, and in relation to data generation in grounded theory. The findings of this research contribute to the academic study of radio listening generally, and specifically to our understanding of the listening experiences of older radio listeners. Understanding the radio as company means that the convivial possibilities of the medium might be maintained or leveraged further by radio, health, social inclusion, and policy workers. The potential contribution of this work to the study of loneliness lies in it being a study of self-generating solutions by people in a demographic frequently targeted by interventions. The methods used to generate and analyse data in this thesis offer a contribution to the use of image data in grounded theory research.

Understanding how people are using the technology at their disposal to create the social contact they want has huge potential as our means of communication diversify and as we approach a second century of broadcast radio in Aotearoa New Zealand. Right now, locally and globally, the ways people communicate, which practices are considered ‘publishing’ and ‘broadcasting’, which communications are public and which are private, is changing. Similarly, the ways listeners enjoy and engage with audio content is evolving. Non-linear, non-localised, geographically-unbound audio formats continue to develop and change, but their basic

premise remains: Connecting people through content. By offering insight into how an older generation of radio listeners uses the technology they have to create the experiences and relationships they want, audio makers now, and in the future, stand to gain considerably by drawing on these insights to better serve their existing, potential, and future audiences.

Radio and radio listening

'The radio', in this thesis, and in conversation generally, can be used to mean many things at once, both tangible and intangible. 'The radio' can mean, 'the specific station I listen to' or 'broadcasting in general' or 'that object over there': "There is no single entity that constitutes 'radio'" (A. S. Weiss, 2001, p. 2). The radio is ubiquitous in our lives, nothing special, but something most of us encounter most weeks (NZ on Air Irirangi Te Motu & Glasshouse Consulting, 2018). This familiarity allows us to use the word casually, imprecisely, certain that its meaning will be clear enough in the context in which it is employed, despite the vast array of meanings the term 'the radio' might convey. The radio is many things: an adaptable wireless technology; some part of a greater broadcasting whole; that part in the middle of the dashboard; the thing I reach for in the dark.

The technology that is radio exists with the express purpose of connecting people over distance. From ship to shore communications in Morse code, the essence of the technology is to bridge a communications gap. Radio technology, which enables point-to-point communication, implies a two-way exchange between parties with equal access and capacity to hear and be heard, to send and receive. Broadcast applications of this technology change this relationship significantly. In early broadcast applications of the technology, the roles of sender and receiver were fixed. Subsequent technological developments and their integration with broadcast radio, from the telephone to the internet, have challenged these fixed positions and complicated the sender/receiver relationship in new and expansive ways. Questions and ideas about mass media as a means of connection, for better or worse, have shadowed these technological developments. Radio technology continues to develop, providing the technology for wi-fi and Bluetooth, and alongside these technological developments, audio cultures continue to change and adapt.

This thesis is concerned with the very personal uses to which listeners put this technology, in our homes and private spaces; in moments of light, dark, and indifference; with a view to understanding relationships created in the listening experience. What follows is an outline of broadcasting and listening in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is particularly relevant in this study, whose participants have grown up at a time of great progress in broadcasting technology and practice, which is reflected in their listening today.

Radio broadcasting in Aotearoa New Zealand

Radio in Aotearoa New Zealand, past and present, is categorised by an enthusiasm for the technology and ongoing tension in its application between the interests of the state and those of private enterprise. What follows is not a detailed history of radio broadcasting in Aotearoa New Zealand, but snapshots from its storied past which shed light on its present, and shifting, iteration. Most often, this discourse is predicated on control of the technology, not on the experience of users. Though, at various times, there were efforts to include, or be seen to include, the voice of listeners in the design and delivery of broadcasting services, these considerations have never been a pivotal concern.

Right from the early days of radio, the state claimed a monopoly on the technology with the introduction of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1903, making Aotearoa New Zealand "the first country in the world to enshrine legislation controlling the radio medium" (Hoar, 2011, p. 3). The Act meant that "only the Government was permitted to receive and transmit wireless communications and anyone else who did so without permission was liable to a £500 fine and confiscation of equipment" (Radio Spectrum Management, n.d., p. 4). This Act related to telephone and telegraph wires and was intended to "establish a government monopoly over the nascent medium and impost draconian penalties on those who breached it" (Hoar, 2011, p. 3). In 1906, at the International Exhibition in Christchurch, "some of the marvels of wireless telegraphy were made clear to the visitor by the small installation of Marconi plant" (Cowan, 1910, p. 141). The demonstration by one of the Marconi company's engineers involved exchanging messages between the Exhibition and another installation seven miles away. This demonstration was soon followed by a proposal from the London-based Pacific Radio Telegraphy Company to connect Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji. Given the state monopoly already established, the government of the day was able to reject this proposal, again, on the basis of a preference for state-owned infrastructure. The discussion around the development and implementation of this infrastructure, whose appeal was obvious, demonstrated early on a tension between the interests of the public and the interests of private enterprise in relation to emerging technology.

Radio amateurs proliferated, using all manner of homemade contraptions to exercise and further their interests in the new technology, largely without licence to do so. In 1909, Alfred Hathaway's home signal interfered with a signal from HMS Pioneer in Timaru. The New Zealand Navy were apparently quite pragmatic about how their needs and those of enthusiastic amateurs might co-exist; the navy suggested a system of bands, or tuning, to overcome these problems but the Government was not interested in implementing these recommendations and instead took Hathaway off the air entirely (Day, 1994). If these are

indeed to be understood as apocryphal in the development of radio in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is on the basis that New Zealanders readily embraced radio technology, experimenting, pushing the limits of its approved uses, connecting with each other without regard to the government's insistence that it be allowed to regulate or mediate any and all such communications. This relationship between public and private broadcasting later produced one of the nation's most iconic cultural entities, Radio Hauraki. Launched in protest over a lack of programming for young people on the state broadcaster of the time, the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, Radio Hauraki was a pirate, commercial station. They broadcast from a boat anchored just outside Aotearoa New Zealand's territorial boundary from December 1966 to June 1970, and were eventually awarded a licence (Research and Publishing Group, 2021).

The beginnings and growth of radio industries and practices are often discussed in terms of a division between the British model and the American model. Aotearoa New Zealand has oscillated between versions these two seemingly polar audio cultures, edging at times towards one or the other but never quite replicating either. At times, policy has alternately seemed to embrace Reithian ambitions for a broadcasting entity to unify the nation, while at other times applying an entirely liberal attitude to the distribution of frequencies but with an almost Orwellian zeal for control of the message: Throughout the 1920s and 30s broadcasting licences were issued and then rescinded or the stations acquired, until the state was overseeing both a publicly funded and a commercially funded network, with both staffed by public servants (Potter, 2012). Until the 1980s, stations were identifiable as either publicly or commercially funded by their call signs: public funded stations were 'Y' stations, YA for talk and YC for music; commercially funded stations were 'Z', ZB for talk and ZM for music, and numbered 1-4 according to the geographic region they covered. Some stations still use these references in their titles. In the late 1930s, the then National Broadcasting Service began a news service produced in the Prime Minister's Department (Day, 1994). This was to be broadcast, unaltered, and in full. This arrangement continued for 25 years: The national broadcaster took its 'news', unaltered and in full, directly from the government until the early 1960s. The balance between state control and public service, to say nothing of private interests, was clearly skewed.

By contrast with its tightly controlled beginnings, radio in Aotearoa New Zealand today operates in a highly deregulated environment following far reaching market deregulation in all sectors of the economy which began in the 1980s (Mollgaard, 2015). The Aotearoa New Zealand approach, at that time, was deregulation in the extreme. The New Zealand Broadcasting Act 1989 legislated that

> there were no restrictions on the number of radio stations a business could own; no restrictions on foreign ownership; no restrictions on cross-media ownership; no restrictions on format or genre; no public service remit for commercial broadcasters; no controls over content. Stations could broadcast whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted, to whomever they wanted. (Dubber, 2007, p. 23)

Today, commercial broadcasters in Aotearoa New Zealand are prolific. Audience ratings are reported across 13 regions and include 23 radio networks broadcasting across these regions (GfK, n.d.). There is one state-funded broadcaster, Radio New Zealand (RNZ) which operates two stations: RNZ National, which carries news, information, and current affairs programming, and RNZ Concert, which broadcasts classical and other specialist music programming. RNZ is also responsible for broadcasting parliamentary sittings on an AM frequency. RNZ Pacific provides news services across the Pacific 'in digital and analogue short wave to radio stations and individual listeners across the Pacific region' (*RNZ*, n.d.), and some of this content is heard on RNZ National throughout the week. None of these stations broadcast advertising.

In addition to these either wholly public or commercial outlets, there are frequencies reserved for Christian broadcasting, and four additional broadcasting networks which receive state support: The Pacific Media Network; the Community Access Media Alliance; the Student Radio Network; and the Iwi Radio Network. The Iwi Radio Network consists of 21 stations, supported by Te Māngai Pāho, a government agency focused on Māori language and culture, to produce and broadcast content in *te reo Māori*, the Māori language.

At the time of writing there are moves to make large-scale changes to public broadcasting (Faafoi, 2022; Peacock, 2022; RNZ, 2022), merging the public radio broadcaster with the commercial, state-owned television station. There is ongoing public discussion about whether the current public radio offering caters to all ages (RNZ, 2020a, 2020b). As Peacock (2022) wrote, "Most comparable countries have long-established public broadcasters offering radio and television – usually non-commercial – and a shared national news operation for both" (unpaginated). The current system, he says, is "not a system that suits the present – let alone the digital future" (Peacock, 2022). The point being that, in other, comparable nations, the public broadcasting arrangements are more settled, less changeable. Not so in Aotearoa New Zealand; the process of becoming is ongoing at a national level. On the one hand, this demonstrates a certain dynamism, a willingness to change and evolve the provision as the demands change. On the other hand, it suggests something unsettled, shifting, undecided.

With this discussion ongoing, it is a poignant moment to consider the role of radio broadcasting in the lives of listeners, now and into the future. What the data in this study demonstrate are that radio has provided a backdrop to the identity work of these listeners throughout their lives. At this stage in their lives, they are able to use radio to continue the

important work of being and becoming, and, in doing so, see and understand their selves as part of a larger whole. Whether or not radio will be able to do this for future generations of older adults depends on whether or not they have the opportunity to weave a listening identity into their sense of self as they grow into later life. Perhaps it is not radio which will provide this thread in future. Perhaps some other media will grow and change alongside people that they might turn to it in their later life as a means through which to see themselves, at a variety of ages and stages, and continue the unending work of becoming.

Radio listening in Aotearoa New Zealand

Relations between broadcasters and audiences have a meandering history in Aotearoa New Zealand. Once radio receivers became accessible to the public, aspiring listeners required a licence to use them. The uptake of these licences was rapid, increasing from 2,900 licence holders in 1924 to 54,000 by 1930 (Day, 1994). Day (1994) wrote that "[a]s the radio audience grew it was gradually recognised as a new type of collective" (p. 97). This new collective formed groups, radio societies whose chief interest was transmission quality. It was from the ranks of these radio societies that a listener representative was elected to join the broadcasting Advisory Committee in the mid-1920s (Day, 1994).

As far as engagement with listeners, this episode is instructive in two ways. Firstly, while it is perhaps encouraging that any notice was paid to the listeners at all, this invitation to representation would prove to be merely lip service; the Committee rarely met, and when the representative expressed views contrary to the orthodoxy, it was made clear that the Committee was advisory only and had no legal status. Secondly, it was clear, right from the off, that the listening audience has diverse interests and cannot be represented by such narrow engagement. The University of Auckland physicist whose interest focused on the quality of transmission, could not reasonably be asked to speak for the broader listenership in his role as 'listener representative'.

Over the course of the development of radio in Aotearoa New Zealand there were various iterations of similar attempts to engage, or seem to engage, listeners. At present, the listener experience is assessed in a variety of ways. NZ on Air Irirangi o Te Motu, the government agency which funds RNZ, as well as community, Pacific, and student radio stations, regularly produces audience research (NZ on Air Irirangi Te Motu & Glasshouse Consulting, 2018, 2021). In addition to those reports, RNZ commissions additional audience research (e.g., Colmar Brunton, n.d.) which it reports in its annual reports (RNZ, 2021).

In a nation of 5.1million people (Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2022), 3.7 million of us are listening to the radio every week (GfK, 2022). The primary means of assessing the preferences of this listening audience are the surveys commissioned by the RBA and produced by GfK, a

global market research company. These data are reported quarterly, and separately report on commercial radio listening and public radio listening. The data are gathered using paper and electronic diaries from listeners all over the country (Radio Broadcasters Association, n.d.). The publicly available data from this research are primarily reported in two ways: by which stations people listen to across the day, and by which age groups listen to which stations. Age groups are presented in spans of 10-15 years, up to the age of 74 (see for example, GfK, 2018, 2019, 2020). The regularly published data on listening habits and preferences in Aotearoa New Zealand do not include people older than 74 years.

Loneliness and connectedness

In common parlance, people generally speak of loneliness and isolation as though they are the same thing, but loneliness, isolation, and solitude are all distinct states of being. Solitude is something we might seek out, purposefully, and experience in joyful delight. So too we might choose to isolate ourselves, giving rise to the idea of 'splendid isolation'. These terms conjure an unpeopled landscape, quiet perhaps, or unsociably loud; a bath, a remote hillside, a long drive with your favourite music blaring. Loneliness is something else. Academics distinguish between loneliness and social isolation in particular. Social isolation is considered to be a measurable number of social contacts. It is a fairly unidimensional, objective measure, not necessarily negative and may be linked to a preference for solitude or may be a precursor to loneliness. Loneliness, however, is described by de Jong Gierveld (1989) as being when "the number of existing relationships is smaller than is considered to be desirable or acceptable, and/or the intimacy one desires has not been realised" (p. 209). This is an inherently negative, subjective experience, and relates to both the number and intimacy of relationships.

While loneliness and social isolation are not the same, social isolation can lead to loneliness (Elliot, 2014). This nuanced understanding of loneliness and social isolation is valuable. Uotila et al. (2010) offered a succinct but nuanced definition of loneliness in their study of elder loneliness in Finnish media: "[a]t its simplest, being lonely is synonymous with a yearning for company and suffering as a result of being alone" (p. 112). This recognises that not everyone who is alone is suffering, only those who are alone and suffering from it might be said to be lonely, and even those with some form of company may be yearning for more or other company. Loneliness is a feeling, it is subjective, different perhaps for everybody, but its implications and consequences are measurable and unwanted.

Understandings of loneliness differ from one philosophical perspective to another. According to the interactionist Weiss (1973), there are, broadly, two facets of loneliness: social (an insufficient number of relationships) and emotional (insufficient depth of relationships). There are, however, other lenses through which loneliness can be understood. Peplau and Perlman

(1982) and Rokach (2000) described an existential and phenomenological view that experiences of loneliness are inherent in the human condition and might not be wholly negative. Instead, they may offer opportunities for growth "including gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of oneself, [an] increase in the value one assigns to friendships and to social support, and discovery of the resources one has for coping with loneliness" (Rokach, 2000, p. 366). The idea that an experience of loneliness is unavoidable, or that it might offer opportunities for growth, is not incompatible with the understanding of loneliness as an unwanted, negative experience. Knowing something is inevitable and taking something from it afterwards does not necessarily make it pleasurable or desirable. Cognitive theories of loneliness relate to ideas about self-esteem; the psychodynamic perspective suggests that a propensity for loneliness develops in childhood. This research considers loneliness and social isolation from an interactionist viewpoint.

Despite the focus on intimacy in definitions of loneliness, there is growing acknowledgement that it is not only the intimate relationships in our lives which engender a sense of belonging (e.g., Blau & Fingerman, 2009; Granovetter, 1973). The idea that our relationships with strangers and near-strangers matter is linked with ideas about social connectedness and social capital raised by scholars such as Putnam (2000) and later Hertz (2020). A sense of belonging and community comes not only from our intimate relationships with those closest to us, but from the way we feel about our place in the societies, nations, cities, and neighbourhoods in which we live. It is possible to feel lonely in a crowd, but it is also possible to feel a buoyant, joyful, effervescent sense of belonging amidst a throng of strangers, even if only fleetingly. Intimate relationships are valuable, but it is also worth considering the possibility that all our human interactions contribute to our sense of community, belonging, and inclusion.

Loneliness in Aotearoa New Zealand

Loneliness can be a feature of any or all life phases (Rokach, 2000) and various studies using various scales will articulate that it is better or worse at different points over a lifetime. These differ from place to place, time to time, and culture to culture; there are critiques of all such measurements, from their methodological approach to their sample particulars. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the work of measuring and monitoring loneliness and connectedness is done chiefly by the Ministry for Social Development in the Social Development Report. Its most recently published data set are from 2014 and shows that after a peak in mid-teens and early adulthood, loneliness trends downwards through the decades, until rates appear to rise again for those aged 75+, up to 13% (The Ministry of Social Development, 2016). Jamieson et al. (2018) found a relationship between loneliness, ethnicity, and living arrangements for older adults in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Ministry of Social Development's (2016) study suggested

that “ethnic group membership and culture have a significant bearing on older adults’ expectations of social and family relationships, which can result not only in differential living arrangements, but also in differential experiences of those living arrangements” (p. 72). Loneliness in later life in Aotearoa New Zealand is complex; efforts to reduce the experience of loneliness for this population need to be nuanced and adaptable.

Data collected during COVID lockdowns in Aotearoa New Zealand suggest that rates of loneliness increased overall during the first lockdown, rising and falling with periods of social restrictions, though overall it was younger people for whom loneliness was most acute during these times (Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa, 2021). Other reports from this period make it clear that risk factors for loneliness and social isolation include age and living arrangements, as well as income levels and access to high speed internet connections (Insights, Social Wellbeing Agency, 2020). For the Aotearoa New Zealand population, this points to increased risks of isolation and loneliness among Māori and new migrants. In essence, COVID-19 response exacerbated loneliness among all those already at risk.

Loneliness, age, and health

The health impacts of loneliness are stark and compelling: Loneliness is associated with the risk of an earlier death, depression, dementia, and feelings of poor health (Goodman et al., 2015). There are clear, documented links between experiences of loneliness and everything from heart disease (Heffner et al., 2011) to the common cold (Cohen et al., 1997) and a myriad of ailments in between. Loneliness is associated with a higher mortality risk for older people (Luo et al., 2012). These health impacts are clear and disturbing. Hagan et al., (2014) considering loneliness in older people, summarised research and suggested that loneliness is “a significant risk factor to the physical and mental health of older people” (p. 683). The clearly established relationship between loneliness, poor health, and death means that loneliness is often considered a public health issue. The UK, for instance, appointed a Minister for Loneliness, tasked with addressing the issue on the grounds of its health implications (see Walker, 2018; Yeginsu, 2018 etc).

Calling attention to the impacts of loneliness on individual bodies, however, risks focussing the discourse on individual remedies and medical solutions to what is a population-level social problem. The experience of loneliness, which so badly impacts our individual health, is a product of our social conditions, constructed at a population level. Addressing the individual experience of loneliness requires paying attention to the isolating social conditions created by the prevailing modes of social organisation: Breaking down family units to the smallest possible measure; stigmatising singleness; glorifying monogamy; developing low density living environments predicated on low-occupancy travel; technologies which connect us across the

globe and disconnect us in hallways and streets. This structural view of loneliness is echoed by sociological understandings of loneliness and, like other social ailments which manifest in individual bodies, such as type 2 diabetes or rheumatic fever, the causes and cures to the scourge of loneliness are primarily structural and collective, rather than individual and personal.

Loneliness and listening

Seen in the context of the macro-social, radio-makers, commissioners, producers, and listeners have an opportunity to use the inherently connective function of the technology that is radio to address the preventable social malaise that is loneliness. Radio technology, dots and dashes from ship to shore, was invented with the purpose of connecting people across distance. The act of connection in and of itself is not inherently positive or altruistic, however, and the purpose to which these connections are made is not neutral. The technology itself takes no interest in whether it is deployed to connect birdwatchers or bigots, and is equally capable of doing either, both, or neither. It is the values which underpin the uses to which this technology is employed which imbue it with meaning and potential, one way or another.

In the preface to *A Social History of British Broadcasting Volume 1*, Scannell and Cardiff (1991) identified the "classic form" of broadcasting in Britain as "a state-regulated service in the public interest" (p. x). They go on to articulate how the use of this state service as a unifying, community-building tool has been present in the radio broadcasting agenda since the beginning. In regulating frequencies, the state exerts its influence or imprints its values on the uses to which this technology is put. At present, states generally operate as capitalist enterprises built on rewarding individualism, and this plays out in the allocation of the state-regulated resource which is frequency. Consider the values inherently endorsed by the allocation of frequencies to commercial broadcasters. Some frequencies are allocated to public broadcasters who are mandated by the state to provide certain services, though these are in the minority. In allocating the majority of frequencies to commercial broadcasters, the connective power of radio technology is explicitly allocated to commodify the public. On balance, it is difficult to see how connecting listeners of any age with advertisers benefits listeners in any way, least of all by alleviating their experiences of loneliness. We could consider, in fact, that connection built on competitive, consumptive, individual drive, might be counter-productive in terms of alleviating loneliness, and yet, much of the connective potential of the technology is spent in this way. The connective potential of radio technology and broadcast practice comes up against the limits of an enabling, or perhaps disabling, framework of political and social values. It is not the technology that fails to connect people, but the ways in which states employ it which embody the very values that drive people apart.

Later life

The global population is ageing. In 2019, 9% of the world population was over 65 years; by 2050 this number is expected to reach 16% (United Nations, 2019). The United Nations (UN) identifies longer lives as

> one of our most remarkable collective achievements. They reflect advances in social and economic development as well as in health, specifically our success in dealing with fatal childhood illness, maternal mortality and, more recently, mortality at older ages. A longer life is an incredibly valuable resource. (Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing, 2020, p. 1)

At a population level, our increasing lifespan takes more of us into life phases which have been, as yet, little explored; frontline explorers are experiencing the oldest ages in new ways, in the company of peers, perhaps, and in better health than those who have gone before. At the same time, the number of people experiencing loneliness is set to rise (Aiden, 2016).

The UN identified 2021-2030 as a 'Decade of Healthy Ageing' (Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing, 2020), in which the UN member nations aspire to "bring together governments, civil society, international agencies, professionals, academia, the media and the private sector to improve the lives of older people, their families and their communities" (p. 1). This is one part of a broader set of UN initiatives focused on age and ageing, in light of growing longevity globally. As the UN identifies, contributing to positive ageing requires a collaborative approach with "[o]lder people themselves … at the centre" (Demographic Change and Healthy Ageing, 2020, p. 1), in which media has a role to play. Practitioners and scholars in media and communications must take this opportunity to listen to and imagine with the needs, desires, and possibilities offered by these new age explorers. For the first time, people in the oldest cohorts have a lifetime of radio listening as part of their everyday experience. There are possibilities and imperatives to be found in these concurrent rises in age and experiences of loneliness present for radio, an ultimately all media.

Perhaps, since it is an inherently relative term, there is little global consensus on what constitutes an older person. "Being older, elderly, or senior apparently is relative to the contexts of observation" (Naab & Schwarzenegger, 2017, p. 94); age is relative to the context, as well as the population. For many years, scholarship on ageing focused on the idea of life stages, pioneered by Erikson and Erikson, who proposed a sequence of eight (later nine) developmental stages, from infancy to adulthood (see for example, Erikson, 1982; Erikson & Erikson, 1998). More recently, social gerontologists think of a lifetime as continuum, or a life course (see for example, Green, 2010; Hunt, 2005). The life course model is less about psychological or psychosocial maturity, and more about the common thread of oneself, running throughout a lifetime. As Wright-St. Clair (2008) wrote, "for the most part, the 'being'

of being aged is hidden amidst the carrying on with things. Being aged primordially exists in the shadows of 'going-along' with how things are and with what is yet to come" (p. 225). We become and remain ourselves, continually, over the course of a lifetime.

Regardless of which sociological framework we draw on to understand ageing, there is a notion that someone becomes 'older' somewhere in their 60s. The UN Day of Older People celebrates those over 60, but elsewhere the UN uses the figure of 65 to denote older persons; others argue that it is no longer reasonable to consider 65 'old' (see for example, Dychtwald & Flower, 1990). Roebuck (1979) charted the evolution of the idea of 'old age' through its use in modern English, finding that, as now, it has long been linked to ideas about economic activity. Overall (2003) said it is the economic activity status which continues to give 65 its legitimacy as a marker for the entry point to old age, writing that "sixty-five [sic] should be treated as an important marker of old age… at that point in life many people begin, or are expected to begin, a new life phase distinct from their earlier working lives" (p. 20). Russell Hochschild (1973) wrote that "the old are judged, and judge themselves, against the standards set by those who work. Like housewives, the old find themselves in a society in which money determines value. Yet they, as a group, remain outside the money economy" (p. xii). She goes on to say, however, that

> It is possible to have a society in which unpaid activities are genuinely honored [sic], because they are useful… But it is precisely in a society such as ours with a value system which honors [sic] what is systematically withheld from old people that the status of the old declines precipitously. (pp. xii--xiii)

Shackling this notion of a life phase so closely with economic activity and participation is not the same requirement placed on other age groups and seems a curious requirement to impose here.

Age in Aotearoa New Zealand

According to Hayman et al. (2012), "[t]hose in the oldest ages are the fastest growing population group in Aotearoa New Zealand" (p. 1). There is a significant longitudinal study underway in Aotearoa New Zealand focused on Māori (aged 80 to 90 years) and non-Māori (aged 85 years) people, living in the Bay of Plenty, an area on the East coast of the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. This study, Life and Living in Advanced Age: a cohort study in New Zealand (LiLACS NZ), is collecting data on a wide range of measures relating to health and lifestyle. At the outset, the study identified that "20% of those aged 85 and over are in residential care" (Hayman et al., 2012, p. 2) and that there was a lack of research into the health benefits of social relationships among older adults in Aotearoa New Zealand. LiLACS takes up the question of health and social relationships and so far has produced one report on this data. They found that the majority (82%) of people in the study had someone they could

rely on for emotional support: For men, this was typically a spouse, and for women it was most often a daughter (Kerse, 2014). People living alone were less likely to have this emotional support, and Māori were more likely to report insufficient emotional support than non-Māori (Kerse, 2014).

In addition to this ongoing research, there are two strategic documents significant to ageing in Aotearoa New Zealand: *Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034* (The Office for Seniors, 2019) and the *Healthy Ageing Strategy* 2016 (Associate Minister for Health, 2016). The purpose of *Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034* is to "drive action to ensure that all New Zealanders recognise older people's potential [and create] opportunities for everyone to participate, contribute and be valued as they age" (The Office for Seniors, 2019, p. 18). At present, it will be difficult to do that in any measurable way in relation to radio broadcasting. Older people in Aotearoa New Zealand are not reflected as listeners, and are not a protected group in the RNZ charter (Radio New Zealand Amendment Act 2016, 2016) or in the relevant section of the Broadcasting Act 1989 which mandates the Broadcasting Commission to produce content for a range of minority groups, including women and children (Broadcasting Act 1989, 1989).

Age and radio listening

Activist and writer Ashton Applewhite (2019) wrote "Human variability makes chronological age an increasingly unreliable benchmark" (p. 46), and it is in this spirit that it is valuable to demystify the listening habits, preferences, and possibilities of older listeners. With respect to radio listening specifically, regardless of the precise number at which it happens, there is, undeniably, a shift in the way the industry views listeners after a certain age: At some point in our later life, listeners lose definition, as in the demographic breakdown and reported listening figures. In Aotearoa New Zealand, publicly available listener data report on listeners in age groups from 10 to 74 years in various, sometimes over-lapping age brackets (GfK, 2019). Listeners over the age of 74 are unreported entirely (GfK, 2022). For comparison, consider the data reported in Australia and the UK. In Australia, the reported increments through adulthood vary, with some brackets spanning 14 years, but those aged 65 and over are reported as a single group (GfK, 2020). What little listener data are publicly available in from the UK present listeners in groups from 15-24, 25-34, 35-54 and 55+ years (RAJAR, 2020). These reports could suggest that an older listener occupies the very narrow space between 65 and 74, after which all listening ceases. What these reported figures demonstrate is not necessarily at what age a listener becomes an older listener, but at what age a listener becomes *personae non gratae*, loses their value according to those collating, commissioning, or consulting listener data. Listeners go from the high definition of youth and middle age to an indistinct mass or not at all.

It seems that, in general discourse, it is our relationship to the economy, rather than any biological or physiological marker, which delineates older people, and requirement to consume or to demonstrate the potential to do so, which also defines status or worth as an audience. This constant return to the economic imperative is, perhaps, not surprising, but as with anything so ubiquitous, deserves an examination from time to time to ensure its ubiquity benefits rather than harms. Older people are defined as such on the basis of their economic activity or lack thereof. Listeners are considered 'passive' or 'lacking opportunities for growth' (MacAlister, 2020) as an audience based on age. If radio understands listeners primarily as economic units, then economically inactive older people are lacking as an audience which can be commodified and sold. Here we return to a tension between the needs of the people, and the needs of private enterprise: Nobody needs to be commodified; everybody needs connection. Radio can do both. Public broadcasters appear to operate outside this paradigm of listener commodification, but they report in the same way, against the same measures, that they may be compared and compare themselves against the same measures as commercial outlets. Structurally, they are construed as existing outside this consumptive model but they employ the same measures none-the-less. For older people to be assured of having the connective power of radio technology made available to them, if they are non-economic units, there needs to be some other incentive to do so. If it is accurate that radio might constitute company, the potential for alleviating experiences of loneliness might be just such an incentive as needed.

Structure of this thesis

This thesis is presented in nine chapters, moving from setting up the study (chapters 1-3), conducting the study (chapter 4), presenting and analysing the data (chapters 5-8) and reflecting on the study (chapter 9).

Chapter 1 – Introduction aims to give some background to the broad areas of study under consideration in the thesis: radio listening, loneliness, and older people. This chapter provides some discussion of those terms, and looks at their place in the present 21st century, pandemic discourse by offering historical notes and present day context. This research sits at a nexus of three rich areas of social life and academic interest. This introduction will orient readers to the social discourse in each area, as it relates to the others, and as it relates to this specific enquiry. Having read this introduction, the reader should have sufficient background in each of these areas to engage fully with the literature review which follows, regardless of their own areas of expertise.

Chapter 2 – The literature review will traverse the academic terrain in which the path of this research was sketched out. This review is focused on three key areas: radio listening,

loneliness, and older people. The review is intentionally narrow and focused on what led to this research design. This approach is in keeping with the tenets of grounded theory methodology, in which the researcher is encouraged to ensure they are able to let theoretical inferences be led by the data themselves, and not imposed thereon by ideas introduced from elsewhere. The literature review chapter itself expands on this discussion and the methodological underpinnings of this approach are explored in detail in Chapter 3 – Methodology.

Chapter 3 – Methodology explores questions of my ontology and epistemology and lays out why grounded theory is an appropriate methodological choice for this work. This chapter includes a detailed account of the methodology itself, its genesis and development, and a discussion of which of these developments are relevant to this work. As is necessary in constructivist grounded theory, I am clear about my own philosophical position and influences. Chapter 3 is, in many ways, about me and how I, the researcher, influence, complicate, and complement this research. You will learn that I am a multi-truth, feminist, constructivist, radio listener/broadcaster/producer, communications professional, community volunteer, and mother. I will unpack how these aspects of my identity and experience brought me to and influenced my work on this research. Grounded theory requires this exposition in order that the researcher can clearly identify the interplay between themselves and the research.

What follows is Chapter 4 – Methods. Grounded theory is often referred to as a theory/methods package, and this chapter delves into how the theory translates to practice. It includes a discussion of the ethical considerations in undertaking this research, with specific reference to engagement with the Mātauranga Māori Committee which improved the study significantly. Chapter 4 also considers the practicalities of my decision to include photography in this research, including how photographic data were created and analysed. This is also where the implications of many of my methodological decisions can be seen in practice. For instance, acknowledging a commitment to co-constructing data nearly always meant being willing and able to be a guest in the homes of study participants. Importantly, Chapter 4 introduces the study participants themselves, without specific reference to their listening identities. Chapter 4 also details how I applied the analysis techniques of grounded theory to the study data, including the use of memos, constant comparative analysis, and various rounds of coding and re-coding text and visual data.

Chapters 5–8 begin with their own guide, An Introduction to the Data and Findings. This introduction outlines how the chapters are structured and includes a guide to the notation used in those chapters to present data and denote different codes. At this stage, the theory is

presented in full, in text, and diagrammatic form. Each element of these descriptions is explored and established in the chapters which follow.

Chapter 5 – Early Analysis presents an overview of how initial, in vivo, and focused codes were used to form categories and ends with the presentation of a core category: Identity. Chapter 6 – Listening and Identity looks in detail at how I came to appreciate the centrality of identity to the study of radio listening for company among older listeners. It goes on to explore what it means to put identity at the core of this data, and how this is understood in the context of time, another significant category in this data. Chapter 7 – Exploring Within Limits returns to the categories of time, space, and taste with reference to the core category of identity. This chapter is an examination of the interplay between the core categories and the sub-categories. Through this chapter, we understand that taste, time, and space provide boundaries to identity work undertaken as part of a listening practice. To this point in the thesis, I have outlined the process of identity work supported by participants' listening practices. Chapter 8 – Listening for Context and Reflection demonstrates how those identity work processes enable another process, integral to the experience of listening as company: Seeing a self in context and seeing a self reflected. Having a clear sense of self enabled participants to hear that self reflected and contextualised through their listening practices. In this way, they experienced listening as company.

Chapter 9 – Discussion and Conclusion puts these findings in the context of existing ideas and research into listening, loneliness, and older people. In this chapter, it becomes clear that this work has something to contribute in multiple fields, including loneliness and radio scholarship and practice. The thesis concludes that, though limited in many ways, this study suggests more avenues for research in the area of media, identity, and community. That research could follow any of many avenues, but it would be of particular interest to consider the community-building potential of radio listening, and the media consumption habits and practices of all generations as they relate to identity, community, and loneliness.

A note on place and language

This research is undertaken in Aotearoa New Zealand, a democratic nation of around 5 million inhabitants in the Pacific. More than 70% of people in Aotearoa New Zealand today are of European descent and just over 16% are Māori (*Ethnic Profile*, 2018). Aotearoa New Zealand is also home to people hailing from Asia (15.1%), other Pacific nations (8.1%), and the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa (1.5%) (*Ethnic Profile*, 2018). More than 25% of people living in Aotearoa New Zealand today were born overseas (*Ethnic Profile*, 2018).

These islands were visited by Europeans throughout the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries and were colonised by British settlers in the 1800s. This colonisation was at the expense of the existing

inhabitants, Māori, who had made their home here for many, many generations previously. Among the nation's founding documents are treaty documents signed by Māori and their colonisers. The substance of Aotearoa New Zealand's treaty remains the subject of political, social, legal, and scholarly debate today. For the purposes of this thesis, however, it is relevant to point out that, in accordance with modern, international doctrine, the presiding document is *Te Tiriti o Waitaingi*, the Treaty of Waitangi. This document was signed by a number of Māori leaders, though not all of them, throughout Aotearoa New Zealand in 1840. According to this document, Māori never ceded sovereignty of their lands and maintain *mana whenua*, the territorial rights and authority over the land (Moorfield, n.d.).

The name of this country is the subject of an ongoing national conversation. Locally and internationally, the official name for these islands is New Zealand. As a feminist and a scholar, I consider it my duty to challenge this official position. As an immigrant and guest of *tangata whenua*, local indigenous people, I consider it my privilege to use the name by which these first inhabitants refer to the islands, Aotearoa. As such, throughout the thesis, I will refer to the country as Aotearoa New Zealand. I am aware that it is cumbersome: Perhaps it could do without the anglicised Dutch. Aotearoa New Zealand conveys a sense of the place, both in terms of the histories it represents and the point the nation has reached in the post-colonial, de-colonising discourse.

There are three official languages in Aotearoa New Zealand: New Zealand Sign Language, English, and *te reo Māori*. The English spoken here is peppered with words of *te reo Māori*, and you will come across some of these expressions in this thesis. These are rendered in italics with translations where appropriate. Two words in particular, Māori and Pākehā, Indigenous and New Zealanders of European descent, appear with a macron throughout. Though ā is not part of the English alphabet, this is the most common rendering of the words in use in written English in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It is true that, were I writing this thesis elsewhere, I may not include a section such as this, explaining the place and form of the nation in which I worked. It is also true, however, that the geopolitics of our time mean that, while Aotearoa New Zealand is a large Pacific nation, and the Pacific itself is geographically significant, both are politically small. Some of the nuance of this research is particular to the place in which it was undertaken, the frequent reference to childhoods spent on farms, for instance, or the idea that I would refer to two ethical bodies within the same university (see Chapter 4). As such, I considered it better to offer an explanation myself than rely on or assume knowledge on the part of the reader. There is much more to this place than I have rendered here, but these points of reference may be of some use for context.

Summary – Outlining an area for research

Radio is a dynamic, evolving technology which has dramatically changed life on Earth in the last 100 years, and continues to do so. From its earliest applications between land and sea, to its present applications in Bluetooth and wi-fi, the technology that is radio has been put to use connecting people over distance to great effect. Against a backdrop of innovation and development in this entirely connective technology, people die of loneliness. People are living longer; ideas about age and ageing are changing. People in the oldest ages are consistently, globally, at increased risk of loneliness. Propelling this enquiry is my conviction that the technology currently available, and arguably that yet to be developed, can better serve to connect people if we understand how some people are already achieving that. This research is concerned not with innovations in signal processing or new audio formats; it is focused on the intimate, daily connections listeners make with their radio such that it becomes company because by understanding how that works, we might learn from these listener-pioneers and replicate their success.

Different philosophies and different academic disciplines will describe and define loneliness in a myriad ways. All distinguish it from isolation, but acknowledge the interplay between the two states. The risks associated with loneliness include risks to health and risks to democracy. For the purposes of this study, it is sufficient to agree that loneliness is a feeling, subjective but universally unpleasant, that can arise in company or solitude, with no single attributable cause. There are measurable, detrimental health outcomes correlated to experiences of loneliness; people die of loneliness. In Aotearoa New Zealand, people in the oldest ages are at increased risk of loneliness. Listeners and radio scholars alike know that people commonly describe the experience of listening as company. Most people in Aotearoa New Zealand listen to the radio every week (GfK, 2022), but very little is known about the radio listening habits, practices, and preferences of older people in Aotearoa New Zealand. This research looks at the intersection of these facts, it wants to understand how it is that radio listening provides a sense of company to some people. While in no way a panacea, radio has an opportunity, and perhaps in the case of public and community radio, a duty, to use the resources it has to address this entirely preventable social malaise.

Considering the nation building aspirations of early broadcast administrators around the world, perhaps we can reflect on Aotearoa New Zealand's broadcasting tug of war, between regulation and marketisation, commerce and society, in the context of the nation's ongoing process of becoming. For instance, between 2015 and 2016 the nation held a referendum on their flag ('Flag Referenda', n.d.). Another major identity marker is the nation's name. As is reflected in this thesis itself, there is ongoing discussion about the name of the country

(McClure, 2021; Tahau Jobe, 2019): ‘Aotearoa’ is a te reo Māori name for the North Island, now commonly used to refer to both islands (Moorfield, n.d.); ‘New Zealand’ is so called thanks to a 15th century Dutch cartographer in the employ of the Dutch East India Company (McKinnon, 2008). As with any identity building work, and perhaps especially so in a nation with a colonial history, the process of becoming is ongoing: There is no one fixed notion of the nation today, with continual shifts in demographics, global positioning and the daily fluctuations in the very ‘mood of the country’ [Den, study participant].

In the following chapters, I outline the design and execution of a study intended to explore exactly that phenomenon with radio listeners in Aotearoa New Zealand. I will consider the existing relevant literature on the topic of radio listening, loneliness, and age, and demonstrate, step by step, how I selected and applied a research methodology and method to explore the company-making process. The data I made with participants will come to life, and we will walk through it together as I highlight all the points on my way to understanding that: Radio listening creates an experience of company for older listeners by supporting a knowledge of self and an appreciation of self in context. Through radio listening, older listeners are able to challenge, comfort, extend, and affirm their self-identity within the boundaries of taste, time, and space. I will reconsider the literature, in the context of this new, explanatory theory. Ultimately, I reflect on the study, naming its limitations and making suggestions for how to apply its findings and where to take this line of enquiry next.

This research aims to provide some evidentiary basis on which to consider which aspects of modern radio broadcasting are serving us in the sense of enabling feelings of connection, and a theory of how they are doing so.

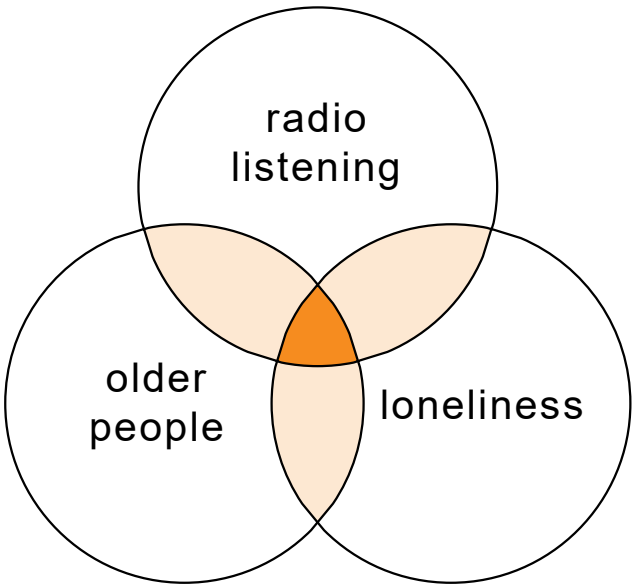
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Unlike other methodological approaches in which the place, function, and relevance of the literature review is cemented unequivocally, the literature review in grounded theory research is the subject of considerable discussion (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014; Dunne, 2014; Rieger, 2019). While Glasser and Strauss (1967) are clear that no researcher, certainly no grounded theory researcher, is *table rasa*, or a 'blank slate', the methodological underpinnings of grounded theory seek to minimize influences on data analysis beyond what the data itself can demonstrate. As Chapter 3 will elucidate, grounded theory as a means of enquiry grew up amongst and in response to a ubiquitous culture of positivist research based on the scientific method. In that research tradition, the researcher constructs a theory or hypothesis and designs and conducts an experiment with which they might confirm or disprove that hypothesis. Perhaps in an effort to distance themselves from the scientific tradition, early grounded theorists eschewed pre-reading, on the basis that that might lead the researcher to hypothesise based on that reading, rather than theorising based on the data themselves.

While this thesis is not a treatise on the constructs of modern academic practice or the strictures of commercial, neo-liberal university requirements, to say that presenting a PhD thesis devoid of a literature review would be controversial is to greatly understate the entirely formulaic structure of the degree requirements. Researchers using grounded theory today recognise the practical requirements for scholars working in academic institutions to produce a literature review, and I present this review in light of these concessions and to acknowledge the connectedness and interdependency of scholarship. Moreover, it would be arrogant and dishonest to suggest that I imagined this research topic or this specific research design without the benefit of the work of those whose labours precede and accompany my own. For grounded theorists working today, the literature review provides a basis for beginning a study and remains a living document. The literature review is part of an iterative process to which thoughts and resources are added throughout the course of the study.

At the beginning of my research journey, I intended to research radio listening and loneliness amongst older people. This literature review, therefore, is rooted in those themes: radio listening, loneliness, and older people. These are each vast and much studied areas. Rather than a digest of all research into each field, this review looks specifically to illuminate the existing knowledge and gaps within the research into the relationship between those areas, to find the space where new research could be of most value (see Figure 1).



Shading – areas covered in the literature review

Triangle – area of opportunity for research

Figure 1 – The scope of this literature review

Since this review is concerned with areas of thematic intersection, the distinctions between the sections in this chapter seem entirely manufactured. Each section opens with a focus on key concepts in each area and then illustrates how the other areas under review intersect. In truth, they could have been presented in any number of arrangements because the point is their interconnectedness. The section on radio listening will look at prominent ideas relating to both radio broadcast and listening. There is a scholarly interest in listening which has nothing to do with radio; likewise, many radio academics are not remotely concerned with listening. The intent of this review is to look at key ideas from each of these fields and see where the ideas proposed might have something to offer in designing research specifically focused on radio listening. This section also discusses broader communications theories in relation to audience/media relationships to consider how best to position new research.

The section on loneliness is intentionally narrow. It outlines: issues in current loneliness research; relevant literature on loneliness, social capital and social connection; and considers theories about the social conditions of loneliness; as well as specific research on listening and loneliness. Similarly, literature on older people is considered through the lens of media interactions and representations and loneliness specifically.

Over the course of the research design, and in the analysis of the data, the focus of the work shifted thematically. As such, what I am presenting in this chapter is a review of the literature which gave rise to this research, rather than the literature which helps to understand its findings. Literature which informed the development of the study in later stages and the ideas

and research I rely on to support my analysis and findings are referred to throughout the thesis where relevant.

Radio listening

In an effort to understand where new research looking at radio and loneliness might make a useful contribution, this review is focused on connections with, enabled, or supported by radio listening. The idea of relationships between audiences and broadcasters are supported by a robust theoretical basis (e.g., Anderson, 1983/2006; Hilmes, 2012; Horton & Wohl, 1956) and the potential for such relationships has been suggested by many scholars (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989; Ewart, 2016; Gray, 2006; Katz, 1950/2012, 2012; Larson, 1992; Mendelsohn, 1964; Shingler & Wieringa, 1998; Squier, 2003; Tacchi, 1998; Tramer & Jeffres, 1983; Turow, 1974). Despite this theoretical basis, and the thought which has gone into considering this potential, there are few studies which examine radio listening relationships in detail (Ewart, 2011; Irvine, 2015; Toepoel, 2013; Travers & Bartlett, 2011). This review will outline the theoretical basis and examine the studies into listening relationships to locate where, between the theory and the practice, new knowledge might add to our understanding of these relationships in practice.

Hot, cold, active, passive – ways of understanding radio listening

There is a wealth of scholarly debate as to whether radio is considered hot or cold (McLuhan, 1994), active or passive (Hendy, 2013; Lacey, 2013b; Peters, 2006; Putnam, 2000). Addressing the portrayal of radio as 'active' or 'passive', Hendy (2000) put forward an argument that radio listening is active in that, by virtue of being an aural medium, it activates the listener's imagination (see also Chignell, 2009). This apparently contradicts McLuhan's (1994) pronouncement about radio being a 'hot' media, that is, one focused on a single sense, providing lots of stimulus and requiring little involvement, and not designed to support a dialogue between the 'sender' and 'receiver'. By bringing their imagination to the act of listening, which according to Douglas' (2004) description seems almost involuntary in some modes, Hendy (2000) wrote that "[t]he radio listener is actively participating" (p. 118) and concluded that listeners are "co-producers of radio" (p. 145).

As a means of conceptualising a relationship between a listener and a broadcaster, programme or station, the value of such binary terminology as hot/cold, active/passive is not clear. If there exists a relationship between a listener and a broadcaster, programme or station, that relationship is developed not only through the broadcast itself, but through the act of listening. To broadcast, in the sense of sowing seeds, is only successful in fertile soil. Success rates will vary depending on the season, the weather, the crops, and the soil itself. So too, broadcasting in the sense of media: The ground must be prepared for the seeds to take root

and flourish, and this is subject to change over time. There is no reason to think that a relationship between broadcaster and listener is static, or indeed binary, moving between only two poles. Indeed, "the 'we-feeling' of radio is vague, shifting multiple" (Hendy, 2013, p. 123) and it seems unlikely to be captured in a binary description. There is a broad spectrum between crop failure and record harvest, feast and famine.

The act and practice of listening is not fixed or binary, it is subject to all manner of weather and soil conditions over which the broadcaster has limited influence. Lacey (2013) noted that "'to listen' is both a transitive and intransitive verb" (p. 7). She described a distinction between listening in and listening out, commenting "it is possible to listen without necessarily listening *to* anything, Listening can therefore be understood as being in a state of anticipation, of listening *out* for something" (Lacey, 2013b, p. 7 emphasis retained). Lacey's work is about the experience of listening as both "the sensory, embodied experience, *and* the political realm of debate and deliberation" (p. 8). Perhaps the movement between modes, as described by any of these scholars, relates to moving between being Scannell's (2000) someone and anyone, from listener to audience.

Modes of listening have, perhaps, more to offer in terms of understanding how any such act or relationship waxes, wanes, or flows over time, than terms such as active, passive, hot, or cold. Douglas (2004) wrote about three modes of listening: flat listening, which is listening for information such as dates and times; dimensional listening, which requires some work by the listener to keep track of people and places and invites creation; and associated listening, which "brings forth certain cognitive and emotional modes" (p. 34). Chion (2012), too, described three modes of listening, though these are differently conceived. Chion is writing particularly about sound within film, as a complement to the visual, but is clear that "there is always something about sound that overwhelms and surprises us no matter what – especially when we refuse to lend it our conscious attention; and thus sound interferes with our perception, affects it" (p. 53).

An alternative listening taxonomy, written without specific reference to mediated listening, identifies base, higher order, and attending behaviours (A. D. Wolvin & Coakley, 1993). There is scope for the addition of social listening (Stewart & Arnold, 2018), which takes account of mediated listening. Social listening is "a dimension of listening comprising a blend of purposes complementary to the existing appreciative, comprehensive, critical, discriminative, and therapeutic listening types" (p. 85) discussed in Wolvin and Coakley's (1993) listening taxonomy. The focus of social listening is inter-personal communication using digital social media. Stewart and Arnold (2018) considered this from both the perspective of the listener

and companies vying for the attention of listeners. They argued that social media has changed listening and these changes are under-researched.

Modes and levels of listening all describe differences in engagement with the content and all that surrounds it. Thinking about listening in terms of modes offers a framework for understanding listening as an experience through which a listener might move over time. Thinking about listening in this way allows consideration of the different levels of awareness and engagement with listening in different spaces and contexts. Thinking about listening as a fluid experience invites questions about how the same medium can have different roles not only in someone's life, but in their day or hour.

Listening relationships

The idea of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983/2006) is predicated on the idea of media technology enabling connection. Anderson (1983/2006) suggested that, in the right conditions, substantial groups of people might be "in a position to think of themselves living lives *parallel* to those of other substantial groups of people – if never meeting, yet certainly proceeding along the same trajectory" (p. 188). Principally, Anderson was writing about printed materials, imagining the "mass ceremony" (p. 35) of individuals digesting the morning or evening edition of the newspaper, notes the paradox of this shared experience taking place "in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull" (p. 35). He pointed out, however, that "each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he [sic] performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he [sic] is confident, yet of whose identity he [sic] has not the slightest notion" (Anderson, 1983/2006, p. 35). Radio might also be capable of creating such imagined communities (Hilmes, 2012), though this may or may not be desirable: Keeping media consumers "in the lair of the skull" (Anderson, 1983/2006, p. 35) keeps them in private, domestic spaces, disconnected and individualised, rather than together (Lacey, 2013; Oldenburg, 1999).

To achieve the imagined communities envisaged by Anderson (1983/2006), the groups need to be disparate and independent, with one clearly in a subordinate relationship to the other. The relationship between a broadcaster, programme, or presenter and their listeners might meet these criteria and be capable of raising this awareness of others living "parallel lives", connecting those "proceeding along the same trajectory" (Anderson, 1983/2006, p. 188). In a study of listener fan mail in the 1950s, one listener wrote, "'My mother listens to you in Boston each day and your programme gives us the pleasant illusion of being together while you are on the air'" (Katz, 1950/2012, p. 44). This demonstration of Anderson's idea is perhaps particular to these two women, predicated on their existing relationship. Regardless, it does suggest a dimension of this relationship which involves this host and this programme on this station at

this time. Not only is this listener identifying that this host on this station at this time enables this "pleasant illusion of being together" (Katz, 1950/2012, p. 44), but she communicates this back to the host, involving him again, in another way. The capacity for the broadcast to connect disparate people through their shared experience of listening is perhaps a wellspring of the sensation of the radio as a companion.

Relationships between broadcasters and listeners are considered one-to-many relationships, one outlet addressing many recipients. Scannell (2000) wrote on this relationship and asked, "To whom… do the media 'speak'? Who do they address, and how?" (p. 5). He goes on to identify two obvious communicative structures, namely "*for-anyone* structures and *for-someone* structures" (p. 5, emphasis retained). Analysing consumer experiences according to this binary could prove a useful, if blunt, tool for assessing engagement. We could consider that a listener experiences a broadcast as a 'someone' if that broadcast engages them to the point of feeling like company, or alleviating loneliness. Chignell (2009) suggested that "One of the achievements of radio since the early days has been to establish modes of address that make listeners feel engaged and welcome" (p. 65), that is, to make them feel like 'someone'. The possibility of a relationship arises if a listener understands themselves to be a 'someone', to feel included in that broadcast or audience. Perhaps they hear their views upheld or directly contradicted, or hear a song they themselves have requested, or a guest they respect or would like to converse with themselves, or a presenter reminisce about an experience they have had too. In this way, a listener might understand themselves as 'someone'.

Listening scholars write about the primacy of the speaker (Lacey, 2013b; Purdy, 1991). Purdy (1991) cited the historic fixation on rhetoric and the glorification of the mastery of language by humans but, as Lacey (2013b) pointed out, "without a listener, there would be no reason, no *calling*, to speak" (p. 166, emphasis retained). This fixation on speaking has shifted focus, from a coercive rhetoric to something more expressive, and has begun to make room for the listener in communications discourse (Purdy, 1991). This is welcome, and recognises the function of communication as two-way, as an act of exchange or trade between two or more parties. Despite this acknowledgement that communication either happens within, requires or creates a relationship, Purdy argued that this is still most often considered from the point of view of the speaker. Wolvin (2010) agreed saying the "receiver/processor has been given short shrift in the communication discipline" (p. 7). He noted that, despite the efforts of the International Listening Association, work on listening theory was drastically under-represented in the Association's journal (Wolvin & Halone, 1999).

Radio listening as community-making

It is possible that rather than inviting you in, radio might instead remind you that you are outside the "knowable community" (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p. 13). In this case, rather than providing a sense of inclusion, it might instead exacerbate a sense of isolation. Douglas (2004) addressed the possibilities of inclusion and exclusion. She wrote that, unlike newspapers, radio has a temporal element which "tied utterly diverse and unknown people together as an audience, even as subgroups of this audience resister and cast themselves against such nationalist hailings" (Douglas, 2004, p. 24). Douglas also says, however, that this raises the risk that any such mass media might reinforce a status quo and cultivate stereotypes. She argued that if radio merely reinforces societal norms which have isolated someone from their physical community, that same media is unlikely to provide an antidote to the isolation those norms support or perpetuate. Lacey (2013) identified that there are any number of ways listeners are encouraged to participate in broadcasts beyond the act of listening, be that directly by a phone in, joining a live audience, or collecting branded merchandise. Rather than promoting a sense of inclusion, she suggested that for those not present, collecting, or participating, this might promote a keen sense of exclusion.

Whether or not listening is inclusive or exclusive may be the purview of the listener (Purdy 1991). Purdy (1991) wrote of the listener that "[t]he individual's processing in the communication interaction creates interpersonal meaning which is shared to become community meaning" (p. 60). Listeners, according to Purdy, are a "primary site of meaning production" (p. 62). The individual's processing and interpretation of communication is, of course, influenced by the community in which they listen, which leads Purdy to describe listening as a "community activity" (p. 61). Listening creates a 'we' (Forester, 1980; Purdy, 1991). Purdy's (1991) position is that

> Community is what we have in common with others of our group, and having it in common makes us related. In speaking we impart and make common, in listening we interpret, share in and giver personal meaning to that commonality. By listening we share in the insight, the vision, the knowledge, compassion, growth, and understanding that is common in the community. We also help create and shape the essence of the community in the interpretive process of listening. (p. 51)

Neither of these contributions from Purdy (1991) or Wolvin (1999, 2010), consider the community-making contribution of radio listening specifically. They do, however, make a case for more theoretical contributions to listening research and do not suggest that radio listening should be excluded from such considerations.

There is a possibility that, having heard a programme, a listener might "metamorphose… into a responding and discussing audience" (Gray, 2006, p. 252) by participating in conversations

with other listeners. Gray (2006) imagined such a metamorphosis might take place in the workplace, for instance. For listeners in the present day, and particularly those not in the workplace, there is also the possibility of joining such an audience discussion using social media. Radio has always had the capacity for audience interaction (Bonini, 2014a, 2014b), and plenty of scholars have suggested that the talkback format in particular might offer surrogate companionship (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989; Ewart, 2011; Sinton, 2021; Tramer & Jeffres, 1983; Turow, 1974).

Recent studies of interactivity, engagement, and participation with media have examined the ways in which digital interactivity has affected media consumption (Bonini, 2014b; Ewart & Ames, 2016; Ferguson & Greer, 2018; Guo & Chan-Olmsted, 2015; Leung, 2018; Savage & Spence, 2014; Sinton, 2018; Spangardt et al., 2016). A study of how social networking sites, such as Facebook, were used by listeners, found social networking sites "have the potential to strengthen weaker social relationships [and] are an ideal means for radio listeners to possibly gain or strengthen relationships with the program [sic] hosts" (Savage & Spence, 2014, p. 6). Similarly, a local examination of interactivity between broadcasters and audiences, afforded by the capacity for online interactions, found "the use of Web 2.0 technology on RNZ National is shaping a new relationship paradigm between the broadcaster and its audience" (Sinton, 2018, p. 73).

An Australian study of audience participation in talkback found that despite calling being the preferred method of contacting talkback programmes, "e-mail [sic] and SMS provided a valuable, and for some a preferred, alternative, to making public comment about an issue" (Ewart & Ames, 2016, p. 103). This study involved focus groups of audience members of 12 talkback radio programmes. For people who might be excluded from participating by phone call, either physically, technically, or because of the stigma associated with an admission of loneliness, such alternative means of participating as those examined in these studies may provide new means of participation for lonely audience members. The research suggested, however, that any significant shift in participation methods for talkback could "radically change the nature of talkback" (Ewart & Ames, 2016, p. 103).

There is some discussion about what constitutes participation when it comes to listening. Carpentier (2015) attempted to differentiate between access, interaction, and participation. He wrote "the concept of participation has remained vague because of its frequent and diverse usages and it intrinsically political nature, which renders it difficult to use in an academic context" (p. 8). Carpentier concluded that the distinction is important because the defining component of participation is power. To misunderstand or obfuscate the meaning of participation allows a broad spectrum of activities to be labelled as participation. If the

majority of these are minimalist, conferring the least power on the audience, we can be allowed to think that rates or participation are high, even though there is very little transfer or sharing of power taking place. This is of particular relevance to older listeners who are sometimes said to be participating through listening. Nimrod (2017) studied the potential for displacement of traditional media by new or digital media. He found that "older Internet users are significantly more inclined to use traditional mass media than new social media and prefer synchronous to asynchronous mass media" (p. 233), but also noted that this audience is not homogenous, and that uses of new, asynchronous media varied amongst the group. The means of engagement with traditional media might be shifting to incorporate or rely on new and social media, but this might not be reflected in all audiences. Proclaiming that participation in media is growing online obfuscates the reality of a lack of power shifting, and belies a lack of participation by older audiences.

Listening, space, and community

Sound contributes to a sense of place whether it is listened to or not. Tacchi conducted an ethnographic study into the radio listening and domestic soundscapes of 50 people in the SouthWest of England in the 1990s. As part of that work, she described the way radio could fill space regardless of, or without, co-creation from a listener (Tacchi, 1998). Radio can create "an environment that is nevertheless social and thus reassuring, but demands nothing" (Tacchi, 1998, p. 32), perhaps not even a listener. She writes that, in the home where it is most often heard, "radio sound… is interwoven into the larger fabric of everyday life, to the extent that it is often hardly thought about consciously at all" (Tacchi, 1998, p. 28). This might extend to leaving the radio on when the house is unoccupied so that there is a soundscape to arrive home to (Irvine, 2015). This is the idea of dailiness, or of listening as a habit or practice undertaken regularly, consciously, or, as she suggested, unconsciously.

Dailiness, first described by Scannell (1996), refers to the way media use forms part of people's daily routines. This habitual listening can become embodied (Blaakilde, 2018), so intrinsic as to go almost unnoticed. In 2015, Irvine undertook qualitative research on behalf of Wavelength, a UK charity which donates media technology (TVs, radios, and tablets) to people who are vulnerably housed. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with individual recipients of the items, as well as with people who managed shared accommodation facilities who had been beneficiaries of the charity. Interestingly, "subjective feelings of loneliness were alleviated through media technologies' ability to provide a sense of company and companionship, to occupy and distract the mind from dwelling on negative thoughts, and to provide a sense of connection to the outside world" (Irvine, 2015, p. 91).

There was no one stand-out programme, or programme type, that Irvine (2015) found to be more successful in alleviating loneliness. In one group setting, the radio was set to a music station and played loudly throughout the day (Irvine, 2015), and other programme types were mentioned with specific relation to their ability to facilitate social connection. She noted some study participants who had called talk-back radio, and one caller for whom this led to an on-air conversation with another caller, and several off-air conversations with them thereafter.

Irvine (2015) found that

> Arguments against media technology as a response to loneliness and social isolation arise from a negative image of an older person sitting alone all day in front of a TV set with no other human contact. However, if the alternative for that person would be sitting all day at home with no form of stimulation at all, there is a positive argument for providing access to the 'companionship' of radio, television or tablet computers at least as a first step to greater social reintegration. (p. 93)

The risk of loneliness associated with older people living alone varies depending on a variety of factors (Dykstra, 2009), including age, location, and the circumstances which lead to living alone (de Jong Gierveld et al., 2006). Wilkinson (2014) looked specifically at how "singleness pose[s] a challenge to heteronormative conceptualizations of the life course and household formation" (p. 2542). Wilkinson's work considers that "the exclusion of the single is one of the key omissions in the work of those interested in challenging geographies of exclusion and inequality" (p. 2452). Considering loneliness as exclusion, it is of interest to explore the ways in which domestic geographies exacerbate loneliness for those dwelling alone, and the potential for sound to exacerbate or alleviate these experiences within domestic spaces.

The idea of community-making within domestic spaces is necessarily mediated: community is public; the domestic is private. In a sense, radio translates between public and private. In this way, it is possible to think of radio as a 'third place'. Accordingly, home is the first place, work is the second place. These are both small places which confine individuals to the performance of certain roles. These places are "adequate neither to the development of community nor to the broadening of the individual" (Oldenburg, 2013, p. 8). For that, people need a third place in which "people from a diversity of backgrounds combine to expand one another's understanding of the world and, out of the bonds formed there, community takes root" (Oldenburg, 2013, p. 8). The idea of third places was pioneered by Oldenberg (1999), though he explicitly rejected the idea of media, writing that "the piped-in voices of radio and television encourage people to stay in their homes… The media is geared to isolated consumers while isolating them all the more" (p. 77). This position is problematic, both in terms of changes in the media landscape since Oldenburg wrote, and in considering people with limited access to community beyond the domestic. He does, however, write of their specific value to older

people, pointing out the possibility they offer for exchange between "retired people… and those still working" (Oldenberg, 1999, p. xxi). He says that the relationships fostered in such places act as mutual aid societies: "In the convivial atmosphere of third places, people get to know one another and to like one another and then to take care for one another" (Oldenberg, 1999, p. xxi). This is similar to the ways community has been shown to arise and function in other groups of older people (see for example, Hochschild, 1973).

Loneliness

There is an almost unwieldy volume of scholarly, policy, and popular writing on loneliness. Rather than a digest of this vast literature, what follows is a review of the literature which shaped this enquiry, specifically research focused on loneliness amongst older people. Reviewing literature on loneliness in later life revealed that much research is conducted on and with older people on the consequences of loneliness (Courtin & Knapp, 2017; Crewdson, 2016) and interventions intended to alleviate that loneliness (Gardiner et al., 2018; Hagan et al., 2014; O'Rourke et al., 2018). Relatively little research is focussed on older people's experiences of company (see Kitzmüller et al., 2018). Thanks to this literature, and to the self-reflection invited by grounded theory methodology, the focus and shape of my research evolved, shifting focus from loneliness to company. (This shift is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.) Shifting to focus on a theory relating to experiences not of loneliness but of company in later life is supported by the literature on loneliness itself.

Loneliness, isolation, and connectedness

The academic literature looking across loneliness interventions considers and attempts to distinguish itself based on a range of variables: whether interventions have been one-on-one or group-based; whether participants lived independently or in care; the length and timings of the interventions; and, sometimes, the content of the interventions (Cohen-Mansfield & Perach, 2015). None of these conclusively identify any attributes common to a range of interventions which will ensure their success or otherwise universally, or even generally. In the report 'Promising Approaches' for Age UK, Jopling (2015) directly addressed this inconclusive discussion of the details of individual studies, saying:

> Most evaluations of loneliness interventions have looked at individual services, groups or activities and have sought to assess whether attending, or being served by, these leads to a reduction in loneliness. This has created a debate to-and-fro among experts about whether social clubs are more effective than befriending schemes, or robot dogs more effective than walking groups. (p. 9)

According to Jopling's (2015) analysis, there is greater value in looking at broader challenges and opportunities focussed on "reaching lonely individuals… Understanding the nature of an

individual's loneliness and developing a personalised response [and] supporting lonely individuals to access appropriate services" (p. 9). It is not that lonely people want for a lunch club or a community garden in particular, though either may prove invaluable to someone. Addressing the loneliness of any one individual requires an acknowledgement of their self and an appropriate response to the needs of that individual.

The value of pursuing research into individual-focussed interventions, however personalised, may be limited. O'Rourke et al. (2018) reviewed the literature on literature relating to interventions aimed at addressing loneliness and social connectedness among older adults. Ultimately, they called for future research to focus on interventions which target social connectedness rather than social contact, loneliness rather than isolation, and argued for research on and theories relating to interventions which will increase social capital. Understood as "networks of secondary association, high levels of interpersonal trust and norms of mutual aid and reciprocity" (Lochner et al., 1999, p. 260), social capital enables societies to work collectively. Social capital is distinct from the social networks and support associated with individuals (Lochner et al., 1999); social capital is an "ecological characteristic" (p. 260), greater than the sum of its parts, the "collective dimension of society external to the individual" (Lochner et al., 1999, p. 260). Rising rates of loneliness suggest the need to look beyond the individual to the collective. Considering social isolation and loneliness in relation to low social capital provides a lens through which to do that.

A counterpoint to the suggestion to shift the focus of interventions from isolation to loneliness comes from scholars such as Granovetter (1973) working on 'weak ties' or Blau and Fingerman (2009) working on 'consequential strangers'. Granovetter was interested in how people form and access networks and, in particular, how these impact employment prospects; though he acknowledged that "even acquaintances who do not serve this function for us may be our main fount of sociability and help us define our own identity as well as making the texture of daily life more pleasurable" (p. 14). The idea that informal, casual social connections matter to our social lives has been foregrounded most recently by their obliteration during pandemic restrictions. Work by Blau and Fingerman considers these types of relationships more broadly. Their focus is on face-to-face interactions, citing relationships such as that with a barista, who knows you on your lunch break, and whom you know on their shift. Your relationship might be limited to this interaction, but within those boundaries it is enjoyable, necessary, and useful. According the Blau and Fingerman, these relationships "are more likely to challenge our worldview and to add novelty, dimension, and colour to our lives, and to take us 'beyond the familiar'" (p. xix). If we consider this in a radio context, we might circle back to Horton and

Wohl (1956), creating intimacy at a distance with someone we only know in the context of their work, and for whom we may be just one of many.

Putnam's (2000) analysis of the breakdown in communities and connectedness is focused on organised groups or 'civil society'. His book, *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000), and other scholarship (Putnam, 1993, 1995b, 1995a), is concerned with civil society and its contribution to democracy, social capital, and social life. His initial ideas about assessing engagement in civic life relate to committee membership and group formation. He writes about the individualising traits of mass media and technology in the home, privatised where once it might have been public; a film viewed at home alone on television rather than on screen in an audience at the cinema; a lecture broadcast on radio rather than attended in person. He contrasts time spent on committees, volunteering, or walking the dog with time spent watching television, for instance. He wrote that "just as television privatizes [sic] our leisure time, it also privatizes or civic activity, dampening our interactions with one another even more than it dampens our individual political activities" (Putnam, 2000, p. 229). He makes no comparisons with radio listening, but his message is clear: Mass media consumption erodes social life and social capital (Putnam, 2000).

Throughout his work, Putnam (2000) ties this lack of social connectedness to rising rates of suicide and depression, as we might expect, but he also looks at the ramifications of a loss of social connectedness with a wider lens, taking in democracy, economics, and safety. According to Putnam (1995a), in some societies the demise of civil society can engender "a widespread tendency toward passive reliance on the state" (64). Putnam (1995a) found that "the norms and networks of civic engagement also powerfully affect the performance of representative government" (p. 65). The connections between citizens and they ways they organise themselves, or not, impact both individuals and governments.

The relationships between social connectedness, democracy, and the state, discussed by Putnam in the 1990s and 2000, are taken up by Hertz (2020) in her book, *The Lonely Century*. Hertz pointed to a correlation between the rise of neo-liberalism and rising rates of loneliness. She wrote that neo-liberalism was never just an economic policy, but a programme of cultural change aimed, as Margaret Thatcher said, at "'the heart and soul'" (Hertz, 2020, p. 13). She wrote of life in market-driven, neo-liberal states that "It's lonely to feel uncared for, invisible and powerless" (Hertz, 2020, p. 13). Neo-liberal economic policy "fundamentally changed how we saw each other and the obligations to each other that we felt" (Hertz, 2020, p. 13). Neo-liberalism shifted our relationships from collaborative to competitive, from citizens to consumers, creating a society of "people who are not only too busy to be there for our neighbours, but don't even know our neighbours' names" (Hertz, 2020, p. 14). Hertz also

reminds us that, beyond the health implications of loneliness, and the generally unpleasant nature of the experience, loneliness is a threat to democracy in another significant way: Loneliness is an invitation to totalitarianism. In her unparalleled work on totalitarianism, Arendt (1958), writing long before the advent of neo-liberal economic policies, stated that

> While isolation concerns only the political realm of life, loneliness concerns human life as a whole. Totalitarian government, like all tyrannies, certainly could not exist without destroying the public realm of life, that is, without destroying, by isolating men [sic], their political capacities. But totalitarian domination as a form of government is new in that it is not content with this isolation and destroys private life as well. It bases itself on loneliness, on the experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of man [sic]. (p. 475)

Certainly our individual bodies suffer from loneliness. That is not in dispute. Individual lives are cut short by the physiological effects of loneliness. Societies die of totalitarianism, and it is not a stretch to connect these two causes of death. There is a pressing need to alleviate suffering in lonely individuals. There is also a pressing need to alleviate suffering in lonely societies.

Intimacy – mediated and at a distance

The sense that radio might help alleviate loneliness arises from this cross over: Loneliness is a want for intimacy (de Jong Gierveld et al., 2006; de Jong Gierveld & van Tilburg, 2010); radio is known as an intimate medium (Douglas, 2004; Hendy, 2013; Loviglio, 2005). The intimacy offered by radio can be described as tactile or physical, in the sense of the device, but, more generally, the impression of the radio as intimate arises from the mode of address and the place of reception: Listeners are addressed directly, in their homes. This intimacy is created over sometimes vast distances. Policarpo (2016) studied the intimacy in friendships conducted over long distances. She found that in all cases in her study, intimacy in the relationship had developed before the introduction of distance, but that it was possible to maintain a sense of intimacy despite conducting the friendship at a distance for many years.

Thompson (1995) wrote about the capacity for intimacy in mediated relationships. He commented that face-to-face relationships are based on a reciprocity, in that they "involve a two-way flow of actions and utterances, of gains and losses, of rights and obligations" (Thompson, 1995, p. 208), noting, of course, that reciprocity and equality are not the same, or mutually assured. Often enough, intimate face-to-face relationships are asymmetrical. Mediated forms of communication enable new kinds of intimate relationships, such as those conducted by telephone, for instance, which might be reciprocal, but which lack some features typically associated with sharing space. Other forms of mediated, non-reciprocal relationships might be intimate, despite being stretched across time and space, such as the relationship "between fan and star" (Thompson, 1995, p. 208). This type of relationship, Thompson says,

"can be exhilarating, precisely because it is freed from the reciprocal obligations characteristic of face-to-face interaction" (p. 208).

Being in the kind of reciprocal, mediated relationship Thompson (1995) describes, freed from the obligations of face-to-face interaction, allows each party to approach the relationship in self-serving ways: Without having to reciprocate, a radio listener can take what they like from the relationship, so long as it serves them in the moment, exploring or affirming their own sense of identity, for instance, without needing to do the same for the other party. Being freed from reciprocity is empowering for listeners in this relationship: They can turn down, or turn off, or participate, or not, entirely as it suits their needs, without sacrificing the intimacy built up in the relationship.

Loneliness and listening

Horton and Wohl (1956) were among the first to articulate and offer a means to understand the relationship of a 'viewer' to the new mass media, in which they included radio: They "give the illusion of [a] face-to-face relationship with the performer. The conditions of response to the performer are analogous to those in a primary group" (Horton & Wohl, 1956, p. 215). This idea is fundamental in even considering the notion of media as company because those who present on the radio "are permanent companions for many people during their everyday lives" (Spangardt et al., 2016, p. 68). If Anderson (1983/2006) gave us a means to conceive of how listeners make relationships with one another, Horton and Wohl (1956) gave us a means to conceive of how listeners make relationships with presenters, and through them programmes and broadcasters.

In 2011, Travers and Bartlett conducted research on older people and radio listening in Brisbane, Australia. Participants listened to a programme made specifically for the study by a local station, kept a listening diary, and were measured against various scales for loneliness, social isolation, depression, quality of life, Alzheimer's disease, among others. The study confirmed that music can have a positive effect on older people's quality of life, but it did not find that listening to the programming specially designed for the study helped participants avoid feelings of social isolation and loneliness.

Arguably, Travers and Bartlett's study (2011) was a study of lonely people asked to listen to the radio, rather than a study of radio listeners. Participants were recruited to the study not on the basis of their listening habits, preferences, histories, or experiences, rather the inclusion criteria for the study were that participants be willing to listen to the specified programme for an hour each day for three months. Participants were supplied with a radio on which to listen to the programme for the purposes of the study. Travers and Bartlett's study *required* listening. Typically, broadcasters, stations, programmes, and presenters invite listening and

autonomous individual listeners make a choice, each moment, to listen or not. “When we let them into our homes it isn’t because they’ve forced their way in. They don’t *demand* consumption – or indeed any response at all” (Hendy, 2013, p. 123). The difference speaks to the nature of the relationship. Travers and Bartlett’s study does not account for the agency of listeners to listen or the effects of a listening habit developed over time. It is difficult to evaluate how these attributes might contribute to the effects of radio listening on loneliness.

Another Australian study looked at the therapeutic role of talk-back radio in Australia (Ewart, 2011). This qualitative study used discussion groups with audiences of specific programmes, including commercial and non-commercial formats. Ewart (2011) found that “some Australian talkback radio program audiences revealed it provides a lifeline and connection to society that these audience members valued” (p. 231). Participants in Ewart’s study were long-time radio listeners. She found that for participants in this study, talk-back had “transcended symbolism bringing into existence a space in which communities of listeners and callers entered and engaged with each other through conversation or by listening” (p. 242). Ewart wrote that two key themes emerged from the study with regard to talk-back’s contribution to well-being: companionship and therapy.

Research into successful interventions for alleviating loneliness suggests that having to ‘out’ oneself as lonely is a barrier to seeking help (Griffin, 2010). Perhaps the anonymity of the radio is sufficient to entice lonely listeners to reach out, to ‘out’ themselves as an audience member and participate in the programme, but perhaps not. Griffin (2010) suggested the stigma associated with admissions of loneliness is “because our society prides itself on self-reliance” (p. 3) and this might extend to making these admissions even to ourselves. In that case, participating in as an audience member in a programme designed for lonely listeners might not be desirable or achievable.

Loneliness, age, and media

Situating experiences of loneliness in wider structural contexts was suggested by Durkheim (1951) in his work on suicide. These ideas about social structures and loneliness have developed, particularly via attachment theory and social network theory (Granovetter, 1973), and, from these beginnings, form the basis of the work by Berkman et al. (2000). The nexus of ideas from Durkheim, along with attachment theory and network theory, are presented by Berkman et al. as a conceptual model of how social networks impact health. Berkman et al. described the point at which network theory coincides with Durkheimian ideas about loneliness and the nature of society as “the view that the structural arrangement of social institutions shapes the resources available to the individual and hence that person’s behavioral [sic] and emotional responses” (p. 845). Viewing loneliness on an individual level fails to

recognise what Berkman et al. would term the 'upstream forces', stemming from the macro, social-structural conditions.

For Berkman et al. (2000), the macro-social conditions include: cultural factors, such as social cohesion and competition/co-operation; socioeconomic factors, such as relations of production and discrimination; politics, such as public policy and differential political enfranchisement/participation; and social change, such as urbanisation. The macro-social landscape of older people has changed significantly over the past century by virtue of increasing lifespan and changes to many of the factors in Berkman et al.'s model. Previously, older people might have benefited from the idea that 'a son is a son until he takes a wife; a daughter is a daughter all of her life' (Bernard et al., 2001; Phillips et al., 2000). Indeed, feminism-under-capitalism means that 'daughters', 'leaning-in' to income-generation, have necessarily bid farewell to their parents, in pursuit not of wealth but financial survival (see for example, Browne & Braun, 2008). This is a global phenomenon. Loneliness among the elderly proliferates because the physical and emotional work of caring, that is socially including older people, work which was formerly the preserve of 'daughters', increasingly goes undone. Feminism-under-capitalism means that community-making goes un-done because the emotional work required for vested-interest community-making is diverted to the cause of income generation, away from communities.

The relationship between loneliness and social capital among older people in a New Zealand context is the subject of a study by Stephens et al. (2011). In their study, Stephens et al. used the model by Berkman et al. (2000) to consider a broad range of social and network factors that influence health. Stephens et al. focused on measures such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, and age, and found that all these measures influenced people's experiences of loneliness. In their findings, Stephens et al. "emphasize the importance of including the social context as an 'upstream' effect on the provision of support older lonely people" (p. 902). What this work in the Aotearoa New Zealand context demonstrates is that the further 'upstream' and examination goes, the greater the breadth of factors which influence the experiences of loneliness among older people. Frameworks such as that proposed by Berkman et al. invite us to consider the role of media networks generally and radio specifically in the macro-social landscape which enables, promotes, and perhaps ameliorates loneliness, and there is evidence to suggest that this has relevance to older people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Loneliness and leisure and replacement

A Dutch study attempted to tease out the contribution of different leisure activities to different aspects of social connectedness (Toepoel, 2013). Drawing on data gathered from an online household panel, Toepoel (2011) looked at the correlations between leisure activities

including holidays, volunteering, 'cultural activities', sports, watching TV, listening to the radio, reading, hobbies, shopping, and using a computer, and five measures of social connectedness. These measures were: "number of social gatherings, number of close relationships, satisfaction with social contacts, feeling of social connectedness, and loneliness" (Toepoel, 2011, p. 356).

The study by Toepoel (2013) referred to Putnam's (2000) binary description of leisure activities as either 'productive' or 'consumptive' and seems to consider radio 'consumptive' (see p. 24 for a discussion of such active/passive, hot/cold binaries in relation to listening). Similarly, Toepoel's study does not consider radio in the category of 'cultural activities' in which it includes many other activities in which the subject is an audience member consuming the product of someone else (theatre, cinema, art gallery, etc). These activities are typically done outside the house and potentially in company, but they are none-the-less consumptive. Further, many of these activities (i.e., theatre, dance performances, music performances), can be experienced live or over the radio, and are often available over the radio when live performances are unavailable. BBC Radio 3 broadcasts the Proms season live and replays performances live at other times. Perhaps your 'hobby' is going to the cinema and you augment this by listening to At the Movies (n.d.) on RNZ, but this study takes no account of that potential congruence or convergence.

According to Toepoel (2013), "cultural activities, reading books, and hobbies have the strongest effect for people aged 55 and older" (p. 369), and ascribes to these Kleiber's (1999) marker of 'serious leisure'. This distinction between radio listening and other potentially solitary, domiciled activities, such as reading, where the subject is an audience member, seems false. These activities have many potentially distinguishing features—the site and mode of reception, the potential for participation and engagement, for instance—but potentially many commonalities—temporality, invitations to engage beyond the performance, and the offer of social capital. This study seems to consider radio 'consumption' as a one-way pursuit, whereas other thinkers consider the role of the audience, particularly in programme formats drawing on user-generated content, as two-way media.

Older people

This research is concerned with the use of a specific media by a specific age group. People in this age group are often portrayed as stereotypes within the media, not least with reference to their technological and media literacy. Any attempts to research media use among older adults cannot do so in ignorance of these perceptions. Studies of youth and media are plentiful (see for example, Balsebre et al., 2011; BBC Trust, 2011; Bosch, 2007; Buckingham, 1997; Davies, 2001; Renaud & Mitchell, 1994; Vandewater & Lee, 2009; Von Feilitzen et al., 1980). In some

media environments, including Aotearoa New Zealand, legislation protects the rights of children to be represented and catered for in media (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2006; Broadcasting Act 1989, 1989). This is not so for older audiences. There are obvious and compelling differences between old and young audiences, but there are also similarities: Both groups are seldom represented in decision-making roles within media outlets. This means that radio is most often made *for* but not *by* them. Similarly, where they are represented in listener data in Aotearoa New Zealand, they are treated as a homogenous group. These groups are poorly drawn in the data, and there is scant likelihood of them being around the table, where these data are discussed, to refute or augment whatever vague sketch they might suggest.

Loneliness and later life

Data from the Aotearoa New Zealand government indicates that after a peak in adolescence and early adulthood, loneliness among residents declines through the decades until the last age group in the data, people aged 75 years and over (The Ministry of Social Development 2016). There are myriad reasons why people in later life might experience loneliness but there is evidence that these experiences often correspond to transitions over the life course: the loss of a spouse (Victor et al., 2005), retirement and losing connection with colleagues, falling ill, losing mobility (Durcan & Bell, 2015); the death of friends (Morgan et al., 2019), for instance.

Wright-St.Clair et al. (2017) published an 'Integrative Review of Older Adult Loneliness and Social Isolation in Aotearoa/New Zealand'. This review offers considerable insight into experiences of loneliness and social isolation amongst older adults in New Zealand, as well as compelling reasons to undertake more research in this area. Wright-St Clair and colleagues explicitly stated in their review that "research is now needed to establish valid ways of preventing and/or ameliorating loneliness" (p. 121).

In Kitzmuller et al.'s (2018) meta-ethnographic synthesis of scientific studies of older adult loneliness, older adults described the experience of loneliness using the metaphor "trapped in an empty waiting room" (p. 213). In Morgan et al.'s (2019) study of social isolation and loneliness among older people in Aotearoa New Zealand, participants also related their experiences of loneliness in "deeply visceral ways: as pain, and as lack" (p. 3). Morgan et al. compared the meanings of these terms from the perspective of culturally diverse groups. Among their results was the finding that "While participants talked about loneliness and social isolation as a personal attribute, they also situated these as negative experiences in their wider structural contexts" (Morgan et al., 2019, p. 3). Not only did participants identify loneliness as an embodied experience, they articulated that this personal experience is impacted by extrinsic social factors in the lives of older people today. The study found that "Many

[participants] described loneliness as not fitting into their families' routines and they referred, often emotionally, to time spent waiting for their family to get home from work or school" (Morgan et al., 2019, p. 5).

Listening and age

The idea that people might age into or out of different media is widespread. A school friend of mine describes herself in one social media profile as being "Old enough to appreciate social media and young enough to use it" (Gentle, n.d.), for instance. One lens through which to consider age and media is media generations. Bolin (2016) talked about media generations in relation to his mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and daughter, and the different media and mediated experiences which defined their generations. He wrote that "the ways in which the media are used by different generations and thus become defining for these generations […] help shape generations through their affordances" (Bolin, 2016, p. 4). It is relevant to consider how older adults interact with radio specifically, not because older adults are homogenous or because of the stereotypes relating to their interest in or capabilities with different media. Rather, it is relevant to consider the relationship between media and age, or perhaps generations more specifically, because their "media biographies" (Hepp et al., 2017, p. 110) might denote their individual, "subjective but nonetheless generationally typical history of use and appropriate of media as technologies and contents" (p. 110). Hepp et al. (2017) draw on Vollbrecht's (2009) idea that in considering someone's media biography, it is important to recognise the "significance and relevance of media for the individual construction and reconstruction of a biography, and how the pattern of media use and media appropriation develops and undergoes change" (Hepp et al., 2017, p. 110). How someone has used media throughout their life, beginning with those events in their formative, early years, is relevant in considering their media use in later life.

A contrast to Bolini's generational approach is what Welch and Mickelson (2018) call a life-span approach. They argued that, while the idea of chronological development has merit in assessing listening behaviour, there is also value in considering "multidirectional development" (p. 97), since "universal patterns of growth and decline do not occur" (Welch & Mickelson, 2018, p. 98). This argument is centred on the idea that it is not age which defines listening behaviour, but the listening environment: "Listening environmental changes allows a focus on where the communication occurs rather than at what age the communication occurs" (Welch & Mickelson, 2018, p. 98). Welch and Mickelson also noted gender differences in listening. Using Wolvin and Coakley's listening types, they tested the hypothesis that listening environments would change listener behaviour and that these differences would reflect gender differences. They found that "each listening environment calls for different applications

of various listening behaviors [sic]" (Welch & Mickelson, 2018, p. 107) and that gender differences were evident in some types of listening; hence, the importance of including men and women in research.

Rowe and Kahn's (1998) influential work on positive ageing foregrounds the importance of continuity in ageing, that is, the idea of maintaining established patterns of social behaviour, for instance, the dailiness of listening habits, perhaps. The value of continuity is reflected in the work of Giele and Elder (1998) in what they described as the life course approach. The life course approach is not really a theory or framework about age, per se, it is about living each day, and connects your whole life to itself, rather than envisaging 'stages' as with some other developmental frameworks (e.g., Erikson & Erikson, 1998). Giele and Elder wrote that "the life course concept also allows for the encoding of historic events and social interaction outside the person as well as the age-related biological and psychological states of the organism" (pp. 22-23). In the context of this research, this idea is potent as it takes in a lot of other relevant theories such as ideas about adaptation, but also because the proliferation of radio in Aotearoa New Zealand is an historical even outside of the potential participants, which almost mirrors their own life course, and may mean that the relationship this generation has with the radio is different to those before or since.

Listening and later life

Using grounded theory methods, Van der Goot et al. (2012) investigated the meaning of television and analysed change and continuity of viewing in the lives of older adults. The paper found that some people's television viewing changed at this point in their lives and some people's stayed the same. Changes might be as a result of: having more time or less time for television viewing or of having fewer choices in how to spend leisure time or as a result of actively choosing to spend leisure time watching television. Largely, whether people's viewing went up, down, or stayed the same was congruent with their attitudes to television viewing throughout their lives.

This paper by Van der Goot et al. (2012) outlines the idea that "media use is related to biological, cognitive and social development across the lifespan" (p. 149). This understanding of change and continuity in media use over time suggests that these changes in life "bring about certain types of media use" (Van der Goot et al., 2012, p. 149). Across the life course, loneliness is also commonly linked with "life transitions" (Kantar Public, 2016, p. 20). This points, potentially, to a correlation between the potential for loneliness and media use at points of development and life change. Van der Goot et al. (2012) wrote, "Possibly, the continuity that older people experience in their viewing behaviour…, status of viewing and their content preferences functions as an adaptive strategy and a way of preserving their sense

of self" (p. 164). Media consumption is habitual, listening is a practice, and our habits and practices are integral to our identity. In the 1970s, Graney (1974) considered the role of media as a substitute for other activities in older age and found media use was not a substitute for social interaction or community participation. In later life, it seems, people continue to use media just as they have always used media. If television played a supportive role in their adaptations to other life changes, so might it support adaptation to changes in later life. These habits and practices, just as any others, are formed over a lifetime and do not arise at times of transition, but may find new meanings in those times.

The study by Van der Goot et al. (2012) found continuity in preferences for content type and genre, as well as in "the status of television viewing" (p. 160). This is perhaps an interesting point of difference between work on television viewing and radio listening in that radio as a medium is not loaded with the same 'status related anxiety' as television. Radio listening is not tied to the same ideas of inertia or social status as television viewing. Certainly, within listening, there are station, programme types, or content which are associated with different expressions of social class, but these are not generalised to the media or activity itself in the same way they are with television.

Van der Goot et al.'s (2012) paper raises the idea of "leisure as coping" (p. 147) and points to the work of others in the area of leisure assisting people to adjust to life events. Participants in Van der Goot et al.'s study reported changes in the meaning of television viewing after "loss in the interpersonal sphere" (p. 156) which they defined as children leaving, relationships ending, or bereavement. They specifically found that participants regarded the television as company and considered it a way to bring "'people' and sound inside the home" (van der Goot et al., 2012, p. 156). In addition to what continuity theory offers in examining this retreat into the familiar, it is interesting to consider the escapist aspect of media consumption and its role in times of change, moving perhaps from 'leisure as coping' to 'entertainment as coping'. This is perhaps a semantic difference, but perhaps not. It is unusual to think of watching news or current affairs (as some of these participants reported doing) as a 'leisure' activity, but it is entirely more familiar to consider television news as 'entertainment'.

As part of a wider study into the place of different media in the everyday lives of retired people in France, Domenget (2003) conducted a pioneering study with people aged 66–76 years in rural and urban settings. Domenget stated that previous studies of media use by older adults have focused on describing their usage practices in great detail or analysing the diversity of these uses, but "work remains to be done to deepen the study of the significations of use, of the meaning such media practices take on for users" (p. 49). Domenget observed that the activities done alongside listening are not juxtaposed, making dinner *and* listening, but

integrated, making dinner *while* listening. This listening as accompaniment can move into listening as company, particularly when the attendant activity lacks meaning, and particularly for people living alone. Domenget noted that listeners in his study "show great interest in the broadcasts they follow and in the content of the programmes, which correspond to their tastes and also partly to their expectations" (p. 52). This study suggests testing the hypothesis that the continued loyalty to one station, and the temporal reference points it provided during a working life, might "serve as a means to overcome this life change, the forced reorganization of everyday life which retirement involves" (Domenget, 2003, p. 57). Changes to the daily routine which accompany retirement, and the potential for boredom and loneliness which accompany widowhood, mean that radio can fully occupy the dimension of company.

Inthorn (2020) also studied radio in the everyday lives of older adults, specifically women. Using grounded theory methods, the study involved 28 participants in Germany and Britain aged between 51 and 92 years. Much like the participants in Domenget's (2003) study, participants in Inthorn's study linked radio listening with other domestic activities. According to Inthorn, the ways older women use radio mirror their experiences of the patriarchy in other aspects of their lives, meaning that they are "shouldering the responsibility for large amounts of unpaid domestic labour, giving up space and anticipating and accommodating the interest of men. Yet it also means opportunities to chip away at patriarchy's hold over their lives" (p. 223).

Krause (2020) conducted research with older Australians to explore their radio use. This research was focused on "how the radio fits into older adults' daily routines… [and] … how listening to the radio might influence older adults' sense of well-being" (Krause, 2020, p. 3). This research was predicated on "research evidence concerning the associated well-being benefits of music listening" (Krause, 2020, p. 3), and sought to discover whether the benefits available through music listening were available through radio in any or all its forms. The study found that radio listening was time- and space-specific for many participants, in that listening might be part of their morning or evening routine, or that they might listen predominantly in the kitchen (Krause, 2020). Participants in Krause's study reported feelings of company and comfort, and her analysis considered the shift from background sound to focused listening. The study suggested that "companionship, comfort, relaxation, and unconscious mood regulation could result from any type of radio engagement" (Krause, 2020, p. 7). Participants in Krause's study were clear that "'companionship' is not necessarily a polar opposite to 'background sound'" (p. 7).

Media, measurement, representation, and exclusion

Scannell and Cardiff (1991) noted that "radio, in an organized social form, seemed to be one significant and unprecedented means of helping to shape a more unified and egalitarian society" (p. 13). They spoke of the idea that radio would unify the nation, creating a "knowable community" (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p. 13), through shared experiences made available through broadcast. Considering a community at the scale of society or a nation is fraught, perhaps homogenising at best and at worst leaning towards the sort of nationalism radio has aided and abetted in acts of violence worldwide (J. Hartley, 2000). Certainly, radio is capable of engendering a sense of inclusion, but, in every instance, any such inclusion has a flip-side: Inclusion implies a capacity for exclusion.

In Aotearoa New Zealand older listeners are blatantly excluded from reported listener data. Asen (2002) wrote that "inclusions and exclusions also occur in the perceptions of others— the imagining of others. Sometimes, individuals and groups appear in debates from which they are physically absent as images (linguistic and/or visual representations) circulate in public discourse" (p. 347). In other reporting areas, such as Australia and the UK, older listeners appear, in that they are reported on, but in those figures they are imagined as a singular mass, a homogeneous listener without the nuanced preferences or requirements of listeners in other age groups. This erasure is a choice; despite the data, broadcasters know these listeners exist, and that there is no age at which people become indistinct from one another with regard to their tastes, preferences, or views. Remembering that, as a proportion of the global population, those aged 65 years and over are predicted to grow from nine to 16%, there is an argument to view these radio listeners with increased granularity, care, and attention. Uotila et al. (2010) examined portrayals of lonely older people in Finnish media. They studied 154 texts from more than 50 publications in Finland. They found that loneliness was connected to "the low status of older people in society, inhumane practices in elderly care, lack of meaning in life and neglect by relatives" (Uotila et al., 2010, p. 103). According to this study, loneliness was considered inevitable in later life. This research speaks to the stigma and othering of loneliness, which we see perpetuated here, but also to the "inclusions and exclusions …in the perceptions of others" (Asen, 2002, p. 347).

In discussing broadcasting and socially excluded audiences, Corfield (1999) said "Meeting the needs of specific audiences… is probably not best done by categorising particular programmes for particular people. The results can sometimes be mediocre and watched by only a minority of the target audience" (p. 143). Travers and Bartlett's (2011) study design places great emphasis on the content of the programme and daily listening for the purpose of the study. Participants went so far as to suggest types of programmes they prefer over the Silver

Memories programme. It seems that Travers and Bartlett's participants bear this out: A programme created to meet the needs of those at risk of loneliness is not necessarily to the liking of those at risk of loneliness.

Corfield (1999) goes on to develop the idea of a stock of knowledge, a set of common reference points that are relatable to as wide an audience as possible. The idea of inclusion sees that popular programming provides a point of reference by which socially excluded audience members might find themselves part of an audience community beyond themselves. This is the idea that by listening to mainstream programming, people who are experiencing or who are at risk of social exclusion might acquire the same social capital currency as the majority of others. This is in contrast to programming targeted at socially excluded audience members which is unlikely to provide this connection without the crucial step of identifying oneself as the listener to a programme for a socially excluded audience. If your social currency is marked in this way, you can only spend it in places which may further marginalise or stigmatise you. Healey and Ross (2002) spoke with older television audiences in Coventry, UK, asking what they thought about portrayals of older age, to explore the viability of broadcasting targeted at older audiences. They found that older viewers were "an informed and knowing audience" (Healey & Ross, 2002, p. 118), aware of the influences of those making the media (industry employees) and those financing the media (the advertising industry). For the employees, this meant any attempts to portray this experience must be imagined; for the advertisers this meant targeting generational groups they perceived to have high disposable incomes. As a result, they found representations of older people were "not necessarily worse but it is different" (Healey & Ross, 2002, p. 118) to their experiences of later life. Here again, programmes have excluded while seeming to include (Asen, 2002).

Summary – The research gap

There is literature on loneliness which specifically calls for research looking more closely at how to prevent loneliness among older adults (Wright-St Clair et al., 2017) and theories on how to use social capital to do this (O'Rourke et al., 2018). There is a paucity of loneliness research which asks these questions in relation to radio listeners specifically. There is a body of literature, both theoretical and empirical, which suggests the possibility of companionable relationships with the radio (Ewart, 2011; Travers & Bartlett, 2011) and other media (Toepoel, 2013; van der Goot et al., 2012), and this review has identified ways to build on this research. The review supports the research focus, as well as a methodology focused on theory-making.

Both the theoretical positions and the studies identified and discussed leave ample space and an invitation to research which draws on the experiences of company amongst older radio listeners and theorises the means by which such an experiences is achieved. Hence, the

question this study aims to answer is: How does radio listening provide company to older listeners who use it to that purpose?

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Grounded theory is used in this study because it gives a credible, adaptable framework for exploring the process by which older listeners construct company in their listening experience. This is a social process which the study aims to understand through data generated with those undertaking this process in their daily lives. The intention of grounded theory is that the researcher builds a theory from data, rather than using the data to test or reinforce any existing theories. "Generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research", wrote Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 6) in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory.* That is, a grounded theorist sets out to generate theory rather than validate theory. There are existing ideas about the experience of radio as company, and Glaser and Strauss acknowledged that "the *source* of certain ideas, or even 'models', can come from sources other than the data" (p. 6, emphasis retained). It is not, however, the intention necessarily of any grounded theory study to probe or validate those ideas. Instead, the intention is, through listening and observing, to gain an understanding of the listening-for-company experience of older listeners directly from the listeners themselves. From there, the study will "subject our data to rigorous analysis, aim to develop theoretical analyses" (Charmaz, 2009, p. 127) and build a theory which accounts for the process at work in this experience. Existing knowledge and ideas about the listening experience will inform this enquiry, but will not dictate its limits, direction, or findings. Instead, these will be grounded in the data generated with participants and analysed by me to produce a theory with the power to explain the social processes involved in creating company from radio listening.

Grounded theory is not a single, unified methodological approach, but rather a term which identifies a range of iterations and interpretations springing from a single source. The term 'grounded theory' may refer to either or both grounded theory methodology or grounded theory methods. Clarke (2009) argued for grounded theory to be understood as a 'theory/methods package'. She says that such packages "include epistemological and ontological assumptions, along with concrete practices through which social scientists go about their work" (Clarke, 2009, p. 197). The methodology and the methods combined represent a suite of tools with which to both generate and analyse data. Both the beginnings and evolution of the methodology and methods are outlined in this chapter in service to understanding how they inform and are employed by this research specifically.

Discovering grounded theory

"Grounded theory is not just a way of *doing* like a grounded theorist, but a way of *thinking* like a grounded theorist" (Stern & Porr, 2011, p. 27, emphasis retained).Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, two American sociologists, undertook a study of the experience of dying in hospital in North America in the 1960s. Strauss recruited Glaser to work on a project "to explain the everyday realities of terminal care in California hospitals" (Stern & Porr, 2011, p. 17). Glaser and Strauss came together in this work from different research backgrounds: Glaser had worked at Columbia University and was trained in positivist, quantitative research methods; Strauss came from Chicago University where he was trained in symbolic interactionism and influenced by pragmatist philosophy (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Glaser and Strauss were working, as Clarke (2012) put it, "in the belly of the haute positivist quantitative sociological beast" (p. 391). Glaser and Strauss moved qualitative research along the analytical continuum from a deductive approach (theory-supporting data) to an inductive approach (theory-generating data).

These approaches, inductive and deductive, are usually presented as a binary. These first grounded theorists rejected methods aimed a verifying theory with data from the field (deductive) and instead proposed a means by which to develop theory grounded in data collected in the field (inductive). Many grounded theorists remain wedded to this inductive/deductive binary concept and spend considerable energy wrestling in this dichotomy. In this study, there have been both inductive and deductive moments: Some descriptions are so thick as to seem deductive, and others so carefully conceptualised as to be inescapably inductive. The binary position is not valuable in this study. Such positivist binaries did inform the revolutionary work by Glaser and Strauss to progress social research methods and thinking, and to put forwarded their innovative, grounded research approach and, as such, are worth acknowledging here.

Birks and Mills (2015) contended that first generation grounded theorists did not articulate grounded theory as a theory/methods package, instead focusing on strategies and methods. Without clearly articulating these positions, they are none–the-less clear within the work itself. This is particularly so in relation to the position of the researcher in the research. Bryant and Charmaz (2014) are direct in their assessment of the weakness of Glaser and Strauss' position on this: They write that that "Glaser and Strauss adamantly maintained the view that researchers' expert knowledge superseded that of their research subjects" (p. 13). This is at odds with other theorists working at the time, for whom the experts have "no better claim to knowledge and insight than any other account" (A. Bryant & Charmaz, 2014, p. 13). Bryant and

Charmaz contended that Glaser maintained this position throughout, though Strauss' view may have evolved somewhat.

This tension is exemplified in what I read as a contradiction in Glaser and Strauss' original work: They require that grounded theory is accessible to the layperson, and yet, describe the audience for their book as "those who are concerned with dying in our hospitals… and sociologists" (Glaser & Strauss, 1965, p. 7). There is no suggestion that patients carry expertise in the matter, importance or understanding of their awareness of their own demise, or any theory thereof. Whatever might be said about the requirement for a grounded theory to be comprehensible to a layperson, *Awareness in Dying* is not for them, or at the very least, we do not agree about their identity. It seems that the 'laypeople' in Glaser and Strauss' original study, in which the experts are the researchers themselves (see A. Bryant & Charmaz, 2014), are the nurses and not the patients.

It is imperative to me that the results of this research are accessible to those from whose knowledge and experience it is drawn, as well as those it might reflect or whose work and decisions it might inform. I am not suggesting that the participants in this study will be flocking to read this thesis, or any other material arising; I am suggesting that they are among the primary audiences I would list for any such work, and that I consider their response, critique, or opinion to be that of an expert on what is intended to be my conceptual reflection of their listening experiences.

Though their philosophical position is not explicitly stated (Rieger, 2019), the ontological position of Glaser and Strauss' seminal grounded theory can be inferred from the title of their seminal work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1965). The idea that any knowledge exists and lies in wait to be 'discovered' belies a positivist or post-positivist ontology which grounded theorists since have largely outgrown. The difficulty with some of the terms used in describing grounded theory's beginnings can make the methodology seem stuck, as though it has failed in its intent to react to the positivist philosophical norms which surrounded its inception. As Stern (2009) noted, however, "Glaser and Strauss were interpreting grounded theory for the positivists" (p. 59). She contended that this can be irksome to some grounded theorists, making particular reference to the use of terms such as 'emerge' or 'emergence'. Of course, she says, the theory does not "rise up off the page" (Stern, 2009, p. 59), but terms such as 'emerge' and 'emergence' had meaning for the audience for whom Glaser and Strauss were writing. While Strauss made amendments to some key terms in grounded theory over the course of his work in the area (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998), Glaser (1999) continued to use those terms with which he began. The point, Stern argued, is that the language is relevant to the audience and that it was necessary to express the methodology in

terms relevant to the audience. Such language may belie what Clarke (2005) called "problematic positivist recalcitrancies" (p. xxi) in the method, but need not take away from the tenets of the method the terms themselves are used to describe.

Developing grounded theory

Glaser and Strauss were not working in isolation: Many others were working to critically examine, question, challenge the positivist orthodoxy of the day. Bryant and Charmaz (2014) wrote that considering Glaser and Strauss' work in the context of others working at the time, it is possible to assess their grounded theory work on two grounds: Did they successfully critique the research practices of research sociologists of the day? Yes. Did they shift the discourse from its objectivist, positivist epistemology? Perhaps, slightly, but the grounded theorists who followed contend that there remained significant work to be done in this area (see Charmaz, 2006, 2014; Clarke, 2009; A. Bryant & Charmaz, 2014; Clarke et al., 2018) and it is in these developments that this study finds its methodological grounding.

Having 'discovered' the grounded theory process together, the two men undertook to develop, refine, and critique it in vastly different ways. Though never together, both men continued to write on grounded theory beyond their initial exposition (e.g., Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1999, 2003), and Strauss with Corbin (e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994, 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This split reflects a difference in response to the burgeoning field of the sociology of knowledge during which Glaser and Strauss were working. Charmaz (2009) considered that the contrasting philosophical and methodological starting points of Glaser (positivism) and Strauss (pragmatism) "placed grounded theory on somewhat unsteady ontological and epistemological grounds and planted the seeds of divergent directions for the method" (p. 128) from the outset.

Arguably, by not clearly articulating the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the method in their initial exposition, Glaser and Strauss left this work to the second and subsequent generations of grounded theorists. These theorists (e.g., Morse, Stern, Charmaz, Bowers, Clarke) have been able to take on this work and ensure that grounded theory has continued to find relevance in the shifting ontological and epistemological landscape in which social research is conducted. Aspects of these second generation developments are outlined below, such as they apply to the use of the grounded theory as a theory/methods package in this study.

Constructivist grounded theory

Constructivist grounded theory shifts the methodology further from its positivist underpinnings, providing a framework for researchers to work in the full knowledge of their

position (Puddephatt, 2006). Constructivist grounded theory requires that the theorist take account of their own position in generating and analysing data. Charmaz (2009) contended that "constructivist grounded theory aims to position the research relative to the social circumstances impinging on it" (p. 134). This includes the circumstances of the researcher, but also the social, cultural, interactional, and situational circumstances of participants. The means by which this is achieved in constructivist grounded theory is through reflexivity. Not only data, but all research process are constructed within pre-existing structures and conditions, and are influenced by the "perspective, privileges, positions, interactions and geographical locations" (Charmaz, 2009, p. 130) of the researcher themself. For constructivist grounded theorists, promulgating these pre-existing structures, conditions, and influences, enables the researcher to view them, move them from opaque, unstated backgrounds to articulated, transparent influences.

Constructivist grounded theory

> assumes a relativist epistemology, sees knowledge as socially produced, acknowledges multiple standpoints of both the research participants and the grounded theorist, and takes a reflexive stance towards our actions, situations and participants in the field setting—and our analytic constructions of them. (Charmaz, 2009, p. 130)

In this way, constructivist grounded theory is acknowledging the contribution of the social worlds of both researcher and research participants to the co-construction of data. What is present in the data is neither the participant nor the researcher but something else newly constructed by both parties. This view of the role of the researcher is a significant departure from the objectivist beginnings of grounded theory and represents a significant point of difference in the epistemological basis of constructivist and classical grounded theory (Locke, 1996). A study of listening lends itself to this constructivist approach to grounded theory, which echoes the co-construction inherent in listening as an activity in and of itself.

The site of this enquiry, at the intersection between listening and company/loneliness, demands a constructivist research lens on two fronts: There is no objective experience of loneliness; by definition, the experience of loneliness itself is entirely subjective. So too for company, even when it is experienced alone. To enjoy one's own company is not necessarily the same as to enjoy being alone. Furthermore, listening itself is a prime expression of co-construction and the existence of multiple realities. As any child playing a game of telephone can attest, listening is an act of construction by each listener. Sound co-exists among listeners whose multiple, individual realities influence what is constructed from the wavelengths which reach the ear, the information that reaches the brain, and the existing, unique realities therein of each listener.

In conversation with Puddephat (2006), Charmaz said that the grounded theory described by Glaser "aims towards generalizing [sic] simplifying, parsimonious statements, and universalizing in abstract terms so that it cuts across fields" (p. 9). If theories produced using classical grounded theory aim to represent reality in generalisable ways, constructivist grounded theories aim for "abstract understandings that theorize relationships between concepts" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 228). There is no suggestion that, with the same data, another researcher might produce the same constructivist grounded theory; there is no suggestion that it would be possibly to create the same data over again, since the data are a co-construction of the researcher and the participant.

Postmodernism and situational analysis

Clarke (2014) said that "those who pursue GT [grounded theory] … today and in the future will need to negotiate their own pathways through all the potent questions of the sociology of knowledge and the post-modern turn" (p. 244). While retaining a constructivist position, postmodern critiques of the epistemological underpinnings of social research, and the challenge invited by the postmodern turn to "examine our methods, expertise, writing, and most significantly, the epistemological premises that uphold our work" (Charmaz, 1995, p. 44) have been valuable in the design, conduct, and analysis of this study.

In her appeals to move grounded theory further again from its positivist trappings, Clarke (2005) suggested drawing on and analysing non-interview data. She contended such data might

> enhance[s] our capacities to do incisive studies of differences of perspective, of highly complex situations of action and positionality, of the heterogeneous discourses in which we are all constantly awash, and of the situated knowledge of life itself thereby produced. (p. xxiii)

Though Clarke is focused on extant data, this suggestion that other, non-interview data, might be useful in examining the research situation, was the driver to use photography in this study: Asking people to articulate their experiences of company, and the ways in which they relate to 'radio', at once an invisible medium and a physical device, the situations in which they engage in listening, the materiality of their devices, the physicality of their interactions with this non-human, invisible entity, is indeed a 'highly complex situation of action and positionality' which lends itself to examination beyond words. Creating images of participants' radios in situ allows for analytical reflection on listening spaces and devices referred to by participants in interviews, adding layers to participants' descriptions.

Clarke (2005) suggested several ways grounded theory research can engage with postmodern critiques and aspirations. She builds on the ontological basis of constructivist grounded theory and revisits Strauss' (1987) social worlds/arenas work, to find ways to explore contextual

situations in the research. Clarke also suggested three cartographic approaches, which she described as "supplemental approaches to traditional grounded theory analyses" (p. xxii). Using these maps helps the researcher further open the data, "elucidating the key elements, materialities, discourses, structures, and conditions that characterise the situation of inquiry" (Clarke, 2005, p. xxii). Using this analytical approach, "[T]he *situation per se becomes the ultimate unit of analysis*" (Clarke, 2005, p. xxii, emphasis retained). The invitation to consider the whole situation as the unit of analysis should produce "thick analyses" (Clarke, 2005, p. xxiii), after Geertz's (1973) 'thick descriptions', which consider all the elements of the situation and their interrelations. Data constructed in this study invited an analysis situated in the "cultural, temporal, spatial, political and economic contexts" (Charmaz, 1995, p. 46) to which postmodern analyses aspire.

Throughout the listening lives of participants, radio has changed in almost every dimension of style and substance—formats, stations, portability, embodiment, duration, reception, tone, diction, presentation, regulation, and more. In their own telling, participants in this study demonstrate that the history and this development are relevant to their listening experiences today. Similarly, participants speak to the situatedness—physically, temporally, socially, economically—of their listening experience. Listening is situated. Audiences are situated. Relationships are situated. Broadcasting is situated. Company, isolation, and loneliness are all situated. Ontologically, while I am glad to be challenged by a postmodern worldview, this research is conducted in an interpretivist mode. The work draws on the postmodern challenge to willingly contribute from this constructivist position to the development of the "new theoretical order[s]" (Charmaz, 1995, p. 47) postmodernism may bring forth, to broaden the scope of social science research, and disestablish the existing power arrangements entrenched in the neo-liberal capitalist moment in which this work is situated.

Feminist grounded theory

There is no single feminist epistemology. "There are multiple feminisms with implications for different research approaches. These approaches are not static, but change as new intellectual currents shift feminist thinking" (Olesen, 2007, pp. 420–421). Just as Clarke (2005) purported that each grounded theorist will need to negotiate their own ontological position, each feminist researcher will do the same epistemologically. Keddy et al. (1996) wrote that that "[b]eginning with her own experience as a woman, the feminist researcher must understand how her own experiences are organized and the social relations that have generated them" (p. 452). The beauty of grounded theory, according to Stern, "is that while you must align with key tenets, you are not beholden to methodological dogma" (Stern & Porr, 2011, p. 14). It is also true that, for a constructivist grounded theorist, understanding and naming these influences,

as early as possible in the planning phase of the research project, "equips a researcher to make decisions of a methodological nature, which in turn affects how the essential grounded theory methods are used" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 9). In exploring my position in this research, I have found myself face-to-face with my feminism at every turn.

I have long described myself as a feminist, but I have never been more keenly aware of the vital importance of the success of the feminist agenda than during pregnancy and later motherhood. The tension in women's lives between paid work and unpaid work, or work which is ascribed value in a capitalist economy and work which is not, are a significant driver for this research. Feminism-under-capitalism means the work of caring for and including marginalised people is systematically undervalued, neglected, and outsourced to poorly paid workers (typically women) on insecure contracts because it is not profitable to do it otherwise. Community-making goes un-done because the emotional work required for vested-interest community-making is diverted to the cause of income generating, away from communities. This abandonment of community-making to profit-making means the ways people socialise when they age is changed and can become transactional. I am curious as to how radio, whose primary purpose is connecting people, relates to and meets the needs within this social paradigm.

Much of the work of the development of grounded theory has been undertaken by women (e.g., Charmaz, Clarke, Stern) and many more grounded theorists have written on the compatibility of grounded theory with feminist research (Clarke, 2007; Keddy et al., 1996; Kushner & Morrow, 2003; Olesen, 2007; Plummer & Wuest, 1995; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001; Young, 2010), even describing an "epistemological affinity between feminist inquiry and grounded theory" (Plummer & Young, 2010, p. 305). Certainly, in the case of constructivist grounded theory and feminist research, this affinity is easily established: Constructivist grounded theorists and feminist researchers are both working to "eliminate hierarchies of knowledge" (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007, p. 180) and foreground the experiences of participants as research partners, rather than subjects. Feminist grounded theory "reveals micropolitics of the research process" (Olesen, 2007, p. 421), meaning it avoids replicating oppression in research relationships, acknowledges and embraces complexity, focuses on the ethical considerations in research, and appreciates and affirms a multiplicity of knowledge systems (Olesen, 2007).

"Feminist thinking and practice require taking steps from the 'margins to the center [sic]' while eliminating boundaries that privilege dominant forms of knowledge building, boundaries that mark who can be a knower and what can be known" (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 3). Being a feminist researcher means being aware of the boundaries of your own epistemological position and

seeking to expand that by means of or alongside your own research. The research proposed here answers this call by taking, as a starting point, people missing from the existing data, positioning them as experts, and inviting them to explore their own experiences. This research does not validate or elevate participants' experiences in any way since they are valid without it and neither seek nor require elevation. This research adds the experiences of these marginalised listeners to the discourse on listening from which they have been excluded and to which they have much to contribute.

Positioning myself in relation to the research: Why this, why me, and why this way?

Prior to undertaking their work on the experience of dying in Californian hospitals, both Glaser (with his father) and Strauss (with his mother and another friend) (Glaser & Strauss, 1965) had had "unsatisfactory experiences of relatives dying in hospitals" (Stern & Porr, 2011, p. 18). Strauss and Glaser met informally through their networks and worked together on a piece of research relevant to their personal experiences using their professional skills. As Birks and Mills (2015) wrote, "When we begin a research study we… draw upon the totality of our life experience in deciding how to proceed" (p. 50). Where we, as researchers, are, and who and what surrounds us, are relevant not only to any analyses we produce, but to the very research we undertake in the first place. Knowledge, and the drive and the means to pursue it, are contextual: The very research which led to the development of grounded theory demonstrates exactly that.

My interest in the experiences of isolation, loneliness, listening, and company-making arise from my own experiences of loneliness and isolation, as well as observations of and work with others having those experiences. My own experiences, as a teenager in a semi-rural town or as an immigrant mothering a baby, are not unusual or unique, and were mercifully fleeting. In my paid and voluntary work, I worked with and for people young and old, people with chronic illness and long-term disabilities, people bereaved, people in caring roles, people wealthy and impoverished, people with and without families and social networks around them, people alone and inundated, people in all manner of situations experiencing isolation and loneliness. As a volunteer in a befriending programme, I had a relationship with Nancy, a migrant woman of colour, widowed young, bereft of her only son, living in poverty, and suffering, terribly, from loneliness. I was aware that she spent huge portions of her time inconsolable for want of company. Our relationship had a monumental impact on me, and I can trace my interest in this area of research back to Nancy. People suffer from and die of loneliness. In pursuing this research, I reject my own (and your) complicity in the social conditions which give rise to and

perpetuate this phenomenon. I do not want to die of loneliness; I do not want you to die of loneliness.

My perspective on loneliness shifted from considering the experience as a public health issue experienced by individuals, to seeing the phenomenon within its broader social constructions. Having made this shift, I moved from wanting to study how radio, as an intermediary, could 'solve' the 'problem' of loneliness, to wanting to better understand how people use this connective technology to serve them, to construct the company they desire in the moment they desire it. It may seem a subtle shift, but this subtle shift reflects the development and greater understanding of my own epistemological and ontological positions. It shifted the study's focus to the value of the knowledge of older listeners and the agency they demonstrate through this problem-solving application of the technology.

I am writing this in Aotearoa New Zealand, a single nation, committed to bi-cultural values, attempting (with varying degrees of success) to construct a multi-truth reality at a national level. Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document, *Te Tirit o Waitangi*, enshrines a commitment to multiple realities, acknowledging *mana whenua* and its colonisers, with all the challenge that brings. As I write, for instance, we, as a nation, are observing Matariki, the Māori New Year, and will observe the Gregorian New Year soon after the next solstice. This is not a commitment to a single, bi-cultural reality, but a commitment to construct and reconstruct a place of multiple concurrent realities.

Coming to understand my own multi-truth, feminist, constructivist position at the outset of this research has enabled me to plan and conduct this study with my own convictions laid bare. I have moved from 'not wanting to accidentally do bad science' as I said in my initial enquiry into the possibility of this research, to being clear that the positivist tenets I presumed central to research do not align with my epistemological or ontological positions. Instead, I have designed and conducted a research project in full view of these positions, rather than in opposition to or denial of them.

Applying grounded theory

Birks and Mills' (2015) *Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide* acknowledges from the outset that "Trying to understand the general principles of grounded theory in the context of the debate and discussion that is so much a part of this research tradition can be incredibly difficult" (p. 1). This difficulty is evident on a most basic level by the range of terms used to describe different analytical tools, strategies, and processes associated with grounded theory. This study will apply the terms used by Birks and Mills: initial coding (coding and comparing incidents—Glaser & Strauss, 1967; open coding—Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998; initial coding—

Clarke, 2014); intermediate coding (integrating categories and properties—Glaser & Strauss, 1967; selective coding—Glaser, 1978; axial coding—Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998; focused coding—Clarke, 2014), and advanced coding (delimiting the theory—Glaser & Strauss, 1967; theoretical coding—Glaser, 1978; selective coding—Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998; theoretical coding—Clarke, 2014).

Grounded theory offers the tools with which to fracture or open the data, assemble it again in new ways, to move beyond description to concept and eventually to a theory. According to Birks and Mills (2015), once the researcher has articulated their position in relation to the research, the remaining essential elements grounded theory studies use to do this are, are: "concurrent data generation or collection and analysis; writing memos; theoretical sampling; constant comparative analysis using inductive and abductive logic; theoretical sensitivity; intermediate coding; identifying a core category; and advanced coding and theoretical integration" (p. 10). This distillation of the essentials accords with my reading of the methodological requirements of both the initial exponents and those who have since developed it. What follows is an outline of these essentials and how they have been applied in this study.

Though the attributes of grounded theory used to achieve these are presented here as linear, it is erroneous to consider that this is a straight, direct process. Grounded theory research moves between these phases until the theory is fully developed.

Memo writing

Writing memos in grounded theory practice is a means of capturing your reflections on, reactions to, questions about, or insights into the data you have made as you go about transcription, coding, and developing a theory. They capture ideas about the data that the researcher can return to, encouraging abstraction from the data. Memos can also provide an 'audit trail' of the researcher's thinking through the theory development—how did I get here? All memos are direct responses to data, they are not speculative, they are grounded in data.

Memos written throughout, from research design to completion, and help build "intellectual assets" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 11) from which to develop a grounded theory. The earliest memos recorded in this study relate to the research design and shifting from a study of loneliness to a study of company: "I think I am letting go of the idea of this as a piece of research into loneliness. It's not that. It's a piece of research into social connection, but can you research one without researching the other?" [Memo, 13 February 2019]. It becomes clear in these memos that my understanding of my epistemology and ontology are developing.

Photography

The use of photographs and photography in grounded theory is unusual, but not unheard of, and not without methodological support. Writing in 2014, Clarke said

> Increasingly, historical, visual, narrative and other discourse materials and non-human material cultural objects of all kinds must be included as elements of our research and subjected to analysis because they are increasingly understood/interpreted as both constitutive of and consequential for the phenomena we study. (p. 240)

Where researcher-generated photography is used in grounded theory studies it is more commonly used as a prompt or elicitation device within an interview, rather than as data for analysis in and of itself. Prosser (1998) posited that the inferior status of image-based research relative to word-based research is rooted in the struggle for social research to assert its credentials in relation to scientific research.

Prosser (1998) noted an "enthusiasm to describe the drawbacks and limitations of using images in a qualitative enquiry" (p. 98). He says that illuminating the challenges without articulating the potential creates an overall message that visual data are only acceptable as a means of recording data or illustrating the central, word-based narrative. Images are cast as "unacceptable ways of 'knowing' because they distort that which they claim to illuminate" (Prosser, 1998, p. 99). The suggestion is that the act of 'making', that is "aiming, framing, manipulating light and camera angle, etc" (Prosser, 1998, p. 98), unacceptably alters the objects in the frame. This view, however, does not accord with a constructivist understanding that *all* data are 'made'; all data are created subjectively. Viewed through this epistemological prism and in the feminist spirit of challenging established ideas of 'knowing', the use of image data in this study is appropriate and the challenges of using image-based research surmountable.

Tacchi (1998) wrote that terms like 'friend' and company' are "used as metaphors to express a particular (and usually unexpressed) relationship with a medium that we are not normally asked to talk or even think about" (p. 26), but I think where you keep or put your radio can tell us a lot. Is it in the cupboard with the fine china? On a high shelf, at your elbow, when you sit in your favourite chair? On your work surface? By your bed, where you can operate it with your eyes shut or in the dark? Do you have one in every room? Is it portable and lives in your pocket? Is it new? Is it old? Is it on the mantelpiece surrounded by photos of loved ones or holiday souvenirs? Do you keep the remote by the phone so you can turn it down when it's your turn on air? The visual data will aim to provide a rich companion to the verbal and field data.

In spite of this methodological congruence, there is little work to date on analysing visual data in grounded theory. The most oft cited practitioner is Konecki (2011) who stated "The least we can do… is to analyse visual data as *auxiliary materials* in our GT projects to generate theories of actions and interactions or other processes" (p. 137). This was precisely the intention with the visual data in this study. In terms of an analytical method, Konecki pointed to the work of Clarke (2005), who devoted an entire chapter to analysing visual materials. She lists a variety of scholars calling for such attention to the visual and describes the post-modern as a visual period. Her opening of this chapter, however, is clear that its focus is on the analysis of existing visual data, not visual data generated in the course of the study.

The composition of the scene, the way the objects pictured relate to each other in space, and their location in the home, is the work of the participant and will augment the interview data. Considered this way, it is useful to refer to Liebenberg et al. (2012) who wrote that

> Where data sets centre around both narrative and visual data, and where the subjective construction of experience becomes the focus of analysis, grounded theory analytic techniques that emphasise reciprocity with participants can help to generate explanations for patterns of behaviour. (p. 59)

This closely echoes the intentions for the visual data in this study.

The study by Liebenberg and colleagues produced participant-generated visual data. These data were used in two ways: Participants were asked to reflect on the visual data they created (these reflections also became data), and the researchers themselves reflected on the data. For the researcher reflections, the team used similar strategies to those used in analysing interview data, including things like spreading photo prints on a large surface and grouping and re-grouping them according to patterns, noting the actions and the actors, and paying attention to what was not included in the images. Considered in this way, the analysis of visual data has more in common with the analysis of interview data than it might at first appear.

Making use of image-based data in this study is consistent with my intention to explore an unarticulated phenomenon. The photographic data in this research are intended to "explore the taken for granted", which Liebenberg (2012, p. 59) and colleagues identified as one of the reasons for the use of images in research; without a single word, where your radio is and what surrounds it, carries a lot of information about your relationship with the device itself and the noise it makes.

Concurrent data generation and analysis

Grounded theory requires the researcher to create and analyse data concurrently. Glaser and Strauss (1965) described their 'Methods of Collection and Analysis of Data' in an appendix to *Awareness of Dying*. They described a "blurring and intertwining of coding, data collection and

data analysis" (Glaser & Strauss, 1965, p. 288) from the beginning to the end of the research project. The idea is that as more data are added to the study, it can be sought and created with a view to saturating categories that the data might be sufficiently rich to produce reliable theory. The researcher begins with an initial, purposive sample, and codes this data before creating more. Birks and Mills (2015) wrote that this requirement, that the researcher concurrently generate and analyse data, separates grounded theory from other types of research designs in which data are created and subsequently analysed, or gathered in response to a theoretical position established prior.

Constant comparative analysis

"Variations on grounded theory are all well and good, but it is important to understand the original concepts; the most vital of these may be constant comparison until the researcher finds a theoretical position" (Stern, 2009, p. 61). The function of constant comparative analysis in a grounded theory study is to "generate data that results in high-level conceptually abstract categories, rich with meaning, possessive of properties and providing an explanation of variance through categorical dimensionalization [sic]" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 90). By comparing incidents with incidents, and cycling through different levels of conceptual interaction with the data, grounded theory analyses move beyond offering a descriptive account and towards creating a conceptual framework (Birks & Mills, 2015). Memoing is a crucial tool in this regard, allowing the researcher to record impressions and make enquiries of the data as they move through these conceptual levels.

Theoretical sampling

The purpose of theoretical sampling is to "find *new data sources*… that can best explicitly address specific, theoretically interesting facets of the emergent analysis" (Clarke & Friese, 2007, p. 367). Charmaz (2014) was clear that theoretical sampling is not about the sampling done initially to address researcher questions—that is initial sampling. Nor is it sampling to reflect different populations – which is something a researcher might want to do if they were reaching for generalisability.

Theoretical sampling in this study will be primarily achieved by adjusting interview questions. Birks and Mills (2015) described such an approach and cited that this has been the practice in other grounded theory studies. Other approaches to theoretical sampling in this study might be necessary if, for example, the data were to suggest that listening for company is particularly prevalent at a certain time of day. In this case, it might be possible to approach people broadcasting at that time and attempt to recruit participants listening to such programmes to saturate codes relating to such data.

Birks and Mills (2015) posed three questions to guide theoretical sampling: “What is obvious? What is notably absent? Is something more obscure being suggested?” (p. 68). Theoretical sampling is not an exercise in sampling until nothing new arises. The purpose of theoretical sampling is not to exhaust all possible expressions of the experience under consideration, but to move the data to the point of saturation in relevant areas of inquiry. Glaser and Strauss’ (1965) work describes theoretical sampling, explaining that once a category is saturated “more data need not be gathered nor analysis be rethought for the segment, unless further theoretical work makes it necessary” (p. 288).

Initial coding and categorisation of the data

Birks and Mills (2015) wrote that “[w]ith initial coding, the researcher moves swiftly to open up the data by identifying conceptual possibilities” (p. 92). Glaser and Strauss (1967) talked about the need to ‘fracture’ the data that the researcher might begin to “compare incident with incident, name apparent phenomena or beginning patterns and begin the comparison between codes applied” (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 92). Initial coding and categorisation of the data invite the researcher to ask questions of the data (Birks & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 2014), while remaining open to “all possible theoretical directions” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 114). Initial coding ends at the point at which categories begin to form.

In addition to ‘fracturing’ the data, this coding process should help the researcher distinguish between any preconceptions they bring and what is present in the data. Glaser (1978) referred to a tendency to code for preconceptions as ‘pet codes’, which sound cute but must be avoided. The reflexive work at the beginning of the study should enable the researcher to identify, through memo writing, what they are bringing to the data and what the data are bringing to the study. This should not be confused with developing theoretical sensitivity.

This stage of coding is typically done by analysing data very closely, at the line, sentence, or paragraph level. Charmaz (2014) stated initial coding “continues the interaction that you shared with your participants while collecting [sic] data but brings you to an interactive analytic space” (p. 109). This close coding “helps to define implicit meanings and actions, gives researchers directions to explore, spurs making comparisons between data and suggests emergent links between processes in the data to purpose and check” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 121). Certainly, in terms of comparison, this was a useful tool in this study, particularly in comparing data relating to ‘turning down’ or ‘turning off’, for instance, and looking at how participants navigated the soundscape, adjusting themselves around the sound by changing locations, or adjusting the sound around themselves by changing the volume.

It is important to pay particular attention to language while coding: language gives shape and voice to the world around us, and reflects our views and values. The language a researcher

uses to code data is no different. Researchers will often talk about the use of *in vivo* codes, that is, codes drawn not from the researchers' own language, but from the data itself. This is typically an early coding technique, which reflects the early stages of abstraction from the data. One early *in vivo* code in this analysis, for instance, was 'Keeping up with the play', which was how more than one participant described their use of the radio for news gathering. Many initial codes were applied during interview transcription and evolved and changed shape as more data was added to the study. In this way, in addition to the co-construction of the data itself, coding is also a co-construction between the researcher and the participant.

Intermediate coding

If initial codes fracture the data and open the researcher to possibilities of their data, intermediate, or focused, codes help the researcher evaluate those possibilities (Charmaz, 2014), forming them into categories. This type of coding is used to hone in on the most salient codes already identified and test them with other data. Focused coding will lead the researcher to form categories as they "begin to identify explanatory, conceptual patterns in their analysis" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 95).

Intermediate coding is intended to help the researcher move to a more abstract, conceptual reading of the data. Part of intermediate coding is linking categories together: Having pulled the data apart in initial coding processes, the intermediate processes should bring codes together in more abstract, conceptual ways. Part of this phase of coding is making decisions about which initial codes "make the most analytic sense to categorise your data incisively and completely" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 138).

Charmaz (2014) cautioned that theoretical codes such as those produced in intermediate coding must "earn their way" (p. 153) into the analysis. Like Glaser who describes 'pet codes', Charmaz pointed out that "grounded theorists tend to adopt concepts from their disciplines, or borrow them from another when their field lacks such concepts" (p. 253). Both Glaser and Charmaz are warning against relying on trends and fads in analysis, which can lead to forcing new data to fit old ideas, the very antithesis of grounded theory.

Theoretical sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity in grounded theory is where the sum of all that the researcher is and knows meets all the data they have generated. The capacity of theoretical sensitivity, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967) is two-fold: It is about the researcher themselves, their "temperamental bent" (p. 46), in addition to their insights into existing theoretical work in the area and their ability to have insights into their own data. Bowers and Schatzman (2009) described theoretical sensitivity as "*the ability to render something abstract or conceptual, to*

move to a more theoretical level. This is quite different than the ability to find a theory or theoretical concept to use to explain something" (p. 125, emphasis retained). For Glaser and Strauss, this is something that develops over a career, if not a lifetime.

Theoretical sensitivity is the means by which the grounded theory researcher adjusts the volume on elements of the data, turning up those which have relevance to theory development and quieting those which do not. It requires a confidence which I initially lacked as all the data seemed to offer potential for rich explanatory theory—listening spaces, awareness of the meta structures, habit, busy-ness and time, familiarity, taste—all of them. By continuing to work with the codes and concepts in the data using the other analytical tools and processes in the method, reflecting on my own knowledge and reading, I eventually felt confident to approach the dial and adjust the volume.

Identifying a core category

A core category will be able to connect with all other categories and their subcategories. A core category will "subsume lesser categories with ease and by comparison hold more significance, account for more data, and often make crucial processes more evident" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 248). The core category is not necessarily that which appears most frequently, but that which can fit most of the codes identified under its 'umbrella' (Saldaña, 2013), and this should be evident in the explication of the grounded theory. Identifying one category to rule them all is essential before the analysis can move onto advance coding and theoretical integration. In the case that no such category is readily available to the researcher, it is necessary to revisit previous coding and analytical steps.

Advanced coding and theoretical integration

The final stage of analysis, once the categories are saturated, the data can be supported by a core category and the relationships between the concepts you have drawn out become clear. The challenge is to raise a category to a theoretical concept, high level categories capable of carrying "substantial analytical weight" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 247). "We chose to raise certain categories to concepts because of their theoretical reach, theoretical centrality, incisiveness, generic power and relation to other categories" (Chamaz, 2014, p. 247). This stage of a grounded theory study requires the reseacher to explain how the theory fits the data, being clear that while other theories may offer explanations of the phenomenon in the data, their place is in a discussion and not in a theory grounded in the study data.

Generating theory

A theory can be understood as "an explanatory scheme comprising a set of concepts related to each other through logical patterns of connectivity" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 108). A grounded theory has these properties and is demonstrably drawn from the data in the study in question.

> Is a given grounded theory the only answer to a research question? Absolutely not. A grounded theorist makes choices like any other researcher… Someone else might find something different. That's why grounded theory can never be replicated – the population is different, the researcher is different, the time is different. This is a postmodern world. (Stern, 2009, pp. 61-62)

For constructivist grounded theorists, "a theory *depends* on the researcher's view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 239 emphasis retained). This is why the initial work to explore the position of the researcher is so vital to this methodology: In order to see the impression you make on the research, you must understand the shape of yourself first.

For the purposes of this study, the most helpful definition of a grounded theory has been that from Weiner (2007) who discussed the meaning of the term 'theory' in relation to grounded theory:

> By 'theory', they simply meant an explanation of the inter-relationship between and among concepts, in order to present a systematic view of what is going on. Done properly, this method generates the intricate relationship among a wide number of concepts. (p. 308)

A grounded theory seeks to explain a phenomena, "by conceptualizing it in abstract terms but does not focus on causality" (Rieger, 2019, p. 8). The purpose is not to explain 'why', but 'how'.

Rigour, credibility, and trustworthiness

The issue of trust in qualitative studies is a question of research quality. Quality markers in qualitative research, according to Birks and Mills (2015), arise from "being able to sufficiently control… the processes that you employ in order to accommodate or explain all factors that can impact on, and thereby potentially erode, the value of your research outcomes" (p. 33). They categorise those factors as "*researcher expertise, methodological congruence* and *procedural precision*" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 33, emphasis retained). They write that "methodological congruence is the foundation of a credible qualitative study" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 36).

Of course, at the outset of my first grounded theory study, my expertise is necessarily limited. In addition to reading widely on the topic of grounded theory, Birks and Mills (2015) recommended those beginning work in grounded theory seize opportunities to learn from other grounded theorists. The AUT Grounded Theory Group provided me with exactly this opportunity from which I have benefited greatly.

Procedural precision in a non-linear methodology requires an organised approach to documenting the research process. In grounded theory, the most important tool for achieving this quality measure is memoing, which is employed extensively in this work, using both words and pictures. The following chapters will draw heavily on these memos, some of which are included in the final text.

Methodological congruence requires an alignment of the philosophical position of the researcher, the aims of the research, and the methodological approach employed in the research. Through an exploration of myself in relation to the research, I find I am a feminist, multi-truth, constructivist, not quite around the postmodern turn but nether deaf to its entreaties. I want to understand the process by which older people experience the radio as company. I want my analysis to be sufficiently robust that I can share it confidently with people working in health, social, and broadcast policy to influence practice in these disciplines.

I have come to the view that for me to gain an understanding of and form a theory explaining (rather than make generalisable statements about or merely describing) this process, I need to foreground the knowledge of those people with this experience and that, together, we can generate data which I can analyse to construct a theory with explanatory power. As such, my epistemological position is now inherent in the research question I take into this study: How does radio listening provide company to older listeners who use it to that purpose? Further, asking this question not to broadcasting professionals or media theorists, but to older listeners, I am saying 'you have this knowledge. Please can we explore it together?'

The research question is predicated on the knowledge and agency of the participants: The question is not 'how well have we solved your problem?''how are you managing this situation?' The study wants to speak specifically to people with and about a self-generated *solution*, rather than specifically to people with and about a *problem* and an imposed 'solution'. The study takes up the mantle of situatedness invited by the data, makes space for my feminist position as a researcher, honours multiple ways of knowing by using interviews and photography, and applies the core tenets of grounded theory analysis to develop a data-based theory.

Summary – Becoming a grounded theory researcher

At its heart, this is a study of a process which many people take for granted and which is not yet clearly articulated or well understood. Grounded theory provides a methodological framework for examining social processes such as these. Integral to this methodological framework is the researcher's understanding of themselves and their own position in relation to the work. For me, a novice researcher, it is instructive to be invited by the methodology to

account for myself, and to examine, in depth, how I, my interest, biases, experiences, and knowledge, come to bear on this work from the outset. Such accounts are described in the methods chapter.

The grounded theory methodology described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was transformative in its time. In its original iteration, grounded theory might not be an appropriate methodology for me to use in this research. Thanks to the feminist grounded theorists who took this methodology and continued to develop it, I see that there is scope for me to do the same. Similarly, with moving the methodology around the postmodern turn and beyond: While I am not a postmodernist, I appreciate efforts to explore the methodology in new directions and hope I may have something to contribute.

CHAPTER 4 – METHODS

Introduction

A report on constructing data in this study could be reduced a simple sentence, such as, 'To answer my research question I constructed data through interviews with and photography of the radios of the 15 participants I recruited'. The data created in this study, however, are a product of more than a consent form, a conversation, and a shutter. Creation of data in this study was influenced by the time and place in which it was created, the relationships between the parties creating it, the identities they bring to the roles of 'researcher' and 'participant', the technology and processes inherent in photography, recording and analysis. I have outlined the salient points of these facets of data-making below.

Coming to a research question

Initially, I had trouble moving from a research idea to a more focused research question. I was clear that I wanted to explore loneliness among radio listeners, and I knew that I was interested particularly in loneliness and isolation among older people, but I did not have a specific question. I thought the problem might be one of language; it occurred to me, for instance, that 'radio listener' was not a term I heard non-academics use. I wondered how I would get people to participate in a study of radio listeners if they did not identify themselves by that term? I also wondered how practical it would be to ask participants to speak to a stranger about feelings of loneliness, given the stigma associated with the feeling.

My supervisors arranged for me to meet with Joan Lardner Rivlin, a life-long social worker and community development champion. I met Joan at Planet FM in Auckland where she hosted a weekly radio show for the Jewish community in Auckland, *Radio Shalom*. Joan invited me to meet her writing group, the Beach Haven Writers' Group. When I met them in October 2018, the group was comprised of 8 women aged 65 and over. One group member group observed that a 'radio listener' was her dad, at news time, shushing the household. I did not want to limit recruitment to people who saw radio listeners in this light.

Though I had approached the group to talk about terms like 'radio listener' and get a sense of their willingness to discuss loneliness, this consultation yielded other, complementary insights. During our conversation, it became clear that people readily associated the idea of company with the idea of listening to radio, regardless of whether or not it was something they personally used the radio for. This consultation was instrumental to me in helping me move towards a research question in which I would ask about company, rather than loneliness.

Rather than 'Are we helping you?' or 'Is this working?', the research question became 'What is going on in this interaction? How are you achieving this?', shifting me from research *on* to research *with* older people about their radio listening. In asking this question, 'How does radio listening provide company to older listeners who use it to that purpose?', and researching with older listeners who use the radio for company, I could seek to build a theory to explain the experience. The intention is that I can then share this theory with radio makers, broadcasting and public health decision-makers, academics, and interested radio listeners.

Ethics

This study was granted ethics approval by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 19 August 2019 [19/267] (see Appendix A). This research was also reviewed by the Mātauranga Māori Committee on 5 June 2019 and endorsed on 10 June 2019.

Mātauranga Māori Committee

In designing the study, I endeavoured to encourage and remove barriers to participation by Māori listeners. To do so, it was essential to ensure to ensure the design created opportunities for potential Māori participants to participate safely. I sought guidance from Mātauranga Māori Committee in the AUT School of Clinical Sciences and was grateful to have their assistance. The Mātauranga Māori Committee reviews research proposals and meets applicants to "provide a supportive forum for researchers to present their research ideas and engage in discussion as to how they may enhance the cultural responsiveness of their research" (Mātauranga Māori Committee, 2018). The committee's work is guided by *Te Ara Tika Guidelines for Māori Research Ethics: A framework for researchers and ethics committee members* (Hudson et al., n.d.). While the AUTEC process requires applicants to address *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, The Mātauranga Māori Committee and *Te Ara Tika* consider the research in relation to *tikanga*, "the customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context" (Moorfield, n.d.). I am grateful to have had the attention, encouragement, and assistance of the Committee.

On the advice of the Committee (Appendix B), I adjusted the age range for Māori participants to include people from age 65 and over. The Committee pointed out that the life expectancy of iwi Māori is lower than non-Māori New Zealanders. Data from the Ministry of Health indicate that in 2013 life expectancy at birth was 73.0 years for Māori males and 77.1 years for Māori females (Stats NZ, 2018). These figures represent a significant increase on those born in or before 1951, when life expectancy at birth for Māori males was fewer than 56 years and for Māori females 56 years (Stats NZ, 2018). By requiring participants to be 75 or older, the study would almost certainly limit the potential number of Māori participants.

The Committee also offered recruitment suggestions and suggested engaging a cultural support person to assist in working with Māori participants, both of which enriched the study greatly.

Allowing for vulnerability

AUTEC (2019) identifies "the elderly" as potentially vulnerable research participants. I would contend that this is an ageist position and, in fact, anyone is vulnerable to unethical research. Writing specifically on interviewing older people, Wenger (2001) pointed out that while ageism is a discussion point in health and social care discourse, within academic studies, "gerontology, while projecting its objectivity, has been haunted by the spectre of ageism… Referring to older people as the elderly had the effect of setting apart a significant proportion of the population on the basis of age" (p. 259). Wenger stated this led to 'sub-categories' of young elder and older elder, but these are hardly an improvement.

Furthermore, perhaps since it is an inherently relative term, there is little global consensus on what constitutes an 'elderly' person. The ethical safeguards I established in this study are not necessarily particular to older people. As Finch (1984) noted, anyone can be vulnerable to being exploited by research, either by exposing more than they had intended or by not taking full account of the potential impacts of their participation. It is the role of the researcher to ensure they are not harmed by either. For instance, Kathy Charmaz tells her students doing interviews that they need to allow time at the end of the interview to accept an offer of tea or coffee "'to allow for time to bring their interviewee back to a normal level of conversation. I think it's unethical not to, and leaving the person in a vulnerable state is simply unacceptable'" (Stern, 2009, p. 85). This applies to interviews with people of any age.

I was careful to safeguard the potential vulnerabilities of participants in a variety of ways. For instance: by encouraging questions to the researcher from the participant or their supporters regarding the participant information and consent; suggesting and making provision for the presence of a support person at the research meeting; making provisions to meet in public spaces; and showing researcher identification to participants on arrival. Participants' confidentiality was maintained throughout by: the offer of pseudonyms; obscuring any identifying information in visual data; and, using confidentiality agreements with suppliers (Appendix C). And, of course, by allowing time at the end of the meeting for chat, to come back to that normal level of conversation to which Charmaz refers (Stern, 2009).

This study is predicated on a requirement for mutual respect: Researching older people's experience of listening to the radio for company by working *with* rather than *on* older people gives the study a basis on which to develop mutual respect. Keddy et al.'s (1996) writing affirms the participatory aspects of grounded theory methodology and its non-hierarchical

validation techniques to which this study aspires. They refer to a goal set forth by Maguire (1987) of what Keddy et al. described as “participation built upon non-hierarchy and interaction between researcher and participants” (p. 451), which sits entirely within my understanding of how to generate valuable, non-exploitative data. This participatory production premise recognises that it is the work, skill, and knowledge of the researcher which creates the linkages to develop a theory, but it is the co-production of data and validity by all parties which forms the work and, fundamentally, allows for the production of the theory.

Any study enquiring into company may find participants who want for such connections. It is also true that this study aimed at intimacy within conversations and asked admission to personal spaces and private thoughts. Asking for intimacy and maintaining boundaries in the same breath is delicate. I aimed to address this in two ways: In addition to being prepared with contact details for local support services should the need be flagged during the meeting, I set boundaries by making clear in the participant information all the contacts we would have over the course of the research.

Free and informed consent

After an initial contact with a potential participant, I sent participant information (Appendix D) and a consent form (Appendix E) and waited for those to be received and returned before raising any discussion of meeting. This enabled participants to discuss it with their networks and feel confident to sign, or not, without my presence or time pressure.

Potential participants were informed in the participant information sheet that the intention was to make audio recordings of interview conversations and take to photographs of the participants’ radios. Participants were encouraged to discuss this with people around them and were invited to ask questions to me or my supervision team. The requests to record and photograph were detailed on consent the form, as well as at our meetings. Participants had multiple opportunities to consider this aspect of their participation and reaffirm their choice to continue or not. Some people were perplexed by my request to photograph their radio(s). I conceded that the request was unusual but that I thought it would be useful to the study. Some people were reluctant to consent to the photography because they had thought that they themselves would be photographed. Once I made it clear that they would not be in the photo, these concerns were mitigated, though the bafflement did not always abate. All participants agreed to recording and photography after their questions had been answered.

Participants were also offered a summary of the discussion. Some participants declined, but most took up this offer. Some participants had feedback on the summaries, making small corrections to their diction, and others took the opportunity to update me on things which had

happened since we met, or to add supplementary material. None of the participants withdrew from the study at that stage.

Recruitment

To explore this research question, the inclusion criteria were people who self-identify as using the radio for company, are aged 75+/65+ years and Māori, live in the community, and are able to speak conversational English. There were no exclusion criteria or requirements that people demonstrate a fitness to participate in terms of cognitive capacity, instead participants undertook correspondence with me themselves and undertook coherent conversations with me by phone or email prior to being provided with any documentation. I was satisfied that people able to engage in this process would be sufficiently able to consent and participate in the study. Participants were asked to consent to participate in an interview, at their home or a place of their choosing, and to me photographing their radios in the spaces where they listen.

Recruitment continued throughout the period of the study. Grounded theory requires the researcher, in reflecting on and generating data, to be purposeful in their recruitment and sampling. This approach to data generation means it was not possible to state at the beginning of a research project how many participants the study would require. Based on other, similar grounded theory studies (e.g., Inthorn, 2020; Nyman & Isaksson, 2015), I planned for a maximum of 30 participants.

Eligibility and identifying potential participants

The social stigma associated with loneliness can be a barrier to recruiting lonely people to participate in research (Goodman et al., 2015). It is, therefore, of considerable benefit to this study that it proposed to recruit people using the radio for company, speaking to an action they are taking, rather than requiring them to disclose a negative experience they are having in order to be eligible to participate.

Listeners were eligible to join this study if they: were non-Māori aged 75 or Māori aged 65 years and over; resided in the community; self-identified as listening to the radio for company; spoke conversational English; had a good recall of events in their lives over the last month. I assessed people's eligibility in communications by phone or email when participants approached me about joining the study. While some listeners contacted me and decided not to participate, no interested parties were excluded or withdrew from the study.

What marks out participants in this study is that they identify as using the radio for company, and had access to a radio on which to listen at their own discretion. By virtue of being aged 75 and over, it is also the case that their listening experience is outside the dominant discourse on listening and is not captured in official listening data.

While there is substantial literature relating to the incidence of loneliness in older people as a function of marital status or living arrangements, these findings relate to prevalence rather than to the experience of loneliness itself. As such, the grounds on which this study might be replicated relate not to the participation by people from various socio-economic groups, locations, or ages. Rather, a similar study could be made with others who understand that they experience the radio as company and are excluded from or obscured within official data relating to listening.

Recruitment methods

In addition to drawing on existing contacts, I employed a range of methods to recruit listeners to the study, namely: advertising by way of a recruitment poster (Appendix F); approaching programmes working with *kaumāuta,* elders; generating media coverage (Appendix G); approaching a men's choir; and snowballing. These methods and their contributions are discussed below.

Existing contacts

Consultation participants from the Beach Haven Writers' Group were invited to keep in touch with the study and were the first port of call for recruitment. At least one of the participants met the criteria for inclusion in the study, and others said they were willing to pass on details of how to participate to people within their circle. Betty was a member of the Beach Haven writing group who so generously assisted at the beginning of the research design. I said when we met that I would let the group know when recruitment was open that they would be welcome to participate. Pat, a member of the group not at the consultation, later joined the study. I am very grateful to Betty for sharing her insights and experiences with me not once, but twice.

Word of mouth

A number of participants were recruited through word of mouth. Beverley was recruited to the study via a PhD colleague in whose study she also participated. Garry is a relative of another PhD colleague. Naomi was recruited through a professional contact: A librarian at AUT heard a paper I gave at an AUT conference and asked how people could get involved in the study. This was my first recruitment enquiry and I was touched that a colleague, having heard the details of the study in a presentation, would consider encouraging her mother to participate. I took this as an endorsement that my research was considered safe, approachable, and significantly interesting to discuss with her family.

Later, for the purposes of theoretical sampling, I wanted to speak to people with listening experiences alongside careers outside the home. To this end, I focused on recruiting male participants who were more likely to have had such employment. By arrangement with the

choir leader, it was agreed for my partner to bring my study to the attention of the members of his male voices choir. Graeme is a member and contacted me after hearing about the study at choir practice.

Recruitment poster

I designed a recruitment poster (Appendix F) which I distributed throughout the Waikato, primarily using supermarket and community house noticeboards. In addition, I was able to put up posters in a number of bowling clubs, a men's shed, and at the Celebrating Age Centre in Hamilton.

Faye was recruited to the study through her daughter who worked in the same workspace in which I rented a desk for part of my PhD candidature. I had put up a recruitment poster in the tea area and we spoke about it one day. Soon after, while conversing with another woman while making tea, I learned that her mother was also an avid radio listener. She asked her mother, Brenda, whether she would participate. Faye, in turn, put up a poster in a common area of her retirement village which Bob and Ruth both saw.

Kaumātua programmes

The Mātauranga Māori Committee suggested the possibility of recruiting participants in the Waikato through the Rauawaawa Kaumātua Charitable Trust. The staff at Rauawaawa were incredibly helpful in sharing my invitation with their networks. Den joined the study thanks to this connection. I also approached the kaumātua programme at Te Kōhao Health and was grateful for an invitation from Rangimarie to attend a meeting of the kaumātua group to discuss my research with them and invite people to participate. We had an interesting discussion ranging from how to fix a radio to how to make an aerial from a coat hanger, and the role of radios in milking sheds. The group asked me to stay to lunch and before I left I was invited to return and share the results of the research at a later time.

Media

Recruitment activities also made use of local radio within the Waikato. Radio Tainui is one of a network of 21 radio stations in *Te Whakaruruhau o Ngā Reo Irirangi Māori*, the National Māori Radio Network. The network is funded in large part through Te Māngai Pāho, a Crown entity intended to promote te reo Māori and tikaknga Māori. Radio Tainui broadcasts across the Waikato, Rahui Pokeka, and Kawhia (Radio Tainui, 2017). Though the station's target audience is aged 20-45 (Radio Tainui, 2017), I considered them a valuable contact in my recruitment efforts as well as a potential audience for any findings from the research. I met with the station manager Trina Koroheke at the station in Ngāruawaahia in February 2020. She agreed to share the recruitment poster with her networks and shared the information with broadcasters at the station.

Active Age on Air (*Active Age on Air*, 2020) was a half hour weekly radio show from AgeConcern Hamilton. In November 2019, I met host Margrit Neukomm to discuss the possibility of featuring the study on the show. This did not transpire, however, Margrit did introduce me to her colleague Katie McKeever, the organisation's visiting services co-ordinator, who kindly shared my recruitment invitation with her volunteers and service users.

Seasons Magazine: Life Beyond 50 is available online and is distributed free of charge in locations around the country from "medical centres and practitioners to garden centres, cafes, restaurants, retirement villages, travel agencies, markets and many other retail and service outlets" (*Seasons Magazine*, 2020). In November 2019, I sent a press release to *Seasons Magazine* and had an article published in February 2020 ('Radio media still all go for the 50+', 2020) which Carrie and Anne read and resulted in them deciding to participate.

Snowballing

The study also used snowballing recruitment techniques, "in which respondents nominate acquaintances who may meet eligibility requirements" (Patrick et al., 1998, p. 296). For instance, Faye put up my recruitment poster in the village where she lives, and where Bob and Jenevere are also resident. Jan invited her friend Jo to participate. Jan and Jo are both talkback listeners, though their habits vary, their preferences and experiences are resonant. They are, again, both Pākehā New Zealanders. Perhaps a weakness of snowballing as a recruitment technique is that people surround themselves with like-minded people and this might lead to interviewees with similar experiences and backgrounds (Patrick et al., 1998). Taken as a whole, the listening experiences of these participants are varied in many ways, covering night/day listening, commercial/public broadcaster preferences, a mixture of music, sport and talkback. All the participants recruited this way are, however, Pākehā New Zealanders.

Participant introductions

With a view to challenging "who can be a knower" (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 3), the study eschewed collecting demographic data for its own sake. There was no compelling requirement for me to collect data such as socio-economic data, place of birth, or level of education. The goal of this research was understanding, not generalisability.

The broad statements I present here are so that we might have a sense of the research participants as people, rather than to provide a blueprint or checklist for any further research in this area. Working in this way honours participants as experts in this experience and I trust them to tell me what is important to or informs it. It is enough to understand that they share the characteristic of being aged in the target group and using the radio for company. All their other characteristics may be as similar or different as they are.

All 15 participants (12 women and 3 men) lived within the Auckland Regional Council, Auckland City Council, Hamilton City Council, or Waikato District Council areas. These represent a mixture of metropolitan and rural areas of Aotearoa New Zealand. Some participants co-habited with a spouse (n=5) or other (n=1), though most lived alone (n=9). Some lived in retirement villages (n=5), others lived at other private addresses such as houses, flats, units, or townhouses (n=9). One participant's living arrangements were not clear. All participants were fluent English speakers, some identified using other languages in addition to English as either native (n=1) or second languages (n=2). Some participants spoke of themselves as parents or referred to their children (n=13) and grandchildren (n=6).

The majority of participants were female. Leontowitsch (2012) wrote about the scarcity of qualitative research into the experiences of older men. Social science research, she wrote, is very often focused on disadvantage, and overwhelmingly older heterosexual men in particular are perceived to be comparatively advantaged. Leontowitsch also pointed to recruitment challenges, noting that in her own research it was "harder to persuade men to be interviewed and there were fewer men to approach" (p. 108). Despite theoretical sampling aimed a recruiting male participants, they are firmly in the minority in this study.

What follows is an introduction to each participant, focusing not on their listening habits, preferences, and experiences, but on their lives more broadly as they disclosed them to me. I have endeavoured to give a brief insight into the connections and priorities participant indicated to me when we met. They are written in the present tense to convey the sense of the person they are.

Faye

Faye lives with her husband in a retirement village. They moved there from their family home in which they had lived for many years and Faye still has visits from some of her neighbours on that street. She regularly hosts her daughter's two children. Faye takes pride in her garden, and she swims, bakes, and writes. Faye listens to the radio at night, both talkback and music, but she is too busy to listen during the day.

Naomi

Naomi and I had our interview on her porch, overlooking the water in the company of many birds. She has lived in that house for many years and has a lovely garden. She told me that gardening had ruled her life. In those days, she said, she would have gone out to the garden directly after breakfast, doing the lawns or minding the fruit trees, depending on the season. She never had a radio in the garden, but now that she cannot be out gardening, she listens to

the radio in the mornings instead, always the National programme. Naomi had a visit from a nurse while I was with her and spoke often of her daughter and son-in-law.

Bob

Arriving at Bob's house I noticed a very healthy, beautifully fragrant basil plant on the doorstep which Bob and his wife told me belonged to their son. In the year or so before we met, Bob and his wife had downsized and moved into a detached home in a retirement village. As a result of the downsizing, the only place for Bob to play CDs now is in the car. He finds the FM frequencies much better than AM for music listening in terms of sound quality. Bob prefers classical music to modern music. He sang in choirs for much of his life, though he does not now, and played organ in his youth. Bob told me he was in the process of trying to get off some committees, but had found it much easier to get on them than off them!

Jan

Jan lives with her husband and they are both avid radio listeners. Their home is decorated with many photographs of their family and friends, and while we were talking we had a visit from Jan's grandson on his way home from school. He had had some exciting news at school and was pleased to share it with his grandparents. There are radios in nearly every room in Jan's house, and we were introduced though an acquaintance of mine who lives behind Jan and hears her radio all the time.

Betty

Betty spoke of moving to New Zealand from Denmark with her family in her youth. She learned English at school in Denmark, but she had to learn Kiwi English when she got here—they had not covered that at school! She was still learning English when she married her Samoan husband. Betty has a large family and when we met was already great-grandmother to so many children that she could only just keep count. Betty and I met through the Beach Haven Writer's Group, which her sister leads. When I met Betty she had been living in a flat behind one of her son's houses in Auckland for about 6 weeks. She told me she thought it would take at least a year to get everything how she wanted it. For now, her radio is perched on a box beside her bed so she can listen at night; she will get a bedside table eventually, but she is making do for now.

Pat

Pat had only been retired for a year or so when we met and told me the radio had been a regular topic of conversation with colleagues at work. Now she finds it might come up over a game of bridge or over a cup of tea after Mass on a Sunday. She lives with her husband in the house where they raised their four children. Her husband listens to the radio too, but he only

wants the news, not the commentary afterwards like she does. Pat is also part of the Beach Haven Writer's Club, though she was not there the day I attended.

Brenda

I was introduced to Brenda through one of her daughters. Brenda talked about listening all through her life, as a child, a teenager, a newlywed, a mother, at work and at home. She told me about tuning in to a station from Australia as a teenager and the excitement of Radio Hauraki. These days Brenda also listens to podcasts on her computer or phone. She considers her listening habits private, a bit like her finances, but she might sometimes discuss what she hears with her daughter or her housemate.

Carrie

Carrie worked for a long time as a hospice nurse and shared some fascinating insights into her observations on the power of listening. Carrie volunteers at a local nursing home, playing piano for the residents and their families. She is friendly with her neighbours and recognised how important that was to her. Carrie's house was home to her and her dog Millie and her collection of miniature teapots. Since we met, the household has made a long anticipated moved into a retirement village.

Beverley

Beverley and I met in her local public library, where she exchanged greetings with at least one other library user and was friendly with the staff. She talked about watching television at her friend's house and using the library to read the paper online. Beverley told me about taking a group of students on a tour of a radio station once, and often had her students make radio shows as part of their work.

Graeme

Graeme told me that he used to work on the radio listening survey many years ago and had an interest in the research. Graeme does most of his radio listening in the car, which some days is not a lot, but other days might be a fair while, if he is out making his delivery rounds with *Seasons* magazine around the region. Graeme and his partner live in a retirement village and Graeme was particularly impressed with one of his neighbours who has an elaborate virtual reality gaming set up in his house.

Ruth

With its view over the local racecourse and its walls covered in art, Ruth's retirement village apartment gives an insight into some of her interests on entry. When we met she was keeping up with news of an international sailing competition. Ruth plays a variety of sports and games,

including golf, croquet, and bridge. The night before our meeting, she had been at a dinner in the village where everyone had got up and had a dance. After our discussion we went down to the café where we were joined in conversation by other residents who had also attended the function the previous evening.

Garry

Garry and his wife Jewell moved from their family home to his current house when Jewell's health deteriorated. Garry and Jewell raised 5 sons and a daughter in their old house. When they moved, Garry packed up a box of memorabilia for each of the children and handed them out. Garry told me about hearing former colleagues or students on the radio and about the different conversations he has with his children on their calls with him throughout the day.

Jo

Jo and her husband were among the first staff members at Radio 1ZD in Tauranga when it first started. Her husband was a talented musician and had worked in radio in Wellington. These days, Jo lives by herself in a retirement property. She is well connected within her village and meets regularly with a group of women she has been meeting with for more than 30 years.

Den

Den spent an amount of her adult life living in New South Wales, Australia. All her children were born there and many of her family still live there. Den lives in a studio flat and her front porch is home to some lovely pot plants. Den is friendly with some of her neighbours—one neighbour stopped in to invite her to a birthday party while I was visiting.

Anne

Anne grew up on a farm, and later had a farm herself, as well as having worked in social services. She still lives in her 'Waikato puddle', but these days she is in a house in town rather than on a farm. Her house is full of bits and pieces she has collected from her adventures, including an enormous fake spider on one of her kitchen curtains which terrified me when I first glimpsed it, mid-way through our interview.

Creating data

"It takes respect, sensitivity, humility, curiosity and tremendous skill to elicit information from complete strangers. Reliance on effectual inter-personal communication techniques for obtaining research data exemplifies the integral role of the researchers as a human instrument" (Stern & Porr, 2011, p. 53). Achieving trust within the research meeting was a combination of many factors: Professionalism, in the sense of arriving on time, bringing all my tools, being organised and demonstrating my respect for participants' time; reciprocity, in all

senses of an exchange, in which I offer my research expertise and participants offer their experiences, we each give *and* take information, ask and answer questions; and reading the tone set by my participant-cum-host. Shoes off? Sit at the table? On the couch? Which is your spot? Tea first, or later, or not at all? Thank-you, I'd love a biscuit. Please do tell me more about your collection. How comfortable is this silence? For me? For you? Often the tone at our meeting echoed the pre-meeting communications we had had by phone, email, post, or some combination.

In this section I outline the times and spaces of data making, as well as the specifics of how they were constructed and captured.

Time

Research conversations were undertaken between December 2019 and March 2020, and then between December 2020 and May 2021. The first case of COVID-19 in Aotearoa New Zealand was reported on 28 February 2020 (Cooke & Chumko, 2020). By this time it was clear from international news that COVID-19 was of particularly grave concern to older people (Baker, 2020; Cooke & Chumko, 2020; Deguara, 2020; Graham-Harrison, 2020; Tondo & Guiffrida, 2020).

My last interview before Aotearoa New Zealand locked down was on 12 March 2020. The uncertainty about the unfolding situation, globally and domestically, impacted my capacity to focus on my work. My notes recorded at the time say

> Right now, I just, I don't know if it's the data or the, the life that's happening around it but … I've noticed that I'm slower to chase up leads [Memo, 12 March 2020]

I was conscious of wanting to proceed cautiously around a disease about which we had little knowledge but some awareness and anxiety.

The government introduced a 4-tiered public health alert system in Aotearoa New Zealand on 19 March. Shortly thereafter, on 23 March, the country moved to alert level 3 and two days later moved to alert level 4. AUT suspended face-to-face research under levels 3 and 4 restrictions. Given the uncertainty of when it might be possible to resume face-to-face research meetings, I applied for and was granted a leave of absence from my studies from 15 May – 15 Nov 2020.

During this break in data-making, the world around the study altered dramatically. The primary defence against this public health emergency was isolation. Where previously isolation itself had been spoken of as a public health issue, the very same isolation now offered the most effective means of controlling another invisible, fast-moving, overwhelming, deadly public health menace. Discussions of the effects of isolation on all age groups proliferated in the

media and amongst government messages around the world (Gabbatt, 2020; N. Hartley, 2020; Hume, 2021; McKelvey, 2020; Sample, 2020). Neighbours and services were called on to reach out to and make contact with people who were isolating (*Coronavirus*, n.d.; Matthews, 2020; Sisson, 2020). A discourse which might have been peripheral previously, was suddenly very much in the limelight.

For some participants, pausing the study made no difference and we were able to pick up again once I returned to the work. This was not the case for everyone, however. One potential participant became too unwell to participate during this time and another, very sadly, died. I am grateful to them both for their interest in the study and am sorry we were not able to meet.

For me, returning to the study after this break meant working with renewed enthusiasm and sense of urgency. I saw the data with a new lens. Kathy Charmaz stated, in response to a question from a doctoral student on interviewing, "'when you go back to data, you see things you never anticipated'" (Stern, 2009, p. 84), and certainly this was the case for me. My thanks to all the study participants for their patience and perseverance.

Place

Considering interview locations and how they inform data generation is of interest among social science and feminist researchers in particular (see Bischoping & Gaszo, 2016; Elwood & Martin, 2000; Hester & Francis, 1994; Sin, 2003). Noting that scale is a social construct (Elwood & Martin, 2000), examinations of place and its contribution to constructed data consider the macro- and micro-geographies relevant to participants. Feminist geographers take note of the site of an interview and its micro-geographies for a variety of reasons. Doing so enables researchers to examine the role place can play in heightening or ameliorating power imbalances in the research dynamic; consider the contribution of place to the construction and performance of identities; and situate knowledge (Sin, 2003). I suggested meeting at participants' homes with a view to conducting interviews and undertaking photography in the same meeting, assuming, only partially correctly, that most people's listening devices would be in their homes. All participants, however, were invited to request or nominate an alternative meeting place. At her suggestion, I met Beverley at her local public library. All other research conversations took place in participants' homes. This created participants-cum-hosts. Even Beverley, being that we were in her local library with which I was not familiar, took on the role of host in our meeting, greeting me in the foyer, nominating a space for us to sit and talk, directing me to the toilets at the end of the meeting.

The offer to bring the research to the participants was born of convenience for me, and out of an understanding that access to transport can be a barrier to social participation of all kinds,

including research. An unintended consequence of this arrangement was that I became a guest in the study. This was a comfortable position for me, in that it provided a physical expression of the information exchange we had agreed to: We negotiated boundaries, physical and dialectic, and with each question I was or was not granted admission to participants' experiences and insights. I was a guest in their physical, emotional, and intellectual spaces. Listening space is negotiated within households, sometimes between members of a household and sometimes just by one person marking different spaces by their soundscape or the appropriateness of constructing company therein. The difference between listening spaces and conversation spaces marks out a difference between the company to be found in listening and the company to be found in conversation.

Koha

Research participants were gifted a jar of homemade jam by way of thanks for their participation—a *koha*. A *koha* is not a payment for participation but rather a "gift, present, offering, donation, contribution – especially one maintaining social relationships and has connotations of reciprocity" (Moorfield, n.d.). The idea of jam as a *koha* was to demonstrate my gratitude to the participants, recognising the value of participants' time and contribution and likely admission to their home with something which I had taken the time and made the effort to produce in my own home. I used fruit gathered from my neighbours' tree and a tree at my daughter's creche, fruit gifted by friends, or picked with my family at a local berry farm. Some jam from each batch made its way to my own table or was returned to the fruit's point of origin in thanks. Not knowing how many participants the study would need meant I made small batches as I went and as new people joined the study.

Making the jam kept me humble. I read the instructions, and yet, the results varied. The process was far from perfect. It was messy. It was an education. The raspberry jam over-set: I was left with a lump of sticky, raspberry deliciousness which remained in the fridge for months, slowly finding its way into my work afternoons, piece by sticky piece; take the jam off the heat when you check for set. The next batch of raspberry was, conversely, slightly underset. I should have left it on the stove for longer; the process might take longer than you think. Keep working. Pay attention. Be patient.

The plum jam burned on the bottom. Heat the fruit slowly after you have added the sugar because it might look like it is dissolved but it might still stick; it needs to boil and roll around in its own sweet, fruity lava to become jam, but you cannot just leave it, you have to be there to tend it all the while.

I underestimated the yield of the grapefruits and did not have enough jars prepared for the marmalade. Two of the lids did not vacuum. The jars, the vessels in which you hold and

present your jam, are not an afterthought. If you want your jam to last the Winter you need to pay attention so that when the fruit fades from the trees or the market, the memory of the season is truly preserved in glass and not lost to the mould of time. Prepare well if you want to make something you can gift with pride and safely use again later.

Jam-making is a series of seemingly tiny decisions, potential errors in the order or micrometres, or seconds. You can put a lot of effort in to collecting the fruit and preparing it, accidentally turn your kitchen into a B grade movie crime scene, break jars, and scald yourself, but all people will see is what they take out of the jar at the end. The scope for success is vast, but it requires attention to detail. There is a fine line between jam and burnt sugar, raspberries in June and mould on toast.

I nearly forgot to give Bob his marmalade. When I remembered and produced it at the end of our interview, he was incredibly pleased to tell his wife, a 'marmalade fan', what his participation in the study had yielded. Den turned the jar around after reading the label: A dark plum jam. She had been scouring the shops for a week looking for this without success, she told me, and I had just shown up at her door with a jar of the stuff. We were meant to meet, she said.

Anyone can enjoy a jar of jam, but only other jam makers will appreciate the work you have put into that one bright, sweet jar. Jan, who had jars of her own apricot jam on her bench, was glad to have my marmalade. She told me that hers was 'caramalised apricot', admitting that it had caught a little while she was distracted. Later, this gave me the confidence to jar my own slightly caught plum jam. Faye was glad to have a jar of my marmalade, but insisted on an exchange: She would take a jar of my marmalade if I would take a jar of hers (gladly received; thank you Faye).

The jam as a *koha* was a leveller, a conduit, and an embodiment of the reciprocal endeavour inherent in this study.

Cultural support

The Mātauranga Māori Committee recommended that I seek a cultural support person to work alongside me and any Māori participants to ensure we were able to communicate effectively. Initially I approached AUT colleagues looking for contacts who might be willing or interested but was unsuccessful. When Den enquired about participating I approached Murdoch Ngahau, a colleague from Free FM, who was happy to work with me in this additional capacity.

Murdoch had some knowledge of my research and we met to discuss the specifics of what I needed and how I intended to conduct the session. I asked Murdoch to prioritise Den's comfort and safety during the meeting; the data were important to me, but it was more

important that Den had a positive experience of the study. I was mindful that my research conversations to date had raised some sensitive topics relating to loneliness and isolation, and involved some intimate conversations about things like pain and bereavement. I was not suggesting we avoid difficult or intimate conversations, but that Murdoch supported us to have any such conversations in a way that prioritised Den's dignity. I asked that he intervene if he felt Den and I were not communicating effectively and set us back on course or stop me if necessary.

On Murdoch's advice, I took scones to the meeting. Den's first question to me on arrival was whether I had baked them myself and I was glad to reply that I had indeed. Undoubtedly, I could have bought nicer scones, but when we shared them with tea and jam later, Den was very complimentary, and it was clear that Murdoch's suggestion had helped set the right tone for the beginning and ending of our meeting.

Murdoch added a lot to our conversation, particularly as he and Den both had a good knowledge of Radio Tainui. He was especially helpful in guiding my behaviour at the end of the interview, making sure we stayed long enough to enjoy a cup of tea together, but knowing when it was appropriate to end the meeting and say goodbye. We debriefed afterwards and he was clear that he felt that Den and I had communicated successfully and we had created a positive experience overall. My indication of this was that, having said 'no' to receiving a summary on her consent form, Den changed her mind as we were leaving and said that she was interested to see what happened and she would like to have one. I took this to indicate not that she lacked trust and needed to check on us, but that she had invested in the research and was curious as to the progress and outcome.

Word data

Rubin and Rubin (2005) described qualitative interviewing as "conversations in which a researcher gently guides a "conversational partner" (p. 14). Such interviews, which Patton (2002) referred to as "information conversational interviews" (p. 342), offer "maximum flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appears to be appropriate… most of the questions will flow from the immediate context" (p. 342). Rubin and Rubin outlined different modes of qualitative interviewing techniques based on their drivers and breadth. Certainly this was the approach to the conversations in this study. Drawing from an interview guide (Appendix H), conversations were free to roam, taking directions led by participants or lines of enquiry which I pursed in response to different responses. The interview guide suggests starting the interview with asking participants about listening in their lives so far. By starting in this way, I asked participants to introduce themselves to me as a listener. I anticipated that

most participants would be able to recall listening at various previous stages of their lives, which was the case, and that this would be a comfortable topic of conversation.

A series of questions from one person and answers from another cannot be described as conversational. Instead, and this is particularly the focus of work on interviews by feminist researchers (see for example, Oakley, 1981, 2016; Finch, 1984; DeVault & Gross, 2012), research conversations are dialogic, reciprocal exchanges. This can be an exchange in the sense of answering direct questions, or sharing "the concerns that animate the research, so that the conversation can unfold as a collaborative moment of making knowledge" (DeVault & Gross, 2012, p. 181). At times, participants asked for this information directly, and at other times I found it appropriate to begin research conversations with a reminder of what the study wanted to discover. None of this is to suggest that an interview can be mistaken for a conversation. As Paget (1983) noted, the differences between a casual conversation and an interview are easily observed in "the length of the turns of our talk, in the frequency of gaps and silences between us, and in the dominance of her speech over mine. While I am there listening, I speak far less often" (p. 77). This was the tone I aimed for in making word data for this study.

The ease with which conversations flow in an interview is variously attributed to rapport or trust or to 'placing' one another. Early feminist researchers writing on women interviewing women note that they are interviewing contemporaries with whom they may share characteristics (see for example, Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1984). This is, of course, a position devoid of consideration of age, class, race, and many other differentiating characteristics (Cotterill, 1992). In my case, an immigrant, junior in years to the participants, such considerations were important in some circumstance, presenters well embedded in the national psyche of whom I was unaware, for instance, or discussions of battery operated radios, which I have never used. In these matters, I became very much the student, gladly informed by my interlocutor.

The interview guide suggests asking specifically about the feeling of company in listening, who is involved, what it feels like, how it happens, but these questions were rarely answered directly. Paget (1983) stated questions of this nature tend to be "theory laden" and that, instead, "interviews are organized around issues which embody these concerns in an elementary way" (p. 79). Questions about a history of listening embody questions about inherited attitudes to the news, or the evolution of modes of listening from those of a child to those of an older listener.

Very many texts on 'interviewing' focus on strategies for elicitation and conduct, but few appear to be focused on pleasure and the invitation to participants to reflect. Rubin and Rubin

(2005) noted that “conversational partners should find the interview itself enjoyable and a time to reflect and draw their thoughts together” (pp. 101–102). This research aimed for precisely this, by positioning participants as conversation partners and honouring and respecting their experience. Many participants reflected during our conversations that this was not something they had previously thought about. Many times I commented on how exciting it was to be creating this new knowledge together.

Finch (1984) suggested that the practice of being asked and answering questions might be particularly familiar to women who are

> subject to questioning from doctors, midwives and health visitors: and also from people such as housing visitors, insurance agents and social workers, who deal principally with women as the people with imputed responsibility for home and household. As subjects of research therefore, women are less likely than men to find questions about their live unusual and therefore inadmissible. (p. 74)

In fact, the idea of an interview is very familiar to very many people. Fontana (2001) wrote that this is a function of living in a postmodern society, wherein “Interviewing… has become the very stuff of life as members of society spend much of their time asking questions, being asked questions themselves, or watching TV shows about people being asked questions and answering them in turn” (p. 161). As such, Fontana says, “They all seem to have routine knowledge of the rules of interviewing, with no need for instruction” (p. 161). Particularly, perhaps, among such astute and practiced media consumers as participants in this study, many of whom were able to critique both those being interviewed and those doing the interviewing.

I recorded word data using a digital Dictaphone style recorder. I was conscious that I wanted a discrete recorder. I transcribed these recordings, which I used to code the word data. The transcripts include notes from me, such as ‘Very, very quiet here’, and I found that many times I was drawn back from the transcript to the recording to revisit the texture of the exchange.

The biggest anxiety I had when attending interviews was that my recorder would fail or that the recording would be unusable. This did happen once, when the batteries went flat during my interview with Den. I was hyper aware of the recorder, even 13 interviews later, and luckily noticed and was able to replace them quickly. In this instance, Murdoch was with me, and using our combined recollections, and my notes, I did not feel that I had missed any substantive material. I included my recollections in the summary I provided to Den that she might dispute them if they seemed inaccurate. Very often, as conversations continued after I had switched off the recorder, I noted additional relevant comments in my field notes or memos, for instance

> So as I was going around taking photos and we were chatting and I turned off the recorder, but and she asked me, oh, how did you get to be researching

> this? And I said about Nancy and Marta and Nicole. And I said, you know, having my own daughter and the radio was a real source of company to me then. And she was like, 'Oh yeah, I didn't think about that. But when I was, had stopped working and I had my children and the men would leave in the morning and it would just be me and this non-English speaking baby. And just, it was company, it really was company', you know, she was really like, 'Yes, I never thought about that. Of course it was!'. And talked about using Listen with Mother. But when I said, 'Let me put this recorder back on' she was like, 'Oh no, no, no'. [Memo, 20 May 2021]

Stern (2009) eschewed audio recording interviews "Because grounded theory is a theoretical interpretation of a conglomerate of data rather than a case report of a series of incidents" (p. 58). Though the audio and visual recordings in this study cannot represent a full reflection of our meetings, they are augmented by field notes and memos and taken together, these are my best effort at creating a full data set.

Image data

To create the visual data in this study, I used both a digital SLR and a manual SLR with black and white 35mm film. The use of film in a study in the 2020s might seem purposefully anachronistic. My driver was three-fold: I have been using this camera for 20 years and feel comfortable with it; I find the quality of film images to be rich and detailed; the analogue nature of film photography echoes the analogue nature of many radios in use today and felt appropriate. I am glad to have also used a digital camera from the point of view that film is fallible, and, indeed, I incorrectly loaded my first roll of film and would have no photographic record of my first 3 interviews were it not for also having made digital photos. I shot in black and white because I felt it could capture placement, context, age, and signs of use without overwhelming me with coloured data. The only time I regretted not shooting in colour was in my interview with Den who specifically talked about the colour of her pink portable stereo.

Just as there are power dynamics and safety to consider in relation to the construction of word-based data, so too these considerations are relevant to image making. Prosser and Schwartz (1998) noted that even the language of photography, load, aim, shoot, implies threat. It was always my intention to make image-based data after word-based data within the research meetings. My intention was that the word-based data would guide me in making image-based data. My photography protocol indicates as such (see Appendix I). An additional, though unanticipated, benefit to organising meetings in this order was that working on word-based data first meant we had built trust in the research relationship. Having sat with me in the kitchen or lounge for an hour or so, I felt able to ask participants whether I could take photos in their bedrooms or bathrooms, private spaces into which a guest is not normally admitted, at least on their first visit. It would have been uncomfortable for both of us if I had begun in this way.

Only one participant hesitated when I asked to use an audio recorder. Very many more had questions about my use of photography. All participants consented to me taking photographs once I reiterated that their radios were the subject of the photographs and that they themselves would not appear. Without exception, people found it curious that I wanted to take photos of their radios. After having discussed 'the radio' for an hour or so, it was difficult for participants to appreciate my interest in the device itself. Very often, however, photographing the device led to conversations about its provenance, placement, performance, or suitability.

I was conscious when framing photos that I wanted to understand the relationship between the radio and the listener, but I had no place or justification for collecting extraneous data.

> I did feel a bit I felt conscious of taking photos of things like the cobwebs, but we had talked about that and she was kind of like, 'I don't care about the house'; she just seemed utterly not bothered…
>
> I went and asked specifically about the bedroom and she was not bothered, but I felt very conscious of not wanting to catch any detail really, like there were stockings. And I don't know: the cropping felt very important to… maintain her dignity. I suppose there are certain things that would, it would have been possible for instance, to include her continence aids or whatever, but that would be, it wasn't relevant and it wouldn't be appropriate. And I was very mindful to not include those things. [Memo 12 December 2019]

Data-making should never be at the expense of or compromise the dignity of participants. In practice, that was reflected in choices made with regard to framing and detail when shooting.

Memos

Clarke (2005) wrote that memos are "sites of conversation with ourselves about our data" (p. 202). Certainly, in this study, memo-making functioned in this way: After leaving each participant, I stopped and recorded a voice memo (later transcribed), which allowed me to record, immediately, those aspects of the conversation, setting, and interaction which made impressions on me. While these were sometimes impressions of my own performance in the role of 'researcher', "I wish I had the tools, interview skills, and experience to have gone, dove into that a little bit" [Memo, 31 January 2020], they were more often a record of those parts of the conversation which captivated or intrigued me: "She talked about different modes of listening, although she didn't call it that, and very much told the difference between, found a difference between the way she listened at night and the way she would listen in the day" [Memo 12 December 2019].

These memos also worked as a form of field notes, recording details about the setting of the conversation, "Just a beautiful [home]… walls covered in art; realized we had the exact same

couch" [Memo, 17 December 2020]. Stern and Porr (2011) wrote that notes such as these offer important context, not captured by recordings. Similarly, notes such as these

> Absolutely spotlessly clean house. I almost felt bad for sitting on the sofa. The interview set up wasn't ideal in the sense that… Graeme was in an armchair and I was at the, on the couch and we were kind of not quite at right angles to each other. And, but that was the spot he wanted to be. So I just went with it. [Memo, 16 December 2020].

contribute to later memos relating to listening spaces, for instance

> In observing the conditions of Graeme's interview with me, it would be fair to say we were well attended by his spouse, who generously offered coffee and biscuits and sat with us for most of the interview. Her attendance was welcome, but perhaps speaks to the spaces in which Graeme is free to pursue his own pleasures independently. Whereas when interviewing others who co-habit with a spouse (Bob, Jan, Pat, Faye) or housemate (Jan) the other party, though they may also be an avid listener, has removed themselves from the conversation. [Memo 11 February 2021].

In relation to the image data, I used memos in two ways: recording memos about photos within my post-interview memos and on seeing images for the first time. Memos recorded directly after interviews often include reflections such as:

> there was this kind of container in front of the kitchen one [radio] that was irritating me at first in the frame. But then I changed the angle a bit… I needed to work around that. Because it was obscuring the actual object, but in a way I was glad of that… because… it's, that whole object is obscured by life, and her life. And it's not the focus, but it's essential" [Memo, 12 December 2019].

I also recorded memos whenever I got any film scans returned, for instance

> This is a photo from Betty's bedroom and I just want to record this memo about what I'm seeing. So this is: Betty's radio is right next to her pillow of her single bed, where almost where a partner's head would be, or a second person if it was a double bed" [Memo, 20 February 2020].

Reflections such as this are echoed in looking at or creating other photos, such as those of Jo's bedroom radio which she brought to me to photograph. I asked her if I could take a picture of it where it is when she is using it. She peeled back the bed covers and put it on the pillow beside hers.

Sometimes my memos were written, but more often my memos were recorded as voice memos on my phone or recorder.

Theoretical sampling

Clarke and Friese (2007) wrote that "theoretical sampling has been integral to GT [sic] from the outset [and] and remains a fundamental strength of the analytic approach" (p. 367). The purpose of theoretical sampling is to "find new data sources… that can best explicitly address

specific, theoretically interesting facets of the emergent analysis" (Clarke & Friese, 2007, p. 367). Birks and Mills (2015) posed three questions to guide theoretical sampling: "What is obvious? What is notably absent? Is something more obscure being suggested?" (p. 68).

One thing quickly became obvious: Participants spoke readily about using the radio for news. Reflecting on the memos I made directly after each participant meeting, as well as the field notes I had made at the time, I identified that many of the participants had spoken about the value of the radio as a source of news. I had an emergent category relating to news and information gathering via the radio. Over subsequent meetings I was able to explore this emerging category further, talking with participants about other potential news sources, use of the radio as a news source in their listening history, and their news gathering preferences. Use of the radio as a source of news and information, both in concert with, or perhaps in preference to, other sources, has proven fundamental to the listening experience for the majority of participants.

Following this prompt from Birks and Mills, and looking at the sample and emergent categories after 7 interviews, and in particular after speaking with Brenda and Pat about their experiences of listening and employment outside the home, I was eager to speak with more people whose listening lives were shaped by work outside the home. I was also eager to speak with people, like Betty, who might have been listening to non-English language radio. I began to focus on recruiting men and Māori participants.

Strangers, in passing, when asking about my work would readily tell me the radio is company for them. They were taxi drivers, the camera shop owner intrigued by my film buying and eager to discuss my camera, the father of my daughter's friend, they are many, various men, but they are not participants in the study. Many of the men I met in passing who might ask these questions were of insufficient age to participate. I reflected that there were, at this point in the study, two women whose husbands' radio use mirrored their own and yet their wives were participants and they were not. The reverse was so for Bob and his wife, who were, to this point, a rule-making exception.

Analysing data

Birks and Mills (2015) wrote that "A fully integrated grounded theory is a high-level conceptual framework that possesses explanatory power supported by advanced analytical processes" (p.91). What follows is an account of that analytical process as applied in this study.

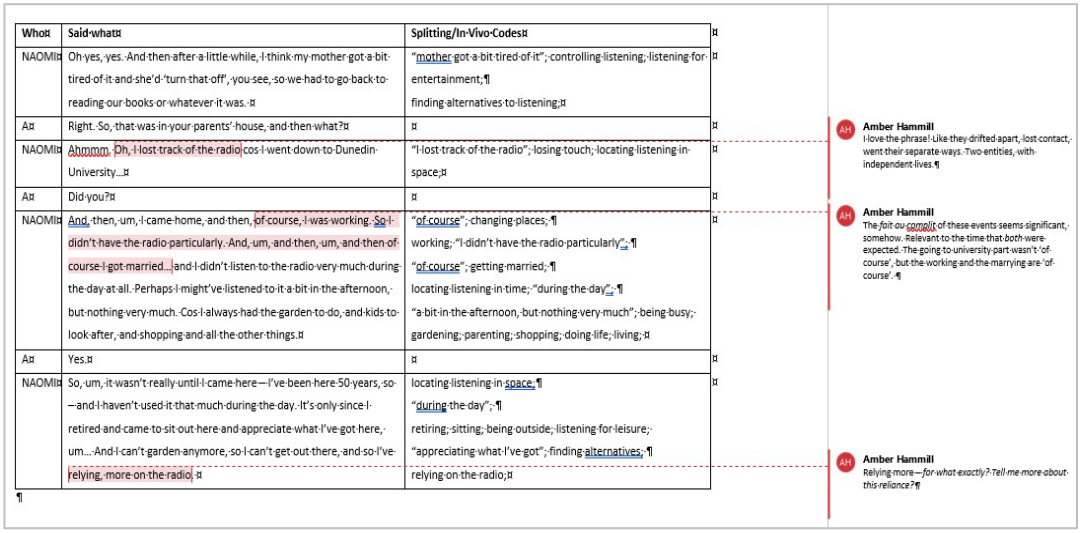
Interview data

"The point is that interviewing older people should not be conceived as a one-size-fits-all set of procedures; rather, it is a form of inquiry that should take into account the diverse subjects

older people are now known to be" (Wenger, 2001, p. 260). It was my role as a researcher to guide this exploration by observing and posing questions but, having set the parameters as being of a certain minimum age and using the radio for company, I was content for participants to indicate what was important to them, in all the diversity their years and experience bring.

I transcribed interview data from audio recordings. Throughout the reflexive process, I recorded 'memos', the thoughts and ideas I had in relation to the data, questions of the data about what processes and actions it reveals, and what is not included in the data. This part of the analysis involved a detailed reading of the minutiae of the data and an exploration of its nuance.

This initial analysis was conducted using line-by-line coding, which Charmaz (2006) stated "prompts you to study your data closely… and to begin conceptualizing [sic] your ideas" (p. 11). These details and nuances are labelled according to their important features. These labels are called codes. Initial codes are "provisional, comparative, and grounded in the data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 48). By adding layers of data, generated through more interviews and radio portraits in this case, the researcher continues to reflect and record their thoughts on the data as well as their analytical decisions (Birks & Mills, 2015). I recorded initial codes alongside the transcript and wrote memos to myself in the comments as I went (see Figure 2 for an example).



Who:	Said-what:	Splitting/In-Vivo-Codes:
NAOMI:	Oh yes, yes. And then after a little while, I think my mother got a bit tired of it and she'd 'turn that off', you see, so we had to go back to reading our books or whatever it was.	"mother got a bit tired of it"; controlling listening; listening for entertainment; finding alternatives to listening;
A:	Right. So, that was in your parents' house, and then what?	
NAOMI:	Ahmmm. Oh, I lost track of the radio cos I went down to Dunedin University…	"I lost track of the radio"; losing touch; locating listening in space;
A:	Did you?	
NAOMI:	And, then, um, I came home, and then, of course, I was working. So I didn't have the radio particularly. And, um, and then, um, and then of course I got married… and I didn't listen to the radio very much during the day at all. Perhaps I might've listened to it a bit in the afternoon, but nothing very much. Cos I always had the garden to do, and kids to look after, and shopping and all the other things.	"of course"; changing places; working; "I didn't have the radio particularly"; "of course"; getting married; locating listening in time; "during the day"; "a bit in the afternoon, but nothing very much"; being busy; gardening; parenting; shopping; doing life; living;
A:	Yes.	
NAOMI:	So, um, it wasn't really until I came here—I've been here 50 years, so—and I haven't used it that much during the day. It's only since I retired and came to sit out here and appreciate what I've got here, um… And I can't garden anymore, so I can't get out there, and so I've relying, more on the radio.	locating listening in space; "during the day"; retiring; sitting; being outside; listening for leisure; "appreciating what I've got"; finding alternatives; relying on the radio;

Amber Hammill
I love the phrase! Like they drifted apart, lost contact, went their separate ways. Two entities, with independent lives.

Amber Hammill
The *fait accompli* of these events seems significant, somehow. Relevant to the time that *both* were expected. The going to university part wasn't 'of course', but the working and the marrying are 'of course'.

Amber Hammill
Relying more—*for what exactly? Tell me more about this reliance?*

Figure 2 – Sample of initial coding and memo writing

I generated nearly 2000 codes from line-by-line work on data from 5 participants (see Appendix J for a coding sample). This is not unusual. Punch (2014) noted that

> Successful open coding generates many provisional labels quickly from even a small amount of data, but this sort of coding does not go on indefinitely. The objective of open coding is not the endless generation of conceptual labels throughout the data. This process of labelling therefore needs to be balanced

> by two other processes. One is to keep an overview of the data in mind, and to keep looking broadly across the data, rather than to only do the intensive coding. (p. 182)

Drawing these initial codes into focused codes was greatly helped by cross referencing them with my overview of the data noted in my constant comparative analysis (see Appendix K for a sample) and by revisiting memos made during data generation and transcription. By cross-tabulating these with initial and in vivo codes (see Appendix L for a sample), the early categories were easily accessible.

As the body of data grew I became more familiar with the data, and began to analyse these codes, to refine and synthesise them, working towards a point at which the codes could be grouped into categories. I used diagramming extensively to visualise these initial and focused codes and categories (see Appendix M for an example). Familiarity with the data made it possible to move to a phase of coding based on the most significant or frequently arising codes found in the initial, line-by-line analysis. This process of revisiting and grouping initial codes is known as intermediate coding. Analysing the concepts arising from the line-by-line work, and memo writing all the while, eventually enabled the analysis to move from codes to categories. This is not a linear process and it is common for researchers to move back and forth between phases of analysis, as I did.

Image data

"Analysing photographic data in qualitative research, as with textual data, is a series of inductive and formative acts carried out throughout the research process" (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998, p. 125). Analysis of the photographs was three-fold: I recorded and transcribed memos describing photos and what I had captured—the relation of objects to one another, the location of the radio within the home, the uses and function of the objects around the radio. I also printed photos of each radio I photographed. I made a physical album by putting these in a sketch book and coded elements of the image in the same way I coded elements of interviews (see Figure 3, or for further examples see Appendix N).

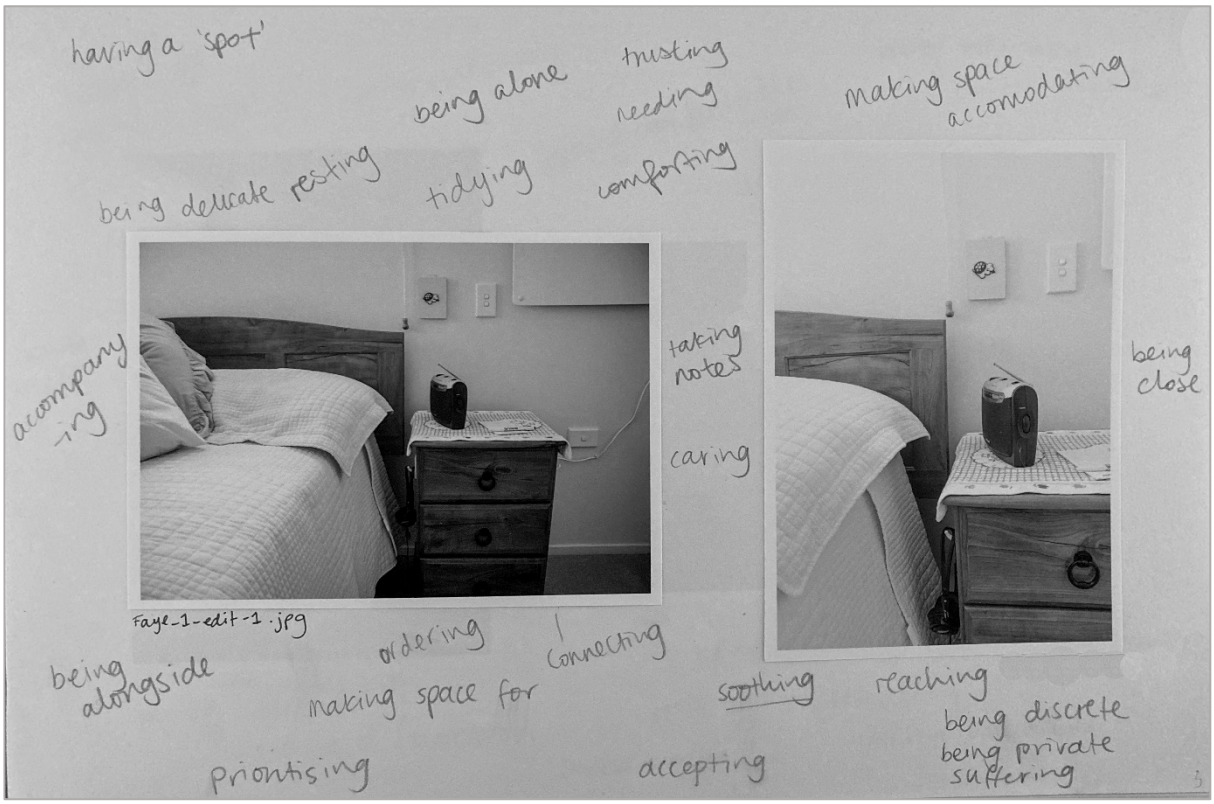


Figure 3 – Coding photos of Faye's radio

Having these photos in the same album made constant comparative analysis simple and visual; I could flick back through the album looking at pictures consecutively, seeing different reflections, the nearness of the radio for night time listening; the way transistor radios and digital devices were used in motion, having no permanent resting place.

Throughout this thesis, image data are presented as visual quotes, similarly to the word data. I have been deliberate about rendering these equally, in the sense that they are both set apart from the text, identified with tags or punctuation, and not listed separately elsewhere as though figures or references.

Constant comparative analysis

The idea of creating data and analysing it simultaneously felt awkward at first. I felt nervous to reflect on what data we had created, assuming I would find it wanting in every regard. Further, I was so overwhelmed by the detail and richness of the data created with my first participants that I found it difficult to sit with the data until sometime after we had created it. On reflection, I was in a continual process of comparative analysis while creating and, in particular, transcribing word data. Many of my memos made during transcription record things such as 'this reminds me of what X said', and I began keeping a log of these echoes in a chart (see Appendix F Constant Comparative Analysis) This had the advantage of documenting the process of theoretical sensitisation, as well as beginning to draw out broad areas for consideration as categories later in the coding and analysis stage.

This process was iterative and retrospective; as new points of comparison arose I retrospectively considered where or whether I had heard or seen similar instances before. This provided an opportunity to move back and forth through the data over the course of creating it. This process was iterative in the sense that new points of comparison could be added, existing ideas refined, blended, or amalgamated, though almost never deleted. The development of this comparison document unfolded over several spreadsheet tabs. Eventually, I revisited this in considering categories for my initial codes and found that the comparative fields I had used provided a good starting point for assembling and naming categories.

The process of constant comparative analysis suggested some early categories. Listing these categories and identifying incidents across the data as I went, supported theoretical sampling, for instance, relating to news gathering preferences or experiences of mothering young children.

Perhaps because, in the way a film does, images were delivered in batches, at some distance in time from their creation, viewing film scans provided a different opportunity for comparative enquiry. Data from a handful of participants would arrive together, and be viewed in sequence, as I 'walked' through their listening spaces once again. Memos from this work help document these comparisons.

Comparison remained a constant during coding. I kept a list of initial codes and added to this with each coded interview transcript. This meant that, while coding subsequent data, I was able to refer to the list and apply existing codes as appropriate when I found similar incidents. In addition to this cross-referencing, I memoed after each coding session and found my memos often included phrases such as, 'this is similar to what X said' or 'this reminds me of X's observation that'. Using externalised comparative methods such as list-making, and internalised methods as in the memos, supported a practice of constant comparative analysis throughout the study.

Diagramming was also a valuable tool for documenting these comparisons. Sketching out people's living arrangements was born of an early sensitisation to space as part of the company-making process; drawing out these day and night comparisons indicates an early sensitisation to time as important to the process of company-making. It was clear, very early on, that creating company at night and creating company during the day were both possible, and linked somehow, but not identical. Some participants did one or the other, others did both. Comparing the experience of participants who did both day and night listening was useful in drawing out the function of busy-ness or activity alongside listening. Comparisons of

this kind invited questions of the data about the function of listening as a 'companion' to *activity* during the day and *inactivity* overnight.

Comparing experiences of listening in the dark and listening in the light changed the value of different devices (big buttons, illuminated displays), changed the relationship of the listener to the device in space (being physically closer, using headphones), and perhaps, most tellingly, the attitude of the listener. Reflecting on this description of night time listening by Naomi

> Oh, I suppose I'm snuggling down in bed, and not near that fire and trying to get at the light and being wet through and, and the little boat that they were on nearly got swamped, just from it going round the bend in the river, at the river mouth. And, um, ah, well, you can appreciate that and listen at the same time, and say to yourself, 'Well, thank the Lord I'm here and not there!'

was useful in informing my questions to Den about her night time listening

> *A – So, I wonder when you're having that, when you move from kind of day time listening to night time listening, what's the difference for you? Would you notice any difference between how it feels for you to be listening in the day and how it feels for you to be listening in the night?*
>
> Den – My thoughts are more peaceful at nights when I listen to the radio. Even if they say things that kind of brass me off, I don't, I don't react like the way I do during the day.

In comparing these descriptions of this mode of listening, the co-constructed nature of the listening experience is stark. There are so many differences observed between listening in the day and listening in the night and these came to form a significant part of the analysis.

Identifying a core category

Diagramming was central to exploring the links between categories, seeing their inter-relationships and dependencies. There were many iterations of the final diagrams presented in the summary section of Chapter 5 – Early Analysis. Once I could confidently express that taste was an expression of identity, but that the reverse was not also true, I understood how the categories fit together.

As is documented in Chapter 6 – Listening and identity, it was through an analysis of the categories and a review of memos that I determined identity to be the core category in this study.

Advanced coding, theoretical integration, and generating theory

I came to appreciate identity as a higher level concept in reference to my research question. The ideas of 'identity maintenance' and 'identity work' were concepts which explained the work of listeners and accounted for feelings of companionship.

Theoretical integration came, disarmingly, around dusk, while sat in the passenger seat on a long drive. After a few days away from my work, quite suddenly and in the middle of a completely unrelated conversation with my partner, I found I could put the pieces together. For months, I had been trying to sketch out the relationship between the two processes I could see in the data: The ongoing process of identity work and another process of contextualising myself (Figure 4). While theoretical integration had seemed to drop from the South Waikato sky, it had, in fact, been a work in progress over many months, as Figure 5 shows.

I could not understand how they fit together, until I could. I retrieved a pen and paper from the glove box of the car and scribbled it down. The pieces fit and I had performed "the final analytical leap" (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 174) to theoretical integration. What these developmental sketches show is the back and forth between abductive, deductive, and inductive processes; I attempted to draw what I saw in the data, returned to the data, revised the ideas in the diagram, and repeated this process over months until I could make the leap.

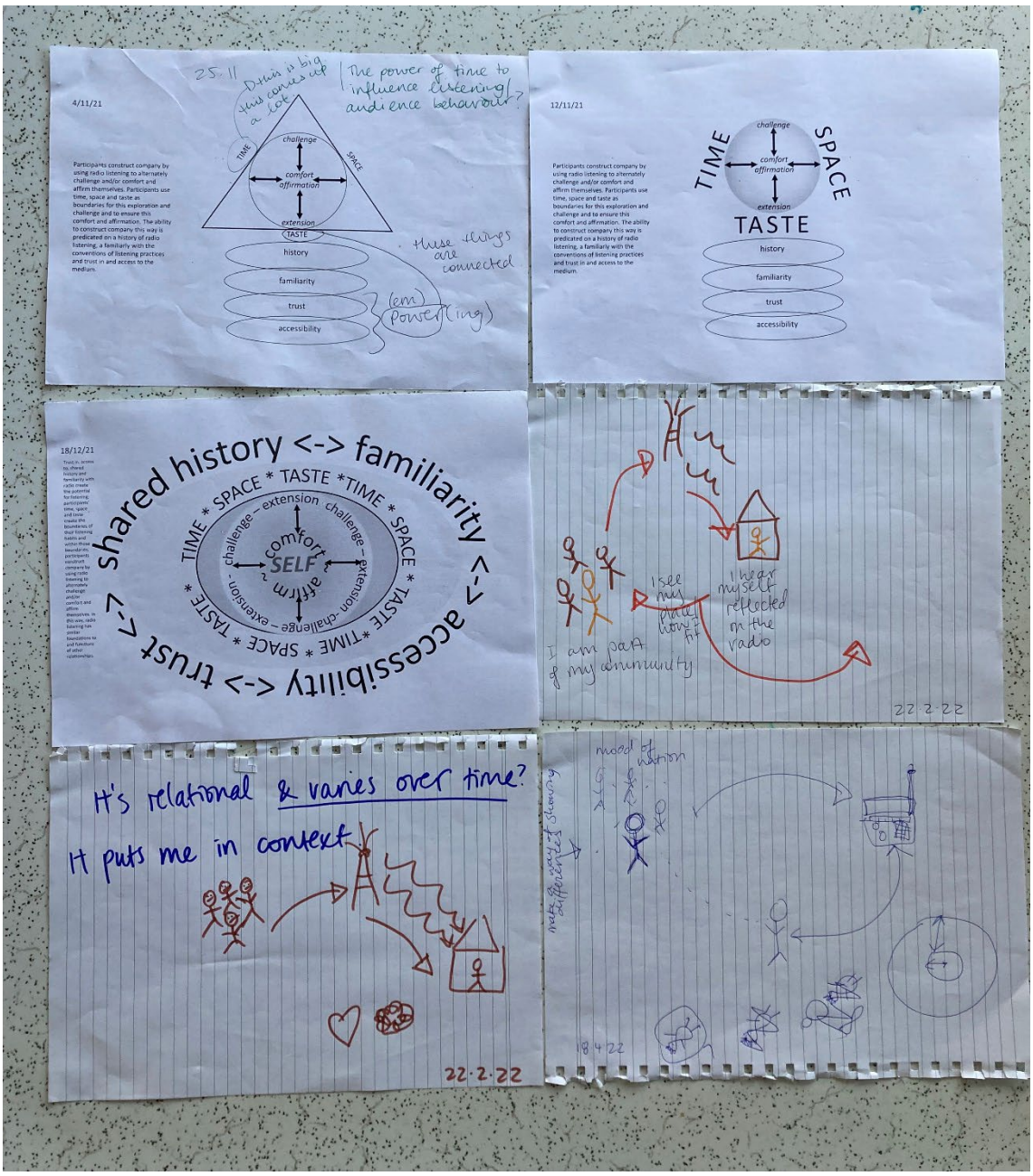


Figure 4 – Diagramming towards theoretical integration

Summary – Using the tools

The data under discussion in the following chapters is reduced to images and words, but it is a product of much thought and consideration on the part of both participants and researcher. These considerations ranged from the language used to frame the question, to managing the power relationships between researcher and participant, host and guest. Very many small but intentional decisions have shaped these data, making them a product of their time, place, and means of recording. The data reflect what was said and seen, and what was not said or seen by way of omission or discretion. They are entirely unique to this study, and my analysis of them entirely unique to me.

Reflecting on the anxious, novice researcher who met the Beach Haven Writers' Group that Saturday morning, I can clearly recognise my own skills development over the course of this work. It is true that I approached each participant meeting with nervous excitement at what might unfold, but, as time went on, I became increasingly confident that I had the skills to manage the research conversation safely and purposefully. The process of preparing this study, through the reflections invited by the methodology, and in preparing an application to AUTEC and the Mātauranga Māori Committee, galvanised my thinking and provided opportunities to carefully consider each stage of the research. Having been through these processes and had generous feedback therein, I understood and could harness and navigate the strengths and weaknesses of the study.

Consenting to participate in a piece of research is a generous act. In their willingness to participate fully, particularly when that involved making themselves vulnerable in discussing intimate and sensitive topics and granting access to their homes and private spaces, participants in this study showed themselves to be both trusting and courageous. My growth in confidence and skill as a researcher over the course of the work was aided in no small part by the listeners in this study who showed themselves to be curious, thoughtful, and considered in their participation and contributions.

Though some of the analytical methods used by grounded theorists seemed opaque at the outset of the study, their applicability came into sharp relief as the body of data grew and I moved through the coding cycles. Diagramming, in particular, was invaluable to me in drawing out the processes at work in the experience of radio listening as company by these listeners. Using film images meant there was often some distance between creating the data and seeing it again, allowing me to reflect on it at a distance with the development of each film. Similarly, the collections of images on each film facilitated the constant comparative analysis relied on in grounded theory studies with ease.

In making data, each of us gave something of ourselves, an exchange of time, ideas, and experience. We made something, these participants and I, separately and collectively. I have taken those creations and fractured them, broken them, laid them alongside one another, over and over again. By coding, diagramming, and memoing, I have made new shapes from these fragments, arranging them in new ways, until they were able to offer an explanation of the phenomena we had all been discussing all along: How does radio listening provide company to older listeners who use it that purpose? We are all in this data, and, since one is grounded in the other, we are all in this theory.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DATA AND FINDINGS

Data in this study were created and analysed so that a theory, grounded in that data, might be offered in response to the research question 'How does radio listening provide company to older listeners who use it to that purpose?' These data and this analysis are building towards a theory with the power to explain the process of the specific phenomena of experiencing radio listening as company. Ultimately, this analysis should provide "an explanation of the inter-relationship between and among concepts, in order to present a systematic view of what is going on" (Weiner, 2007, p. 307).

My theory is that

> Radio listening creates an experience of company for older listeners by supporting a knowledge of self and an appreciation of self in context. Through radio listening, older listeners are able to challenge, comfort, extend, and affirm their self-identity within the boundaries of taste, time, and space.

Figure 5 illustrates this theory in full.

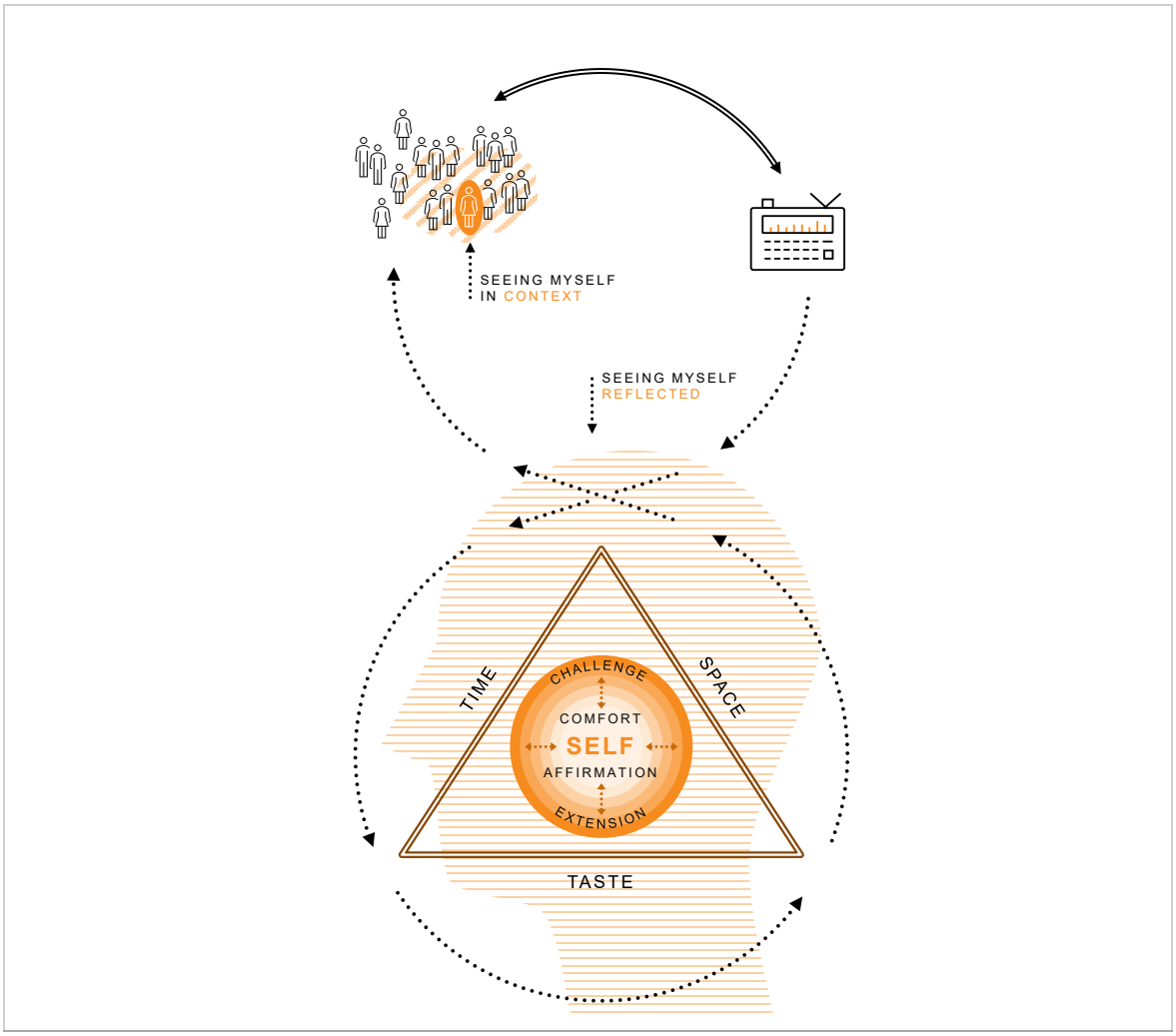


Figure 5 – A grounded theory of radio listening for company

Over the next four chapters, I will outline how the data analysis moved from loose, fragmented ideas and thousands of initial codes, through the analytical stages of grounded theory methodology to the development of categories, and finally gave rise to this theory.

Chapter 5 will look at the initial coding in detail, drawing out how the analysis moved from initial and in vivo codes through focused codes to categories. This process is presented in detail that the branches of later analysis can be traced back to these ground level roots and clearly linked to the data. By the end of Chapter 5, the analysis has produced four categories: TASTE, TIME, SPACE, and IDENTITY.

Chapter 6 demonstrates how IDENTITY can be understood as a core category, and how the remaining three categories can be understood through this prism:

> Through radio listening, these listeners were able to challenge, comfort, extend, and affirm their self-identity…

This chapter explores the interplay of these categories, putting IDENTITY at the centre and examining the processes at play during radio listening. Centring IDENTITY, the remaining categories act as boundaries to the exploration of IDENTITY supported by listening.

Chapter 7 outlines how TASTE, TIME, and SPACE provide boundaries to this identity work:

> …within the boundaries of taste, time, and space.

It includes a discussion of how participants use these tools to manage their listening and the demands of identity work.

Chapter 8 steps outside the self, to consider the experience of company more broadly:

> Having a clear understanding of themselves enabled these listeners to perceive their social identity.

Returning to the core category of IDENTITY, Chapter 8 considers how the processes of identity-making and -maintenance work in concert with two other processes enabled by listening:

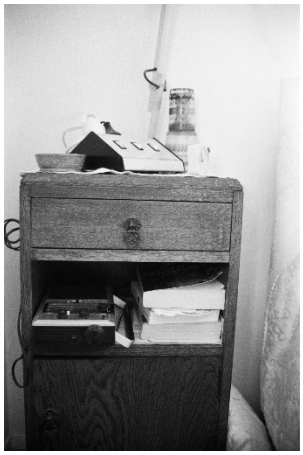
> These older listeners were able to experience radio listening as company because listening supported and contextualised their knowledge of self.

Chapter 8 demonstrates how these processes can be combined to create an experience of listening as company.

At the end of these chapters, it will be clear how the theory is grounded in the data.

Notation

Chapters 4 to 8 draw on: memos, word and image data, quotes from the data, in vivo codes drawn from the data, initial and focused codes and categories extrapolated from the data. For clarity and ease of reading, these are presented as depicted in Table 1.

	Presentation	Example
Word data	short quotes: 'Single quotation marks' [participant named in square brackets].	'I turn to another station immediately. I'm not going to listen to it when there might be some good talkback or there might be a story on 1YA' [Betty].
	long quotes: Indented without inverted commas and the contributing participant named in square brackets thereafter.	And when, of course, we used to listen in the holidays as well. And then, when we got home from school, we had to, Mother had to relate all the things that'd gone on that day, just to keep us up to date.... [NAOMI]
	quotes including my own speech: Where it has been necessary to include my own speech alongside participants' speech, it is indented regardless of length, with my own utterances in italics.	*A – And how do you feel about that text talkback kind of stuff?* Pat – Well, I think it's a watering down of the station, but anyway, that's what I think.
Image data	Photographs appear in the text as visual quotes with the relevant participant named in square brackets in the caption below, as per the textual quotes.	 [Anne – bedroom]
In vivo codes	*'Single inverted commas and italics'*	*'too hard and too brash'*
	in vivo codes within quotes are rendered in italics.	Jan – Oh, yes, we do. I think *it probably just comes from our upbringing*; we always like to listen to the weather, and then half the time can't remember 5 minutes later. [laughter]

	Presentation	Example
Initial codes	*italics*	*having a favourite*
Focused codes	**bold**	**identifying as a listener** **space**
Categories	CAPS	TIME
Memo	Indented and tagged as [memo, date recorded]	Having a preference, sharing knowledge, demonstrating knowledge – these are acts of asserting yourself, putting a stake in the ground, being powerful. They're all 'power moves' of a sort. [Memo, 1 October 2021]

Table 1 – Notation throughout the data chapters

CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS AND EARLY ANALYSIS

Introduction

Chapter 5 presents the study's findings and looks closely at some of these conceptual categories of TASTE, TIME, SPACE, and IDENTITY. The chapter examines the codes which contribute to these conceptual categories and details their properties to make clear how they are understood. Chapter 5 lays the foundations for understanding how these concepts contribute to theory building developed in the chapters to follow.

Initially, Chapter 5 presents initial, in vivo, and focused codes leading to the early, nebulous ideas formed during the early phases of the analysis process. Punch (2014) was clear that coding procedures at all stages are in service to "reducing the data through abstracting… seeking to discover the conceptually central aspects of the data" (p. 182). He writes that "The outcome of open coding is a set of conceptual categories generated from the data. There will also be some ordering and classification of these categories, and some sense of what is central in the data" (pp. 182–183). It is these early conceptual categories, with some ordering and classification, which are outlined in this chapter.

Some codes were not best served by single words or phrases but instead required several words to fully convey the sense of what they capture. Where this applies, codes are described using dashes to link several worlds into a single code (e.g., habit–familiarity–'knowns'–fans). The essence of this code lies somewhere in the intersection of these terms, and requires all of them to varying degrees to make sense.

According to Punch (2014), it will be clear by the end of open coding which of these initial codes is central to the data. In Chapter 5, I present those ideas which went on to form the core of the grounded theory, as well as those which dissipated and did not prove to be central to the explanatory theory arising from the data. Both are presented in this chapter with equal merit; it is not until later in the analysis that the relative weight and substance of these early ideas takes form as my theoretical sensitivity develops.

TASTE

'Oh, I can't stand that man, that North, he's a poet.' [Naomi]

Without exception, participants were keen and able to articulate their *listening preferences*. The preferences they articulated were wide-ranging and might equally refer to individual presenters, musical styles, formats, devices, and stations: *I like this*; *I don't like this*. These discussions seemed quite reductive and lacking in depth at first. They appeared to be a very

surface-level appraisal of the relationship. I listened and noted these preferences (see Figure 6 for a sketch of these preferences).

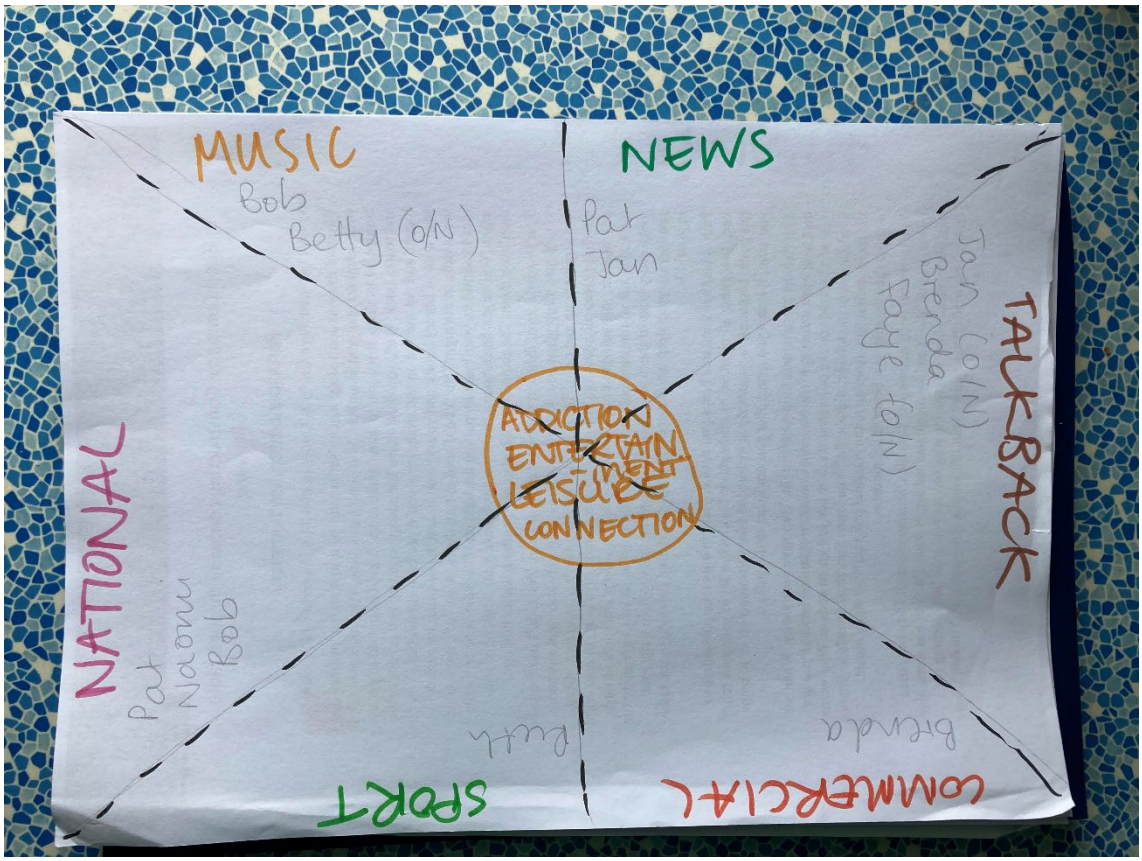


Figure 6 – Early diagramming of preferences and favourites

Without understanding their significance to the question necessarily, I could not escape the ubiquity of this area of discussion. On sitting down to discuss the experience of company, every participant directed the conversation to an outline of their preferences. These details, which I initially thought to be less an expression of the company-making aspects of radio listening and more something delivered in anticipation of my interests, was so ubiquitous as to warrant more examination. These early codes were simple: *knowing what I like* (Figure 7)

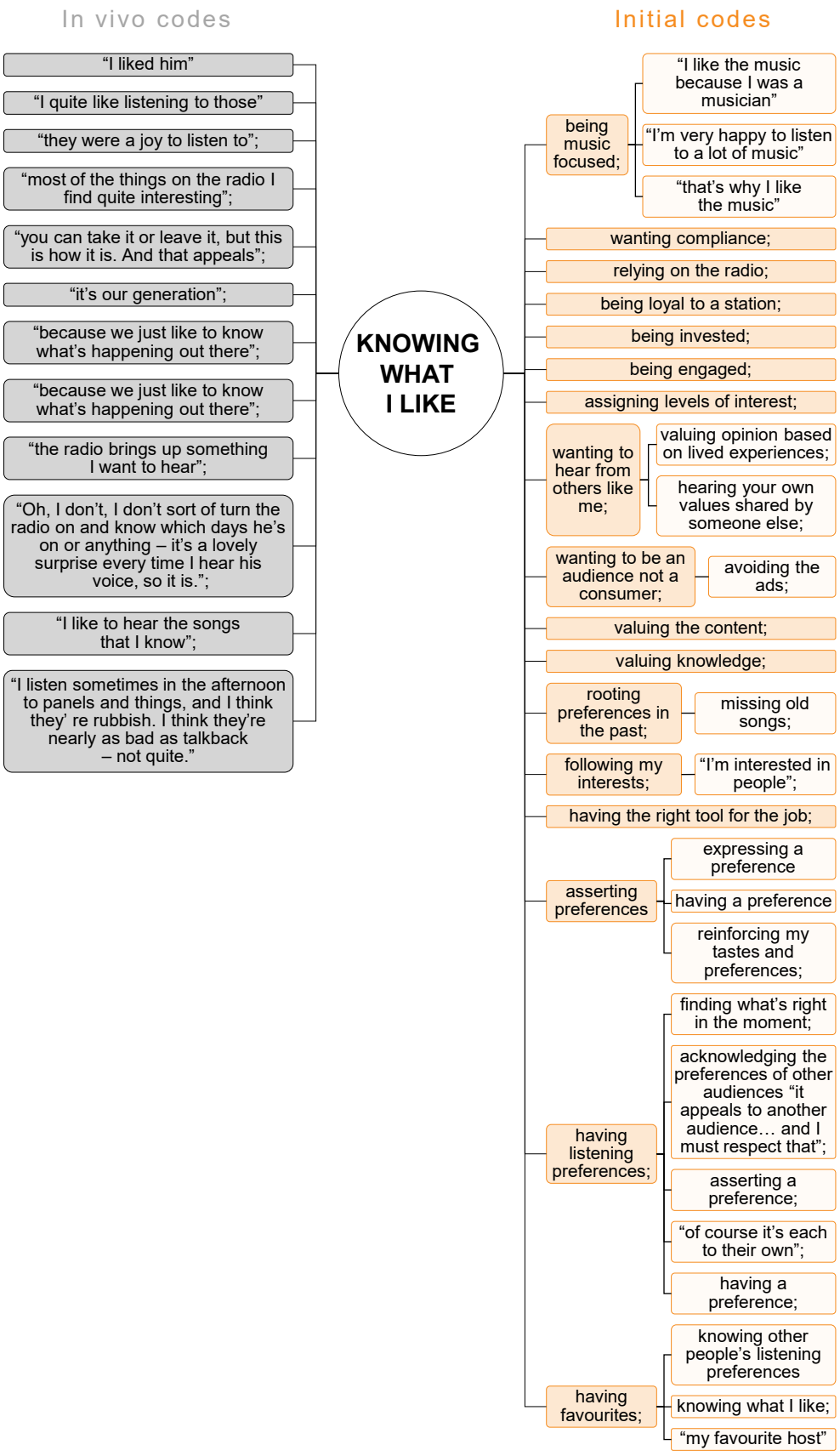


*Figure 7 – Some initial and in vivo codes associated with **knowing what I like***

and *knowing what I don't like* (Figure 8).

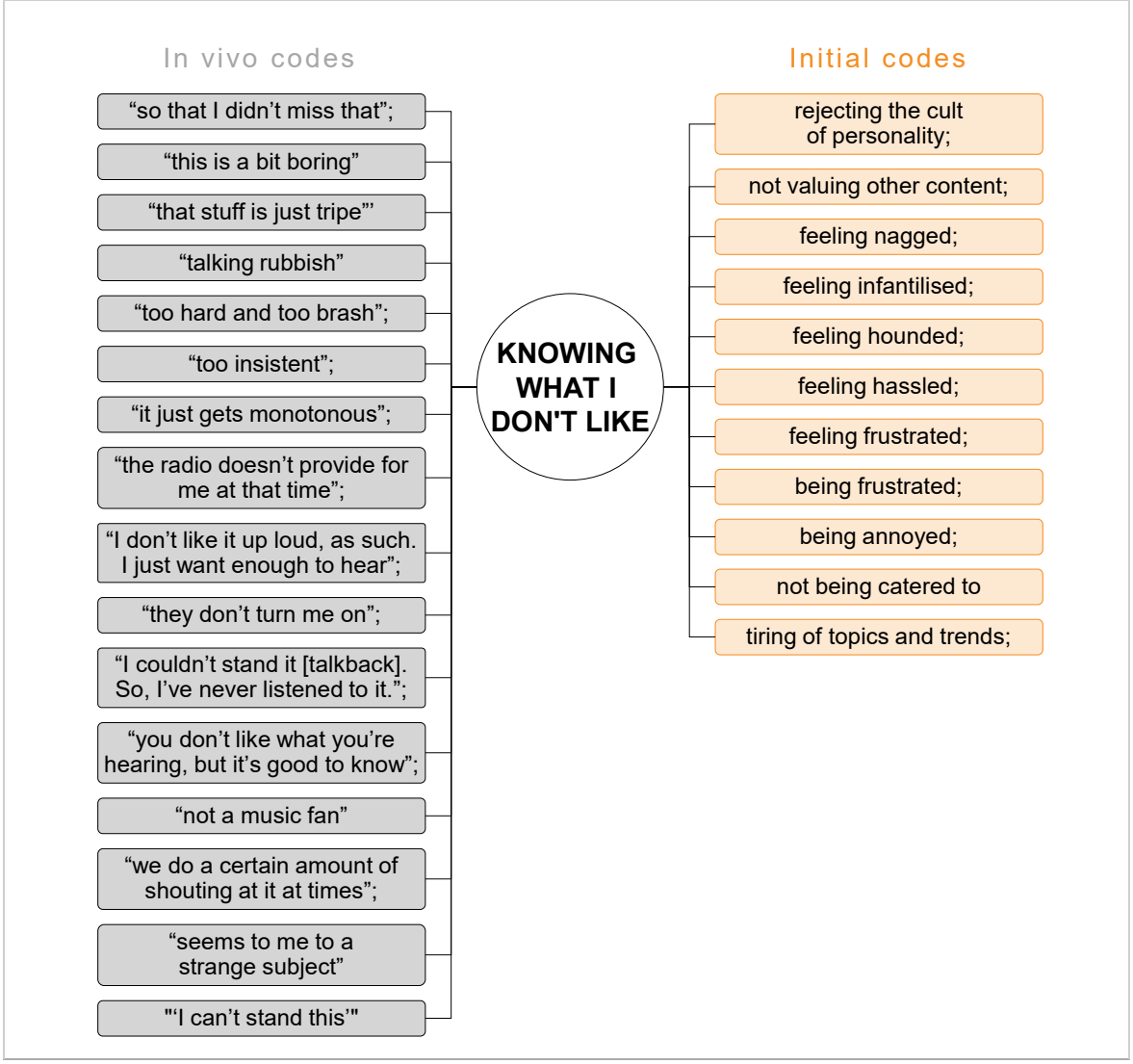


*Figure 8 – Some initial and in vivo codes associated with **knowing what I don't like***

As interviews continued, I began delving into the whys and wherefores; perhaps it was the *topics*, or the *style*, or the presence or absence of *ads*, or particular qualities of the *voice* which made these *'favourites'*. Perhaps the sense of company was located within the favourites only, on account of these qualities. Memos from early in the analytical process are indicative of a growing understanding:

> Having a preference, sharing knowledge, demonstrating knowledge – these are acts of asserting yourself, putting a stake in the ground, being powerful. They're all 'power moves' of a sort. [Memo, 1 October 2021]

Considered over time and taken together, the codes I had applied to these data, such as *having a favourite* or *expressing a preference*, '*my favourite host'* or **'***too hard and too brash'* led to an understanding that in these statements participants offered something of themselves in which they were confident and steadfast: **A knowledge of myself**.

Participants' radio preferences were as much about the radio as they were about themselves. This applies regardless of whether the preference relates to the content or device. These are statements of TASTE. **Having a preference** and being able to assert it is an expression of TASTE, *expressing myself*, just as any other choice expresses myself: **I know what I like** and **I know what I don't like**; **I know myself.**

Fracturing the data during initial coding led me to focus on three areas related to these expressions of preference: the **content** of and **connection** to what they were listening to; the physical aspects of listening such as the **devices** and attendant **technology**; and the **choice, power and control** exercised in responding to these preferences. These relationships are shown in Figure 9.

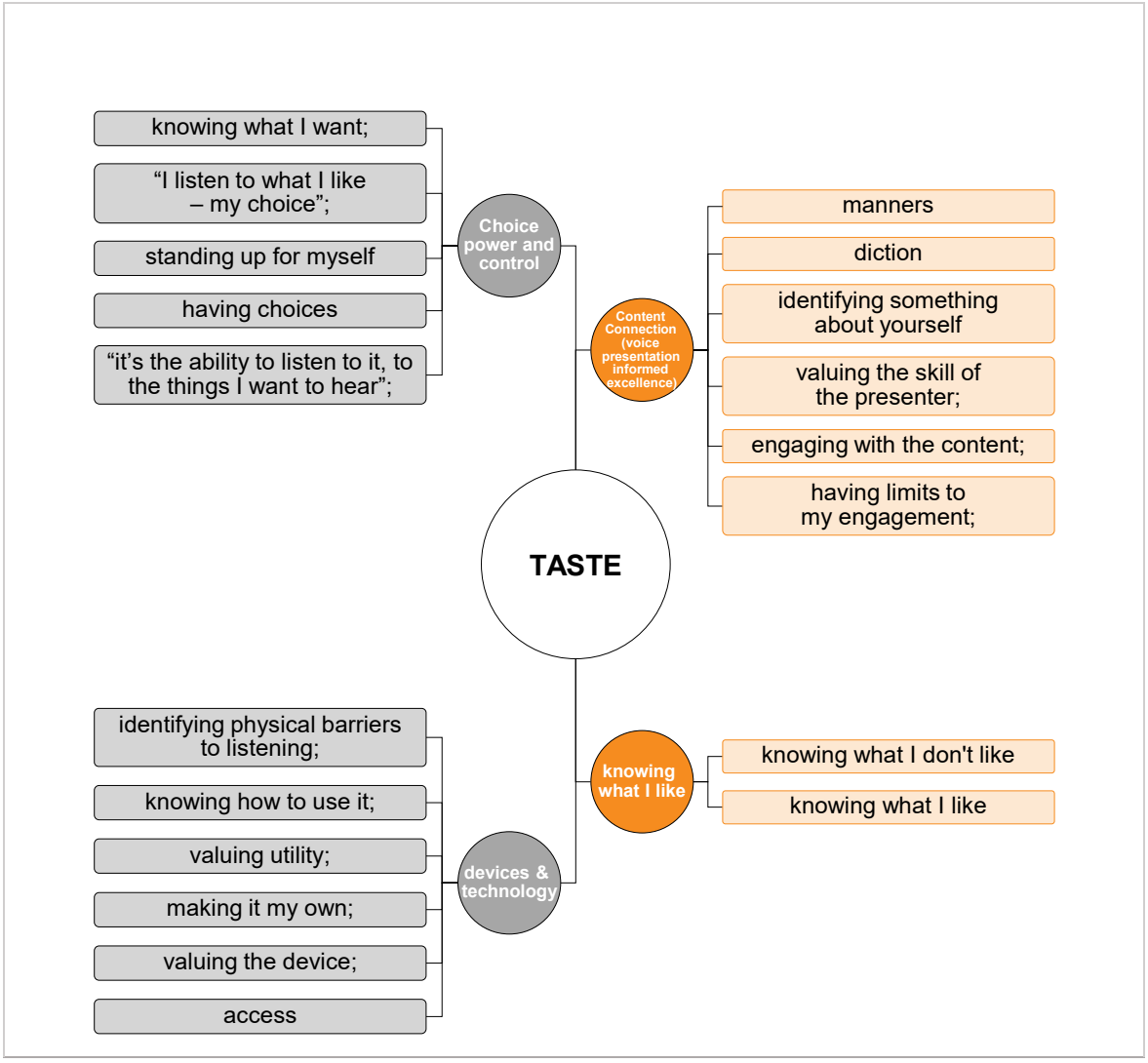


Figure 9 – Forming the category TASTE

The properties of each of these focused codes and the initial and in vivo codes which went into them are explored below.

Content & Connection

‘I know they’re not talking to you, but you, seem to have that relationship, that voice, as if they’re speaking, to you.’ [Beverley]

Listeners hear what is being presented and they hear how it is being presented. Neither element, the what or the how, is heard in isolation and participants expressed preferences in relation to both aspects.

Valuing the skill of the presenter

Participants noted where presenters had ‘*done their research’* or made remarks like ‘*I think they’re both very intelligent broadcasters’.* There were other presentation elements, less physical and more stylistic, which attracted or repelled.

> Something about the level of discourse. Be respectful. Be prepared. This isn’t to be taken lightly. Don’t be a bully. Be professional. [Memo, 13 February 2021]

Carrie was able to describe that some presenters changed over time, for instance Kim Hill, who she said had ‘mellowed’ and Karyn Hay who she indicated had matured from the young woman she remembered from the weekly television music show *Radio With Pictures* (1976–1989) when ‘it was just all the one voice’ [Carrie] into an interviewer who was ‘really lovely to listen to’ because ‘she is brief, intelligent interviews that are this long. And she doesn’t judge people; she’s really good.’ [Carrie]. Such observations require a deep knowledge of the presenters and their style: Carrie indicates a sensitivity of listening, deep sustained attention, and engagement over time.

Unlike Karyn, who ‘doesn’t pry, she just… draws people out in a lovely way’ [Carrie], Carrie talked about some presenters seeming to ‘*harass’* their guests or interview subjects, which she found *disrespectful*. She said, ‘they just keep on pummelling away and I think, ‘that doesn’t seem very appropriate’’ [Carrie]. In her view, the mode of address, even to the prime minister, was discourteous, as though they were talking to ‘a lady off the street’. She said:

> They don’t seem very respectful. And I’m thinking, ‘If I was speaking to the Prime Minister, I would actually… If it was the male prime ministers, they would have spoken to them quite differently to the way they speak to Jacinda’. I think. That’s me. She is so bloomin’ tolerant – it’s a wonder she doesn’t hit them over the head with something some times. I honestly do. [Carrie]

The presenter, in these cases, is an ambassador for or representative of the listener.

> Interviews, I like to hear perhaps, whoever; most people Kim Hill interviews, because I think she is an excellent interviewer. Slight… terrier on the attack sometimes, but she asks the questions to which I’d like to know the answers, and to learn about the person’s life or issues. [Beverley]

Kim is asking the questions almost as though on Beverley's behalf, and the listener requires to be represented as and by a skilled interlocutor to reflect their own capabilities.

Diction and manners

Betty was able to clearly describe the importance of clear annunciation and slow, well-articulated speech. When presenters fell short on these requirements, she simply could not decipher their presentation. For her, this requirement was physical. The same was true of songs as it was speech breaks, and she described not being able to make out the lyrics in much of the newer music she heard.

For other listeners, their preference for clear diction was less physical and more a question of taste or expectations.

> Bob wants correct diction, just like Naomi. She attributes that to her mother, and to being a teacher, and he attributes it to his choral training. Presentation. Correctness. [Memo, 14 January 2021]

Bob put this preference down to many years of training as a singer; Naomi described memories of presenters she remembered in her youth whose presentation and diction she particularly enjoyed.

> Oh yes, yes – beautiful, beautiful voices. You still hear some of them. Some of the announcers are like that, and otherwise they've just got an ordinary now New Zealand accent. But the early, or the earlier ones, that I remember, they were, they were a joy to listen to. [Naomi]

Beyond either the physicality of the speech, or preferences in style, participants spoke of the way they were 'treated' by presenters. They spoke of wanting to be addressed as an intelligent audience, capable of mounting their own critiques, and coming to the conversation with their own knowledge, ideas, and intellect.

> I'm trying to find a word for this pronunciation fixation. Bob and Naomi both have it. Thesaurus is saying 'fastidious', which is accurate. Snobbish? But I need a verb. What is this verb? What is going on here? Yes, they're talking about their preferences, but there's something more than that. It's almost like they're commanding *respect* from the presenters, as in, 'Don't you speak to me like that!' Come correct. Don't insult me, or my intelligence. Is it that? Or is it about the medium? If you're going to take up this time on air, put your best foot forward. *I want the best.* Nothing half-arsed. Do it properly. [Memo, 18 October 2021]

This is a quality of presentation that goes beyond *voice*. It is about *modes of address*.

> Naomi – Oh, I can't stand those programmes, all the ads. 1ZB and whatnot. Some of the voices on there, oh they grate on me. Some of the announcers, and some of the people who are talking to them, I can't stand them. And, as for all these advertisements – oh, God, save me. [laughs] Yes, and they're so loud and they're so insistent, and, oh, no – no thank-you.
>
> *A – What is it about the way they address you?*

> Naomi – Oh, they – well, we're all children to them.
>
> *A – I see…*
>
> Naomi –They don't give us any idea of our intelligence, or anything else. They just hammer away at their dry cleaning or whatever it is, and, um, ah… And they don't give you any time to… well, let you think. But you are thinking, and you think 'Well, I know all that; I've heard it so many times before', and it's, it just gets monotonous. No, I just, I just can't put up with it.

Participants were interested in good *manners*, not only from the presenters to themselves, but from presenters to interviewees and guests

> It's about that human part that you need to maintain that if you're a good interviewer. Some of the best ones have always done that – they don't demean people by the way in which they question them. I think that's really important. So, yeah. [Carrie].

Naomi acknowledges that these expressions of good manners can go in both directions:

> Because I can remember, you know, back in those days when we were listening to the radio, we would all, we wouldn't chat while the radio was on. It was part of the, part of the household sort of thing – you didn't … talk while other people were talking… [Naomi].

The idea that listeners and broadcasters would treat one another as they would like to be treated suggests that they aspired to a relationship of mutual *respect*. The radio is accorded the status of another member of the household. A memo recorded during this transcription speaks to this understanding of the tone and boundaries of the relationship:

> Not respecting the relationship – I won't talk while you're talking, but don't *demand* my attention. Bad manners. We are co-existing here (I'm on a project with my encyclopaedias all over the floor and I will listen to you, but don't take the piss). [Memo, 16 December 2019]

By choosing to spend time listening, participants offer their *respect* and *attention*. They require the same in return. A sense of 'company' in any relationship perhaps requires that it is a *relationship of equals*.

Devices and technology

> As I say, I've got 9 radios, and, ah, they all have their roles to play. They're almost like members of the family. You know. One has it's got, it must have a loose connection that I have to tap it every now and again. It's like a recalcitrant pupil or child. [Garry]

The **technology** required and **devices** used are of interest because they are the interface between the listener and the sound. Any device needs to be appropriate to any activity it might accompany, and it represents an expression of TASTE in a very material sense.

> Listening and technology as expressions of yourself, e.g. Brenda's listening is transgressive now (podcasts, Bluetooth speaker in the washing basket) as it was then (tuning into 2UE from Sydney); Garry wants the BEST quality device for his wife as a way to honour her and demonstrate his love for her; Jan's

> emergency wind-up radio is about her preparedness, capability, dependability. [Memo, 23 September 2020]

Variously, participants spoke of or showed me battery powered radios [Brenda], valve radios [Bob], inherited radios [Ruth], gifted radios [Pat], shopping for their radios [Betty], Bluetooth speakers [Brenda], crystal sets [Bob], transistors [Beverley], wind-up radios [Jan], car radios [Graeme], and smart phones [Carrie]. This physical manifestation of and interface with 'the radio' is material to the listening experience. No two participants showed me the same radio used in the same way.

Customising and meeting my needs

Faye's listening arrangements speak to the relationship between sound and **space**: Faye listens at *night*, in bed, beside her husband. She wants to *stay in bed*. People listening through the night who are sat in their living rooms are lonely, Faye says.

> Ah, I feel sad for them. Because they're obviously sitting in an armchair with a cat on their lap and are by themselves and need the radio, more than me. You know, I have a family, I have a busy time with grandchildren, and I have a husband, and I just feel sad for those people that they actually need the radio, because they're more lonely than not being able to sleep, really. [Faye]

Though she knows it would take more than the sound of her radio to wake her husband lying beside her, she wears headphones, which, when not in use, hang on a hook he installed for her beside the bed.

[Faye]

Faye is sleepless. Her husband cannot help this, particularly when he is asleep, but they each seek to make each other as comfortable as possible through the selection and use of the listening apparatus: Faye can stay in bed, avoiding moving to the living room, without the worry that she will wake her husband; he can demonstrate his care and support by making the tools accessible to her.

Bob had *customised* his radios in a different way, keeping one for each band and noting on them where he could find the stations he wanted.

[Bob]

Not only is he clear about his listening preferences but he is unwavering. This choice of devices reflects his use: These devices move through SPACE with him, both inside and outside, and are never far from his person that he might adjust the volume depending on his activities, or in case he is in a shared space with his wife. Where previously he had a larger sound system, this could not be accommodated in his new home and these devices represent his **adaptation** to this new SPACE.

Qualities

Participants spoke of the variable sound qualities of different devices, of preferences for devices with pre-set buttons or easy to read displays.

> Ah, well, well, the radio by the bed is going on all the time, you see. And then I get up and I switch on this kitchen radio, because it's got a better tone than the one near my bed. [Naomi]

Garry has one particular radio which serves as a gardening tool, that is, he has a radio specifically for taking outside with him. It has a handle, for ease of portability, and on the day I

saw it, sitting inside the door from the workshop to the garden, the aerial served as a stand for his sunhat.

[Garry – garden]

'Yes, so, ah, when I go through the garage, pick up bits and pieces to go out to the garden, I pick up that radio. That goes with me' [Garry]. This device, which wears the marks of its function, both as designed and as imparted by Garry, is in contrast to the kitchen radio. The kitchen radio is a sleek, white, modern device which complements its surroundings perfectly. Each of these devices would be completely out of place were they to trade places. The kitchen radio is plugged in to the wall and is therefore almost entirely redundant in the garden, '…that radio up there is one of the best I've had' Garry tells me.

[Garry – kitchen]

Garry has another of these same devices in the bedroom. The reception in their old family home had not been a problem, but it was something they sometimes struggled with after they moved. These new radios got around that somehow. Garry told me that 'because Jewell spent most of the last 18 months confined to bed, um, it was important that she had that access to radio' [Garry]. So, he said,

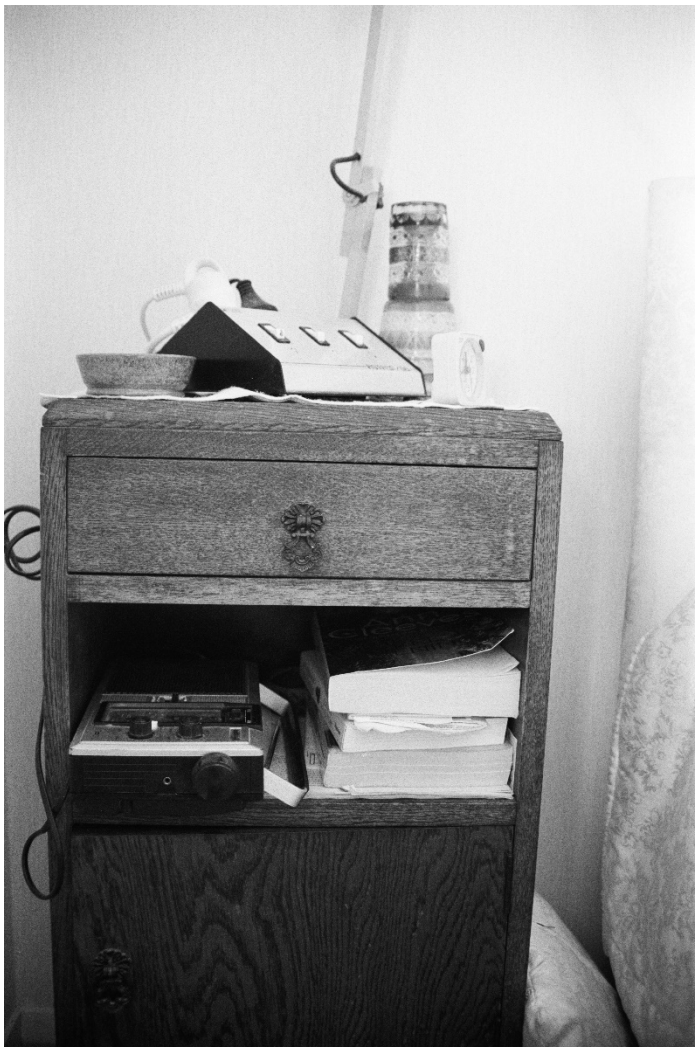
> … I went to some trouble to find the best. And that Sangean, which I know now how to pronounce, I think it's South Korean I think, is very very good. So. I had that by her bedside and, all she had to do – I set everything in there so she only had to press one button to turn it on: Press one for National; 2 for Concert FM. She didn't worry about the cricket. [Garry]

[Jewell's bedside radio]

I met Beverley in public. She brought her radio with her, in the same bag she uses to carry it with her when she is out walking either in town or when staying with friends whose listening habits differ from hers. She also uses her car radio and has a radio in her home. This device serves a specific function and has been selected for that precise reason.

[Beverley]

Anne describes her choice of bedside radio on the strength of the size of the switch she can use to turn it off and on in the dark. When photographing this radio, I could barely see the radio itself, but the switch, Anne's interface with the radio, was impossible to miss.



[Anne – bedroom]

Devices can represent a **choice**, an expression of a **preference**: Ruth uses Alexa; Brenda has a Bluetooth speaker; Betty got a new radio to meet her changing needs. These new devices are vastly outnumbered by radios so long in attendance that their provenance is a distant memory. Where they have been selected, rather than inherited or gifted, devices have been selected by participants to fit their life.

Sometimes device selection has a process akin to 'survival of the fittest'; among the many or other devices participants have had, the one(s) they have and use now are those that have been maintained through clear outs, relocations, or down-sizing. Garry has two new radios, bought to accommodate his wife Jewell. This relates to **adapting and replacement** and **space**; circumstances have changed, **spaces** have changed, needs have changed, and radio listening adapts to changes over TIME and devices reflect these changes.

Choice, power, and control

"**I listen to what I like – my choice**" [Bob]

These expressions of TASTE, be they related to content or devices, are not theoretical or hypothetical. They are statements of intent upon which action is taken: A device is bought, the station is changed, the volume is adjusted, attention is diverted. These actions are displays of the **choice, power, and control** participants have over their listening experiences. Having a preference and acting on it is an expression of the freedom and power of choice.

Listeners have choices: Whether to listen at all, and, if so, what to listen to, where, for how long, at what volume, and with what attention. In terms of company, this is one of the ways the participants assert themselves and set boundaries within their relationship with the radio.

> But the ordinary, commercial stations – I don't like at all. They're too hard, and too brash, and… Too insistent on you listening to them. You can't just put them away in back of your head and forget, or almost forget they're there, because they're so insistent! Uh! No thank-you. [Naomi]

The power of this choice means they are unhappy to be presented with anything less than excellence from their chosen output. They are able to readily identify excellence, if and when it occurs, and articulate the qualities that make it up.

Being able to take action based on these tastes to **meet my needs** is an expression of **choice, power, and control**. Knowing what I like and taking actions on that basis are linked to my **identity** and the way I understand and present myself to myself and beyond.

Up, down, or off: Selective listening

'Oh, some music, is absolutely diabolical. [laughs] And I thought 'I can't stand this', so I turn it down to low and then I'll turn it up again when it's finished…'. [Naomi]

The choice to listen or not in any given moment is influenced by a variety of factors, including: ACCESS and whether the radio is available in that moment; **time** and whether participants are free to listen; **space** and whether participants are in a shared **space** or their own **space**; and **content** and where along the spectrum it falls from *"favourite"* to *"can't stand it"*.

> It's selective hearing, I guess, isn't it? For instance, I can hear my wife's radio going right now – she's listening to 1ZB – but what she's hearing I don't know, and it doesn't worry me, but if suddenly something came on, I don't know, disaster or major event, yes, I would be interested then. [Bob]

Participants spoke of *'turning down'*, *'turning off'*, *'tuning out'*, *'switching off'*, *'changing the station'*, and *'editing'* the sound. These **choices**—up, down, on, off, over—are expressions of **taste** and the **power** and **control** to exercise these choices. In this way, participants set and acted on *boundaries* in their listening practices.

> Anne – And it's the same with other things: If I don't sort of agree, "I just… think of other things, do a bit of editing and I'm on my way". [laughter]
>
> *A – I love that description. Does it, in that editing time, is it kind of like you just turn it down in your head?*
>
> Anne – In my head.
>
> *A – Yeah, you don't really turn it down though do you?*
>
> Anne – Nah no no no no. No I just leave them to get on with it and sooner or later it changes to something else….

By contrast, not being in the right **space** or not having *access to a device* usually represents a binary of either listening/not listening.

Deciding whether or not to get involved

Engagements beyond listening ranged from having worked at a radio station [Jo], been interviewed as a guest [Bob, Pat], visiting a station [Beverley], calling in [Faye, Graeme, Jan], writing in [Jan, Betty, Garry, Faye], taking down recipes or tips [Naomi, Jan], talking back to the radio [Pat, Carrie, Naomi]. With the exception of Jo, who offered the information about having worked at a radio station, participants only spoke to me about their contributions when asked; contributing was not front of mind for anyone in relating their listening experiences. I had taken for granted that the ability to join the conversation was a significant contributing factor to being able to generate and access company through the radio, but this was not supported by the data.

Decisions about contributing to a live discussion on-air were not taken lightly. Faye described not wanting to get out of bed to call, except for very rare occasions when she felt she had the information the host was looking for and felt compelled to offer it. She felt sure of herself and wanted to contribute, but it was a mixed experience. It was out of the ordinary for her to call. Despite listening for hours every night over many years and being regularly made aware by the host that there was room for more callers, she could only recall a single time that she had called during the night.

Jan's experience of contributing to a live discussion was similar. In her many hours of listening, she recalled phoning in only once when she felt she could speak from her present, personal experience. Though she and her husband might regularly shout at the radio, the decision to contribute to an on-air discussion was complex:

> Jan – … there's times I've felt like ringing, but I've thought, 'Oh, I probably haven't got the', and I'm not putting myself down, but 'I haven't got the ability to be able to word it the way I want to, sort of thing, to really get my message across. And someone out there will be, will shoot it down in flames' and such, so. And then I'll feel that, 'Blow, I wish I'd worded it this way', so I choose not to.
>
> *A – Do you think the other callers spend very much time thinking about that?*

> Jan – I'd say some definitely don't. [laughter] And some possibly do. And some just are naturally able to put their point across, you know, and I just think, 'Wow', when I hear that.
>
> *A – Yeah, ok, so, at times you think, it's a kind of feeling like, 'I definitely have thoughts and opinions here but I might not be able to get them across in a way I feel'…*
>
> Jan – Yes, yes. And they can easily be misinterpreted then. So therefore I'm wasting my time. Well, not wasting my time, but it's pointless.

Irrespective of the factors to consider in making this decision, determining your own level of engagement with the radio represents a **choice**. Participants were aware that they had the choice to participate at any time, and many had exercised that **choice** at various times. It was not necessarily those moments of additional engagement which generated a feeling of company but perhaps the **choice** as to whether to *involve themselves beyond listening*.

TIME

The relationship between listening and TIME operates at scales ranging from a single hour to life-long; listening measures lifetimes, decades, seasons, weeks and hours. Listening variously filled time [e.g., Faye] or marked time [e.g., Anne]. Participants reported different listening and company experiences at different times; day listening and night listening had different qualities for those who did both and served different functions for those who did one or the other. It was this consistent distinction between day and night listening which first suggested that TIME may be relevant to understanding how participants experienced listening as company.

Listening and time: A lifetime

I began most interview conversations with an invitation for participants to tell me about the radio in their lives so far. I hoped, in this way, to learn a little about the participants, and give some context to our conversation. Hearing these recollections was intended to be an introduction to the participant, but ultimately came to reveal not only the length of association between participants and listening, but the depth of this association also.

Many participants began with early recollections of radio listening in their childhood homes. Many participants were able to recall early listening memories linked with family members, and specific listening **habits** or **spaces**. These memories ranged from tender [Brenda, Naomi, Den] to thrilling [Brenda, Pat]. This was rendered as much in participants' words as in their voices, which fell or raced, invoked quiet or laughter as the story required. The telling suggests the vivid nature of these recollections and the impressions left by these moments and feelings.

Participants recalled the listening behaviours, habits, and practices of their childhood.

> Yes, yes. And she listened to the news and, um, then she used to do her vegetables while she listened to the serials which came on from 10 o'clock. I think it was Dr. Paul or something else, and so on, and um, then of course as I grew older, um, my father was a great sportsman and we'd get up in the middle of the night to listen to the All Blacks playing overseas. Yes, you know, we've come a long way. [Jo]

Formed in childhood, these habits and practices of a lifetime, in themselves, contribute to a sense of self. Participants were able to tell me not only what each person in the household listened to, but at what times, in what seasons, where in the house, recalling in detail the postures and attitudes of different family members. These came to be coded as **my listening past**.

Brenda described the thrill of covertly listening to 2UE Sydney in her teens, relishing this memory of transgression and the conversations that ensued among her schoolmates. She went on to speak in similar terms about her current listening practices, such as using podcasts on her computer, or casting the radio from her phone to her Bluetooth speaker and putting that in the basket with the clothes while she pegs the washing out. Brenda is relating a history of unorthodox or boundary-pushing listening preferences and practices. Viewed in this way, Brenda's history of listening can be seen to be a lifelong expression of herself.

This is not to say, didactically, that there is a straight line between listening in adolescence and listening in later life. Beverley, for instance, remembers listening to sports on the radio as a child, which she does not do now.

> I'm not a sporty person. The highlights, I don't mind hearing just who won, but not to follow a match. Which I did as a child: I remember getting quite excited about was it Winston McCarthy? 'Wait for it… It's a goal!' [Beverley]

But she does remember it, clearly enough to provide me with an impersonation, remembered many years later. In her working life, Beverley had an assistant who would tape programmes for her during the work day so that she could listen to them later. It is not the sports listening which has carried on, but the listening attitude, the attentiveness.

Feelings and anecdotes within these recollections came to be coded as **my listening past** and where they prompted recollections of moments in the life course they were coded as **accessing a past self**. The code **my listening past** refers to recollections such as 'I listened to *Hit Parade*[1] ' [Pat], whereas **accessing a past self** refers to data such as 'I never owned a transistor until I was married' [Brenda] or 'My main radio listening was, again, between 7 and when I left for work' [Pat]. Both these codes are about identity, but where one is listening-specific, the other is far broader.

[1] *Hit Parade* (1946–1975)

Learned listening practices

'there was always the radio...' [Pat]

Participants often talked about skills, traits, or habits they had inherited from their elders.

> from early we… and the lifestyle then in the 50s would be that the radio would be key. That and the newspaper were the way we all got news of what was going on in our world. So we didn't have these fast messaging things and, even television wasn't in at that point. So I think part of it is our background contributed to our interest or not in radio. And Mother would, she'd always, she'd always have the radio on. [Pat]

From taking the time to explain different elements of language [Naomi] to looking out for the Queen's Speech on Christmas day [Pat], which her mother had listened to on the radio and which she now tries to catch on television. These kinds of learned habits and behaviours came to be coded as **learning at your mother's hem/intergenerational listening**. Jan provides a clear example, saying:

> Well, I grew up with that… and of course being farming, everybody had to be quiet when the weather forecast was on, and then Dad would say afterwards, 'What was the weather? …
>
> So it's kind of what I grew up with. And everything stopped at 10 o'clock in the morning to listen to the serial, you know, have a cup of coffee and listen to Dr Paul or whatever it was. [Jan]

And later, on follow-up

> *A – I wanted to ask you before, you said about your dad saying 'Shhh, the weather's on' and then saying 'What's the weather going to be?'*
>
> Jan – Yes
>
> *A – And, you know, that kind of, appointment, almost, with the radio when the serial was on, or whatever, and so that's very, kind of um, dedicated listening, I suppose. And I'm wondering whether you do any listening like that now?*
>
> Jan – Oh, yes, we do. I think it probably just comes from our upbringing; we always like to listen to the weather, and then half the time can't remember 5 minutes later. [laughter]
>
> So, and there's certainly specific, specific times that, the times when you know that they have a regular guest or two. Like in the morning they have a left-wing politician and a right-wing on and a little panel, and that's always good to hear because… And it's a bit like, it's reasonably light-hearted, but it's kind of – that's something I like to hear.

Jan tells me that her husband, Jack, grew up in a house with similar listening habits, so it seemed natural to her that they would carry these on in their married life. 'We always had the radio, '*we always had a radio going'*. Cos Jack had been brought up with the same thing. And I think probably a lot of, most people in our generation have' [Jan]. Jan is suggesting that, for both her and her husband, the habit of listening was established in their childhood, and it was something she never thought twice about replicating in her own household. As with so many

aspects of household management, media consumption habits and the use of the radio as a household tool is something Jan learned from her parents. While her father's main use for the radio was the weather forecasts, Jan's is more of a social forecast, which Den describes perfectly, saying *'I think I can gauge the mood of the country by the things people are saying on talkback'*.

Habit–Familiarity–'Knowns'–Fans

'It was just part of our lives; it was there. Like the sun's out, most times, it's just part of it.' [Brenda]

'I wouldn't say a feature, but it was always there.' [Bob]

Every participant is able to recall the radio in their childhood. Some of these recollections were device specific: buying a radio as newlyweds [Brenda] or being gifted a radio as a 21st birthday present [Pat]. Other memories were about specific shows

> I used to like listening to the Junior Request – they had some good stories there. They don't have those stories anymore. …
>
> Oh, there was Bobby Benson and the B–Bar–B Riders[2], and they fought off Hank the Horse Thief – Ha Ha Ha! [laughter] Oh, lots of things, you know, Pink Toothbrush and Blue Toothbrush[3]. All those. Then of course, when I got into my teens, and I discovered, during the day they would have these, adults' serials about romance and… [Den]

Others still recalled details of their parents listening to the weather [Faye, Jan] or the serials [Naomi] or the cricket [Pat]. These are the building blocks of a listening IDENTITY.

Pat describes recording the results of the *Hit Parade* (1946–1975) in an exercise book every week in her early teens. While this practice has waned, she now describes herself as a news junkie. This early practice, of wanting to gather and record the *Hit Parade*, is not so far removed from her present practice of news-seeking. Her style of listening, and her engagement with the content, is little changed. It was not the music itself she described to me, but the practice of recording the information. She was not choreographing dances or learning the lyrics, she was information-seeking then as she is information-seeking now.

Participants described their lifelong habits and practices. These habits and practices are enduring, though may have had periods of 'abeyance' [Jan] and have **adapted** over TIME. Some participants describe periods in which they were busy with children or working, but, where that was the case, they have been reinstated. The capacity to **adapt** listening habits and practices to new life circumstances has also endured.

[2] Rice, H. C. (Creator). (1932-1936; 1949–1955).
[3] Bygraves, M. (1959).

Listening and time: The day

'… Ok, I use it now even as a time, as a clock and sometimes a date too. I do, actually. I remember someone saying, 'Gosh, she doesn't even know what day it is'. I can relate to that.' [Anne]

Conversations moved from past listening to present day listening. This very often became a discussion of routine: I listen to X at Y time (while doing Z), and then, and so on. Some participants had flexible listening patterns but most participants reported quite *rigid*, *established listening routines*. These routines gave shape to or took their shape from the *busy-ness* described by so many participants. This meant that some listening was *filling time* while other listening was *alongside* other activities. Time worked to boundary listening for many participants: *turning the radio on* when they got up, or went to bed; *listening in to particular programmes at particular times*; *changing media* for the 6 o'clock news.

Day / night

> Well it's very lonely every night when you are the only one awake. Oh, there might be a few more awake, but in your house, you're the only one awake. And it's very quiet and it's very silent and it's very dark. [Faye]

Most participants did a combination of day and night listening (see Figure 10). Faye and Betty only listened at night; Pat, Anne, Beverley, and Graeme only listened in the day. The distinction between day and night listening is clear in both the word and image data. Day listening is about *being alongside* or *'seeking information'* whereas night listening is about '*comfort'* and '*rest'*.

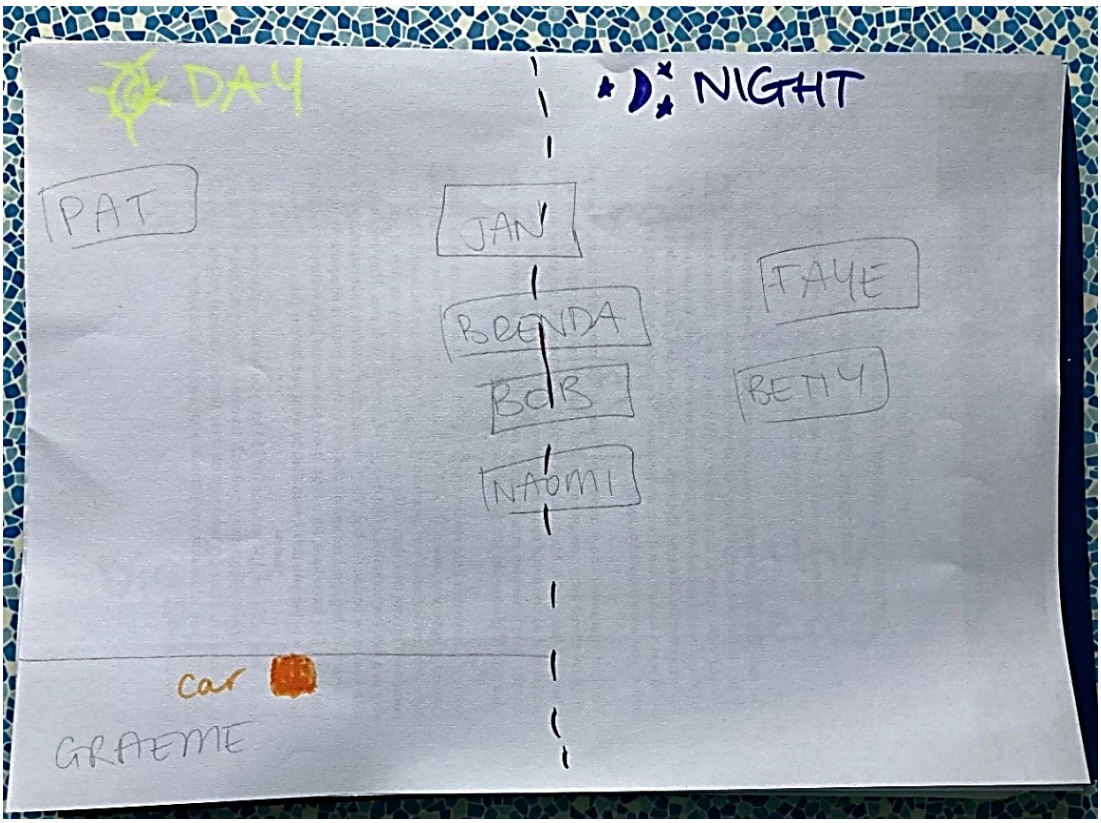


Figure 10 – Early diagram of day / night listening

Participants referred to the radio at night being a *'sleep aid'* or '*a sleeping pill'* or something they used to return to sleep. 'Concert programme during the night – if I wake up I'll turn it on quietly and listen to that, *lulls me to sleep again*' [Bob]. This is about sound, rather than about content for Brenda. She describes not needing the radio at night if she is in hospital because there are other sounds, but when she is home, she might wake in the night and think

> 'Mmm, something missing…'. Turn on the radio and then; I think I use it because I'll be listening to something and I'll think 'Oh yeah, I'll wait for this bit', and it never comes because I got to sleep. It's wonderful! It's a good sleeping pill. [Brenda]

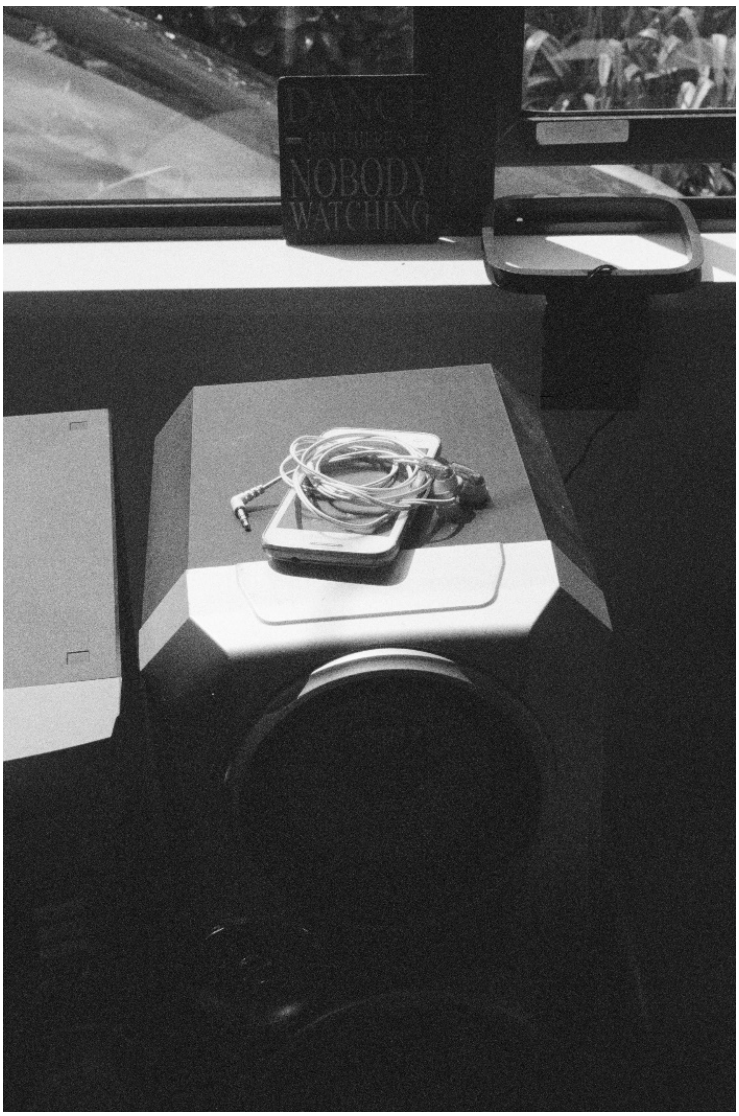
These images of Naomi's listening illustrate the different requirements. The radio for use in the day is part of the milieu of the kitchen, jostling for space with the teapot, medicine, and containers, just another of the kitchen utensils needed in a busy day. The radio for night listening is one of very few items which it is essential to keep close within reach overnight.

[Naomi – day]

[Naomi – night]

Carrie's day and night radios illustrate something similar, but different: We can see the day radio *filling the space*, *taking up space*, *making a statement*, beside her piano and chair, decorated with a reminder to dance; the radio she uses at night is an old phone, with headphones and reflects a requirement for *being quiet*, *discrete*, *close*, *unobtrusive*. Day listening and night listening require different *devices* and they offer different *experiences*.

[Carrie – day]



[Carrie – night]

Time as a boundary

'And everything stopped at 10 o'clock in the morning to listen to the serial, you know, have a cup of coffee and listen to Dr Paul or whatever it was.' [Jan]

Time boundaries listening at various scales, be they daily, weekly, annually, or over the life course, and this interplay is reported from childhood to contemporary listening practices. Naomi spoke about doing more listening during the school holidays as a child, doing more listening when she has more time.

> And when, of course, we used to listen in the holidays as well. And then, when we got home from school, we had to, Mother had to relate all the things that'd gone on that day, just to keep us up to date, and then in the holidays we would listen again. [Naomi]

Time is often used as a barrier or a boundary within listening practices. Sentiments such as '*see I never have TV on until 6 at night, never*' [Anne] or 'Well *the first thing that happens in the morning* is it's turned on, whoever wakes up first' [Jan] demonstrate not only how time functions as a boundary to listening, but also the ways this is linked to having a listening

routine. **Knowing the radio schedule–content–format**, and the way it complements the flow of the day in the household is linked to the idea of habit–familiarity–'knowns'–fans aspect and the choice to be governed by or to override or transgress these boundaries in any given moment is a demonstration of **Power–Agency–Control (selective hearing)**, from the point of view of knowing the schedule, knowing how to organise myself to do this listening I want to do, whatever that may be.

Filling and marking time and being alongside

> And I think to have that voice, and he's got such a nice voice, in your ear, is very nice. And the time still goes quite slow, but it, but it, just fills in all that time that you're awake. [Faye]

Filling time or *passing time* are two other ways listening intersected with the passage of time for study participants. While much discussion from participants was about *being busy* or *being too busy to listen*, particularly in the day, there were also participants for whom listening was a means by which to while away the time, or something they did *alongside* their other activities. At these times, listening was *passing time* while doing something else, but there were other times, when there was nothing else to do, that listening became a way of *filling time*.

Naomi used the radio to *fill time* during the day, whereas Faye put it to this use during the night. Whereas Brenda described *filling space* with the radio, 'I don't like being in a quiet house', Pat described radio listening as *being companionable* and *filling time* at these times when she had nothing else on:

> I don't turn it on every day. Just… Just depends. I guess it is if I'm doing something, I don't need to have it on. I guess it's company from that point of view. I do turn it on if I haven't got anything on that morning and I'm not actually going to be sitting at the computer doing anything, or I'm not going out later on, so I suppose it is for company. I hadn't thought of it like that, but it is in a way. [Pat]

When Pat's time is not otherwise filled, the radio can fill it and, as she says, '*it is for company*'. Pat was newly retired from a job in which she described having very close, collegial working relationships. She often discussed radio listening with her colleagues. She was still **adapting** to retirement, she told me, and though she did not explicitly consider that the radio was *'a social'* companion at this stage, she did describe having more time to do the kind of morning listening she had identified was *'for company'*. Pat had moved into a new moment in her life and the radio was filling this time for her.

> Pat – Yes, yeah. So. It certainly, as far as I am in my retirement, and I'm only recently into retirement, I'm finding it difficult to manage. I'm not, It's not, it's not a social companion for my retirement at this stage. I'm doing the same kind of radio listening to as I was before.
>
> *A – It hasn't changed, really?*

> Pat – Hardly, except I've got more time to listen to the mornings. And now, cos it's Summer, we don't have that in the Summertime, and I find that boring. The stuff that they do; they don't have Morning Report, they don't have Kathryn Ryan until next week, I think she starts. And Kim Hill as well. And so, the people they bring in, do more music stuff. So I don't have that to listen to over the Summer. That can be annoying. Because it'd become a habit for me. Yeah, yep. But that's alright. I mean, I think they do, they do deserve a holiday.

Pat's description, like Faye's and Naomi's, is about listening to pass the time. This is *entertainment*, perhaps, but also, as Pat says, company.

Naomi's night time listening, as well as *filling the time*, serves to *mark the time*: 'I have it on practically all night, because I can sleep with it burbling away, and um, *it tells me the time*, of course. [Naomi]. Anne does something similar in the day, 'Ok, *I use it now even as a time, as a clock* and *sometimes a date too*. I do, actually' , only not only on the scale of the hours, but on the scale of days, too. The passage of so much life-time can be correlated with listening. There is *familiarity* here and also *trust*.

The companionable nature of this relationship is also seen in the way participants used the radio *alongside* their chores and pastimes, while they knit, perhaps, or garden, and the fabric of daily life.

> Bob – There's always something to do, be it the dishes or making the beds, or anything. No, there's always something to do.
>
> *A – And, when you are listening, are you still doing those kinds of things?*
>
> Bob – Yeah, the morning between 5 and 9 I've got to get up and get dressed and eat. So, those things are going on, not necessarily in the background, particularly specific times I know I want to listen, for instance, 10 to 7 the finance news, I want to listen to that, so I certainly tune in more so then than at quarter to 7 or 20 to 7.
>
> *A – Right. And do you stop the dishes?*
>
> Bob–Not necessarily.
>
> *A – You just change you, tune in on a different level, would you say?*
>
> Bob – I would think that's a good description. Yep. [laughs]

Bob listens *alongside* his morning routine which is *interwoven* with listening in different modes. It is neither *filling time* or *marking time*, but he is *aware of the time* by the shifts and alterations in his listening attitude. He knows what to expect, when, and how to *make his life fit* around his listening preferences. Jan describes something similar:

> So, it basically comes around with me and, no Jack doesn't do that so much. So it does, actually. I mean, I don't not do something because I want to hear the radio, and I don't not go out at 10 o'clock because I want to hear the, you know, but, and we've got a car radio anyway. But still. No, I don't let it actually totally, totally rule my life. [Jan]

Life must go on around listening, but since Jan has access to a radio just about everywhere she goes, in all the rooms of her house, in her garden, and in her car, she never has to forego this *alongside* arrangement.

While Jan readily tells me 'We don't, *we're almost addicted to it*, [laughs] in a way, because, *we just like to know what's happening out there*', Bob's attitude is more indifferent. He tells me

> Bob – If I turn it on now, as I say, it would be background to me. Certainly I would appreciate it, but it's not critical; I can do without it. I don't want to do without it, but I could do. Right?
>
> *A – So it's, it's not a necessity, it's a pleasure?*
>
> Bob – Ahhh…. That's two extremes: a pleasure is something that's only occasional, a necessity is essential. It's not essential, but it's highly desirable.
>
> …
>
> I would certainly miss it. Alright? If I didn't have a radio, I would miss it.
>
> *A – What do you feel like would be missing?*
>
> Bob – The company! [laughter]

The *alongside* listening described by Bob is typical of many participants: They continually adjust their **mode of listening** that the radio might be *alongside* them in their activities: Bob can listen *alongside* doing the dishes, he just *tunes in on a different level*. Jan is not *addicted*, but there is almost nowhere in her daily routine where she cannot listen. Listening is *ubiquitous*, as described by Brenda, *'like sunshine'*, and can be understood as company for its contribution to the soundscape, a *'background'* or *accompaniment* to the rhythms of daily life.

SPACE

Sound and **space** are complementary, hand in glove: Sound is enabled, transported and changed by **space**; **spaces** are transformed by the passage, presence or absence of sound. The **spaces** in which participants listened was interesting to me from the start as I moved through them to photograph participants' radios, and as they were described to me for their different functions and *modes of listening*. Participants spoke of the *listening habits and practices* in a variety of different **spaces**: their childhood homes, their workplaces, their cars, their homes while raising children, and their homes at present. In each of these spaces, the listening they described took on different qualities.

Pat shared an early memory of listening at night which clearly illustrates the impact of listening space on listening experience. In Pat's childhood home, the radio was in the lounge room. She told me about listening while her parents were out of an evening:

> [I'd] listen to some detective stories on the radio, like, like, well Day of the Triffids[4], is not a detective story, but that, but also Night Watch[5], was a programme. And my bedroom was down the other end of the house, and I'd listen to Night Watch, which was about crimes and murders, and then I'd, was supposed to go to bed, half past 8. So I'd turn the radio off, and I'd turn the light off in the lounge, and I'd RUN down the…. In case there was a murderer behind me, and LEAP into the bed. [Pat]

Moving between the listening space, down the hall to her bedroom, late at night, while her parents were out, was thrilling. Her retelling of this experience, many years later, is incredibly vivid. It is alive. She is laughing at herself, but she knows the feeling still. The excitement and the fear: It is there, in her body. This experience and the memory of it are entirely shaped by the **space** in which she was listening. Certainly the content would not have changed had she been listening in bed, say, but the *listening experience* would not have been the same.

The different places in which participants listened are relevant to their experience of company because they are relevant to their *experience of listening* and are in relationship with their *modes of listening*. The images of Carrie's day and night radios (see pp. 142–43) speak to the different requirements of devices in space also: The stereo commands a lot of physical space and is capable of filling that space with sound; the night radio has no requirement to fill the space, but rather to be *accessible* and *unobtrusive* in the sleeping space. While company is available through listening in each of these spaces it is achieved and experienced differently.

Where participants listen shapes their listening experiences and is shaped by their access to different devices and the rhythms and routines of their days.

Sharing space

The majority of participants lived alone and did not generally share their domestic listening spaces. Despite living alone, however, many of these participants described situations where they needed to consider others in their listening: Anne worried that her neighbours would be disturbed by her listening, until she remembered they were hard of hearing, and it was unlikely to bother them; Beverley made her own listening arrangements when she visited with friends who did not use the radio. Generally speaking, however, participants who lived alone occupied their listening spaces fully and without compromise.

Den's radio goes wherever she wants at any given moment, moving around the space as she does.

[4] Watts, P. (Producer). (1957).
[5] Reed, D. (Producer). (1954-1955).

[Den]

She moves it between the living space, the bedroom, and the kitchen entirely at her discretion, without reference to anyone else's listening requirements. Carrie has a large entertainment unit, occupying substantial floor space in her living room, between her television and her piano.

> Owning the audio space e.g., Carrie with her huge stereo or Graeme with his car radio; Pat marking boundaries of listening in shared space with her husband. [Memo, 23 September 2021]

Just like Bob, Carrie has devices of her choosing which suit her needs and her environment. While arguably Bob has more floor **space** to devote to a stereo than Carrie does, Carrie lives alone and has not had to fit her aesthetic or audio requirements with anyone else's needs or **tastes**. This also relates to the gendered nature of domestic **spaces**, in the sense that Carrie's **space** is entirely her own and represents her own preferences and requirements entirely. Bob identified his luck in having a wife for company. She is also a radio listener, and their tastes overlap but are not identical. I asked him about sharing the listening space:

> Bob – Oh yes, we certainly listen together, but she has more interest in the ZB programme than I have. [inaudible] something on that comes on that I'm interested in, yes I do. But the majority is those 2 – National programme and Concert programme.
>
> *A – And, how do you negotiate the sound space? If there's something on ZB that is not of interest to you, but, so you want to have on Concert or National?*
>
> Bob – Or nothing
>
> *A – Or nothing*

Bob – I'm malleable - if she wants to listen to something I'm quite happy to have that.

A – Negotiating.

Bob – That's right.

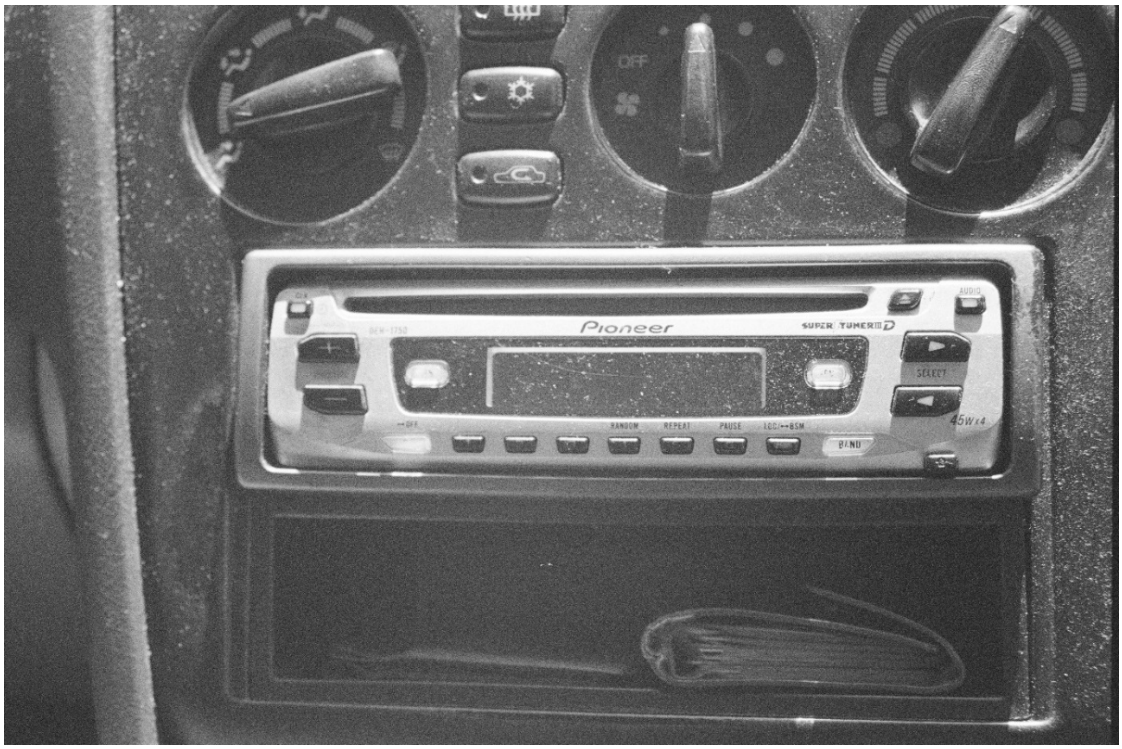
A – That's nice to hear.

Bob – That's the only way to be. Can't have 62 years of marriage without being malleable – beaten into shape. I didn't say which one of us was beaten. [laughs] Negotiable may be better.

Pat's husband also listens to the radio, but not as much as she does, and will leave the listening space if her listening continues after he is finished listening; Jan's listening practices and preferences align closely with those of her husband, and they largely share listening. Faye wears headphones to keep her listening confined to her side of the bed. These arrangements are bespoke to each household, making space for the listening practices and preferences of each resident.

There was one exception to households which share living space and sound space. Graeme and Cathy might listen to recorded music together in the house but they did not share a radio listening space: his listening was confined almost exclusively to his car in which he rode alone.

> Graeme's listening spaces: somewhere in the house as a boy but not in own indoor space; in the kitchen in the mornings while working; while outside in the garden or doing other jobs in mid-life; in the car in later life. The audio space he is allowed? Can enjoy? Can fill? Is different from other people's. [Memo, 20 March 2021]



[Graeme]

This has echoed throughout Graeme's adult life: whenever he has co-habited his listening spaces have been outside, or in the shed, or in the car. This speaks to the gendered nature of the domestic space and where each household member might *work alongside the radio* or where they might find or be entitled or enabled to seek *leisure*, *comfort*, and *rest*.

We have already explored the relationship between space and the listening experience and considered the way modes of listening change in different spaces. The implications for finding company in shared listening spaces is inextricable from the space/listening relationship.

Space as a boundary

> *A – What might make you turn on the radio in the day? If you were going to listen in the day?*
>
> Betty – Well, the radio is in the bedroom, and I'm out here.

The location of the device determines where listening happens. Several participants negated this, either by having radio throughout all conceivable listening spaces, such as Jan or Garry, by having a device sufficient to make every space a listening space, such as Carrie or Den, or by having portable devices, such as Bob, Beverley, and Brenda who listened a Bluetooth speaker in her laundry basket while she worked, for instance. For others, such as Graeme, Betty, and Faye, there were clear demarcations of listening and non-listening spaces which either dictated where they listened or were dictated by the locations of their devices.

Curious about this, I mapped the locations of listening devices against interview spaces onto a generic floorplan (see Figure 11). I was curious to see whether this face-to-face social interaction took place in a listening space, or a non-listening space.

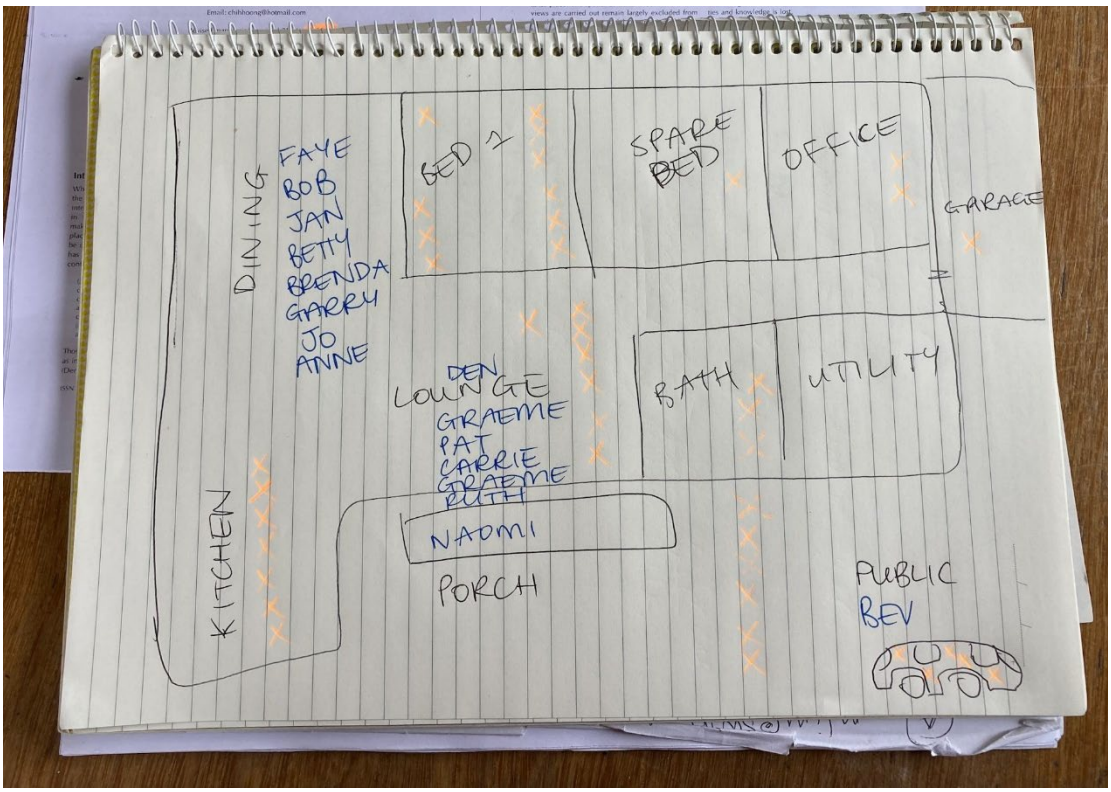


Figure 11 – Map of devices and interview spaces

Very many interviews took place at the dining table. Nobody had a radio in their dining space, but all dining areas were within earshot of a radio. Of all the living spaces, kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms, offices, utility rooms, garages, cars, living rooms, only the dining area was routinely devoid of a listening device. It seems that this space, set aside for eating in a particular posture, chairs arranged facing one another, specifically does not invite a radio where all other domestic spaces might: There is some invisible *boundary* around this particular space which, though it does not keep out the sound of the radio, does exclude the device. Those who live alone are not more or less likely to eat alone than they are to sleep or lounge or wash alone, but where there were bedside, sofa-side, and bath-side radios, the dining space was consistently without a radio. This micro-geography, where the furniture is set for face-to-face conversation, suggests that this is a *shared space* in which face-to-face company has precedence. Very many of my conversations took place in the dining area; of all the areas of a home open to guests, the dining area is a likely place to receive them, as my experience shows. Whereas we might expect to hear music if we are a guest in a living area or lounge, in a dining area we expect conversation. Excluding the radio from this space specifically is indicative of the **boundaries of the listening relationship**.

Faye uses space to make a listening boundary in a different way. Faye's listening space also marked a boundary in her relationship with the radio. She told me that there were regular callers overnight who 'normally say that they're sitting in their chair at night. Not many stay in bed. They all seem to sit up and have their radios in the lounge' [Faye]. She explained that:

> there's also a lady. Really odd lady, that rings in as well. And they've been ringing in for years, and it really is their thing. And she has a cat, and it sits on her knee while she's talking on the phone. So obviously she's up and, like, Brucie, sitting in his lounge. They don't seem to even be in bed in the middle of the night? Where, I'll wander round a little bit, cos it's blinking cold in the Winter, so I really prefer to stay under the covers. [Faye]

Faye, in bed next to her husband, though she describes the night as 'lonely', is less in need of the radio that those sitting and listening in the lounge room. **Space is the boundary** she uses to separate her sleepless listening practices from their lonely listening practices.

Carrie talked about how the radio is used as a boundary in the space where she volunteers, saying that

> they've got a radio in there, which sometimes they put on because there's a meeting in a room next door and they've got the door shut but they put the radio on so that people coming in don't hear anything from there. [Carrie]

In this case, the sound from the radio creates a private space in which people can do their work without being observed by colleagues or other service users.

IDENTITY

Touchpoints in these radio histories often included university or early adult independence, marriage, or early career references, becoming a mother, and retiring. These are milestones in any life course, and it perhaps not notable that they appear in a chronology of radio listening or indeed any other chronology. Taken as a whole, however, these references indicate a listening history, a sense that *alongside* these milestone moments, and many incidental, non-milestone, non-moments besides, radio had a place. It may be that it barely warrants a mention, '*like the sun*', as Brenda says, but it is there: The ubiquity of listening *alongside* these moments speaks of **being a listener**.

Having an identity as a listener–citizen–audience member

Having an identity as listener–citizen–audience is the sense of belonging associated with the practice of listening. Participants spoke of being known as a listener: Pat and her workmates listened and knew they listened, or Brenda or Anne said that their kids know they're home because the radio is on. Often this is even more specific, such as in Naomi's case, 'Well, of course, they wouldn't do it [change the station], because they know that I have the National programme on all the time.' [Naomi]. **Being a listener** was a marker of identity.

While participants' families and friends might identify them as a listener, this is more so about self-identifying as a listener and does not require validation by other people, friends, family, or presenters: 'I listen to X, Y or Z'. Very many participants spoke of listening to 1YA or The National programme. Until 1964, 1YA was the call sign for what became The National

Programme and what has been known as RNZ or Radio New Zealand since 2007. Through these various references, participants told me when they became 'listeners'; this history of listening is coded in the language they used to describe their listening.

'Keeping up with the play'

'Not that I can change events, but, I just like to know what's happening.' [Beverley]

Many listeners spoke of wanting to *'keep up with the play'* or *'being up with the play'*. This was closely linked with *using the radio for information rather than company* and came across initially as a deflection, or as wanting to present radio listening as more than mere entertainment, or a folly. There was a sense of *entertainment as taboo*, a presumption, perhaps, that radio listening, and especially radio listening, that might be the subject of research, needed to be in some way above or beyond entertainment: Surely she cannot be researching something so trivial as how I entertain myself? Bob, for instance, very willing to disclose his RNZ and Concert listening, became defensive when disclosing his 1ZB listening. Jan and Graeme were also aware that talkback listening was disparaged by others, though they appeared less bothered by that than Bob.

Through whichever channel they might receive it, participants were eager to tell me about their attention to news and newsgathering habits. So prevalent were discussions of newsgathering that I undertook some theoretical sampling related to newsgathering practices to explore the links between newsgathering and the experience of company. Initial coding of data relating to newsgathering and *'keeping up with the play'* was related to *wanting to remain engaged as a citizen*, *being a regular listener*, *asserting myself as an audience*, *being part of something bigger*. These were about being an *audience* in the sense of listening and being a *citizen* in the sense of a responsibility to remain engaged beyond your daily points of contact with the world at large.

> certainly when I was, when I was at home a full time mother and with young children, I used to have it going all the time just about. Because, not for company or anything, I don't think, it was cos, I was used to being in touch with what was happening, you know, you're kind of interested in current events and people and what's happening. And that's kind of, just part of it probably. So, I, I wanted to keep up with what was going on in the world. [Jan]

By *'keeping up with the play'* participants were remaining connected, keeping their social capital intact within the listening community and the broader community. This continual quest for new news was an aspect of being a conscientious citizen, part of a community.

> Well, I think it probably still, which is what I've said before, I'm interested in people and I'm interested in their experiences and their, their, well, I'm interested in their good and their bad experiences, but the bad ones you

> think, 'Oh!', cos it's good to hear them actually, cos it's good to know. Otherwise, some of these things that people ring in with, if it's the topic that tends to be being discussed, and, are things that I would never, have never experience or have been in… and so it's actually good to hear. I mean, you don't like what you're hearing, but it's good to know. [Jan]

Listening provided a connection to both the listening and broader community and, if not company itself, might afford access to company this way.

Meeting my needs: Replacing–adapting

Replacing–adaptating are also about identity making, shifting, and adjusting the concept of self as activities and interests change and adjust: Naomi, a gardener, was unable to garden; Faye, a musician, could not do music herself anymore; Bob, a singer, is not singing these days; Jan, the farmer's daughter, is not on the farm anymore but still wants to know the weather. Listening cannot replace gardening or singing or playing music or farming, but it can fill some of the time which might have been spent doing these things and it can provide **access to a past self**: It can speak to that interest, to that marker of identity. It is not a *replacement*, but it might represent an *adjustment*.

Adaptation in particular is about **being resourceful**, and taking pride in that resourcefulness, exercising **power and control** in the moment, **identifying and responding to my needs**. For instance, Pat adapted her listening depending on whether her husband was home or away; when he was not there, she listened in bed late at night. Betty cannot always make out the words in the song, but she can change the station: 'I turn to another station immediately. I'm not going to listen to it when there might be some good talkback or there might be a story on 1YA' [Betty].

Betty displays this adaptation in other ways, too. Having just moved to a new place, she does not have the right bedside table yet, so she makes do with a suitcase. Betty has the **power** to **adapt**, **replace** what she does not have to **meet her own needs**; she creates what she needs from what she has.

> Cos I had a little table that I used to put it on there, but now that I've moved here I don't have a table the right height, so I've had to make do. And I've got a suitcase standing there and a cushion, on top of the suitcase. [Betty]

[Betty]

Bob has similarly adapted his listening to his new space. Bob spoke of being without a 'radiogram' since he downsized and moved into a retirement community. The radios Bob has and uses now are those which best suit his listening needs and the **space** available, and he plays his CDs in the car. Devices also reflect the way participants were adapting to new situations. Bob and Betty are **adapting**, *making* do, which they can do on the strength of **knowing & meeting my needs–tastes**.

> And otherwise, it's um, oh, sometimes I listen to the cooking programmes, and I think 'Oh yes, that sounds very nice', but of course, I never make them because I don't do any cooking and I haven't used the oven for years. [Naomi]

The radio has been able to support participants and their needs have grown and changed. When TASTES have shifted, from the latest hit single to current affairs, listening has been able to accommodate that. Where needs having changed, radios have been replaced that they might have the required attributes.

> I've been here 50 years, so – and I haven't used it that much during the day. It's only since I retired and came to sit out here and appreciate what I've got here, um… And I can't garden anymore, so I can't get out there, and so I've relying, more on the radio. [Naomi]

Where life has changed, listening has been able to support participants: from a passion for gardening, to hearing of new ingredients on the radio; from playing music, to listening to music. While the genesis of these changes might have been outside participants' control, their response to these changes, these adaptations, have been their choice, within their control.

Several participants spoke of radio as contributing to wellbeing. Speaking about her mother's listening, Naomi reflected that the time she took between household chores, when she made herself a cup of tea and listened to the radio was '*the radio's contribution to her wellbeing*' [Naomi]. Faye spoke about the radio saving her sanity during sleepless nights, when she said it was lonely to be awake: 'I do like the night programs going *all the way through the night – I'm sure there's a lot like me* that it is, *it saves your sanity*, I think, because *it's something to listen to*' [Faye].

Where this contribution was most pressing was among women discussing their use of the radio when they were at home with young children and how they *adapted their listening practices* at those moments.

Awareness of the meta structures

'No advertising, no radio.' [Bob]

'And I know that's *all part of the system* how it works and *if you don't pay for it you've gotta put up with the ads*.' [Pat]

Beyond *knowing the schedule*, *charting the development* of their f*avourite presenters* over time, or *knowing the regular callers* by voice, participants showed a keen **awareness of the meta-structures** of radio specifically and media in general. Pat's radio illustrates exactly this. It is surrounded by other media: books, the telephone, a satellite dish. The device is part of a *media landscape* in the same way her listening practices are part of her media landscape.

[Pat]

Jo worked at a radio station and detailed what this meant for her in terms of invitations to events around town, for instance. Talkback listeners were able to describe the process for getting on air: talking to the presenter, waiting to be put through. Pat noted that the Summer schedule was a time for the professionals to be on holidays, implying that those left holding the fort were of a lesser standard. Beverley told me that 'occasionally Radio New Zealand goes off air, to fix a… repeater station or whatever it is. But not very often'. Participants were familiar with the processes, policy, and infrastructure behind and contributing to their listening experiences.

> that's why I'm against all these news things being rolled into one, being owned by the same company: Because it's all the same now, all they're doing is, they could read it off Facebook, I don't know. [laughs] I don't know where they get it from, but a lot of it isn't news. …Not important anyway, it's all emotive claptrap. A lot of it. When there is news, it's over-hyped. Don't like that either. [Brenda]

Beverley spoke directly about ratings and their influence on content.

> *A – Is there anything else you feel like you want to tell me about listening?*
>
> Beverley – About radio? Hmmm… I prefer it to stay part of my life, as it is. I don't usually listen to the Concert programme, but for friends who do: I hope that stays as well. Occasionally I might tune in there, but not usually. Possibly there are too many radio stations, all competing.
>
> *A – What makes you say that?*
>
> Beverley – At one stage, Paul Holmes came and spoke to the 6th form. And he was dynamic. And it was all about the ratings. So, I hope Radio New Zealand does not, well it's not part of the game because it's not commercial as you know, but I certainly hope it doesn't go commercial.
>
> *A – What do you think would be the disadvantage to that?*
>
> Beverley – Well then you have to concern about the ratings and who's listening, and what should we play to keep people happy, or to get them to listen, because we're competing with that. And then there's advertisers, we need the advertisers to get the money.
>
> …
>
> Beverley – I don't know that they are, I think they're just carrying on as they were. Perhaps it needs to be reviewed. But I think, perhaps radio listeners, Radio New Zealand listeners are older…

Beverley is keenly aware of the market influences on the radio landscape. She has views on market saturation and audience demographics for different stations. Her analysis goes far beyond the content she hears to consider market forces, advertising, and station finance.

Whatever feelings they might experience, in this case company, participants were well aware of what went into making them. 'she [Kathryn Ryan] seems to be pretty well up to date and she must have very good producers. Because I understand they're the ones that get the people. And she just has to do her homework' [Ruth]. Participants' knowledge extends from

the corporate and financial mechanisms to the intricacies of programme-making. This intimate knowledge of the structures shows not only an understanding of the media, but of the structures around it. Participants are *citizens* and *audience members* who are deeply aware of what goes into their listening experiences at all levels. This engagement and awareness is an antithesis to what I mistook for 'surface level' disclosures about favourites and preferences. Participants have a keen *awareness of the meta structures* and are under no illusion as to what is behind the sounds with which they are interacting.

Summary – Relationships between categories

In centring our conversation on their listening preferences, participants told me who they were. Through their expressions of TASTE in relation to **content** and **devices**, participants *asserted themselves*, they demonstrated the **choice, power, and control** they had within their *listening relationships*. These relationships are bound by TIME and SPACE and contribute to participants' sense of IDENTITY. Chapter 5 has outlined how I came to understand the data in this way. Figure 12 captures a simplified outline of the relationships between initial and focused codes and their categories.

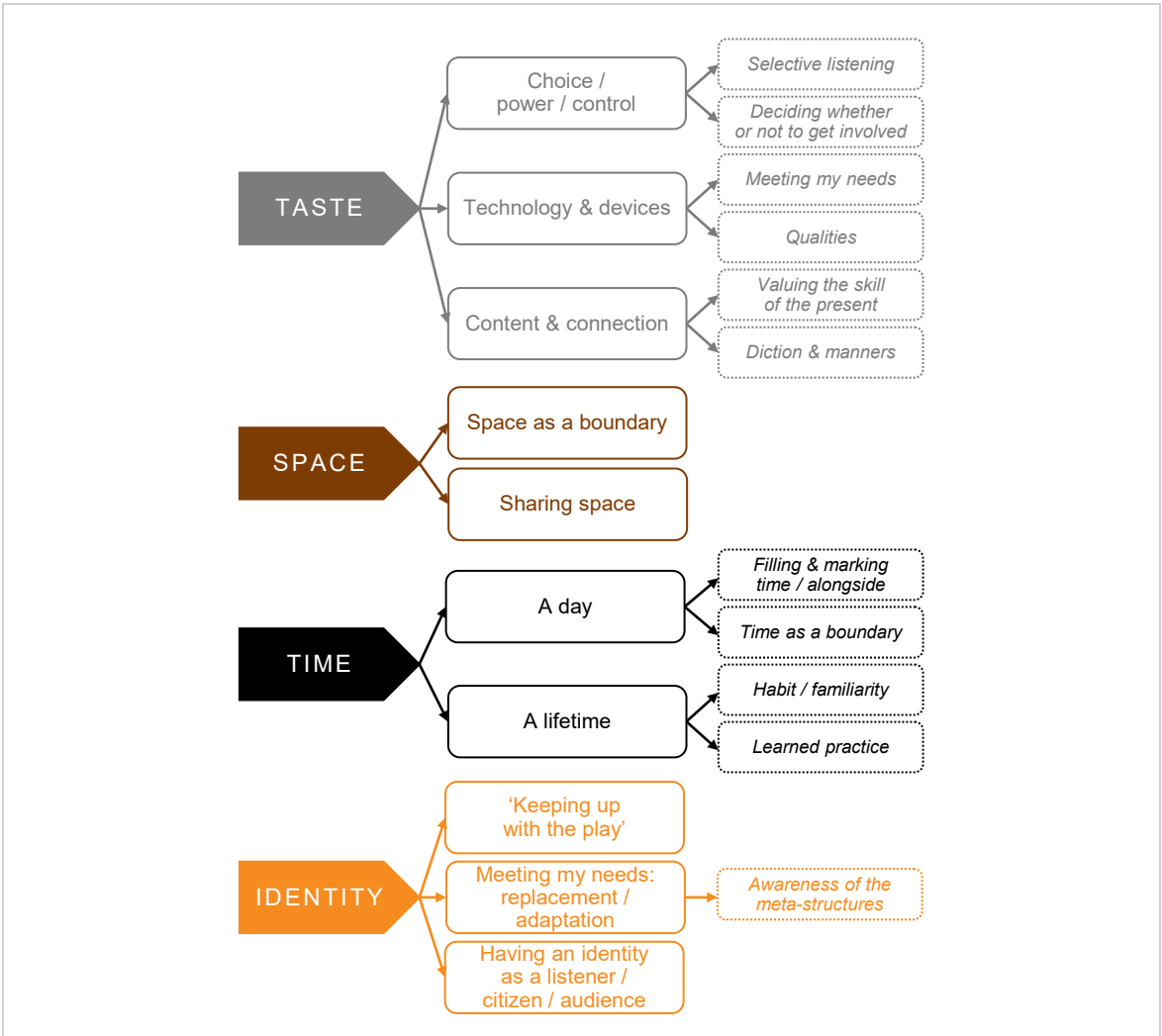


Figure 12 – A sketch of initial and focused codes and their categories

Despite this linear presentation, there is significant back-and-forth between categories and their focused codes. Listening **spaces** and **devices** are linked to the preference for and experience of *alongside* listening. Where **replacement and adapting** are described in relation to IDENTITY, it is clear that the ways in which participants make replacements and adapt are also a function of TASTE and are reflected in their choice of **device**. Similarly, decisions about **sharing space** are shaped by **choice, power, and control**. Undoubtedly the choice of **device** is related to the **space** in which it will be used, and so on. Sometimes a **device** itself is testament to the *length of this relationship*. Several participants spoke of having used radios which had previously belonged to their grandparents, or siblings perhaps, linking them to past selves. Some devices were gifted, others have been retained for long periods and in themselves offer **connections across time** and to others. Figure 13 shows these relationships to be chaotic, difficult to read and interpret.

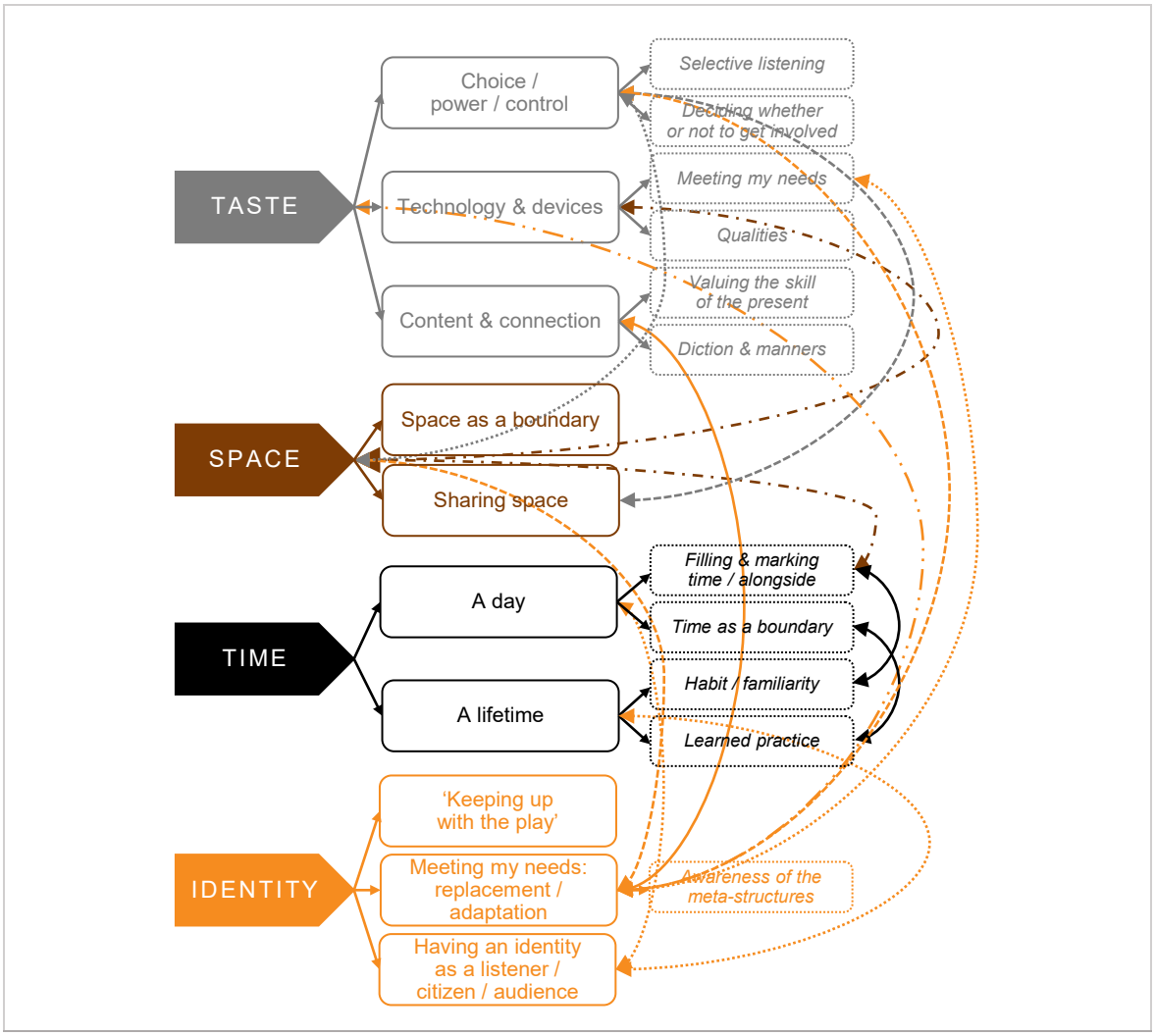


Figure 13 – A sketch showing some of the links across categories

Looking at these relationships in different configurations makes clear that the links between TASTE and IDENTITY are thick. Figure 14 helps clarify this.

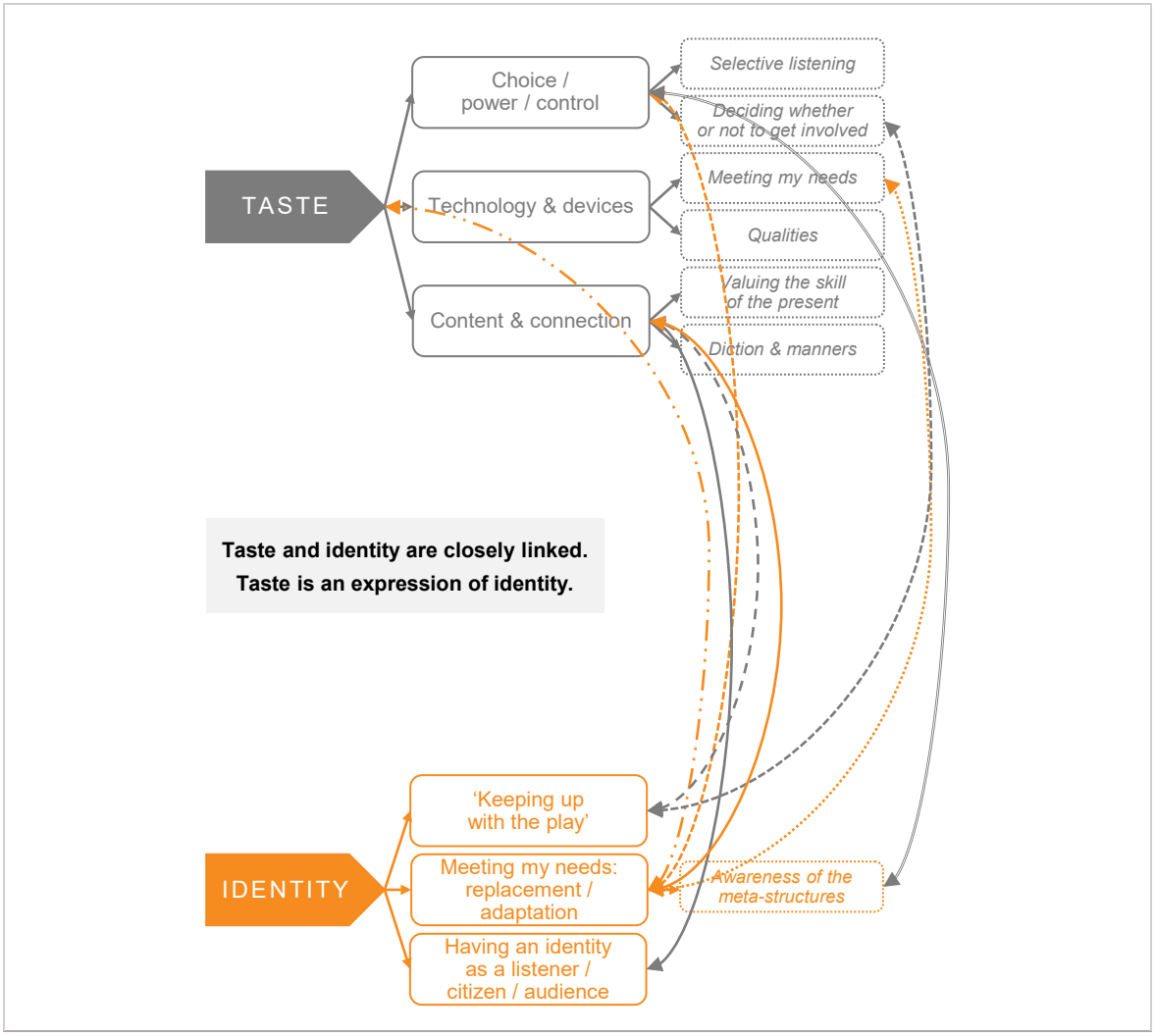


Figure 14 – Looking at the links between IDENTITY and TASTE

Figure 15 positions IDENTITY as a core category, demonstrating that it can be understood as "the central phenomenon around which all other categories are integrated" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116).

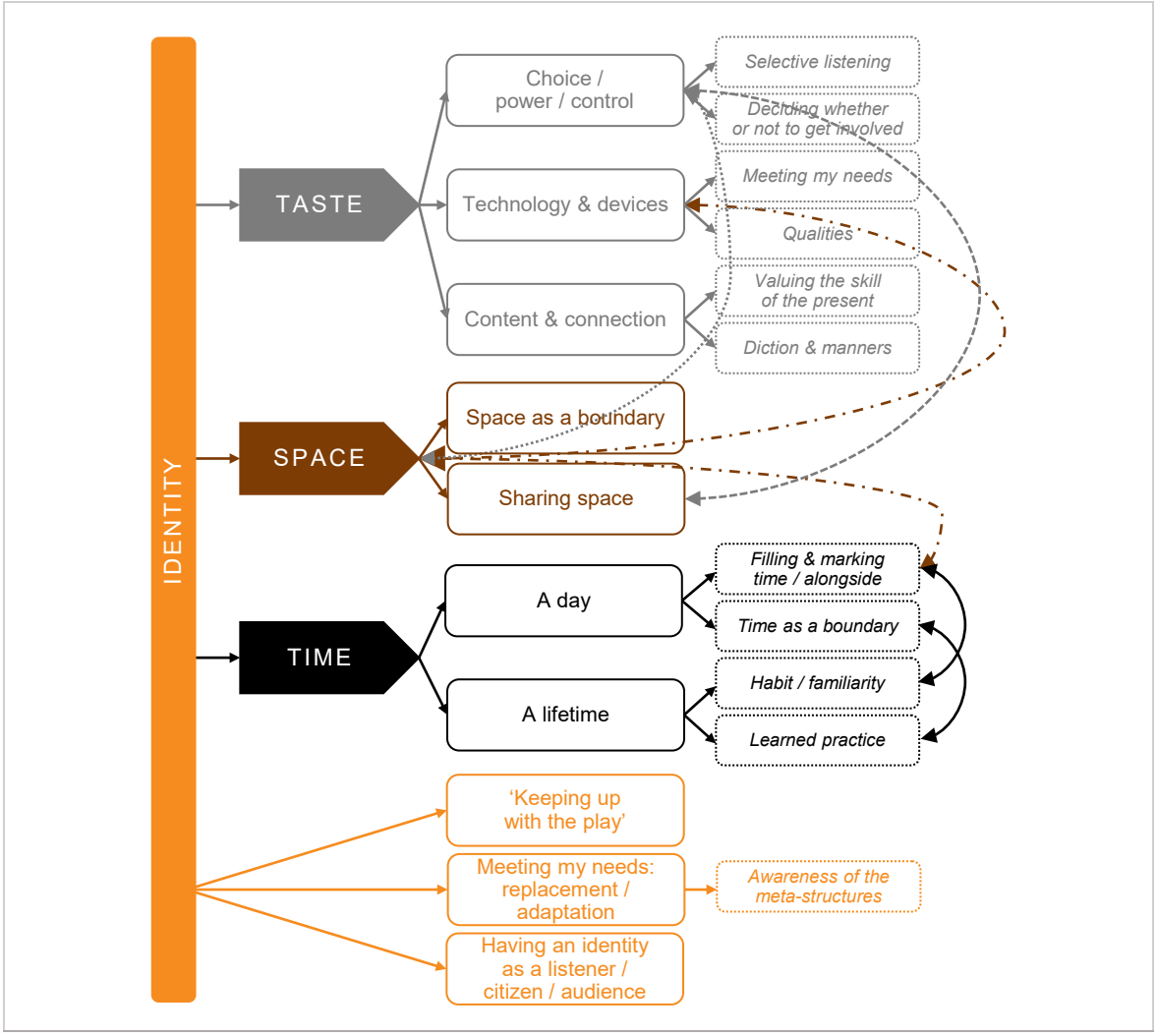


Figure 15 – A sketch positioning IDENTITY as a core category

TIME and SPACE are important, but they are not central. We can understand TASTE as an expression of IDENTITY, so that, while they appear to be of similarly vital importance to understanding the data, TASTE can be explained by or understood as an expression of IDENTITY, but TASTE cannot explain IDENTITY.

In Chapter 5 we moved from fractured data, through focused codes and initial categories to a core category. Chapter 6 will develop this understanding of the data in relation to IDENTITY and develop this category more fully in response to the research question: 'How does radio listening provide company to older listeners who use it to that purpose?'

CHAPTER 6 – LISTENING AND IDENTITY

Introduction

The chapter begins by exploring IDENTITY as a core category and is concerned with the part of the theory relating to self identity:

> Radio listening creates an experience of company for older listeners by supporting a knowledge of self and an appreciation of self in context. **Through radio listening, older listeners are able to challenge, comfort, extend, and affirm their self-identity** within the boundaries of taste, time, and space.

The chapter begins by exploring the core category of IDENTITY in relation to the data and goes on to examine the properties of this category.

There are many instances in the data where participants address matters of IDENITTY directly in terms of identity-making and identity shifts, but none more so than the identity shift which accompanies the beginning of motherhood. The relationship between listening and mothering was a feature of many research conversations in this work, right from my very first conversation with Faye. Talking to Faye, the mention of the shift to motherhood was oblique to listening, but not unrelated. Faye listens overnight when she is sleepless. She identifies the link between sleeplessness and early motherhood, though she did not use the radio at that time. She told me that

> the kids were such bad sleepers and I was up and down, up and down, by the time they were two they started to sleep all night… but you get in such a pattern, waking all the time to hear a kid or whatever, that you don't really know how to go to sleep after that.
>
> And I had big babies for a skinny person and ended up with really lax muscles so I was incontinent well and truly in my 30s and 40s, ah, so I was up in the toilet every hour of the night, see, then I had a hysterectomy to tighten my womb and whatever, but I was such a bad sleeper and I haven't ever come right. So I started listening to the radio, probably in my 40s really, because up until then the kids were still at home and, but it's just frustrating. But anyway, that's how it is. [Faye]

Faye did not say 'I started listening to the radio because I became a mother'. She did, however, link her current listening practices to her experience of becoming a mother. It would be some time before I would see or understand this link. As the research conversations continued, links between mothering and listening continued. It was not until I saw IDENTITY as a core category that I began to revisit how discussions of IDENTITY and **becoming** and **adapting** featured so consistently in the data.

Having established IDENTITY as a core category, the chapter moves on to an analysis of how these "individual components of the study weave together" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 276). Chapter 6

builds towards an understanding of how participants use listening to challenge, comfort, extend, and affirm their self-identity and establishes TASTE, TIME, and SPACE as the boundaries in which they undertake this identity work.

Appreciating IDENITIY as a core category

Chapter 5 explored the relationship between listening and IDENTITY and noted reference to listening at various milestone moments. The importance of radio at one of these milestone moments in particular stood out: **becoming** a mother. This moment in the life course represents a significant change to IDENTITY and, more than any other, stood out amongst the data as a point in TIME when participants identified the radio as company. Figure 16 introduces the idea of the layered listening self which will be developed over this chapter.

Figure 16 – IDENTITY and a sense of self

This is not universal: Not all participants in this study who are mothers spoke about using the radio this way in this moment. But by illustrating how radio supported this moment of acute **identity shift**, the mothers in this study who did use the radio in this way illuminated that the radio *could* be used to support **identity maintenance** and, in doing so, be **experienced as company**.

'[T]here was world out there, besides babies and nappies and colic' [Brenda] – acute IDENTITY shift and listening

Participants in this study were overwhelmingly women (n=12; 80%), and among them almost all (n=10; 83%) spoke of being mothers. Discussions of mothering often included a conversation about those early days, the birth of the mother which accompanies the birth of a child. Coming to the IDENTITY of 'mother' represents a significant IDENTITY shift. It is well documented that loneliness is often correlated with moments in which people are "experiencing a transition in terms of their social connections and social identities" (Kantar Public, 2016, p. 20), just as Anne articulates. Anne talked about having stopped working to have her children and remembering that 'the men would leave in the morning and it would

just be me and this non-English speaking baby. And just, [the radio] was company, it really was company' [Anne].

Many participants referred to their radio listening during this time of transition from one IDENTITY to another and, in many cases, disclosed having been lonely at this time. Pat's experience of early motherhood was accompanied by moving somewhere new where she had no connections. She talks about the role of the radio in those times as 'very much company… a lifesaver probably' [Pat]. She talks about having 'left everybody behind' [Pat] and being 'at home with a kid, with children, or a child and one to come' [Pat].

> You know, you'd have National programme, and there was always a little bit of local news at the end of the National bulletin. Yep. So. So, that was, it was really important in those days. Yeah. Really good, to have something to, have the news on, some adult interaction, really, I suppose, you could call it. [Pat]

Brenda talked about the role of radio when she was at home with her children.

> Brenda – Then, as a new mum, oh, yeah. As a new mum, that was definitely company. Radio on the minute I got out of bed. And, right through. Never turned the radio off.
>
> …
>
> *A – I'm interested in that new mum company feeling. Tell me a little bit more about how that worked for you?*
>
> Brenda – Not so much, actually, just company, as in, there was something else happening besides baby. Cos my husband was a shift worker, so I was pretty much alone, on my own with the babies. Because when he wasn't sleeping, he was working. Not his fault, but that's the way the world was going then. Um, and yes, the radio; I still, I did, I used to listen to the, oh, what were they? Quarter hour plays that used to come on at 10 o'clock in the morning. After Aunt Daisy.
>
> …
>
> Brenda – … That's, saying that, you talk about the radio when the children were little: Um, it was nice know that there was another human being out there, another human voice. And someone, there was world out there, besides babies and nappies and colic and all the good things and bad things.
>
> *A – It's really important to know that when it's happening.*
>
> Brenda – It is, it is. Are you a mum?
>
> *A – Yes, yep.*
>
> Brenda – Yeah, and, yeah: Because I probably had, probably had a mild case of postnatal depression, but in those days, you got over it.
>
> *A – Right.*
>
> Brenda – Nobody, um, nobody wanted to help you. And you didn't admit you had it, because it was weak. It was hard.
>
> *A – Very unfortunately, I think that remains the case for many people.*
>
> Brenda – Still? But there's so much help?

A – But asking is hard.

> Brenda – Yeah. When I did ask, I was given antidepressants. Not much fun. I took them for a wee while, and then realised I was nearly hooked, and decided 'Nah, not going there', because it's not a good thing. You must be able to, you must be able to keep, to get your mind out of it. And the radio helped there, by listening to things and, I mean, I could, but of course, with babies, you just start listening to something, and they squark. Or they spill something.

As my memos from the time of transcription show, Brenda's account in particular was incredibly effecting.

> The bit where Brenda talks about her postnatal depression is really hard to listen to. It's hard to imagine her, alone, with a baby, trying to listen, to 'get her mind out of it', with a background of crying and jobs to do and exhausted. She didn't say half of those things, but I *know* those things. Wanting to kind of crawl into the radio, into a clean, quiet, adult space, away from the dirty floor and the washing and the endless, indecipherable noise. All the mothers. All of them make me feel this way. [Memo, 6 February 2021]

Identifying the link between this acute moment of identity formation and experiencing the radio as company challenged me, as I recorded in a memo while transcribing.

> Of all the participants who have spoken to me about their experiences of loneliness in their early days of motherhood, Brenda has been the most discursive and offered the most detail of those days. Listening back to Brenda's interview while transcribing and summarising it makes me wonder whether I was shy of some of her revelations because of my own experiences and unpreparedness to explore those within myself.
>
> Mothering a baby, though not so much an infant, was an incredibly challenging time for me also. Brenda's disclosures about her own struggles during her early days of motherhood resonated with me in such a way that, on listening back, makes me wonder whether I hesitated to explore them with her, in terms of her use of the radio. I can hear myself trying to leave her space to disclose what she wanted to disclose, but I also hear myself take the first opportunity she offers to move away from the intimacy and difficulty of that moment.
>
> In deciding to work with older people in a discussion of loneliness and company, I knew I would need to face my own experiences of loneliness and isolation, but I hadn't expected, on reflection, to have them mirrored back to me in such familiar terms. If any, I anticipated they would be tales of the loneliness I may have yet to encounter, my hitherto unknown future loneliness, rather than my well known, perhaps too close for comfort, very familiar loneliness. [Memo, 10 February 2021]

It was in reflecting on this profound moment of identity shift that participants were most readily able to identify radio listening as company. Considering these data collectively in the process of constant comparative analysis suggested that radio listening played a role at this moment of profound identity change. Mothering changed participants' *selves* and the way they related to the world around them, and very many of them described radio listening as important in this period. In this period of **adaptation**, the radio supported these participants. It

was a reminder of the world beyond their experience in the moment, it supported Brenda to 'get [her] mind out of' the 'babies and colic' and maintain something of the self she knew before she was mothering. It did the same for Pat and the same for Anne.

'That mothering thing' [Jan] – keeping up with the play; keeping up with my selves

Jan remembered being moved to call in to a talkback segment while she was a fulltime mother to young children. There was a discussion of parental leave and of

> talking about you know, more parental leave, and more mothers going back to work sooner, and they should be, and… you know, 'you don't feel valued if you're not at work' and just, or 'you should', or the expectation that you should go back to work [Jan]

She *decided to call*. She told me that generally, calling was 'a bit scary, cos I've got to think carefully what, how I'm going to say it usually' but that on this occasion she felt very strongly about it and she did call. She said,

> I was a young mother, and at home, a fulltime mother, and that was my role in life – I wasn't feeling sorry for myself or anything, that was how it was. And I felt I was keeping informed and, you know, but socially, if you're 'just a mother', you were just a mother, and you…
>
> And I remember at the time thinking, you know, 'motherhood is so important, and it's so undervalued, there's no status attached'. And I mean, I didn't expect to be held up on a ped, or anything like that, cos I was doing, I had the choice.
>
> And, but, I always was conscious of the fact that there was no, it was undervalued the importance of, for the next generation, that mothering thing. [Jan]

Jan is not 'feeling sorry for herself' and she is still '*keeping informed'*, but she sees that her new IDENTITY, *'just a mother'*, is not appreciated by others, it is undervalued given its crucial importance. *'That mothering thing'* she is now doing is contrasted unfavourably with her working self, which had '*value*'. She rejects this and *decides to participate* and say so on air: 'And so I got on and said that "the trouble was, I believe, that mothering has never valued as a, or less and less as we go through", and that was it' [Jan]. Jan identifies that mothers, and solo mothers in particular, are often maligned on the radio she listens to, but she takes this opportunity to '*speak from experience*' and speak in defence of her new IDENTITY.

Jan is not using the radio for 'company' in this time, she says, she is using the radio to '*keep informed*'. Her IDENTITY has changed, shifted, to include 'mother', but **alongside** this new IDENTITY, she still identifies as someone who is '*keeping informed'*. Using listening to '*keep informed*' is something participants describe doing across the life course: Listening to the *Hit*

Parade (1946–1975) kept Pat informed as a teenager; discussing Kathryn Ryan at work kept her informed in discussions with her colleagues at work.

Analysis of these disclosures, and of the ways these participants described using listening at this moment in TIME, developed into a broader understanding of the use of listening as a means of affirming an IDENTITY. This was only possible later because of these early, fearless explorations by participants of the role of listening at this particular moment: isolation coupled with a loss and remaking of the self. Becoming a mother is a moment of acute IDENITTY change and it was discussions of these moments which led me to interrogate the link between listening, IDENTITY, and company.

In this moment of acute IDENTITY shift, participants described the radio as providing connection to other adults, but also to the selves that motherhood had disrupted. Anne was working, connected, *'up with the play'* of the adult, working world because she was part of that play, until she was no longer, until that working adult self had to sit alongside this new, mothering self. Listening to the radio helped her do that. It connected her to others, yes, but it connected her to her*self*. Pat was part of a community which she left, and, cut off from that and mothering in isolation, the radio connected her to that self. Brenda's listening reminded her that 'there was something else happening besides baby' [Brenda], it connected her to things happening in the world, because it affirmed that she had a place in that world, beyond the world of 'babies and nappies and colic and all the good things and bad things' [Brenda]. The experience of company in these moments came from a connection to the self, made available through listening.

Listening as IDENTITY work

The process of being and becoming is ongoing: "[I]dentification, whether of ourselves or of others, is a process; something that we do" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 2). In other words, though listening, participants actively engaged with content which not only affirmed and comforted them, but also content which extended and challenged them. Hearing the opinions and experiences of others, political shifts, events, and technological developments, means participants are able to constantly comparatively assess their own views, locate themselves in relation to others, and continually monitor and add to or potentially adjust their own understanding of themselves.

By continuing to listen, participants are engaged in a practice of identity maintenance. Radio listening plays the part of a close and trusted companion with whom participants are able to test new ideas and remember old times. This companionship provides space in which to revisit past selves and construct new understandings of that same self. This intimate relationship has

built up over **a lifetime of listening**, and remained accessible through the many **identity shifts**, **replacements**, **adjustments**, and **adaptations** that constitute a lifetime.

'Keeping up with the play': Listening and IDENTITY over TIME

It is not only the acute moments of IDENTITY transition in which radio listening plays a role, as Ruth demonstrates. Close inspection reveals that there are very many moments of identity-making over the life course in which radio had played a role or has at least a noteworthy presence. At one stage, I entertained a line of theoretical sampling concerning major world events and listening. I asked participants whether there were specific moments in history at which they recalled listening to the radio. I was readily able to recall myself, for instance, that I heard about the death of Princess Diana on the radio in my father's car one Sunday afternoon as I laced up my football boots. While many people recalled world events, there were no such standout moments at which they distinctly remembered hearing directly from the radio. Rather than world events, it was intimate, personal moments of change and becoming at which people recalled their radio listening. Considering the role of listening at times of identity formation reveals that radio has accompanied other moments of becoming over the life course. From building crystal sets [Bob the engineer] to compiling lists of the top 10 songs in the Hit Parade (1946–1975) [Pat the 'news junkie'] to learning English [Betty the new New Zealander], from learning and dancing to the latest pop songs as a nursing student [Carrie the musician] to pushing boundaries with unauthorised listening and pirate stations [Brenda the non-conformist], many participants recall radio at moments of identity formation and change.

Figure 17 illustrates how being a **listener–citizen–audience member** has sat alongside this lifetime of becoming, and where it has not, and how these touch points offer **access to a past self** through a process of **adaptation** and **replacement**.

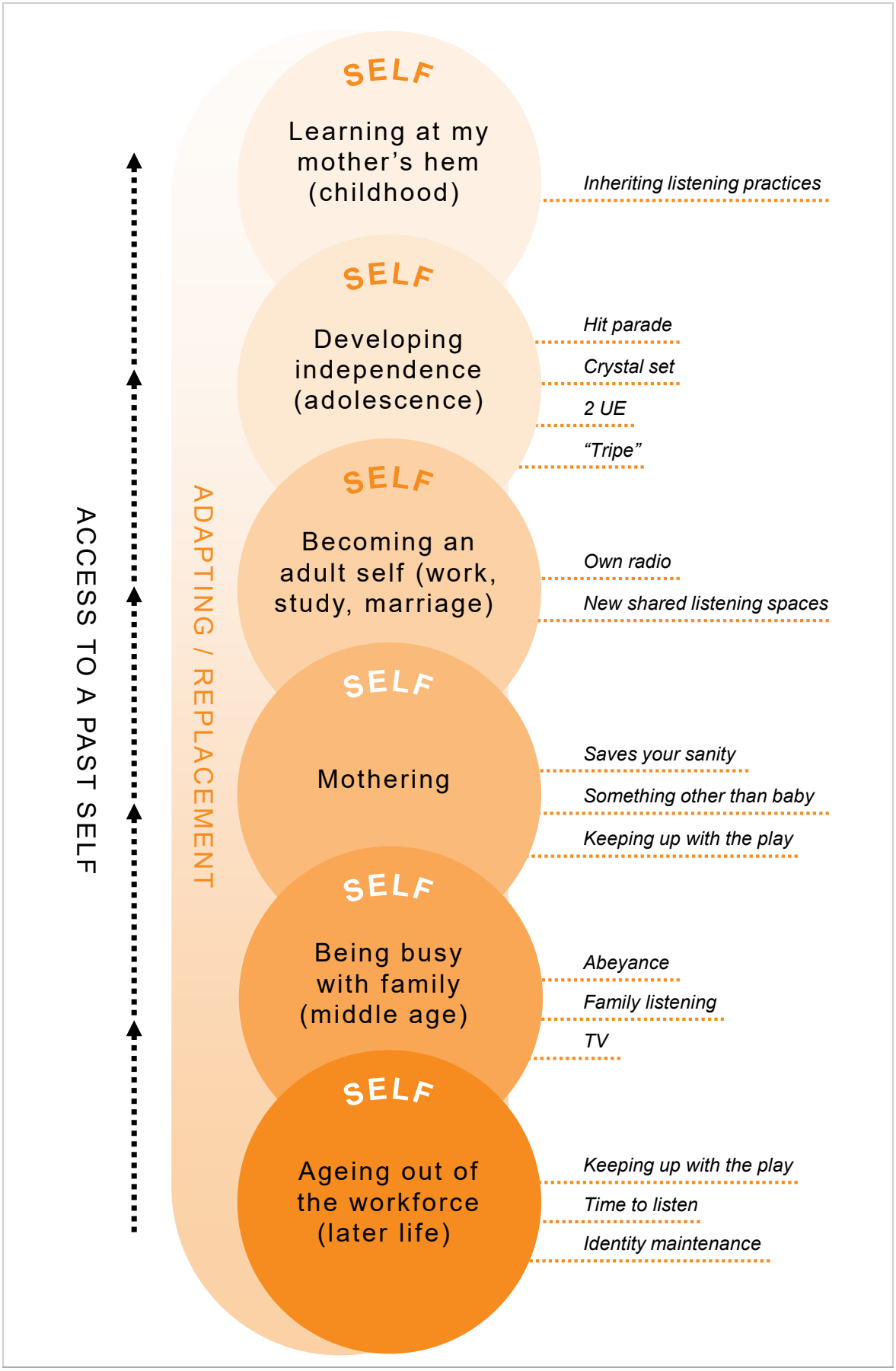


Figure 17 – Radio and IDENTITY over time

Capacity or willingness to discuss listening at moments of IDENTITY shift are perhaps enhanced by being some distance from those shifts, though several participants did speak to recent IDENTITY shifts in relation to their current listening. For the most part, these were initially coded as **replacement–adaptation** and ranged from adjustments such as Betty and Bob moving house to Pat retiring from the workforce and Garry having adapted to his role of carer and later widow. 'So I just, yeah, radio's almost *like a part of the family*… even more so now that I'm in this new role of being a widower. I still find it hard to say that word' [Garry]. These are all shifts in IDENTITY in varying degrees during which participants discussed the role of their radio listening.

Participants described acute moments of identity-making when radio might play or have played a role, as discussed above, but these were few and far between across the life course. The kind of IDENTITY work participants described was more likely to be small **replacements** or **adaptations**, moments of exercising TASTE or asserting oneself through exercising their power and control. One of the ways listening plays a part in these small, daily acts of IDENTITY work is by providing a mechanism for identity maintenance, that is checking, through listening, where they are in relation to others. In one sense, knowing where others, perhaps contemporaries or perhaps not, stood on particular issues or what kinds of experiences they were having provided a context in which to understand themselves.

> This identity making, um, is on a trajectory over the life course or, or well goes back through the life course, over the life course, to enable things like access to a past self and recalling or remembering my listening past and this, um, what is happening now with things like keeping up with the play for instance, or, um, checking the mood of the nation is a kind of identity maintenance where you check yourself, you, you it's it, um, like keeping up with the play is about having an identity now being present now and continuing to seek information, and knowledge is still about building that identity and, and checking and confirming where you are in relation to other people, because we need that, those points of reference to know ourselves, we don't, we define ourselves in relation to other things: I am, but also I am next to, I am above. We need the preposition for a full understanding of ourselves. I think that's how this works. 'Keeping up with the play' is identity maintenance. It is a way to understanding myself in the present; where am I in relation to others today? Or, perhaps, where are others in relation to me today? [Memo, 15 January 2022]

Jan directly addressed the difference between seeing herself in context and seeing herself reflected. She talked about how listening to the views of others which oppose her own might make her shout at the radio.

> Jan – So, and, we do like listening to talk back. We listen to Newstalk ZB. And I think probably just for the same reason, we're interested in what people have to say and we do a certain amount of shouting at it at times.
>
> …

> Jan – Especially Jack. I have to say 'If you hear Jack shouting, it won't be at me' [laughter] But it's good, it's good. And we often have different opinions on things, obviously, but it does, it does give you, it keeps you up with the play and it keeps you up with the way people are thinking, and…
>
> *A – What gets you shouting?*
>
> Jan – Oh, mostly, mostly – well we're right wing in our politics I guess – and when it's somebody that is promoting or proposing something that we just feel would not be good for, you know, that's our, that just opposes to the way we approach things like that.
>
> But it's not so much that, it's more, I think you know, often it can be nasty, people can be nasty, or say something that we feel is just simply putting a wrong slant on things, but that can happen often on both sides – it's not just.
>
> So that's probably it and in Jack's case it's… well, sometimes with me too – it can be the cricket umpires or the referees! [laughs] Or whatever. Or people… I can't think of anything specific, but it's often, people promoting something that we can't see practically how it would work. Or from our experiences we know that well, if you did that well, this'd happen, sort of thing.
>
> *A – Does it feel like you're trying to correct them, would you say?*
>
> Jan – Yes, I don't know. Cos in a lot of cases people wouldn't want to be corrected because that's the way they believe and they would think the same about us, sort of thing.

It might be someone whose politics she disagrees with, or the cricket umpire: People might '*put a wrong slant on things'*, and that can happen, she says 'on both sides'. It's a challenge to listen to; she shouts at them sometimes. Jan knows, however, that people with views different to hers do not want to be corrected, just like she does not, they are calling because they want to hear themselves reflected. Engaging with the challenging content gives her context, points of difference when she disagrees and points of solidarity when she does agree.

A memo I recorded during transcription compares and contrasts Jan's experience with Naomi's:

> [For Jan the radio is] giving me insights into experiences of others. Almost the opposite of what Naomi said about enjoying people talking about experiences she had, or might have had. Jan is enjoying the strange; Naomi was enjoying the familiar. It meets you where you are – you can find ways to hear new things, or you can find ways to hear old things, depending on your preference. [Memo, 12 February 2020]

Jan is seeking challenge; Naomi is seeking affirmation. Both women are experiencing listening as company.

Figure 18 draws out the flow of this work, moving between comfort and affirmation, extension and challenge.

Figure 18 – Listening and IDENTITY work

'*A nice, gentle voice at night time*' [Garry] – Seeking affirmation and comfort

Seeking comfort and affirmation through listening is reflected in the feeling of **familiarity**, of being *known* and *having a routine*. *Knowing the schedule* is a comfort and affirms the listeners' identity as a **citizen–audience–listener**. More than simply expressing an IDENTITY, these traits affirmed participants' identities.

Chapter 5 explored the differences between the experiences of listening during the day and during the night and established that day listening and night listening requires different *devices* and they offer different *experiences*. Further analysis of these experiences with reference to IDENTITY offers more insight into the different company-making processes happening during these different listening experiences. Den describes these different listening experiences very clearly, saying

> My thoughts are more peaceful at nights when I listen to the radio. Even if they say things that kind of brass me off, I don't, I don't react like the way I do during the day and I don't, I don't even think 'Shut up', I don't even think that. [Den]

Whereas during the day, Den is interested to engage in more **challenging listening**, at night she is **seeking comfort**.

> *A – So, I wonder when you're having that, when you move from kind of day time listening to night time listening, what's the difference for you? Would you notice any difference between how it feels for you to be listening in the day and how it feels for you to be listening in the night?*
>
> Den – My thoughts are more peaceful at nights when I listen to the radio. Even if they say things that kind of brass me off, I don't, I don't react like the way I do during the day and I don't, I don't even think 'Shut up', I don't even think that.
>
> *A – Right.*

Den – During the day I… [gestures]

A – Say it out loud, right. That's an interesting observation.

Den – Yeah.

A – And do you think that's, do you have any idea why that might be?

Den – Probably because I'm of a mature age [laughter] and get, and tire, and tire more easier than… before.

A – Right. Do you have that kind of experience of sleeplessness overnight, or do you sleep?

Den – Well for while, at least 3 years now, my sleeps are incremental.

A – A bit and a bit and a bit?

Den – Yeah, 3 or 4 hours max. Usually at one time, and then I'm up. I used to get up and do things, but now I don't, I just lie there and be slack.

A – Listen to the radio?

Den – Listen to the radio or read, or.

A – And, but it's already on, so you don't have to turn it on when you wake up?

Den – No.

A – Yeah, ok.

Den – I just go like this [gestures feeling around for the radio]

Murdoch[6] – Look for the volume? [laughter]

A – Turn it up. And so, that's interesting that kind of more peaceful; listening feels more peaceful in the night time. Even if it's talkback? Even if it's like, or is it because you're listening to something different, do you think?

Den – Oh, no, not is; I think… No doesn't matter what it is.

A – Right, it's your, what you're bringing.

Den – It's probably where I'm at.

A – Yeah, got ya.

Murdoch – Am I hearing you right like, when you're listening during the day and in the evening, you have a shift in what you want to be engaged in?

Den – Oh… Yes, I s'pose so, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Murdoch – So there's also a shift in your mood?

Den – Yeah.

Murdoch – Yeah.

Den – See I'm a day time warrior, not a night time warrior.

It is not that what is available has changed with the coming of the night, but that Den has changed, and her requirements have changed.

[6] Murdoch Ngahau provided cultural support in my conversation with Den. See Chapter 4 for more information on this arrangement and Appendix H for his signed confidentiality agreement.

Den described some of her radio use as 'hum', but noted that her night time listening was different to 'hum'.

> *A – In that kind of, um, night time music listening, that, is that, would you describe that as hum as well, or is that a kind of different listening?*
>
> Den – Mmmm… Before 12, some of those hours in there it's hum. But after 12 when I listen to Radio Tainui or their affiliated stations it's, I chose to listen.
>
> *A – Can you tell me a little bit more about that – what that listening feels like?*
>
> Den – Oh, it's um, it's mainly memories, you know, from back home really. And, my mum and dad – the family. That's what those hours are for me, anyway. Because of the songs and the stories they tell.

For Garry, this access to a past self is a comfort, even when the music is not his '*favourite'* for the memories it provides of his wife Jewell.

> *A – Are there times when it feels like a close-er friend?*
>
> Garry – Well, possibly now, more so. And, as I say, there are times when it, it's a me-memory bank. As I say, listening to the 9th, Beethoven's 9th, and visualising Jewell singing in Auckland, and how excited she was about that. Yeah, so, it, you know, it's, it reinforces, and has that ability to recall; you sometimes hear something and say, 'I remember when'.
>
> *A – Yeah, ok. What kinds of – I mean, obviously Jewell's Auckland performance – but are there other things, other times when that might happen?*
>
> Garry – Yeah. Favourite songs. That's particularly one, where, ah, I still have, lots and lots of um recordings and tapes and all sorts of things that Jewell had for herself related to her civic choir because they sang in all sorts of languages – German a lot, for example – and she had to learn how to sing in German. And sometimes I hear those pieces of music, which, might not have been my favourite, but for her, they were big challenges, and demanding and I think, because I can think of her, say, in Hall St and so on where we were…

For Garry, the radio is a '*member of the family*', but the feeling of company is even more so when it brings memories of Jewell, singing, in their long-time family home. It 'has that ability to recall', to bring memories to him. Even in the challenge of listening to pieces of music which 'might not have been my favourite', Garry finds comfort in access to those memories.

It is a comfort to be reminded of these past selves, of familiar songs, people, places, and events. These memories affirm us within ourselves, and as members of a community with a shared experience. At night, Den is not interested in arguing about the state of things, she is feeling peaceful in herself, so her listening is peaceful. In those midnight hours she *'chooses to listen'* to the radio of memories, stories, and songs of mum and dad and family.

Figure 19 illustrates this relationship between this mode of listening and the self.

Figure 19 – Comfort and affirm the self

Both the reasons for and qualities sought differ from day to night.

> But I would be listening to Brian Crump – I find him a nice, gentle voice at night time… he has a lovely gentle, sort of voice. Nice, which I find, very appropriate, if you like for late night listening. [Garry]

Jo listens to talkback at night, even though she is aware that it might '*stimulate you*'. She told me how she came to be listening at night,

> And so there began my association with company at night being the radio, and for, all these years, I go to bed with the radio. Ahm, I turn it on as soon as I get into bed; even if I'm reading it's background and when I turn off the light it just goes on. And, um, I don't know whether that really is a good or bad thing, because I find that sometimes talkback radio can be very disturbing in that it stimulates you; you want to have your say and get part of it. And sometimes I do actually turn it right down so I can't hear what's going on. [Jo]

[Jo – bedroom]

She knows she does not want to be stimulated in the night, but she still wants the sound. The device on her bedside table appeared to be a clock radio, but Jo did not mention using that as a radio. This is listening for comfort, and she needs the radio closer to her to do that. She turns it down, quietly, though not off, because the quiet sound is the comfort. The content might challenge her, but the sound can comfort and affirm her IDENTITY: She is a listener, day and night.

Carrie's experience is similar. At night, the sound can be a comforting focus, helpful in managing her wandering thoughts.

> It doesn't always happen, but it's, it's, it is a companion at night time. Because otherwise, it, I've got all the thoughts that go on and they sometimes take me all over the place, and I don't really want to go in the middle of the night. It's fine in the day time, you can, I write lists and I do things, and 'I must remember that', and, but oh! in the night it's a pest. It really is annoying. So, then it is a companion, because it actually moves me into a different space for that period of time. So I don't have to have it on all night, but, other times, as I say, I wake up in the morning and I hear this voice talking… [laughter] away in my ears, which, has been on all the time and I've been fast asleep. So. Yeah, so that's quite funny. [Carrie]

In the day time, these thoughts can provide opportunities for extension, she writes them down to remember later. At night, that is a pest, she says. At night, listening is a companion which '*moves her into a different space'* for rest, peace from the 'pest' of her busy mind.

'A day time warrior, not a night time warrior' [Den] – Seeking challenge and extension

Radio listening gives participants access to others, who, as Jan says, might be so far out of her experience as to be inaccessible otherwise. Participants often discussed listening to things they did not like or did not necessarily enjoy. They managed this in different ways, either with an awareness that it would pass quickly enough or by limiting the amount of TIME they listened or simply by sitting with the discomfort. Listening at all is a **choice**. Making the **choice** to listen to something you do not enjoy, in that moment, has a purpose. For participants in this study, that purpose seemed to be a challenge to themselves or to their ideas or tolerance of discomfort, even. Sometimes it was a voice [Naomi] or a format [Pat] or a musical style [Betty] or a topic [Anne] which provided this challenge. Through engaging with this challenge, participants explored their boundaries with the option to extend or reinforce them.

Others, such as Jan, Bob, or Den, for instance, describe listening to things they might not necessarily agree with for the sake of having their views challenged or fortified.

Figure 20 illustrates this relationship between listening and the self.

Figure 20 – Challenge and extend the self

For Jan, listening to something of which she has no experience, which she cannot know, extends her knowledge of herself and her relative inexperience in certain areas.

> Jan – Well, I think it probably still, which is what I've said before, I'm interested in people and I'm interested in their experiences and their, their, well, I'm interested in their good and their bad experiences, but the bad ones you think, 'Oh!', cos it's good to hear them actually, cos it's good to know. Otherwise, some of these things that people ring in with, if it's the topic that tends to be being discussed, and, are things that I would never, have never experience or have been in… and so it's actually good to hear. I mean, you don't like what you're hearing, but it's good to know.
>
> *A – Can you give me an example of the kind of thing you're talking about?*
>
> Jan – Some of the things that, you know, often it's about children, because I'm particularly interested in children I guess, and things that have happened with their children, or somebody as a child, things have happened to them as a child more. And you just… some things just simply haven't changed over the years, the rules have changed, there's perhaps more support things… but really, when you hear people talking about things that happen to them in their life, and are still happening in some cases, you just think, 'Oh', you know.
>
> *A – Things like where children are not cared for properly, or…*
>
> Jan – Yeah, yes, that's right. And sometimes that's because of the parents' own experiences being brought up, or – there's just a myriad things I think. So, there, kind of in a way, you think, so then if you're out in conversation and something like this comes up, you can put another balance to it, cos often it's all people thinking the same way, sort of thing. So, you can put another balance in there from something you've heard.
>
> *A – And, kind of like you're saying, that's outside of your experience, there's no way you're ever going to experience that. So, if these people weren't telling you, you wouldn't know?*
>
> Jan – Yeah, no, that's right. It's just good to be aware of, and sometimes, in your own small way, you can do something by contributing something to it or something.

Jan goes further, relating the knowledge she has gained to others, particularly those '*people all thinking the same way'* she extends her IDENTITY: Having listened, Jan becomes someone who

knows about these things. A memo I made while transcribing my conversation with Jan points directly at the difference in use between affirmation and extension:

> Giving me insights into experiences of others. Almost the opposite of what Naomi said about enjoying people talking about experiences she had, or might have had. Jan is enjoying the strange; Naomi was enjoying the familiar. It meets you where you are – you can find ways to hear new things, or you can find ways to hear old things, depending on your preference. [Memo, 12 February 2020]

Unlike Jan, who wants to hear those things which extend and challenge her, Pat says that for her:

> It's gotta be; the content has to be something that I engage with. Really. Not something that I don't want to engage, negatively, something to annoy me. The news can annoy me, but that's actually happening. But opinions, I don't really want somebody else's opinions. Stupid opinions, in my opinion, [laughs] I can't be bothered listening to. And I mean, if I'm engaging with people in conversation and they have those opinions, I can engage back with them, but to listen to somebody who's spouting… their silly opinions? Can't be bothered. [Pat]

Despite expressing this reluctance to engage negatively with content, Pat is able to relate, in detail, examples of a programme she finds irritating. She knows the format, certainly, and she gives a recent example of listening to her annoyance at one of the guests. It is difficult, perhaps, to articulate why you would listen to something which annoys you, whose irritation you can describe in detail, and yet, she does. Beverley said she has one or two friends who 'don't listen to the news, because they find it depressing. And all bad. So they don't, physically, choose to do so. Whereas I'm the opposite. [laughs]'.

Carrie recounted listening to an interview Peter Singer gave to Kim Hill. He had been due to appear at an event in Auckland, which was now no longer going ahead. Carrie had been a nurse in her professional life and spent many years working in hospice care. She knew the content was challenging, but she stopped to listen. She said:

> they were giving him a bit of a hard time, it was Kim. It was fair because of what had been said, but when he got to explain sometimes you could see his thinking, where it went, and that made sense in itself to him and to other people when they've got, when you're going on a logical basis and it's, removed from emotion, it is quite different. And if you want to judge it, you have to see, well where are you standing when you say this? [Carrie]

Carrie's professional experience let her view this from a 'logical basis… removed from emotion'. She draws on her professional IDENTITY to relate to this challenge: 'And I have thought back, "What's my experience in relation to any of what he's saying?"' [Carrie]. She knows, however, that the way she relates to this content is a function of '*where you [are] standing when you say this*' [Carrie] and goes on to say 'Whether I would, if I was in his surgery or wherever he was and he was saying, "Now, we think you should do this with your child", I

don't know that would be quite different' [Carrie]. Listening to this challenging content calls on her professional experience, and her life experience as a mother herself. This is an exploration of her views, in relation to her community, based on her IDENITTY as a nurse and as a mother. She is willing to listen to Singer because he demonstrates to her that he has done this searching also:

> So he didn't shut his, his mind to other ideas. And that was probably what I got out of it, that he obviously had changed some of his thinking. He still wanted to present some of his thoughts. And that's all they are – they're his thoughts and they're possibly based on some good information or otherwise, and obviously by talking to people or – so he wasn't an ignorant person, so I accept him on that basis. [Carrie]

Bob spoke about finding company in the sound generated by the radio overnight. This was a direct contrast to his experience of listening in the day. I asked whether his night time experience of sound-as-company, regardless of the presenter was night time only, or also something he experienced during the day. 'No', he said,

> Bob – there are some presenters during the day that I listen to particularly if they're on 1ZB, I like the presentations between 5-6.
>
> *A – In the morning?*
>
> Bob – No, in the evening. It's a tossup between listening to the National programme or 1ZB then, but it's the individual who I listen to.
>
> *A – And who's that, between 5-6 on ZB?*
>
> Bob – I can't remember.
>
> *A – Me either. But it's something particular about that?*
>
> Bob – Well, it's the, not the individual – it wouldn't matter who the individual was – it's what's presented.
>
> *A – I see*
>
> Bob – The content.
>
> *A – And, at that particular time on ZB, the content is*
>
> Bob – Challenging. Interesting.
>
> *A – Challenging?*
>
> Bob – Well, I mightn't agree with what they say. There's nothing wrong with that. You don't agree with what I say all the time – I hope you don't anyway. [laughs]
>
> *A – I hope I don't? Yes, indeed.*
>
> Bob – That's right.
>
> *A – But an hour of that is enough?*
>
> Bob – There's probably other things to do.

Company by the comfort of sound overnight, and company by challenge during the day, Bob's use of the radio mirrors Den's use in this way. Overnight, she finds comfort in Radio Tainui During the day though, she says

> Den – Well, most hosts actually they make me think. You know, it's like another, different point of view they have, from my original, [laughter] thoughts. So, they, they, I will have to say, most of them expand my thinking. Yeah.
>
> Murdoch – Is that a good thing?
>
> Den – I think it's a great thing! I think it's good. Can't live in my ignorant 45 degrees forever, can I?

The challenge Den finds in her listening, however, is incredibly personal. Den, the 'day time warrior', listens to talkback. She told me

> Den – Well, in my more peaceful years I would say, I enjoy it. I, I, I don't it's not a companion so much as um, I listen to talkback, and I think I can gauge the mood of the country by the things people are saying on talkback.
>
> …
>
> Den – Yes. And, um… how, the narratives are changing. Um… people are being more careful in how they say things, how things are said. And I think, 'Oh, gosh', but, I don't think it changes, much, about, how some people feel about others. Just the way they say it is changed, it's. That's what I think. But I still, I like listening to those.
>
> *A – Yeah, ok. What, what is um… what do you like about it? Could you put that in words?*
>
> Den – Ah… Well, I think there's, because people are anonymous, so I, I won't look at Facebook because it's too stupid. [laughter] It's so...
>
> *A – Perfect.*
>
> Den – So here is kinda sort of the same, because you have anonymity, you don't, you can say what you like.
>
> *A – Right.*
>
> Den – And with no, physical come back…
>
> *A – Unfiltered, kind of?*
>
> Den – Yeah, yeah. And… Yeah, I think it gives people the courage to, to say what they, how they really feel. [laughter].
>
> *A – Mmmmm.*
>
> Den – Um… And I… even so, sometimes I hate what they're saying, but, I think… they need a platform to be able to say these things so that it's out, rather than stuck in.
>
> *A – In, yeah. Ok. And are there times when it's just, you just think, 'Oh, I'm turning that off'?*
>
> Den – I know I, um, it's funny my son and I were talking about that on the weekend and he can't stand it and he get so angry and he says… he just won't listen to it. I said, 'Well look, don't let how other people think… ahm, ahm… ahm, you know, don't let them dictate how, whether you get angry or not.

> Don’t. Just don’t; don’t let it happen.’ You know? But he still does cos he’s still, a kid. Not really, he’s 50.

Den’s experience is poignant: She listens to understand not just the mood of others in general, but their attitudes to Māori people specifically.

Summary – Comfort, affirmation, challenge, and extension

Participants suggested that their appetite for **comfort and affirmation** or **challenge and extension** was influenced by their state of mind which was often linked to the TIME of day, and demonstrated that different **types of listening** happened in different SPACES. This IDENTITY work is focused on self-identity: My own perception of myself. Listening supports the exploration and maintenance of this identity by providing comfort and affirmation as well as opportunities for challenge and extension.

Figure 21 illustrates these listening experiences.

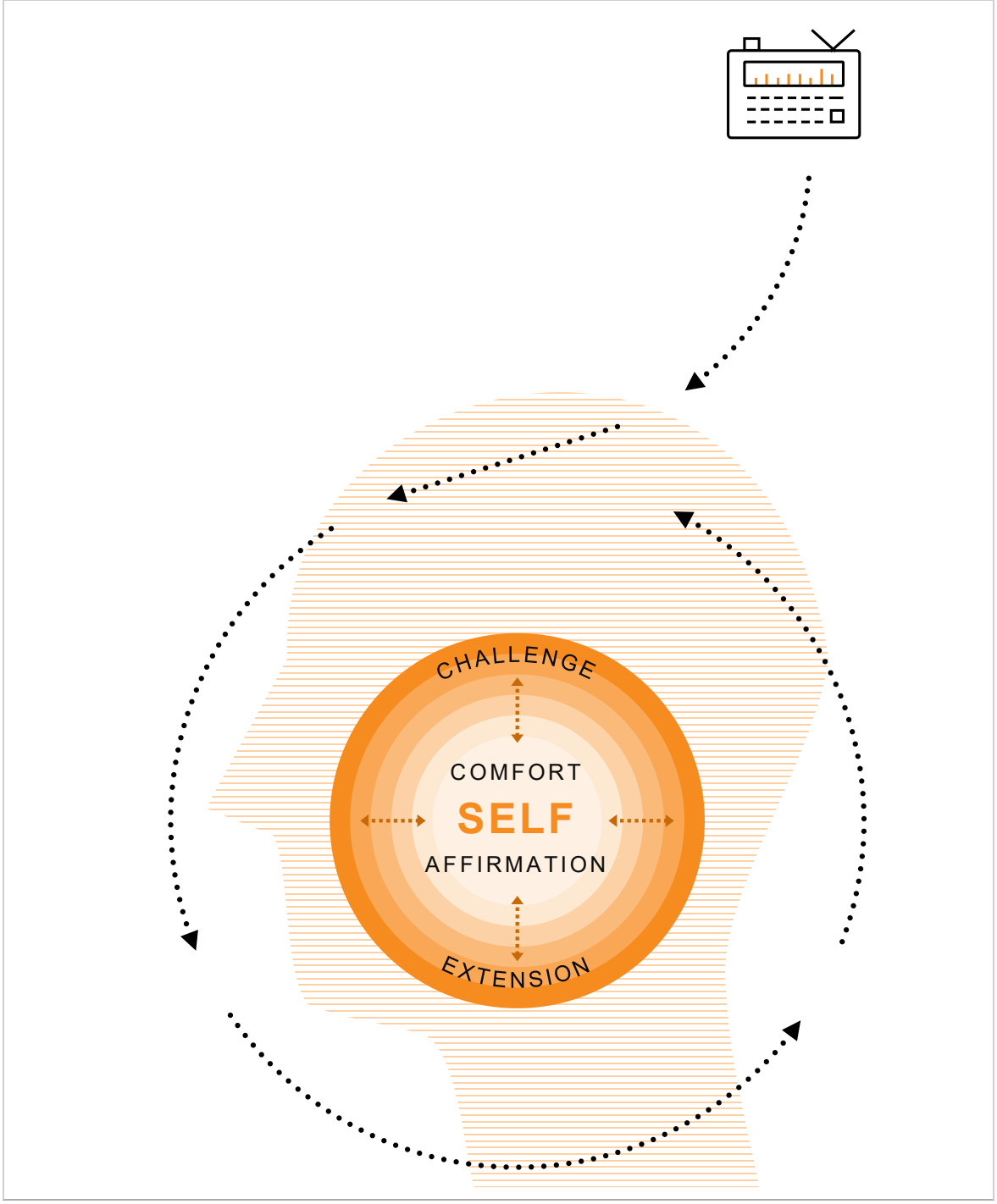


Figure 21 – Comfort, affirm, challenge, extend

It is a **comfort** to be reminded of these past selves, of familiar songs, people, places, and events. These memories **affirm** participants within themselves, but also as members of families and communities with shared experience. Radio is able to provide this **comfort and affirmation** because it was *always there*, '*like sunshine*', alongside participants when these memories and selves were made. It is, in a sense, part of the community which formed the self. Choosing listening which **challenges** me, provides opportunities to extend or affirm my IDENTITY in relation to new information.

CHAPTER 7 – EXPLORING WITHIN THE LIMITS I SET

Introduction

Having identified core and sub-categories, the work in this chapter is to consider them in relation to one another. Saldaña (2013) wrote that "one of the most critical outcomes of a qualitative data analysis is to interpret how the individual components of the study weave together" (p. 276).

Chapter 7 is concerned with the boundaries referred to in the theory.

> Radio listening creates an experience of company for older listeners by supporting a knowledge of self and an appreciation of self in context. Through radio listening, older listeners are able to challenge, comfort, extend, and affirm their self-identity **within the boundaries of taste, time, and space**.

Chapter 7 explores the connections between the core category of IDENTITY and categories of TIME, SPACE, and TASTE. Understood together, these connections provide the basis for a theory to explain the experience of radio listening as company: Participants use radio listening as a means by which to '*keep in touch*' with aspects of themselves, within the boundaries they establish. Figure 22 represents these boundaries.

Figure 22 – Establishing the boundaries to IDENTITY work

Based on this analysis of initial, in vivo, and focused codes, it is clear that IDENTITY has a core function in connecting the categories which arise. Chapter 6 revisits these discussions and considers what this means for company-making, demonstrating how the sub-categories are linked to the core category and the ways in which these sub-categories of TIME, TASTE, and

SPACE provide a boundary within which participants undertake the IDENTITY work made possible through listening.

Exploring the bounds of identity though listening is an exercise in going over familiar ground, but also defining new edges, exploring new and old features in the landscape. This is an exercise in mapping the IDENTITY landscape. In centuries gone by, before parish borders were definitively mapped, members of rural communities in English villages engaged in a similar, though physical, practice called 'beating the bounds'. Each year, on a particular Christian feast day near Easter, members of a parish would join together to walk the boundaries of their parish with the purpose of creating a mental map of the area in which they lived, worked, and gathered (Darian–Smith, 1995). This mental mapping of the boundaries, regular checking and confirmation, describes the IDENTITY work at the centre of participants' listening experiences.

> Time as a boundary of the self – current time, as in today, this minute; past listening self. Having boundaries, 'beating the bounds', knowing where I start and end, even if I transgress those, helps me know myself. I can be comfortable in the middle or rub up against the edges. [Memo, 29 September 2021]

Participants expressed different limits to their listening. Those limits might be time limits [Naomi—radio goes off at lunch time, or Brenda and Pat—radio goes off at news time]. Listening might also be limited in the sense of what they are prepared to listen to "the radio gets a big OFF" (Brenda) when people speaking disparagingly about older people who "can't or won't" speak Māori; or for Jan, when people are speaking on topics she feels they have no knowledge of 'I turn it down' [Jan].

Certainly, IDENTITY satisfies the conditions for a core category as described by Birks and Mills (2015) in that it is possible to "trace connections between a frequently occurring variable and all of the other categories, sub-categories and their properties and dimensions" (p. 98). Chapter 7 details these connections first described in Chapter 5. Considering the relationship between TIME and IDENTITY, the chapter explores moments of becoming and identity-making across the life course. Participants discussed not only those pivotal moments of acute identity shift but other, more subtle **moments of becoming**. Chapter 7 looks at these expressions of TASTE over TIME, exploring these **adaptations** and how they are reflected in **listening habits and practices**.

TIME and IDENTITY

TIME contributes to having an IDENTITY as a listener: Participants disclose that the duration of the listening relationship contributes to the sense of **Having an identity as a listener–citizen–audience member** by the qualities and availability of their remembrances of their **listening past**, for instance. **Having an identity as a listener–citizen–audience member** and **habit–**

familiarity–'knowns'–fans can only be acquired over TIME. Ruth's mother identified her as a listener at a very early age, based on her **habit** of listening. Figure 23 illustrates these relationships.

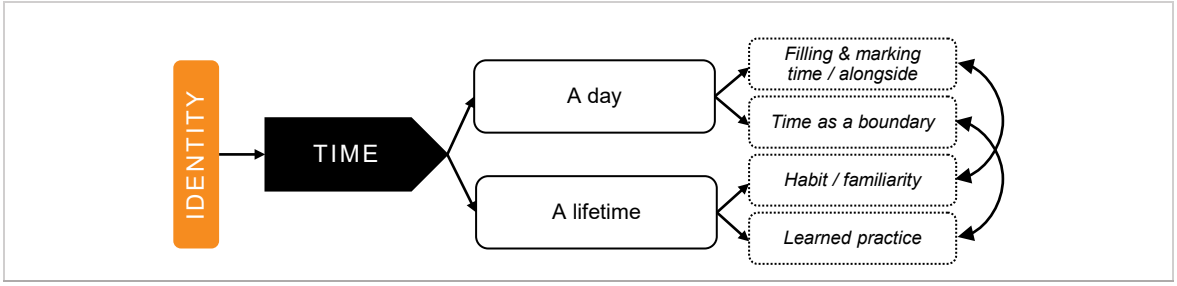


Figure 23 – IDENTITY and TIME

> I used to listen a lot to the radio, obviously, because she bought me the original, was it The Listener or the Radio Times? Now I'm 82, so this goes back… a long way. And she said, 'Oh, you're listening to the radio a lot', and um, yes, so. I can remember that quite vividly me she buying that, because I was always at the radio. [Ruth]

In a contemporary sense, **'being / keeping up with the play'** describes how the radio contributes to participants' identity formation today. Participants readily displayed their long association with presenters or broadcasters, recalling either how long they had been on air. Graeme told me, that Leighton Smith 'started I think in 89, so. It must only, it would have been well over 20 years. And of course *the programme was top rated*'. Two years after his retirement, Graeme said Leighton was '*still my number 1*. *I'd love it if he was still on*, and I'd probably be *making more effort*, to pick up the radio at the time he's on'. Theirs had been a long association, and Graeme was nostalgic for it.

Access to a past self

Listening provided participants with **access to their past selves** and reflected those selves back to them. They were able to recall listening throughout their lives, but also what they listened to now recalled their past experiences. Garry, for example, cited many instances of hearing old colleagues or students on the radio. Once he heard Kathryn Ryan interview Haare Williams, with whom he had been at teachers' college. What is it like, I asked him, when you hear someone you know on the radio? 'Oh, it's lovely, yeah' [Garry], he said. Naomi told me about being transported by a story that reminded her of her own hiking trips. Betty talked about the pleasure of hearing people talk about the 'old days', saying

> Betty – … sometimes they talk about the old days, and of course, I remember all those things they say mostly. Occasionally, there's some old people that go on the talkback and have a lovely time and want to talk a lot. And sometimes they let them talk. And it's interesting. Yes.

> *A – What does it feel like when they're saying things that you also experienced? Or, when they're talking about the old days and things that you recognise, what does that feel like?*
>
> Betty – It feels like I'd like to join the crowd there. [laughs] And say what I remember. Yeah, it does.

In providing participants with access to the past, listening has a dual function: It **affirms** and **comforts** but it also reinforces the feelings of ubiquity and being **alongside** identity making across the life course.

Sometimes this access was physical. Ruth told me that

> my mother – I've still got her little radio, I've got it in the car – it must be, 60, 70 years old. And I still use that when I go to the beach. I keep it in the car because someone might throw it away…[Ruth]

Ruth uses her Amazon Alexa device to catch the sports news on the hour at home, but at the beach she uses her mother's radio which she keeps, safely, in her car, where nobody would think to dispose of it. Ruth's mother encouraged her listening, buying her the paper with the radio listings in it as a girl. Ruth remembered her parents with their 'ear to the radio all the time' during the war, and remembered, in her childhood home in Auckland

> A special little listening room. And it was I can, I can come into the room, there's a fireplace and then there was a cupboard underneath and on top there was a shelf, and on that there was the radio. [Ruth]

The radio Ruth keeps in the car now was the radio her mother brought with her when she came to stay with adult Ruth. Access to a past self is achieved not only by listening to the radio, in this case, but by the device itself. The listening experience is constructed by far more than content.

Routine: IDENTITY in action

Participants were able to articulate their daily *routines*. None of them said 'I wake up and see how I feel and take it from there'. Not to say that there was no spontaneity. Betty, for instance, might or might not head out on the bus, but there was a rhythm, a schedule, to people's days. How participants spent their time formed part of their identity: I play golf [Ruth, Jan]; I sing in the choir [Carrie]; I swim [Faye]; I am part of a coffee group [Jo]; I deliver the magazine [Graeme].

The value of TIME, or the idea of TIME as a resource or currency, was something that came up early in my memos. While making and considering data, I noted that participants spoke of busy-ness. For instance, they spoke of being too busy to listen at particular times or 'keeping busy'. For people in this lifestage, their time, in a day-to-day sense, is, as Jan describes, 'her own', but more time has passed in their lifetimes than that which is yet to come. Time is at

once unbound and limited. The majority of their life time is a matter of reflection, rather than projection, but the days are as full or empty as you make them.

> Also, just got *The Unexpected Community* (Russell Hochschild, 1973) in the post. "Old age communities around the country, like the one described here, are for the most part a good *response* to these problematic trends, but *not* a fundamental *solution* to the problems these trends incur" (p. x) – she talks about how the problems associated with the isolation which arises from leaving work. Because people are forced out of work based on their age, they are no longer able to occupy the status of economically active (we force people to become isolated?). But she identifies that in a post-industrial age, we can chose to value things differently. Something about the scourge of idleness & the mindset of an Industrial Age & how this complicates retirement as a concept & a life stage in practice. Can't listen when you're 'busy' and there are always other things to do; leisure / luxury / indulgence – how to spend my time? [Memo, 21 January 2020]

Some participants recalled their mothers, particularly, using the radio as entertainment [Jan & the serials; Naomi & the serials]. These recollections were loving and tender, and suggested that this entertainment was 'earned' by their mothers, who, in some cases, by the time the serial came on:

> Oh yes yes; it was her time for, you know she'd done some of the housework, and done the dishes and maybe put the dinner on if it was going to take a long time to cook. And, um, she made herself a cup of tea and listened to the radio. [Naomi]

This idea of radio as leisure, relaxation, entertainment, is not considered taboo in reference to their mothers, but it is very rarely referred to in this way by participants describing their own listening.

> *A – When you're having that company feeling*
>
> Ruth – Yep
>
> *A – How does it happen?*
>
> Ruth – I think it's like, well, I think, we're; I think it's a routine thing. I think 'Well that's what I do'.
>
> *A – Yeah.*
>
> Ruth – You know, I know that on Saturdays I play golf, on Wednesdays I play golf, and on Tuesdays I play croquet, on Fridays I play croquet.

Participants' actions assert their IDENTITY. Their time is her own, certainly, and it is valuable: How they choose to spend their time is a matter of TASTE and a way to express and maintain their IDENTITY.

TIME as a boundary to IDENTITY work

> Cos my calendar, I should've shown you to photograph my calendar, because you'll see that I have stuff on every day, of some kind. It might only be the exercise class or it might be going to swimming for, in the afternoon, or, um,

> going to yesterday going to the writer's club and the arthritis group, cos I'm on the, and something else – and taking her to the vet. And then choir in the evening. That was a really full day, that's why Wednesday would be the day. But, Thursdays I just have Kainga Aroha in the afternoon for 2 hours; Friday's my free day; Monday's my exercise class plus usually something else, and then what else? I dunno, whatever else. Oh, the Hearing Association, I'm on the committee of that, because I do have hearing aids, and they're all of them are very elderly, and I feel like I'm 25 and them, they're 99, but, especially the old gentlemen who goes 'Hello everybody!', and he's got these big hearing aids and he talks at the top of his voice… [Carrie]

By far the biggest limiter of listening was busy-ness, or the availability of TIME. Participants mentioned that they have no restrictions on their listening now, time-wise, for instance 'our time's our own. It's not like we've got to be out the door at a certain time. Except if it's golf day or something' [Jan]. Anne compared the freedom she has to listen now to a busy period in her teens.

> *A – There's a kind of period in your listening, what about when you were a teenager? Were you a radio listener when you were a teenager?*
>
> Anne – Too busy.
>
> *A – Too busy working?*
>
> Anne – Mmmm. Mmmm. I had to be on that bus at quarter past 7 and quite often I'd been milking before that. Then I had to get, sort of, we didn't have a shower, cleaned up, tidy, cos I didn't want the ones at work to know what I'd been doing before. Get to there, get to work fresh as a daisy. And then come home and cook dinner and. No, I never went back milking at night time: Damn it, they had to. But I still had a meal to cook and family to do. Yeah, so I just never had time. Nope.
>
> *A – Yeah, so in that sense, it's kind of, now that you do have the time, you can…*
>
> Anne – Enjoy.

For others, having more time did not necessarily mean more listening. TIME still provided a firm listening boundary to Pat's listening, even in her retirement.

> Pat – Yeah. I mean, I wouldn't turn it on in the afternoon. [laughs] It's the mornings.
>
> *A – Even if…*
>
> Pat – No, not really. No.

It is not Pat's **habit** to listen in the afternoons; she listens in the mornings. Her decision is not based on the afternoon's content, but entirely on the TIME of day. Figure 24 illustrates this boundary at work.

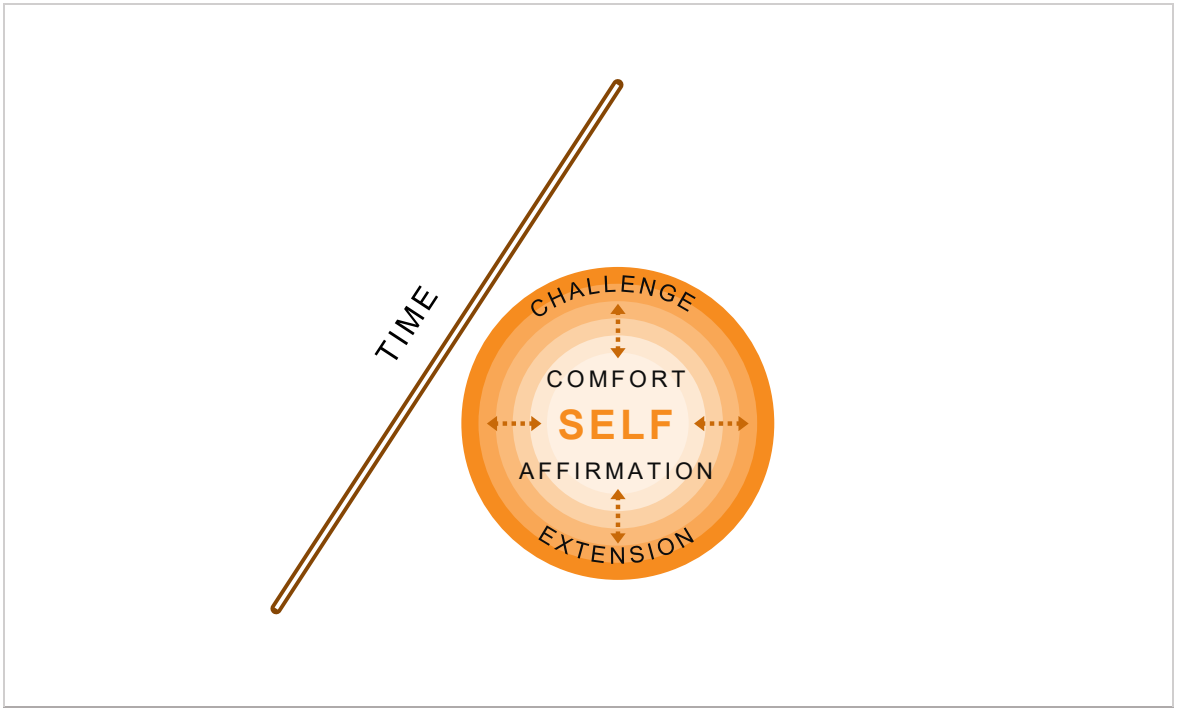


Figure 24 – TIME as a boundary to IDENTITY work

While participants spoke about the radio as a companion medium, in the sense of being able to listen alongside other tasks

> It depends on the… depth of the interview or the interest of the interview. Or else, I'm just *listening* listening. Or I could be annoying the cat. [laughter] if the cat's annoying me. Or could be making my bed. Depends on the time. [Beverley]

Participants also spoke of being too busy to listen

> *A – … You said you don't get a chance to listen much in the day, it's mostly in the night? But what…*
>
> Betty – I could if I wanted to, but I have too many things that are looking at me or coming into my head to do. I go out every day and I ride my scooter – I've got a mobility scooter, I got it before, before I moved here, for that driveway.

Betty could listen in the day time, if she wanted to, but there are other things to do. It is antithetical to the stereotype of retirees that they would be too busy to listen to the radio, however, many participants cited this as something which limits their listening. Betty describes the need to attend to other connections in the day, which is not a constraint she has during the night.

In the day, she is out, on her scooter or on the bus, at the local library or supporting music classes for children through her church. These other connections take priority in the day time. She might chat to someone on the bus or in the library, or keep up with her children and grandchildren. A memo reflecting on Betty's interview shows my understanding of these disclosures developing.

> When I was with Betty, listening about the bus rides or the different benefits of different phone lines, I thought we were off topic. It felt like that even when I was transcribing. But on this listen, I felt like, 'Oh, you're telling me how important it is to you to be busy, to maintain your independence and stay connected, and how you're adapting, with your scooter, or texting, to keep being able to do that. And since you've been living alone, radio has been just another tool for you to do that, to meet the need you have for company in the night. In the day, there are people all around you, though some of them are more available than others, and at night, it's the radio. You find connection there – to old music, old stories, to joy, to stories, to faith, to humour'. It was like a 'zoomed out' listen. [Memo, 10 December 2020]

Betty is able to contextualise herself with other people in the day. In the night, she does this with the radio. Old, familiar songs, or Samoan language or Biblical messages she has heard throughout her life are a comfort to her at a time when others are not available. This is a function of TIME. The company she experiences through listening has a distinct TIME boundary of day and night.

TASTE and IDENTITY

For a long time, TASTE was the category that spoke the loudest in this data. The sheer volume of data relating to expressions of TASTE is undeniable. As a category on its own, however, it was not clear how TASTE related to the experience of company.

This relationship changes if we consider TASTE as an expression of IDENTITY. If TASTE is a marker of IDENTITY, and participants use listening to express and explore their TASTES, it can also be understood that listening is used to express and explore IDENTITY. Figure 25 describes these relationships.

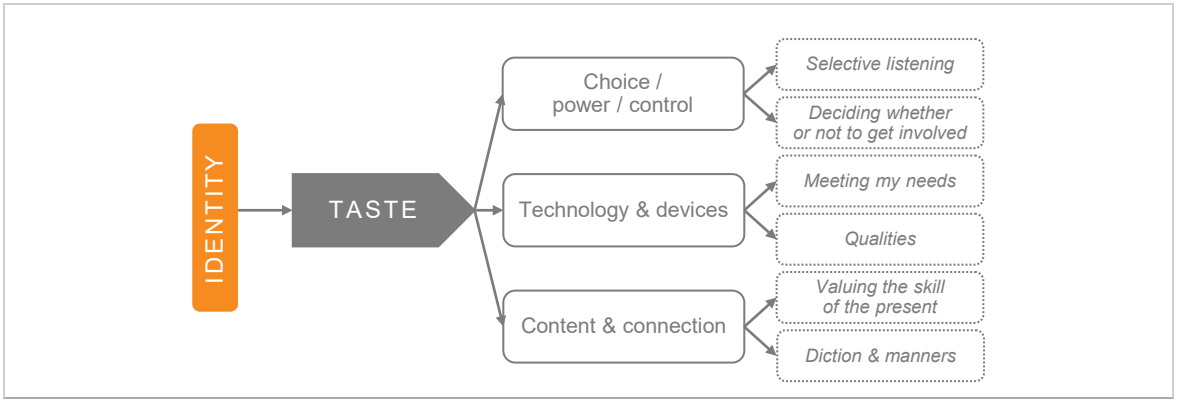


Figure 25 – IDENTITY and TASTE

Using TASTE to define who I am

'I listen to what I like.' [Bob]

Graeme referred to his sister throughout our conversation. He set them up as a binary. He told me that, where he listens to talkback, his sister listens to National. His sister lives alone; he lives with his partner. His sister works in government; he worked in business. She is in

Auckland; he is in the Waikato. Graeme defines himself in relation to one and in opposition to the other; she is this; he is that. Graeme tells me who he is as much by telling me about himself, as by telling me about his sister; knowing who I am by knowing who I am not. This is a microcosmic reflection of what listening offers: An opportunity to affirm ourselves by holding ourselves up beside others, by giving context to our understanding of our self. Graeme tells me his sister has the radio on all the time, which he does not, and I asked him whether, on his visits to her, he was ever tempted to turn it off.

> No, in fact I'm inclined to listen to it, if it suits. Oh, I don't dismiss it. No, no, I appreciate – but you can only listen to one or the other and I've just got used to, listening to, for a long time now, NewstalkZB or its equivalent. [Graeme]

By continuing to check in with what the others are doing, in this case his sister and her listening, Graeme can confirm his own position as a NewstalkZB listener. His IDENTITY as a NewstalkZB listener is established over TIME and he takes the opportunity his sister provides to **challenge** those **boundaries** and **affirm** this habit born of **familiarity**, to **confirm** his **choice**.

Other participants go through similar processes of identity checking through listening. This was initially coded as *knowing what I don't like*, which it is, but establishing and checking this preference is something that happens in different planes of listening from stations, through formats and presenters and style, to ideas and opinions. The limits of this exploration might be at a station-level, as in the case of Graeme, or within the same station such as Pat enduring the stand-in presenter over the Summer, even within a familiar programme during which participants might stop to listen to things they would not usually [Garry] or which challenged them [Jan]. The boundaries themselves might be set by SPACE in that Graeme is at his sister's house, or TIME as in Pat listening in the Summer months, or TASTE as in Garry and Jan who remained on the station of their choice but extended themselves within those boundaries.

Turning over, turning off, turning down: TASTE as a boundary to IDENTITY work

Ads were another limiting factor in some people's listening. Typically, people whose predominant listening preference was for RNZ spoke about how the ads turned them off commercial stations. They realised the necessity for the station to broadcast ads but were not prepared to listen to them. Bob told me that advertisements were 'a waste of time'. Others, whose listening preference was for talkback or commercial radio, did not mention the ads or else were not bothered by them.

> Ads are a 'waste of time' [Bob], and 'our time's our own' [Jan]; Naomi talked about having time. Time is a big deal here. There's something about the value of time, and wanting to spend it wisely. Moving out of the financial economy

and into the time economy? Time is currency. Nostalgia is valuable. [Memo, 25 November 2021]

TASTE dictates how and to what extent participants were exposed to content which challenged, extended, affirmed, or comforted them. TASTE can be used to form a **boundary** to that exposure which participants themselves **control**. Figure 26 describes this.

Figure 26 – TASTE as a boundary to IDENTITY work

Anne exercises this control through a process she refers to as 'editing', she switches her mode of listening from an attentive, engaged listening, to a less attentive, less engaged listening. She can decide to what extent she engages with the content. Brenda has a threshold: '*If it's all one-sided and all against the grain*' she turns over rather than listen to something which might depress her:

> *A – … do you go back to talkback at some point?*
>
> Brenda – Yeah. Just to see what's happening. This year is election year, and they're going to drive me barmy. So, and, they might depress me if they don't agree with my thoughts, or if they're not going along with the way I think things should be. So. I'll turn it off and listen to music.
>
> *A – Do you not find that quite a lot on talkback?*
>
> Brenda – Mmmm, usually it's a balance. You can, yeah: Somebody might come out with something outrageous, and then you'll get people saying, 'Well no, that's not quite right'", but, and coming up with balanced argument. But if it's all one-sided and all against the grain for me, I'll turn it off. Cos it just, it drags you down; it's not worth listening to.
>
> …
>
> *A – Like, before you said, 'Oh, well they'll annoy me, it will be annoying if they're kind of going against the grain of my thinking',*
>
> Brenda – It's more than annoying, it's depressing. And I recognise it as such and there's no point in making myself depressed.
>
> *A – Yeah, right.*

Brenda – So I turn it off. I'm not that hooked on it. [laughter]

The radio can provide **extension** in small ways, such as 'sometimes, if I'm working in the kitchen doing things, you know, household chores, I'll leave the radio on and find that it was interesting after all. And it's a little reminder of me not to judge too quickly' [Garry].

Sometimes switching over provides a change, something different, as Beverley described:

> Beverley – No. This one I occasionally might go on to FM and occasionally I might listen to the BBC World News on the radio in the car.
>
> *A – Oh yeah? What would make you do that, do you think?*
>
> Beverley – I just want to hear something that isn't an afternoon voice or… some… rock music or something that's blasting. That I'll switch off and occasionally I might switch over. Or occasionally Radio New Zealand goes off air, to fix a… repeater station or whatever it is. But not very often.

SPACE and IDENTITY

For most participants, most of their listening happened at home. Some participants discussed having listened in places where they worked or volunteered, and many referred to listening in the car. Sound still functioned as a boundary in all of these spaces, regardless of whether they were public or private. Figure 27 outlines the relationship between IDENTITY and SPACE.

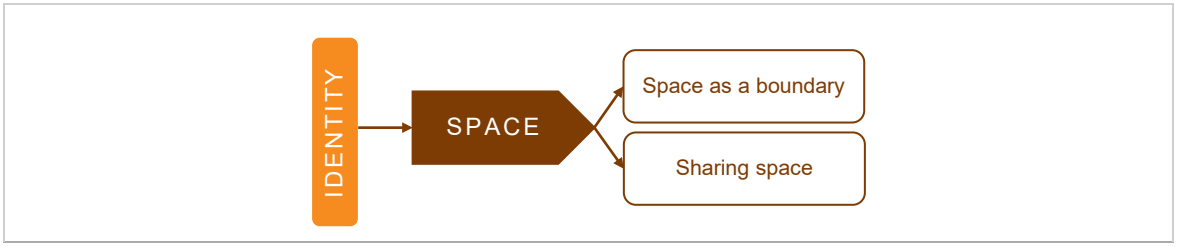


Figure 27 – IDENTITY and SPACE

Of the 15 participants, eight lived alone. Of those who did not live alone, they were conscious of how their listening might be different if they did. The connection between company and radio sound in space is drawn out here. Pat lives with her husband, David, who spent much of his career in a job that required him to travel for long stretches at a time. She explained how her listening changed when David was away and noted that, if she lived alone, she might return to these habits.

> In one sense, it isn't anything that… I could probably do without it. It's not something that's absolutely essential in my life, but it's certainly very useful, very comforting. And useful. But I wouldn't say I'm dependent on it, or anything like that. If I was living by myself perhaps, I might be more, I don't know. Like, when David was away, it was, I enjoyed it, sitting up in bed at 10 o'clock at night, reading my book and listening to the radio, cos between 10 and 11 it was a summary of the day's news. I found that quite interesting, but I don't miss it at all now. [Pat]

Pat listens more than David, so she will often listen without him.

A – And so, your husband, did you guys, was your radio listening similar? Like, did you like the same things?

Pat – Yep. Yeah, but no – he doesn't, he just listens to listen to the news broadcast, and then turns it off. But I like to listen to the commentary afterwards. So. He will go into another room if I want to listen.

A – He didn't catch the talkback bug from his mum, I guess?

Pat – No, no he didn't. Not at all. No, we're the same… content orientated. He just doesn't like to listen as much as I do.

A – Yeah, so he makes himself scarce while you hang out with the radio?

Pat – Yeah. Oh, especially during the day, not at night. Cos at night, I tend to watch TV from 6-7:30, and there's not usually much else on, so we don't listen to the radio, or we read or do other things.

Pat's radio is central within the house. If the radio is on and David does not want to listen, he moves. There may be other ways to negotiate the soundscape in the space, but this is their arrangement. When Pat was home alone, she would listen in bed at night as well. Her husband's company means she does not miss the enjoyment of 'sitting up in bed at 10 o'clock at night'. While their TASTE in listening is complementary, during the day they are content to take up different areas of the house to accommodate their different **listening habits**. Without the option of sharing space with her husband, particularly in the evenings, Pat's 'dependency' on the radio for comfort might be more so. In the times when she is listening and he is elsewhere in the house, she still has the option of his company, she does not depend on the radio in these times, listening is a CHOICE rather than a need.

'If I lived by myself': SPACE as a boundary to IDENTITY work

Graeme, reflecting on his sister who lives alone, says that he anticipates his listening would change if he lived alone too. Now, he lives with Cathy and says, 'no: I don't need it for company. I can sit here meditating, and just everything off. And Cathy will be sometimes, the two of us are just relaxing. And happy that it's quiet'. It is the presence of Cathy, sharing the silence, which prevents Graeme from needing the radio for company. He says

> … I can understand people living on their own, and it's a few in this village, that may well, I can imagine relying on the radio. It's quite nice, if you're on your own, you don't want it to be quiet all the time, you might just have it in the background. But you may not actually be listening to it, it's just there, and maybe, but that's a comfort, cos they've got, you've got that little bit of background. [Graeme]

Space changes listening. Many participants described changes to their listening practices when they were in spaces other than their usual listening spaces. Figure 28 illustrates SPACE as a boundary.

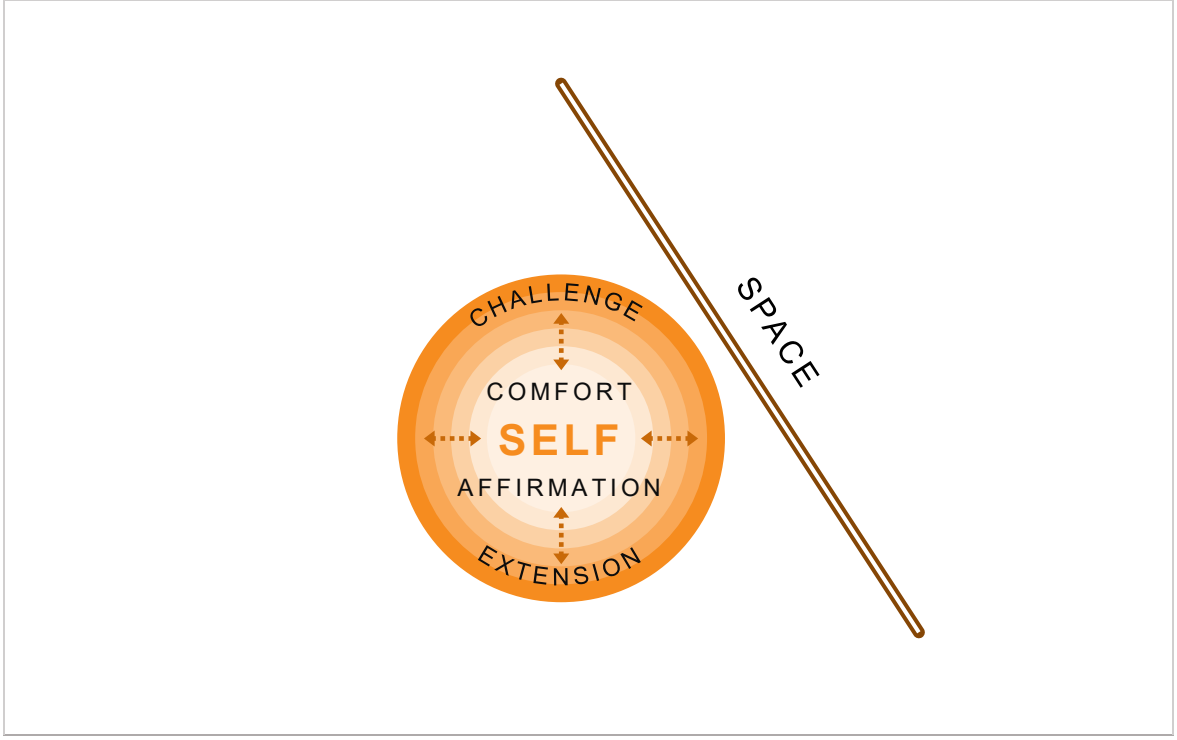


Figure 28 – SPACE as a boundary to IDENTITY work

Pat had recently taken a trip with a friend, visiting with others who did not have the radio on. When she and her travelling companion, also a listener, got back in the car to come home, they turned the radio on.

> Pat – Well, just, I was away last weekend… At Kaitaia. We drove up on Friday. Friend and I drove up on Friday, and we came back on Monday. Didn't listen to the radio, apart from the news once, the whole time. Also didn't see the television news, and also didn't see a paper. Didn't miss it at all. So.
>
> Oh yes, we both turned, we turned the radio on as we were coming back to Auckland. At Whangerei. And we both said to each other, 'Wonder if anything's happened in the last 3 days?', in the world. [laughs]
>
> *A – And?*
>
> Pat – And it hadn't! Well. It could've but it hadn't.
>
> *A – That's interesting – I wonder if that's about, you had gone away to go away, you know?*
>
> Pat – No, we were staying with friends and they didn't have either a radio on or the TV on, and we didn't ask for it to be on. And we were going up for a special occasion, but even so, yeah, no: Didn't miss it.

Pat is out of her SPACE, for a special occasion, with friends who are not consuming any news. At her friends' place, where there is no agreement about shared listening SPACE, Pat 'doesn't miss it'. It is Pat's habit to listen in the car on her way to work. When she was back in the car, in a SPACE she associates with listening, she and her travelling companion return to a listening practice. Pat has been away somewhere, in a different place, but as she approaches home she returns to her news-seeking practices.

Summary – TASTE, TIME, and SPACE as boundaries

Participants used TASTE, TIME, and SPACE as boundaries for listening and for this IDENTITY work. All these factors, TIME, TASTE, and SPACE act as practical boundaries to listening: Content to my TASTE at the TIME that suits me in the SPACE where I can listen as I please. These boundaries provide edges for the exploration of IDENTITY participants undertook while listening. Figure 29 illustrates these boundaries at work in this process.

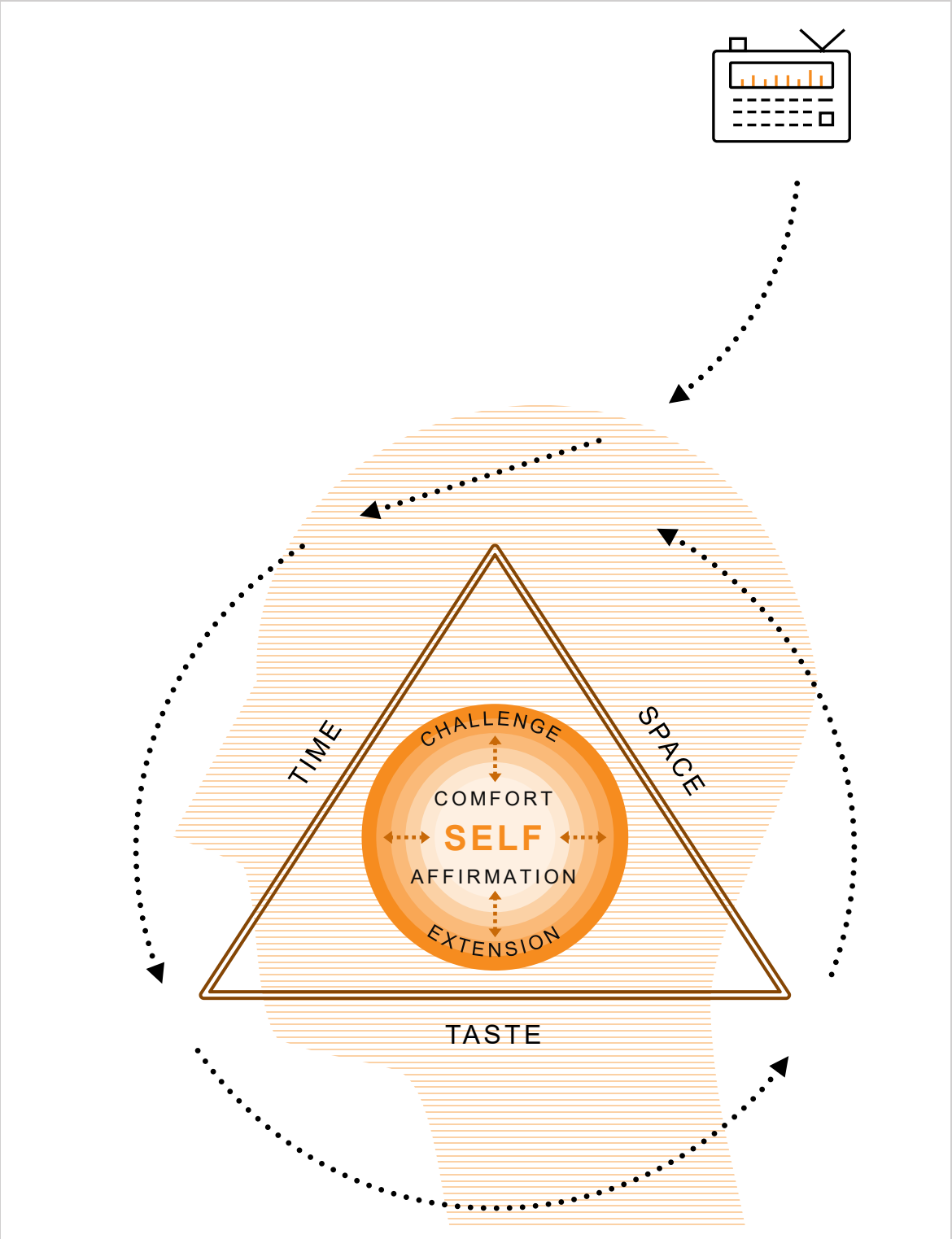


Figure 29 – Challenge, extend, comfort and affirm the self within the boundaries of TASTE, TIME and SPACE

Different aspects of this work were done in different places, at different times, and these choices were all predicated on TASTE. Radio listening is a means by which to '*keep in touch'* with a self, past and present, and participants were in control of how they moved between these experiences and where the boundaries lay in either direction.

CHAPTER 8 – SEEING MYSELF IN CONTEXT; SEEING MYSELF REFLECTED

Introduction

Chapter 8 is concerned with the social identity aspect of the company making processes of the theory:

> **Radio listening creates an experience of company for older listeners by supporting a knowledge of self and an appreciation of self in context**.
> Through radio listening, older listeners are able to challenge, comfort, extend, and affirm their self-identity within the boundaries of taste, time, and space.

Finally, the chapter draws together all elements of the theory and elucidates how these dual processes—supporting a knowledge of self and an appreciate of self in context—are experienced as company by listeners in this study.

Carrie told me that, for her,

> …the word 'company'… usually that means 'being with' really, doesn't it. I'd say is the best description, 'being with' or 'having with'; you use company, as, involves somebody or some thing, and it can be from a dog to a radio or whatever else that you see that that's company… [Carrie]

I had Carrie's same sense that company involved a sense of 'togetherness' or 'with' and I wanted to understand who were participants 'with' in the experience of listening as company. I asked about who else was included, or present, in the company feeling, but the role of others was not immediately clear.

> *A – I'm wondering in that company feeling, is it just you and the radio, or are there other people kind of, involved in the experience, do you think?*
>
> Beverley – Mmmmm, I think usually just me, and the radio.

As Beverley says, it's just her and the radio. Certainly some participants spoke about **feeling connected to certain presenters or content**, but this was not universal: It did not apply to all participants and neither was it, for participants who did have this experience, the only means of experiencing company in listening.

I wondered whether participants might have a sense of shared listening with friends or family they knew to also be listening elsewhere, as in the case of the mother and daughter in Katz's (1950/2012) study. Some participants described similar sensations to those of Katz' correspondent, such as Garry and his daughter, or Pat and her colleagues, but they did not cite the experience of company in an awareness of shared listening. At times, the question of who else was involved in the company experience seemed to bemuse or frustrate participants.

A – Yeah, ok. So, in the night, in that company feeling, who is included in that company feeling, would you say?

Bob – I don't really understand the question – it's only me.

A – Only you?

Bob – Well, who else is there to have company with? My wife's asleep.

Participants often said that it was not company they were seeking in radio listening, but information. At other times, rather than actually listening to any particular content, the company was found in the sound itself, or '*the hum*' as Den identified it. In order to take part in the study, participants had self-identified as using the radio for company, and yet they more readily spoke about *information-seeking* and variations on *the hum* as their reasons for listening. This was an invitation to look at these expressions and experiences more closely for their relationship to company-making processes.

To listen, seeking information, yet identify the experience as one of company, suggests some opaque process by which one is achieved in seeking the other. Seeking information or '*keeping up with the play*' speak to the same drive: To have an awareness of what is happening around you, or perhaps *to* you, albeit at some remove. Information gathering shapes my knowledge of the world around me. Having this information enables another step in the company-making process: Knowing what is happening around me lets me see myself reflected and see myself in context. The information I find could be anything, from 'we are remembering Beethoven's birthday' to 'it is forecast to rain this afternoon', the effect is the same: I see that I am part of a community who acknowledges and celebrates Beethoven; we will all need raincoats in the garden this afternoon. I see myself reflected; I see myself in context. Whereas listening for comfort, affirmation, challenge, and extension is about self-identity, this element of the listening experience is about social identity. Writing about social identity, Festigner (1954) noted that "people evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparison respectively with the opinions and abilities of others" (p. 118) and that is what is at play here. Figure 30 illustrates these processes.

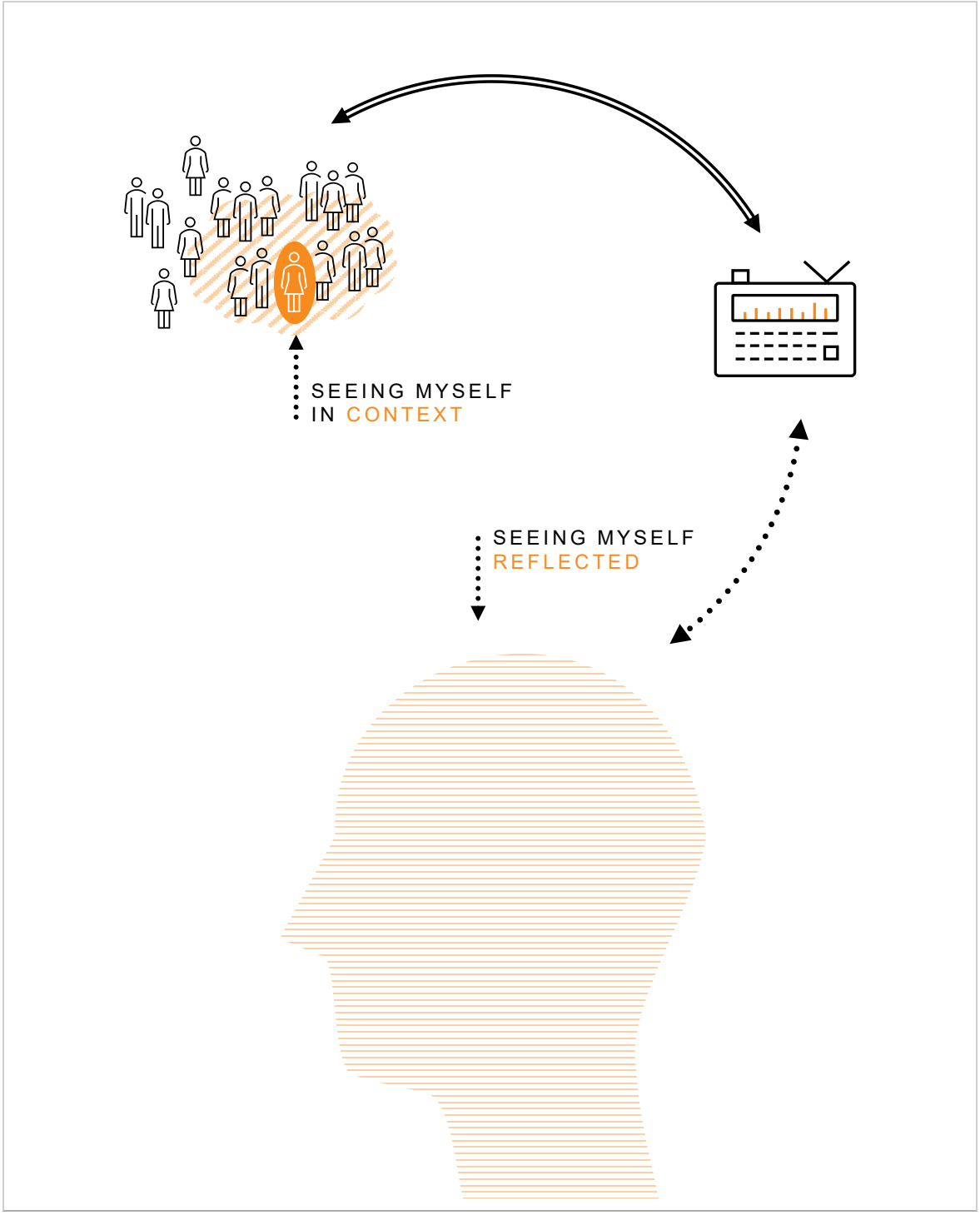


Figure 30 – Seeing myself in context; seeing myself reflected

Many participants spoke of turning the radio down or off when visitors came to call [e.g., Anne, Den]. Some of this might have been driven by hearing difficulties, but more so the impression was that it was only possible to entertain one 'guest' at a time. Certainly it was possible to share the companionship of the radio, as Bob, Pat, Jan and their spouses, but this shared listening was at the invitation of both parties. The company of guests was not expected to sit alongside the company of the radio. The suggestion here is that the radio can provide a context for myself, in the absence of others, or provide context for a relationship when listening is shared.

In order to illuminate the company-making processes as they occur within listening relationships, the chapter includes a wider view of the company described by participants to see how these reflective and contextualising processes work in other, non-radio relationships. What follows is an examination of this process of contextualisation and reflection, as described by participants.

Seeing myself in context: The company of others

Though we sat down to talk about the radio as company, each participant discussed their relationships more broadly, be they family relationships, working relationships, friendships, neighbourly relationships, community relationships, or others. Participants spoke variously about company in their lives, with and without radio listening. Despite the focus of the research conversations being the company available in listening, in asking participants to tell me about their lives, they necessarily told me about the lives of others too. "When a self does appear it always involves an experience of another" (Mead, 1934/1967, p. 195). Participants' experiences were bound up with the experiences of others; each participant was a whole, and also a part. The process of company-making appeared to rely on both the whole and the part: **maintaining an identity** and **seeing that identity in context**. Figure 31 illustrates this relationship.

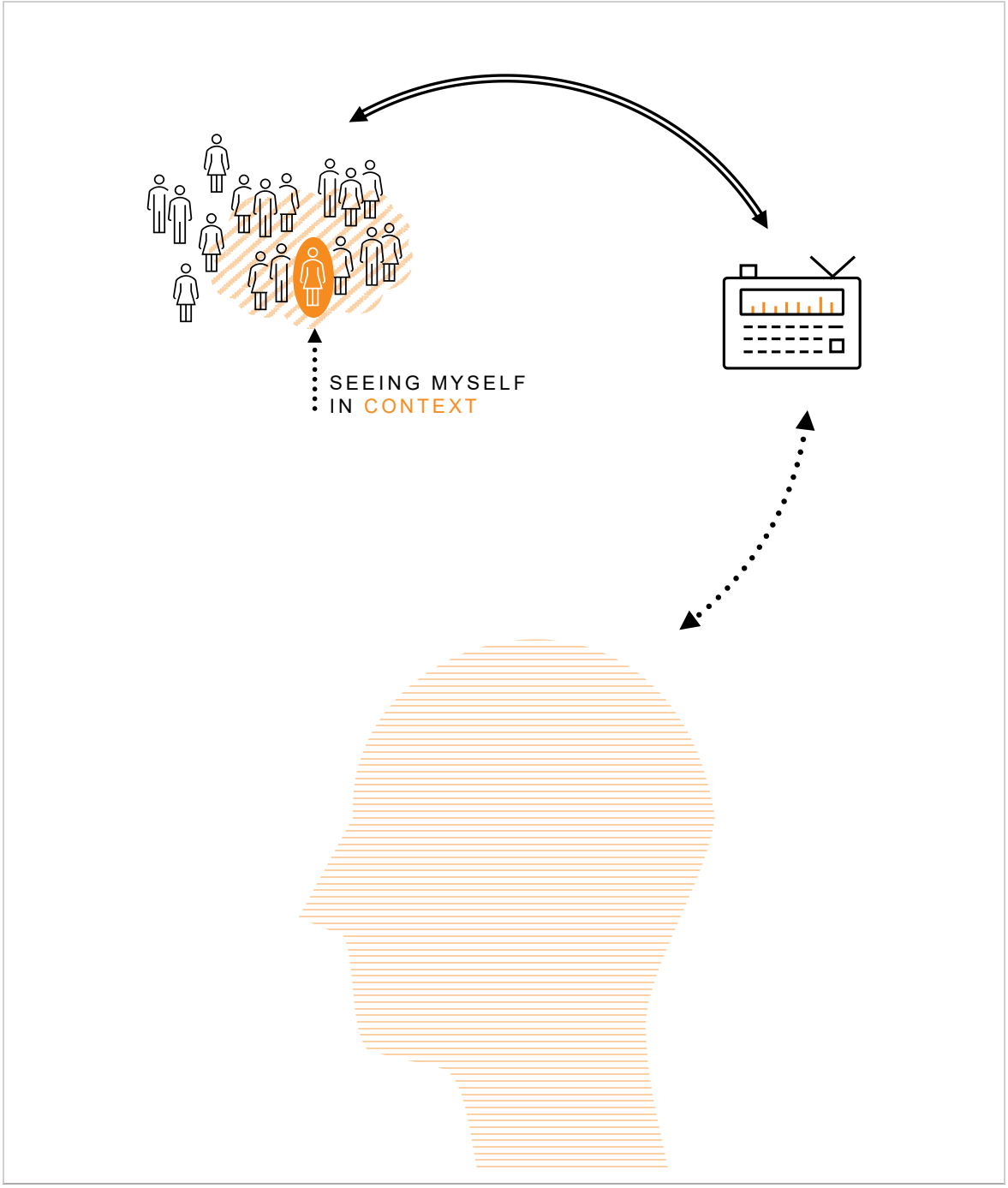


Figure 31 – Seeing myself in context

It is useful to consider the experiences of non-radio company described by participants that we might understand the experiences of radio company in the scheme of company more broadly. Just as Graeme explained himself to me in terms of his sister, their similarities and differences, participants were able to use the radio to see themselves in light of these counterpoints and connections. With a clear understanding of self, listening provides an opportunity to consider that self in context. To understand how context constitutes company, we can examine how participants described other, non-radio experience of company as context. I outline some of these experiences below in service to understanding what it means to have, or be, or be in

company, and how this helps understand the company participants experience through radio listening as a process of contextualising themselves.

'It's more information than company' [Bob]

'No, company, it's – when I saw the advertisement [for the study], I really wondered what was company for me. It's company during the night if I lie awake, but during the day, it's more interest than company I think.' [Bob]

Certainly there were moments when participants articulated the experience of listening as company. More likely though, participants would say that they were listening for information, rather than company. Beverley readily identified that it could be both, saying

> And when I'm in my car, I often listen. Unless I really have to concentrate on something on the road, and then I switch the car radio off. So I can really concentrate. So I guess it's company, but it's also information, and it's… can be distracting in those situations. [Beverley]

Participants were not saying they did not experience listening as company, they were saying that company was not the driver for their listening, the purpose of their listening. They were listening for information and, in doing so, they may or may not have experienced company.

At times, I found this difficult to reconcile. All participants had answered an advertisement (Appendix D) or seen a poster (Appendix C) and agreed to participate in a study calling for people who experienced the radio as company (Appendix G). They self-identified as using the radio for company. Generally, when we sat down to talk I reiterated that this was the purpose of the study. Indeed, sometimes during our conversations I brought this up again explicitly. All our conversations were predicated on this self-identification, and yet, it was something we talked around, it was difficult for people to address directly in the moment. Carrie perhaps best expressed the oblique nature of the discussion of listening as company when she said, 'We sort of got off the topic a bit, but it all really comes back in a way'.

Initially I wondered whether the insistence that listening was for information was a reflection of the requirement for busy-ness, and the taboo of leisure and entertainment (see Chapter 5). Thinking about information-seeking in the context of IDENTITY, however, opened up a new understanding of this code: Information-seeking extends participants' engagement with those around them, but also with their selves. Anne provided a clear example. She spent many years living and working on farms and though these days she lives in an urban setting, her knowledge of and interest in farming remains very much part of her IDENTITY.

> Anne – Radio Live, Rural, Rural X[7] or something they call it. And I hear lots of things. That's really educational, I find, that programme, about 50 shades of green. And then I was travelling and I saw a beautiful farm and it was going to 50 shades of green and I thought, 'Oh no, that's what they're really on about'.
>
> *A – What is it?*
>
> Anne – Um, it's farm, sheep farms, usually way out, this was in the back on the, what, we had to detour going from Te Kuiti down to New Plymouth and we had to do a detour out, into places we would never have gone too. And I saw this beautiful farm, and I saw these bloody little pine trees. And it was a lovely gradient and everything, and I thought, 'it's been cleared from bush, it's been farmed with love, farmed with love for several generations and there it's back into, into pine trees'.
>
> *A – Turned into a plantation?*
>
> Anne – Yeah.
>
> *A – Oh I see what you mean.*
>
> ANNE – The whole farm. And I thought, 'Oh dear'. That would've fed a lot of people. Pine trees are never, those pine trees are never going to be harvested, they're just going to be there. And I thought, 'Oh dear'. But ok: The contrary side of it is, that farming couple were probably elderly, they were getting past it, no one wanted to buy it at the price they really wanted that they could get for it, who can blame them? So that's the other side of it. So. That was education from a programme that I'd heard, and then I could relate to it when I saw it.
>
> *A – Yeah, sounds like a mix between things you didn't know, and thing you can really closely relate to?*
>
> Anne – Mmmm.
>
> …
>
> Anne – Yeah. It's just relating to life experience, I s'pose.

Listening to farming related content can support this understanding of herself, maintain it and extend it in a way. This content honours her existing knowledge and experience and puts this knowledge and experience in a contemporary context. It extends her farming IDENTITY into the present. She is *keeping up with the play*. Jan, who grew up on a farm but married a banker, spoke similarly of being connected to farming-related content.

> … I think probably if people are on a bandwagon and they kind of don't really know, uninformed – I'm saying 'uninformed' in terms of… because they've never lived in that world, you know. I mean, there's a lot of anti-farming rhetoric out there and that irritates me because they don't understand, what farming's about. You know, unless you've, lived it, grown up with it, so forth, I think, that's one thing that comes across. [Jan]

Jan identifies with her farming past. She values the input of one farmer in particular who calls regularly, who she says is 'fascinating, cos he's a good basic farmer that's out there doing it' [Jan]. Just as Jan's experience of mothering gave her the courage to speak on it on air, so too

[7] McKay, H., & Loe, R. (Presenters). (2017).

others with direct experience in different areas are able to valuably do so. Neither Anne nor Jan have been farming for many years, but the experiences and opinions of farmers provides **access to a past self** and, in doing so, **reinforces ideas about themselves**. In this way, they see themselves reflected.

'*The way I know the community*' [Carrie]

'I was not thinking that it replaces the community in anyway, it, informs, me on my community, the radio does.' [Carrie].

In meeting Carrie, I was also introduced to many of the people with whom she shares her days. Carrie told me about conversations with strangers in the supermarket and on the street, attending a neighbour's singing performance out of *politeness*, even though the genre was not to her TASTE. She shared details about her previous neighbours' work schedules and home lives. Carrie told me about a lot of people in her life, talking me through their various interests and attributes, much as she did with her collection of miniature teapots: She is interested in people and she is committed to a friendliness without judgement.

Just as Carrie has a detailed knowledge of those around her, she is knowledgeable about the presenters she hears and takes an interest in the ones she likes. For example, Carrie listens to Karyn Hay's show on RNZ (Hay, 2018). She told me that

> when I go to bed I like Karyn Hay… because she is brief, intelligent interviews that are this long. And she doesn't judge people; she's really good. I used to knew her when she was back in the Radio With Pictures[8] days, in her, what she was, 20s? And it's so different, cos I was, 'Oh no, not Karyn Hay's coming back', but when I heard her, I thought, 'Oh, that's really unfair because', she used to be on the TV and like, 'Hello, this is Karyn Hay and tonight on our programme', and it was just all the one voice and; she doesn't do that now. And she's lovely.
>
> She's really lovely to listen to. And I think, oh, she's only on, look, for 45 minutes if that. She has to wait for the news and if that goes on too long she comes on at 17 minutes past 10, and she's only on till 11. That's the only spot she's got. So when she got given an award in the Queen's Birthday, or the New Year Honours, I said, we emailed, cos, it's very rare for me to do that, but I sent to say 'Congratulations, I hope they give you your own programme soon', because she would be really good. …And she doesn't pry, she just, 'So tell me about that? I don't really know about that, would you just tell me a little bit more about it?', and so she draws people out in a lovely way. And I think, 'Gosh, she's a good example of what I would say' …. [Carrie]

Carrie is interested in Karyn, in her career, in her prospects; she is rooting for her, hoping for more for her. She celebrates Karyn's achievements with her. She feels that she sees herself reflected in Karyn who is 'a good example of what I would say', and shares the non-judgement

[8] Hay, K. (Presenter). (1976–1989).

qualities Carrie valued so highly in her mother and aspires to herself. Karyn is one of Carrie's collection of people.

Throughout her life, Carrie has found company in different types of listening. In her married life she said the company was in the music.

> Married life? Yeah, when we went, we had a farm, so, yeah, probably had a radio; we would've had a radio at that time. Again, you're sort of busy, so I would just have it – I think in that time, I wasn't listening to the National programme so much. Because it would be music that I would be looking for. And sort of, music would be my company when I was busy, in the, in the home. If I wasn't busy on the farm. So, yeah. So it wasn't a constant then, but um, yeah. And I think there's a tie, as well, to, with me being liking and really enjoying all sorts of music. This is a good example. It adds to that, that, that thing that I have about music, and so I'm in a choir at the moment and I go to shows, and I've been in musicals in the past and I play ukulele and piano, and so it ties in. And sometimes I have to, I'll hear a tune and I'll think, 'Oh, I must try that', and I'll use it to, to um, see if I can play that tune. Cos I can play by ear, so. …And that's what the radio does: It builds on your information of things that interest you. That's really key about radio… [Carrie]

Her musical skills are an asset to her now in maintaining relationships, at her volunteering role, and in her choir, in musicals. 'The companionship [offered by radio] is not like an essential, but it is a comfortable thing' [Carrie]. The company she finds in listening sits comfortably alongside other companionable outlets like music and family. They rub up against one another companionably in her living SPACE.

[Carrie – living room]

The company Carrie finds in listening mirrors this approach to other companions. This was clear from the way she spoke about the presenters. Carrie was clear about one presenter whose interview style was not to her TASTE. She talked about his style, and how she felt he sometimes harassed interviewees, particularly women, but she eventually came to the point that

> Sometimes 'The Media' become a group of people that all just do this, but that's not true because some of them are, you know, good journalists, or whatever they want to call themselves these days, there's better ones. So that's probably, um, but it's a challenge isn't it, listening to them sometimes. And I don't mind that, well my mind's still thinking and I'm not right or wrong but it's just like, 'Hmmm, would you talk to your mother like that?'. Or, whatever. It's about that human part that you sh-, you need to maintain that if you're a good interviewer. Some of the best ones have always done that – they don't demean people by the way in which they question them. I think that's really important. So, yeah. [Carrie]

It is important not to lump everyone together, but Carrie wants to see the values of non-judgemental engagement reflected in the company she keeps. None of this stopped her listening, however, she is able for the **challenge** of listening to them. In listening, Carrie's *preference* is to see herself and her own values reflected.

The company Carrie finds in listening does not replace anything, it is part of a milieu of connections in which Carrie seeks and finds company. Her connections give Carrie a context: She is a neighbour, chorister, volunteer, a listener. Listening provides the same contextualising potential as these other relationships: 'This is the way I know the community. It's a way in which, it's views about the, and information comes from the community which… I am part of' [Carrie]. While listening is not a replacement for this community, Carrie speculates that 'if I couldn't get and about out, then the radio would be company'. Many other study participants echoed this sentiment [e.g., Graeme, Jan]. Radio might not be a replacement now, but the facility is there, if she needs it. Carrie can imagine transposing her connection-making from the community to its reflection, the radio.

'*The hum*' [Den]

'And *I don't always listen*; I'll admit *I just like a background hum*.' [Den]

Many participants talked about finding company in the sound of the radio, over and above any specific content. Den described this as '*the hum*'.

> Den – Oh… I haven't… Do you s'pose 'background hum' and 'company' mean the same?
>
> *A – Maybe?*
>
> Den – I never thought about that.
>
> *A – I think if that's what is the, what it's doing for you, then maybe yeah.*

Den – Could be 'eh?

Murdoch – I wonder if it's the same as you know sometimes I've got friends who will just leave the TV on, just because, you know, even if, even if they're tired they'll just leave it on, just because it helps them sleep as well?

A – I think it might be, if that's what it, feels like. … If it's just the sound that is the company, then yeah, the hum.

Den – It is, it is yeah: I've just been thinking it, thinking about that. Yeah probably is. And it's, um, for me, it's good to wake up to the hum, [laughter] to some kind of noise.

Den told me

Den – … I'm just thinking, perhaps it's a bit of a substitute… Cos there's no family – oh, for me, anyway, cos the family's all over the place – no family noises around me, like my family. So maybe it's a substitute. I don't know, I've never thought about it really.

A – Yeah. There's nobody else in the kitchen bashing the pots or calling out or… Stubbing their toe on the corner

Den – Or making crooked things, you know, like the door. [laughter]

A – And, I guess that's, a change, for you? Because you were in a household as a girl, and then in a noisy family household, and now, not. Now you have to look somewhere else for that noise?

Den – For the noise.

Previously, the cacophony of family life has surrounded Den, provided a context for her days. With that gone, the sound of the radio is a substitute. She is not always listening, but there is always noise, much like in any family.

Beverley made a clear distinction between the two modes of listening she did. She described '*listening listening*' as 'times I really want to tune into something. So then I concentrate' as opposed to 'sometimes it's just, if you like, *for company as background*' [Beverley]. Company is not necessarily limited to one mode of listening or the other, but they are different: '*listening listening*' and '*background*'.

For Bob, this type of *'hum'* listening, in which the sound itself provided company, was something he experienced over night.

A – …so the company feeling is from the – I guess on Concert during the night you would rarely hear the presenter, is that right?

Bob – I'm not fussed on who the presenter is, it's the music that's presented, that I want.

A – Yes, ok. And the company feeling, is the noise itself, maybe?

Bob – What's generated, the sound.

A – Ok

Bob – Certainly the presenter doesn't mean anything to me at all.

Chapter 5 looked at the interaction between sound and SPACE but the experience of sound as company is about the interplay between sound, SPACE, and TIME. For Bob, who shares his listening space during the day, it is at night that the sound itself provides company. In the day, he says,

> *A – So… 5-9 on National, what, where would you say in there, is that kind of company feeling?*
>
> Bob – I don't know it's altogether company, it's more information I think.
>
> *A – Ok*
>
> Bob – More information than company. I've got a wife for company, I'm very lucky.

Overnight, his wife is not 'listening in another room' [Bob], but rather sleeping right beside him. They are not sharing listening in the day or in the night. They might be physically closer overnight than they are in separate rooms during the day, but in the night there is space for the sound generated by the radio to provide company. Hearing music he knows and likes overnight is **familiar**, **comforting**.

Jo and Brenda also described finding company in sound overnight. Jo outlined how this began for her as an *adaptation* to living alone.

> Well I've lived alone for a number of years, and, when I was first by myself, I'm relatively nervous, and I had a big house, and houses at night creak and groan and so on and then I discovered that, if I had the radio going, they were less likely to disturb me. And so there began my association with company at night being the radio, and for, all these years, I go to bed with the radio. Ahm, I turn it on as soon as I get into bed; even if I'm reading it's background and when I turn off the light it just goes on. And, um, I don't know whether that really is a good or bad thing, because I find that sometimes talkback radio can be very disturbing in that it stimulates you; you want to have your say and get part of it. And sometimes I do actually turn it right down so I can't hear what's going on. [Jo]

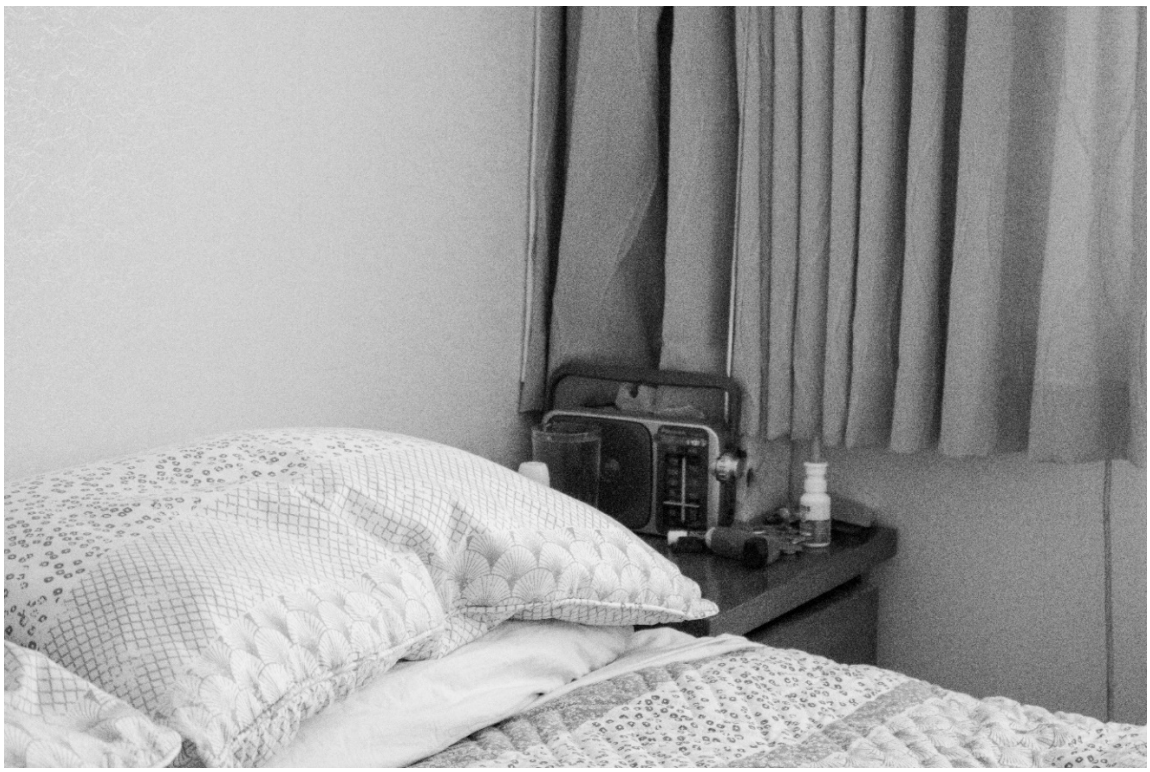
When photographing the radio Jo listens on at night, I asked her to put it where it would be when she was using it.

[Jo – Bed]

She pulled back the covers and placed it on her pillow. Jo no longer lives in the creaking, groaning house, but the radio is right there, alongside her all night. She has **adapted** from sharing her nights with a person to sharing her nights with her radio. Her night radio sits on her pillow until she takes it with her to the shower in the morning.

For Brenda, nights in hospital were filled with different sounds, but on nights at home without the sound of the radio, she feels there is 'something missing'.

> I will go to bed; oh, if I go to hospital – which has been quite often lately and I don't like it – I don't miss it, because there's other sounds going around and there's other people. But when I go to bed at night, I might think, 'Oh, I can't be bothered with talkback and I don't want to put the other radio on', so I'll go off to sleep and I'll wake up and I'll think, 'Mmm, something missing…'. Turn on the radio and then; I think I use it because I'll be listening to something and I'll think 'Oh yeah, I'll wait for this bit', and it never comes because I got to sleep. It's wonderful! It's a good sleeping pill [laughter]. [Brenda]



[Brenda – bedroom]

The sound, '*the hum'*, is the sound of others, the sound of a world beyond the self. *'The hum'* is the buoy line, connecting the individual diver to the collective boat. This connection allows participants to go exploring, to wander off in thought or action, waking or sleeping, but connected to the surface, tethered by the sound to a meeting point, a vessel where they will find the familiar: A voice, content, manners, themselves. The sound gives a context from which to launch myself and to which I can trace myself back.

Seeing myself reflected; checking my reflection

In talking about **content and connection**, participants singled-out various aspects of presentation, including *voice*, *diction* and *manners*, and *style* (see Chapter 5). In particular, the emphasis by some participants on diction and manners can be read as wanting presenters to reflect the qualities participants valued in themselves. Participants reflected the desire to and benefits of seeing themselves reflected in a variety of ways: Betty has a favourite presenter, she told me ' there's an announcer called Bruce on 1ZB. He is PERFECT'. Later she told me that

> Betty – Bruce is very popular with other people, too.
>
> *A – How do you know that?*
>
> Betty – Because some of them ring up and say, 'Hello Bruce', and talk to him as if they know him.
>
> *A – Right. And tell me what you like about him? You said he speaks clearly and he's very knowledgeable, but you said he's 'perfect'.*

> Betty – And he's, probably, pensioned – I don't know – or near pension age. He's sorta well controlled, the way he speaks. And he knows a lot.
>
> …
>
> *A – Do you have a picture of him in your mind? Have you ever thought about what he looks like?*
>
> Betty – I thought he might have white hair.
>
> *A – Ok! It sounds like you might feel like he might have something in common with you, about his age, or something like that?*
>
> Betty – Yes. Yes, and, a lot of people feel very comfortable with him. Some of the new presenters, they struggle a bit to get people to ring up to talk? And they have to play music in between to fill up the time until someone rings.

Betty's sense of seeing herself reflected in her listening extends to a visual reflection of ageing. The poignancy of age and ageing in relation to listening comes up multiple times in the data.

> Participants were also aware of the ages of radio voices. They might note, for instance, that callers were their own age, or older, or discern that a presenter might be of a similar age to themselves, based on their voice, music tastes, or recognition of shared memories of events and places. By observing a presenter's career overtime, they might notice for instance that someone had "mellowed" in their style over time. [Memo, 10 November 2021]

This sense of *hearing myself reflected* is not always so literal as Betty's experience, but these literal expressions are poignant.

> He's a family man, because he has talked about his, I think he's got teenagers, talked about his teenagers. So he relates to people very well, and he can talk about family stuff and whatever. But has not anybody said to you that they've got a favourite announcer at all? [Faye]

Faye spends a lot of time with her teenage grandchildren, having raised two children herself, and relates to this presenter, so much so that he is a *favourite*. The idea that the content and its delivery would reflect participants themselves is, in some sense, a question of TASTE: Participants sought out content to **meet their need** to **see themselves reflected** in line with their TASTES and the ideas about themselves. Figure 32 illustrates this relationship.

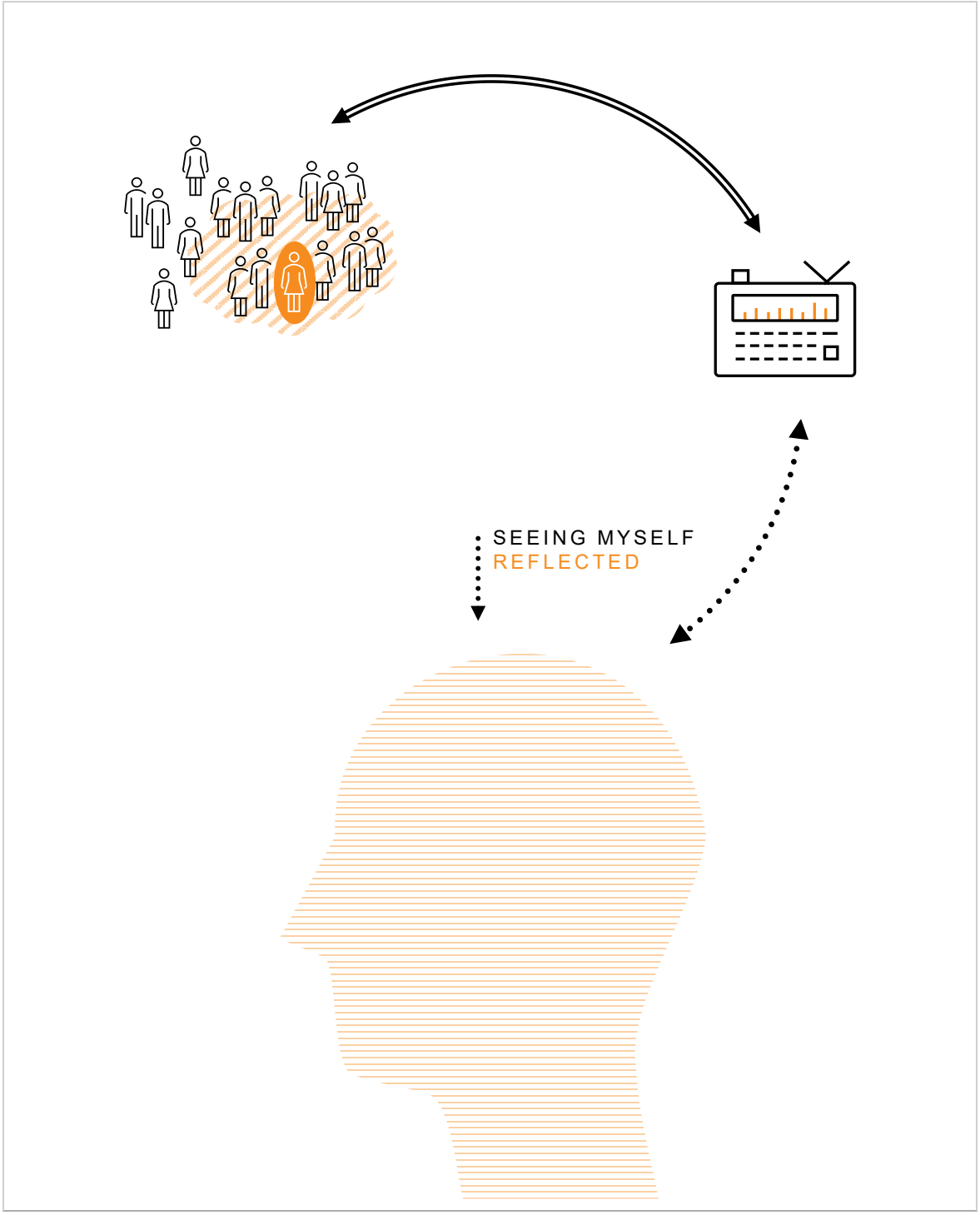


Figure 32–- Seeing myself reflected

Some participants felt that presenters were talking to or connecting with them, but they were not often identified outright as the object of the company feeling.

> *A – So, that feeling of keeping up with what's happening, or, is that the same kind of feeling you would get when you're scrolling the headlines on Stuff, do you think or is it different, when it's the radio?*
>
> Beverley – Mmmmm. I guess a bit different, because, I know they're not talking to you, but you, seem to have that relationship, that voice, as if they're speaking, to you. Whereas the other, I'm making the effort. …Effort's not quite the right word, but I'm doing it. And I don't have to do either. That,

so, the different thing, it's the eyes, rather than the ears. So, the, visual rather than the aural. Hmmmm. Hadn't thought about that before.

A – Me either. We're making new knowledge together! [laughter] And I suppose, exactly the opposite of what you've just been saying, whereas you can carry on making the bed or doing the housework, and get this information, whereas, when you're scrolling Stuff you're sat in the library scrolling Stuff. You can't make the bed and…

Beverley – No, you can't multitask, well, not really.

Pat said 'I certainly didn't think of the other listeners. Probably me and the presenter, I suppose', but this was unusual. Jan was the only participant who suggested that other listeners might be involved in the company feeling for her.

A – … I'm wondering, in that company feeling, can you tell me more about that company feeling, and maybe, who is in it?

Jan – As in, the listening, the listeners? Or within your own community?

A – Well, you tell me – either or both.

Jan – Well, I suppose, unwittingly, you think about who is listening, because there's such a wide variety of people. And it can, there's times I've felt like ringing, but I've thought, 'Oh, I probably haven't got the', and I'm not putting myself down, 'but I haven't got the ability to be able to word it the way I want to, sort of thing, to really get my message across. And someone out there will be, will shoot it down in flames' and such, so. And then I'll feel that, 'Blow, I wish I'd worded it this way', so I choose not to.

A – Do you think the other callers spend very much time thinking about that?

Jan – I'd say some definitely don't. [laughter] And some possibly do. And some just are naturally able to put their point across, you know, and I just think, 'Wow', when I hear that.

She is conscious of them and how they might interact with her, but only when it comes to the thought of getting involved, rather than just in the course of her listening in general. Jan also said that she 'never thought of it as company, I just thought I was interested in what was happening. And, as I say, any current events or people's opinion – as I say, I love listening to interviews'. Jan was a keen observer of the callers, however, particularly the regular callers. She was familiar with the farmer who she sometimes heard if she was awake overnight.

I don't know them personally, but you kind of get to know their name and they're quite; there's one that rings during the night, actually, if I'm awake. And he's a dairy farmer, but I don't know if he ever sleeps, and he's liable to be up, it's usually if I've woken up about 4 o'clock, and he'll call in. And he's busy cooking pies for the guys for their lunch and there's, he's been up since 2 o'clock, and it's just that real basic on-the-farm stuff that he's doing. And he's got opinions on things that are going on out there as well. So he's fascinating, cos he's a good basic farmer that's out there doing it. And he's got a few kids of his own and I think he takes in a few as well, so you kind of hear a bit of that. [Jan]

She also recalled meeting someone in person whom she recognised from his contributions on air.

> … there's another one, and I have actually met him recently and then you feel as if you know him. Cos he came to a meeting I was at and I recognised his voice actually. And I said 'you rang up on the radio' and he puts a political view. He's …he's Canadian I think, and, he's, at least I call him well-informed, as in he obviously does a lot of reading and listening and research.
>
> And he's a retired person – I have no idea what he did in his life – but he kind of; there's a difference between arguing and putting forward things that are the facts or seem to have credibility, as against an opinion as such, sometimes. [Jan]

Jan grew up on a farm. She describes herself as right wing and she is retired also. She recognises these callers, in the sense that they reflect her in some ways. She values contributions from people who are well-informed and speaking from experience, which she finds these men do. In the case of the Canadian, she knows this caller well enough to recognise his voice when they meet in person, and she feels that she knows him. She had imagined, even, what he might look like. Though, as is almost always the case, she told me he bore no resemblance to her image of him. Despite this fully drawn character, she did not identify him or any other caller specifically as the object of her experience of company. In considering prospect of 'the listeners' as company, she is considering a nameless, faceless 'audience', rather than any one person or group in particular. Somewhere amongst the collective audience, which she is part of, she recognises herself reflected back.

'*It's part of the family*' [Garry]

While I was with Garry, the phone rang. 'It could be any one of 6 – they keep tabs on me', he said, explaining that his children each phoned him regularly, as though on a roster system. He checked his phone and said, 'That's my Caroline. She's usually the first' [Garry]. He **knows the schedule**: Caroline will call early, then

> Garry – … Andrew, our – what's he? Fourth? Fourth son, he's in Auckland. He phones me, yep, just about every single night, roundabout quarter past 9. When Jewell was still here he used to, I used to sit up there [in the living room] and read. Ah, because Jewell would be asleep probably by about 8 and I wanted to make sure she got off to sleep easily. Cos she really needed it. And so, ah, I'd sit up there and ah, read my big books, you know, whatever, fiction I'll…
>
> *A – To not have the light on for her?*
>
> Garry – Yeah, yes. And so Andrew would ring me round about 10 o'clock, half past 10, knowing I would still be there. So now we're down to about quarter past 9.
>
> *A – Ok, sending you off to bed, is he?*
>
> Garry – Yeah, so. And ah, so we chat philosophically and practicably…

Andrew is scheduled to phone in the evenings, at a tough time for Garry.

Garry told me about the different types of conversations he had with each of his children, both about the radio and not: '[F]or example, Caroline would listen, she and I would often, ah, compare our listening… We might have both been listening to Kathryn Ryan' [Garry]. He told me about chatting with his son Jeremy while he was

> …on a tractor, or bailer or something and he, I might phone him or he'll phone me and, and he'll talk about what Kathryn Ryan is saying, or the latest interview while it, while he's sitting up in one of these giant machines. So, you know, that's why I say it's a member, almost a member of the family. [Garry]

Unlike Jeremy, Andrew was not necessarily a regular radio listener so Garry would text him when something or someone was on that he thought would be relevant or of interest to his work

> Garry – often I'll just send him a quick email or quick phone call to say, 'tune in, there's', what's his name? Bill, Bill somebody? He's an architect in Auckland and he's often on Kathryn Ryan's show.
>
> *A – Yeah, ok.*
>
> Garry – And I said, 'You should be listening to him, he's talking a lot of common sense about building in Auckland.'

Garry described another of his sons, David, as 'a conspiracy theorist' saying, 'we don't agree to disagree'.

> Yeah. He listens to programmes on his phone, and… I won't say to him, you know, he's brainwashed, but he's got all his facts and figures, but to me it's one-sided and I've got to try and wean him away from that one-sidedness. I don't mind him holding a view, I want him to do that, but he's got …But's he's; the balancing is another thing. [Garry]

When last they were together Garry did not have his facts together to **challenge** him, but he had remedied that now, and was ready to talk to him about his views. Finding a balance between **challenge** and **comfort** was something Garry talked about in terms of their views and their listening. David is a tiler and had spent a week in the house doing some tiling for Garry. He described to me how they balanced the soundscape while they shared the SPACE.

> Garry – … he doesn't listen to radio. But when he was here doing the tiling, for example he was here for a week, all told, coming and going. We had a good, ah, democratic approach to things. Ahm, he would play his music in the morning; he had a big box
>
> *A – That he takes around with him?*
>
> Garry – Yeah. And he would be, playing all his, music, and, which, I, and he had, you know, a quite a good mix in it really, but a lot of it was not my music, but that didn't matter. But in the afternoon it was my music. So. Yeah.
>
> *A – And was he suitably tolerant?*

> Garry – Oh yes. And one day, when he was a little bit jaded, a little bit tired, I put on a baroque, tape, ahm, or CD or something, and he found it soothing. Yeah. And I said, 'That's what it's supposed to be'.

The radio, Garry told me, is '*like another member of the family*'. The way he experiences company with this family member is just like he experiences company with all his other family members: By knowing, by being known, by seeing himself reflected past and present, but taking the time, by **comforting** and **challenging**.

Listening allows Garry to check in, '*keeping up with the play*' of each family member's lives.

> Garry – And then she was switching over to talk to somebody about pop-up shops. Which, I should've listened to, because um, our son in Auckland, who's a physio, Christopher, he's also a, has a pop-up shop where he sells vinyls and books.
>
> …
>
> it's actually; the vinyls are a lucrative little side.
>
> *A – I bet, yeah.*
>
> Garry – Amazing. I keep counting my vinyls here – I've got about 100 of my specials that I kept, I – make sure none of them disappear.
>
> *A – Right, when he comes to visit. Make sure none of them go… walkabout.*
>
> GARRY – Yeah, especially the Goons[9]!

In this example, Garry's listening is connecting him with his son and, in a way, with his past listening to *The Goon Show* (1951–1960). Garry's listening **connects him to his past**, **reflects him back to himself**, and **keeps him connected** to the present all at once. For instance, he told me

> I can remember, ah, a chap interviewed at length, by Kathryn Ryan: Haare Williams. And, ah, he's an esteemed kaumātua[10] in Auckland, and it was a long interview, a good half hour interview, and I ah, I was at teachers' college with Haare. And, I've only seen him once since then, but lovely gentle man. And, he was Harry Williams in those days, and now he's converted to a Māori spelling, and it probably suits him better too, you know, he is a Haare, drag it out a bit. And, ah, I remember just sending in a photo of Haare and I in a rugby team. [Garry]

Garry relates to each member of the family uniquely, they each provide him with a different context and his listening reflects each of these. He tailors his interactions to each family member: He talks about building and development with one son and vinyl with another; he has handed on his collection of Booker Prize shortlist titles to his daughter, and tracked down the article on his wife's maths teaching achievements for his son who teaches maths. These

[9] Milligan, S. (Creator). (1951–1960).
[10] Kaumātua is a te reo Māori word meaning "adult, elder, elderly man, elderly woman, old man – a person of status" (Moorfield, n.d.)

exchanges, individually and cumulatively, make company for Garry. So it is with his radio listening.

Garry's interactions with his family members vary, though each are experienced as company. Garry's devices reflect this in that each has its place and function. He relates to them differently, and he uses them, individually and cumulatively, to make company. They are suited to their surroundings, they fit. The aerial on the workshop radio has no place on the kitchen shelf but is quite at home with the vertical arrangements of the other tools in the workshop where greasy hands will not leave smudges on its dark surface.

Garry [workshop]

The things in the workshop are orderly, organised; screwdrivers arranged by type, drill bits by size; protective wear to one side. There is a utility in these objects, they are for working. In different ways, the things on the kitchen shelves are working too, working at making the space beautiful, enjoyable, pleasant. Some of them are functional, certainly, a calendar, a bell, some notepaper, but those items too are decorative; be practical if you like but in any case be lovely.

Garry [kitchen detail]

What Garry described to me in discussing the company he finds in his family is not one thing; it is that each of these interactions might at any time provide something different within the spectrum of that relationship. Garry's experience of listening as company is the same. At any one time the radio might provide him with any one of comfort, challenge, reflection, extension, connection, entertainment. Listening supports his identity maintenance and lets him see that IDENTITY in context. Through listening he has a sense of being known, much like his relationships with the rest of his family. In this way, Garry experiences listening as company.

'The mood of the country' [Den]

'I like to think *there's a lot of people in the country like me*.' [Graeme]

Graeme will occasionally listen to a music station, but generally he listens to talkback.

> Cos if you're listening to ZB, they've got their set, um… broadcasters through the day. And there are some, Leighton Smith, for instance, to me, I s'pose, to a lot of people, cos he's only not long retired, he, ah… he to me…. was what Mike Hosking is on TV: Quite controversial, probably, for those politically-minded. Right-wing, [laughs]. But I just like, I like them both. I think they're both pretty educated and they know. They're pretty smart. That's my opinion. And people have very differing opinions about that, but, yes. So talkback, I just enjoy, sometimes, particular subjects and people get all sorts of opinions of course. [Graeme]

Den listens to talkback too. She welcomes the challenge it brings. She says

Den – Well, most hosts actually *they make me think*. You know, it's like *another, different point of view* they have, from my original, [laughter] thoughts. So, they, they, I will have to say, most of them *expand my thinking*. Yeah.

Murdoch – Is that a good thing?

Den – I think it's a great thing! I think it's good. *Can't live in my ignorant 45 degrees forever, can I?*

This listening, for Den, shows her in the context of the listening demographic: Graeme.

A – Have you noticed, like, you said at the, when we first started chatting that you've noticed that the language people use is, changing, and you don't necessarily think that they're views are changing, but the way they say it is changing. Have you, got any examples of that that you could think of?

Den – Oh dear, I thought this could be avoided but, however [laughter].

Well there is a time, when ah, people get on radio and they say 'And those Māoris' and blah blah blah. And that used to get me cranky those, you know. But I find lately, they don't say 'those Māoris', they will say things like, 'And you know, those people, I will not say who they are, but you know who they are', that's what I mean about the change in, ah, language. Yeah.

A – Less direct but same feeling?

Den – It's the same, same talk but without saying the words. Not being so direct. So that, that's changed a lot, you know.

…

Den – Yeah, I know. I don't know whether that's a good thing really, because sometimes I think it's driving things under again. Yeah.

A – Yeah. The, what you're saying hasn't changed but the way you're saying it has changed and it feels more… underground, or something?

Den – To me, I think I speak in that way, it's driving it underground. And… and, and there's a lot of that, there's a lot of that today, which is a shame really, I think. …But, um, you don't hear very many young people ring in during the day or in the evening or at night – it's very rare. Ahm, it's mainly older people.

Murdoch – Older males.

Den – Yeah.

…

Murdoch – So when you do get angry at the radio do you find it's because it's, because of 'those Māoris'?

…

Den – Oh the views, yeah. Yeah, that's when I'm 'Ah, shut up – you don't know'.

…

Den – What it, what it… points out to me is, um, the ignorance in this country about our history. And I know there's a lot of kickback about not wanting our hist-, the total history being taught in the schools, there's a lot of anti-that,

> but, because I hear it on the radio [laughter] but it should be taught. It should be taught. The whole thing.

Graeme listens to the same content as Den, but with a completely different ear. Den hears an ignorance of history. Graeme hears a new disharmony he was unaware of before.

> Yes, and I'm quite opinionated too. I've got; yes, well, we could go down other; you know one word that really interests me? It's so interesting looking back, talking about Māori and Pākehā, the word 'racist'. I mean, that wasn't around a few years ago. When I was a kid, maybe, thinking back to when I was 14, really, you know, Māori and Pākehā, we accepted each other, and, I don't think; all the issues that have come up in recent years just weren't around then. Maybe it was a simpler, simpler time. Or maybe the old, you know, the, it was the advent of the old colonial thing. Which, when you look at it now, you can understand it, but it didn't appear to be an issue for a long time. Anyway. That's just the way society's changed. [Graeme]

The changes he sees in society are not changes he welcomes, however. For Den, the sentiment has not changed, the changes have been linguistic only. Not so for Graeme. He told me

> … Well, well I heard a mate, we were talking about it … recently and he just said, cos he drives a lot, and he said, 'God we're a dirty country, people just toss things out', and I know exactly what he means. We've got a, we've got, we've got people in our society who just don't give a damn about the mess they make. And it's like tossing something out of a car window. And that, I think, and I notice that too, in all the driving I've done, it's just amazing as you're driving along the road, if you really look, so often. There's stuff just rubbish just sitting there. And, ah, to me, why can't… the people that supposedly don't want to work, or haven't got work, could be employed to make this country even great than it is. Why shouldn't we have a nice, tidy; when I look out of this unit I'm looking out at a place that's looked after, basically. But you can go, as you probably know, and driving round the city, I'm sure you find places that are just rentals, cos no lawn mown, it's just the rest of the street might look quite tidy, but somebody doesn't give a damn and it just looks absolutely forlorn. [Graeme]

The changes Graeme sees in society are messy. 'You can understand it', he said, but 'it wasn't an issue for a long time' and 'we just accepted each other'. Now, people do not mow their lawns and 'somebody doesn't give a damn'. Graeme wants things to be tidy. Graeme is sure there are a lot of people out there like him, and that is who he wants to hear from. He wants his IDENTITY and experience affirmed, so he seeks out listening that provides that affirmation. Sometimes when he is listening, he notices that hosts

> have to dismiss somebody, and you can see why. Cos you hear some people rambling on and some people you think, 'God'… What planet are they living on, this sort of thing, you know.
>
> …
>
> I actually think a certain, I won't quote the percentage, but… based on all the calls I've heard over a period of years, and I, I often, I've said to somebody, I, I, I think a certain perc, percentage of our overall population are thick. [Graeme]

People with messy ideas from other planets get dismissed. They're thick.

Den spoke of one presenter whom she had thought might be Māori themselves.

> *A – …Do you, yeah, ah, are there any hosts who you feel like, come alongside you in that moment, and say, 'That's rubbish', or no?*
>
> Den – To the host?
>
> *A – No, to the caller. Like, when the caller is spouting off with their nonsense, are they any who just say, 'That's ridiculous'.*
>
> Den – Oh, what, there, yes, there used to be a guy on and I'm sure; I used to think he was, he was, ah, Māori, but, when he did speak a bit of reo, I could tell he wasn't. You know? So, um, but he was, he was, not Ryan, was it Ryan Bridges?
>
> Murdoch – Oh yeah, ok, Ryan Bridges.
>
> Den – I think? Or another one? And man he could talk, talk his head off. And, and um, and, he'd say things to upset the callers. I don't know if it was Ryan Bridges or another fella. But oh, they didn't care, they just motored ahead and, ahm, said whatever it is they wanted to say, and, um, yeah.
>
> *A – So his accent in te reo gave him as not a te reo speaker, but what made you think he might be?*
>
> Den – … Ah, because, his… probably his thinking.
>
> *A – Ah, yeah.*
>
> Den – Yeah.
>
> Murdoch – You mean he was an advocate for calling out the caller?
>
> Den – Yeah, he was, yeah. His thinking and then, but, no. When he said the words I thought, 'Oh no, he ain't'.

He reflected her position, advocated for her in a way, with callers. And all this in an environment where the host does not usually seem to be alongside her. She felt perhaps he was Māori 'probably because his thinking' [Den], but when she heard his te reo Māori pronunciation, she knew he was not. He is not on air anymore, but this stands out for her.

Den and Graeme both listen to talkback. Den listens to challenge herself, to '*gauge the mood of the country*'. Den wants to hear what the Graemes of the world are saying about the Dens of the world today. Graeme wants to hear that the world is still the tidy, race-free place he remembers. Graeme listens because he wants to hear himself reflected and, through this reflection, affirm his understanding of the world around him and his place in it. Graeme 'like[s] to think *there's a lot of people in the country like me*' [Graeme] and he has found a way to reflect that back to himself through talkback listening. Graeme hears himself reflected; Den hears herself in the context of ignorance.

Summary – Knowing myself; knowing myself in context

Participants use a range of strategies to create the experience of company they are seeking in any one moment. The capacity to do this is based on **knowing themselves** and **knowing their boundaries**. Sure in this knowledge, participants can use listening to see themselves in broader social context and recognise when they see themselves reflected.

Just as the precise shape and nature of other audience members can be freely imagined, as with Jan and the Canadian, or Faye and the callers in their living rooms, those who provide the fodder for content might be opaque but they are not entirely unknown. Participants have an awareness of these broader others, whether they are audience members or not, just as they do of the meta-structures underpinning the entire broadcasting operation, from media ownership to production assistants. This awareness, of listeners, of subjects, or structures and mechanics, are part of the listening experience which contribute to the experience of company. Figure 33 illustrates these processes.

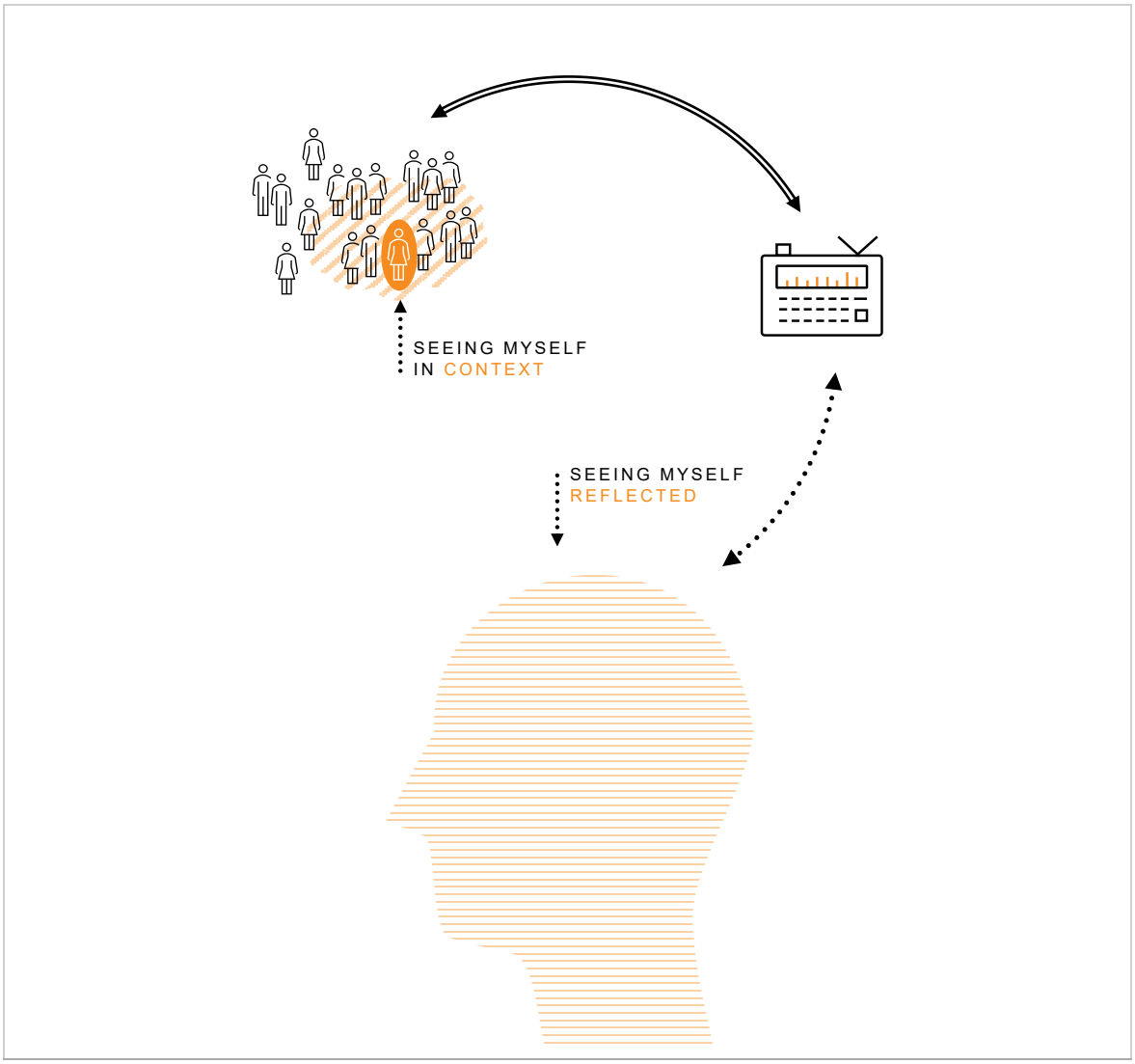


Figure 33 – Context and reflection

In listening, participants are able to challenge, extend, comfort, and affirm themselves. This IDENTITY work was made possible by a lifetime of radio listening through which participants had come to see themselves as having an identity as a **listener–citizen–audience member** Participants' listening was a **choice** they made based on their TASTE and the TIME and SPACE available to them in which to listen. These parameters provided boundaries in which to undertake this self-exploration. Being confident in their IDENTITY meant that, through listening, participants were able to see their IDENTITY reflected and see that IDENTITY in context. These dual processes create an experience of company.

In order to recognise my reflection, I need to understand what I look or sound like: I need to know myself. The IDENTITY work enabled through listening and explored in Chapter 6 makes it possible to identify myself in what I hear. The process of IDENTITY-maintenances is essential to the process of seeing myself in context, described in Chapter 7.

An understanding of ourselves is impossible without reference to others. Radio listening gives participants access to others, who, as Jan suggests, might be so far out of her experience as to be inaccessible otherwise. TASTE dictates how those others are presented, and it can be used to form a **boundary** to that exposure which participants themselves **control**. Participants suggested that their appetite for **comfort and affirmation** or **challenge and extension** was influenced by their state of mind which was often linked to the TIME **of day**, and demonstrated that different **types of listening** happened in different SPACES. Participants experienced listening as company for the connection it provided to their selves. Figure 34 shows the interplay between these dual processes.

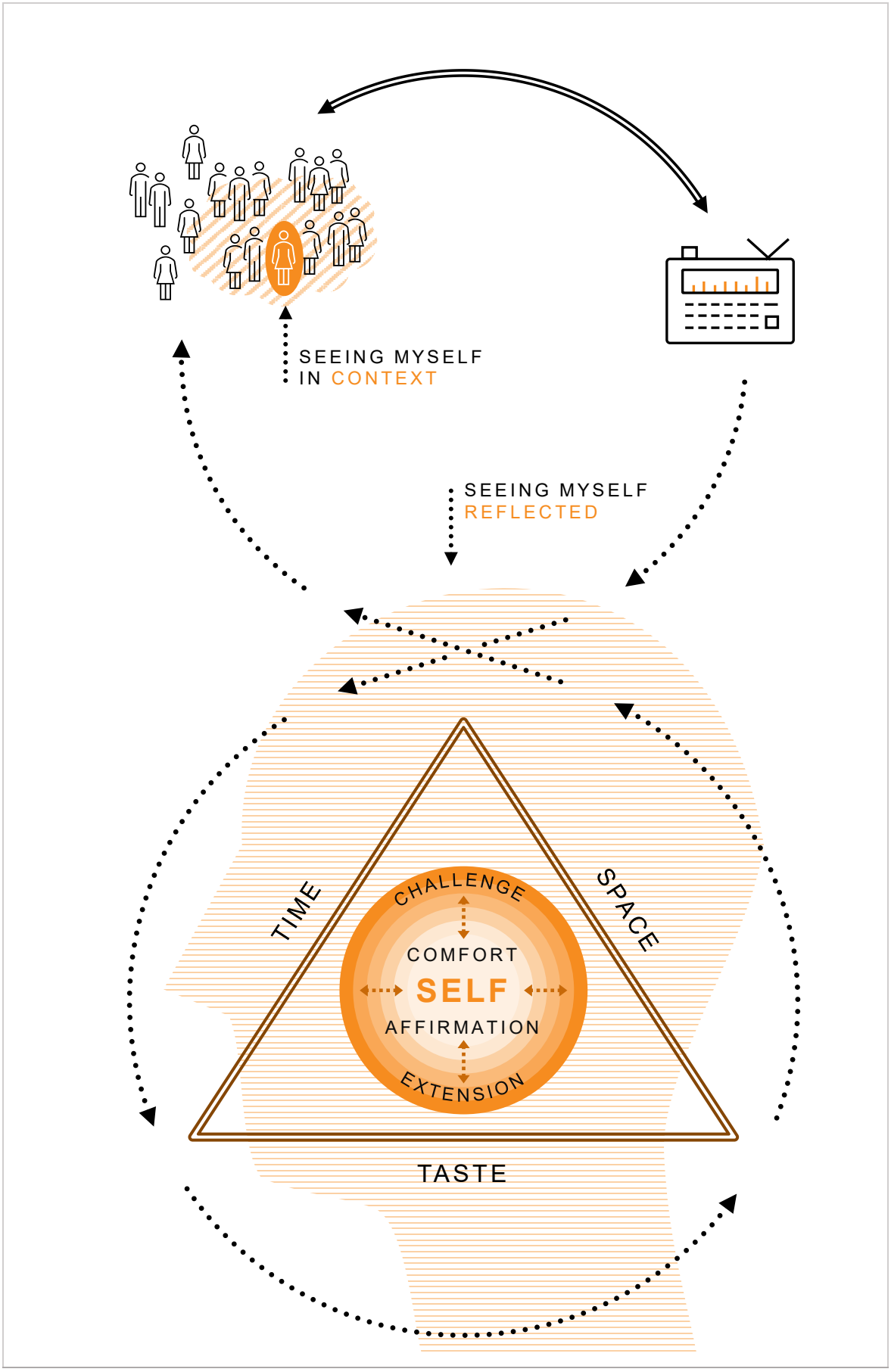


Figure 34 – A theory of listening as company

The four findings chapters have walked through the process of theory generation. Using grounded theory methods to create and analyse data in this study, I have developed a theory in response to the research question: How does radio listening provide company to older listeners who use it to that purpose?

> Radio listening creates an experience of company for older listeners by supporting a knowledge of self and an appreciation of self in context. Through radio listening, older listeners are able to challenge, comfort, extend, and affirm their self-identity within the boundaries of taste, time, and space.

Chapter 5 used initial coding methods to fracture the data and draw out codes and establish categories. Chapter 6 examined the properties of the core category of IDENTITY, demonstrating how the concept of IDENTITY related to the data. Chapter 7 established the links between the core category of IDENTITY and the sub-categories of TASTE, TIME, and SPACE, saturating these categories and demonstrating how they work together. Chapter 8 has integrated these concepts, moving to the theoretical. Each chapter has built on the last, abstracting from the data to produce a theory in response to the original enquiry: How does radio listening provide company to older listeners who use it to that purpose?

CHAPTER 9 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The final chapter of this thesis steps back from the data to look at the theory in context and reflect on the research process. It places the theory in the context of other relevant work on listening and identity and identity and loneliness in particular.

The question posed in this research was: How does radio listening provide company to older listeners who use it to that purpose? The theory offered in answer to that question is that

> Radio listening creates an experience of company for older listeners by supporting a knowledge of self and an appreciation of self in context. Through radio listening, older listeners are able to challenge, comfort, extend, and affirm their self-identity within the boundaries of taste, time, and space.

This theory raises a number of discussion points, particularly in relation to the self, identity, company, listening, and the inter-relationship of these concepts in the context of radio listening as company. There is an ongoing, complex interplay between a medium and its audience: They make each other. Over a lifetime of listening, participants in this study were, in big and small ways, formed by listening: 'it was always there like sunshine' [Brenda]. But so too they have, in bigger and smaller ways, formed the media: They are callers [Jan, Graeme], they are guests [Bob, Pat], they write in [Betty, Carrie, Graeme], they work in radio stations [Jo], administer the audience survey [Graeme], they listen. The identity of each is, in part, formed by the other. They are citizen-listener-audience, they know and see themselves as such. Radio listening has and continues to support their sense of self and provides an opportunity to see that self in the context of others. Having a sense of self and a sense of that self in context provides a feeling of being in company.

In conclusion, I reflect on the study, outlining its strengths, limitations, research implications, and original contribution to knowledge. This part of the thesis considers the significance of the findings and makes suggestions for future work.

Identity and the self

It feels almost audacious that the same thesis which discusses jam-making and radio sing-a-longs purports to be an exploration of identity and the self, but it is, in fact, these very things which make a self. In this way, the analysis of the engagement of the self in this study accords with Mead's (1934/1967) assertion that "The self… arises in the process of social experience and activity" (p. 135). Discussions of the self and identity can feel reified, removed from the everyday business of being and having a self. As Mead wrote, "When one is running to get away from someone who is chasing him [sic], he is entirely occupied in this action, and his

experience may be swallowed up in the objects about him, so that he has, at the time being, no conscious self at all" (p. 137). The small matter of our selves in not something we think about much in the wash of everyday radio listening and yet it is inescapable and essential.

The process outlined in the theory of company making put forward in this thesis describes interplay between a private, internal process of the self-making and a public-facing, outward process of identity-checking. This is similar to what Street (2017) described, saying "the general sound of life does not answer back, but feeds the internal monologue of self, which in turn feeds into a personal identity by which we are recognised in our individual interactions with others" (pp. 5-6). Jenkins (2014) described the relationship between the two as "the internal-external dialectic of identification" (p. 30), with the self being an internal concept and identity being an external, outward facing concept. The very idea that there is an internal-external dialectic implies that it is others who create the boundary between self and identity. Implicit in that idea is that a self is created and understood in reference to others. The interplay of these processes is clearly seen at work in the findings of this study. In much of the literature relating to the self and identity, it is conceptualised in the sense of the self and the person (Jenkins, 2014), and it is typically understood that there is a private self and a public person.

How ever we label them, a self and a person or a self and an identity, the central point remains that there is an internal-external division. This is because "[n]ot everything going on in our heads and hearts is obvious to others, nor is there always harmony between how we see ourselves and how others see us (or how we imagine they do)" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 28). This is not to suggest that we are each two entities, but that there are internal and external processes involved in being: "The self is unimaginable without mental processes, and *vice versa*. Identity without selfhood is similarly implausible" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 36).

To suggest that there is an internal self and an external identity, understood in relation to something else, is core to the processes at work in the theory of this thesis. The internal and external processes are both informed by listening in an ongoing exchange. Jenkins (2014) also argued that identity "isn't 'just there', it is not a 'thing', it must always be established" (p. 4). Indeed, he says, "identity can *only* be understood as a process, as 'being' and 'becoming' one's identity – one's identities, indeed, for who we are is always singular and plural – is never a final or settled matter" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 5). Listeners in this study were continuing to engage with this process of being and becoming, supported, at least in part, by their listening.

Social identity and belonging

This thesis finds that that the sense of company available through listening lies in the listener having a sense of self and being able to appreciate that self in the context of others. This

process of identifying a self among others is similar to the process described in Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory. Social identity theory describes how a person's sense of themselves, their sense of identity, is based on their understanding of their membership, or not, of a group or groups. According to social identity theory, groups in which a person feels they belong are described as in-groups, us and we; groups to which they do not feel they belong are out-groups, they and them: Where the self is 'I' and 'me', a social identity is 'us' and 'we'.

Listeners in this study described two ways that this sense of group membership was available as part of their listening: Listeners have a sense of themselves as a listener-citizen-audience, and they describe identifying themselves as members or not of groups which they hear on the radio. Radio listening provides a steady flow of groups against which listeners can assess themselves as either in or out and, in either case, this can contribute to a sense of identity. They might be teachers [Garry, Beverley, Pat] or choristers [Bob, Carrie, Graeme], or church goers [Betty] or cinephiles [Jo], or gardeners [Anne, Faye, Naomi, Jan, Brenda, Den], or sailors [Ruth], or they might not. They identify with the host, or the guest, or they do not. They are in or they are out. Either way, in or out, this membership or not is a source of a feeling of belonging. In this vein, Putnam (2000) also addressed the role of others in the formation of a self, stating "When people lack connections to others, they are unable to test the veracity of their own views, whether in the give-and-take of casual conversation or in more formal deliberation" (pp. 288–289). In the case of radio listening, while it is true that some listeners speak to the radio, in listening they are observing this back and forth, deciding in the moment whether they are 'in' or 'out' of any particular group, albeit at a distance.

Listening supports a sense of group membership, offering social identity continuity over the life course. For others, for whom listening went into abeyance in middle age, it is possible that returning to listening offers, if not a social identity gain then, a social identity rediscovery or reclamation. Membership of social groups be they family, professional, sporting, or other groups "form the basis for a person's sense of social identity… central to a person's self-definition, helping the person to understand who they are, where they belong, and how they make sense of the world" (C. Haslam et al., 2019, p. 96).

Throughout this study, listeners spoke of different moments in their listening histories. They spoke of growing up, of university entrance and early adult independence, marriage, career changes, becoming parents, and retiring. Many of these milestones mark identity shifts which other research has correlated to increased risks of social identity loss, such as entering university (McIntyre et al., 2018), becoming a mother (Luoma et al., 2019; Seymour-Smith et al., 2017), and retirement (C. Haslam et al., 2019). According to C. Haslam (2019), "each of

these changes requires people to reorient themselves in the world—changing both the way they self-define … and the way that they relate to others" (p. 98). Listeners in this study variously recalled listening at all these times. It was not that they necessarily described listening more or less or to new or old things. Rather they were aware of listening at these moments of identity shift and sometimes remarked on links between listening and identity shift in these times, most notably in the case of the shift to motherhood.

For listeners in this study, listening has provided equipoise against these changes over their lifetimes, Identifying as a radio listener-citizen-audience means being able to maintain an aspect of social identity and group membership over the life course, particularly in those moments which social identity is typically at risk. This is particularly valuable not only because social identity is a protective factor against loneliness (C. Haslam et al., 2019; S. A. Haslam et al., 2022; Jetten et al., 2017), but also because joining a group can be difficult for lonely people (Jopling, 2015; Stuart et al., 2022). It is preferable for people to maintain their social identity through the changes in their lives, rather than needing to join new groups when they become lonely.

The continuity of social identity found in listening may be of particular relevance to older listeners at the point of retirement. While the social aspects of retirement are increasingly an aspect of retirement planning, taking into consideration marital status and existing relationships (C. Haslam et al., 2019), research has offered fewer insights into "the effects that other ways of connecting to people might have on adjustment" (C. Haslam et al., 2019, p. 96). The findings of this study suggest that radio listening may be precisely this, another way of connecting to people which has a positive impact on adjusting to identity shifts. Other identity shifts which may impact listeners in later life, such as those brought about by reduced mobility or widowhood, may also be impacted by the continuity of social identity made possible by radio listening. More than one participant in this study suggested that their listening changed during periods of living alone, for instance, and Garry, in particular, found some comfort in his grief through radio listening.

The findings of this study relate to radio listening, but echo S. A. Haslam et al.'s (2022) references to being a fan of a sports team as a means of social identification. Such group membership allows people to "benefit from the camaraderie of fellow fans, to participate enthusiastically in identity-relevant sporting festivals and to gain a sense of collective efficacy and effervescence from their team's achievements" (S. A. Haslam et al., 2022, p. 162). The self-making and -maintenance expressed by radio listeners is not a direct comparison with these sports fan group members, but it is not entirely removed either. In fact, at times they might cross over: Ruth spoke of using a sports broadcaster specifically to check in with her teams'

endeavours. In Ruth's case, this 'keeping up with the play' by listening supports group membership in a very practical way.

Small, everyday acts of connection enabled in radio listening described by listeners in this study could well be described as having an effervescent effect, that is, giving meaning, a sense of connection and joy. The idea of collective effervescence was raised by Durkheim (1912/1995) to describe the sensation of special events, which he said differentiated between the sacred and the mundane. In such events, he says, groups experience an excitement beyond the everyday. Gabriel (2020) argued that this sensation of effervescence is not limited to large-scale, extraordinary events, but that this sensation might be available "while watching a movie, sitting in a classroom, and even while at events without intrinsic interest" (p. 29), and that these may "give meaning, a sense of connection, and joy to life" (p. 129). Gabriel's study relates specifically to university undergraduates watching television in the presence of strangers. It features a different age group consuming different media while physically co-located. There are obvious differences between that study and this one. In these differences we can find questions to do with physicality, time-shifting, age, and companion activities. None-the-less, this study does suggest that mediated experiences of an everyday nature can produce an experience of effervescence.

Identity and listening

The theory put forward in this thesis is built around an idea of developing, maintaining, and appreciating a self in sound. So often we think of a self in terms of self-image; we hang mirrors in our homes, catch sight of ourselves in windows or puddles, or even as shadows. But, while I am visually limited in my experience of myself, I cannot see my own back for instance, this is not so with speech and language. Mead (1954) argued that though the development of a self begins pre-linguistically, with gestures and attitudes, it is through speech and language that my understanding of myself can more closely approximate others' understanding of me. I cannot see myself as others see me, but I can hear myself as others hear me. It is not only in my self-image that I might know my self, but also in sound; sound also reflects and, in doing so, creates an echo. Perhaps in order to think of ourselves reflected on the radio then, we are thinking of a self-echo, rather than a self-image. Street (2017) wrote that "we are defined by sound: [T]he sound around us and the sound of ourselves. Our Self. We may close our eyes, but we cannot close our ears" (p. 3). Vision or sound, the function is the same: We can use these as self reflections to assess the similarities and difference between our perceived-self, that is our identity, and the identity of others.

This notion, however, that our voice is more knowable to us than our visage, does not necessarily tally with experience. We very regularly misunderstand each other in language, for

instance, suggesting that perhaps what I understood of myself in language was not at all what you understood of me in language. What is more, it is common to hear people say that, on hearing themselves, they either did not recognise or did not like their self-echo. It is common, as new audio makers, to feel exposed or vulnerable on hearing ourselves played back. This fades eventually, and our sound reflection becomes as familiar to us as our visual reflection, we recognise the person who echoes back to us, and know its relationship to our self, but we are not fooled into thinking they are the same thing: That echo is our public, external self, our person, and not our private, internal, self. "We are taken out of ourselves through radio, yet paradoxically hurled into our innermost thoughts" (Douglas, 2004, p. 22). It is the person which echoes around us, which we are contrasting with others, hearing our private selves reflected in public, or not. As Street (2017) says, "Listening is the condition in which we seek connections that relate to the concept of self" (p. 94), just as in the echo of our own voices.

Listeners in this study engaged with the radio both when it did and when it did not reflect their sense of themselves. In some cases, this engagement was very literal, calling in or talking back or switching off. In other cases, listeners might 'edit' what they heard or divert their attentions. Douglas (2004) wrote about how listening can provide a sense of feeling at once a part of something and outside it at the same time: Listening "cultivates both a sense of national unity and, at the same time, a conspiratorial sense of subcultural difference, of distance from, even superiority to that national ethos" (p. 23). Douglas is saying that listening provides an opportunity to experiment with identifying as 'in' or 'out', to move between as we negotiate our position, are drawn in or pushed out. Douglas differentiated between listening and hearing, saying "we can passively hear, but we must actively listen" (p. 27). The purpose of this distinction is to note that "[p]assive hearing, which is a kind of automatic processing, rarely becomes intertwined with what the 'I' is thinking or doing; actively listening almost always does" (Douglas, 2004, p. 27). She goes on to say that being able to move between these realms, of hearing and listening, is one of the pleasures of radio. Listeners in this study talk about this shift consistently, suggesting that not all listening is an act of self-making and identity-maintenance, sometimes it is simply 'hearing', but that the pleasure lies in the choice to move between them, with the option to engage the 'I' at their own discretion.

In choosing to move between listening and hearing, listeners in this study demonstrated that sound is a co-creation, only fully realised once it is heard (Street, 2017). The output remained the same but the reception changed, and it is in the reception that the sound is changed. By their ability to create the sound, listeners manage how they engage with self and identity work. As Hendy (2013) wrote, "[t]he 'we-feeling' of radio is vague, shifting, multiple, of course. Like our identities, it's sometimes national, sometimes local, sometimes cultural or ethnic or

political. Collective sensibility is a protean thing" (p. 123). This study finds that listeners manage their own shifting engagement with that very 'we' feeling: The sensation of 'collective sensibility' might be broadcast by the sender and then heard or not by the receiver, an ongoing invitation to co-creation from moment to moment. Listeners in this study did just as Purdy (1991) described helping to "create and shape the essence of the community in the interpretive process of listening" (p. 51).

This study's listeners spoke about the ebb and flow of I and we occurring within a single programme or overtime, noticing that interview and presentation styles evolved or shifted, sometimes resonating and sometimes not. As much as radio stations might want to conceive of their audiences as having a fixed identity (Hendy, 2013), the findings of this study propose that there is no such thing: Listeners in this study were in a constant process of being and becoming. A more accurate description might be that stations are broadcasting to people who identify in this way at this time, with the awareness that, at any particular moment, individuals will shift in and out of this description, which is bound to be incredibly narrow in the scale of possible human identity. They will go on 'sending' a message of collective sensibility to a single, consistent identity, and listeners who meet that identity will 'receive' it, but this collective will shift from moment to moment, from night to day. A protean thing indeed.

Taste, listening, and identity

Taste was the most readily available expression of identity for listeners in this study: Almost immediately, on sitting down with me, listeners spoke of their likes and dislikes. This chimes with Jenkins' (2014) observation that "identification and interests are not easily distinguished. How I identify myself has a bearing on how I define my interests. How I define my interests may encourage me to identify myself in particular ways" (p. 18). It felt comfortable, accessible, to talk of listening in these terms. This study found that listeners used both radio which comforted and affirmed their sense of identity, and things which challenged or extended it. Hendy (2000) wondered whether radio caters to people's existing tastes, or maybe shapes them, since "the boundaries of people's identities are so complex and blurred" (p. 215). For listeners in this study, it was not a case of radio forming tastes but tastes informing listening.

Listeners in this study managed their listening within the taste boundaries they set. Within these boundaries, some listening was to their taste, some was not, and they used both experiences to explore their self and their identity. As Hendy (2000) observed, the options for listening are so many that radio could provide consistent, uninterrupted access to listening which is matched precisely to match our tastes. He wondered whether access to a consistent stream of things we like distorts our notion of identity. Social identity theory, as well as the listeners in this study, make it clear that it is not only in listening to the things we 'like' or

which reflect us that we might find fodder for our identity work: Listening to things not to our taste, listening-out, to broadcasts from the out-group for instance, can also build our sense of our self, and contribute to a feeling of belonging, support and company. Hendy argued that, because radio is so segmented, it is able to offer "a more *precise* reflection of the fragmented communities of modern societies" (p. 214). Even in saying so, he is clear that this is a somewhat Pollyanna view of radio, harking back to ideas about listening as a shared experience, in the face of very few listening options. Lacey (2013a) suggested that increased "personalization [sic], networking and specialization" (p. 15) encourage more 'listening-in', that is, listening to more of the same, rather than 'listening-out' or listening to new, unfamiliar sounds. This line of thinking suggests that radio has the potential to reflect back as many selves as there are audience members, but that by catering to everyone's specific needs, there might be no need to ever encounter anything not exactly calibrated to your satisfaction. Taken with Douglas' (2004) idea of moving in and out of dialogue with the 'I' during listening, the same station might cater to any number of 'I's, as they drift between listening and hearing as and when it suits them.

Time as a boundary in identity work

In terms of the identity work done by listeners in this study, time provides a boundary in the immediate sense and in the longer term. "We continue to listen for voices, both within our own silent sound world, and the incoming messages that place us in Time. These voices may either develop our concept of who we are, or reinforce our preconceptions" (Street, 2017, p. 93). Street is discussing the idea that sound, and voices in particular, are of a time, in a moment. Some participants in this study spoke of time-shifted listening, but the focus of all our conversations was on live broadcast listening. In this medium, certainly, the voice is of a moment. It is tied to a time; 'an afternoon voice', as Beverley says, or 'a nice, gentle voice at night time' as Garry remarks. It was not only the message that placed listeners in time, but the voice itself.

As a longer-term boundary, or marker, time as part of listening functions not merely as a nostalgic exercise, but to "mark, for the listener, the space of his or her body in history" (Crane, 1986, p. 68). Crane (1986) was writing about music presented in chart shows in North America, and how the ubiquity of certain songs presented as 'Golden Oldies' can "mark an era because they have been absorbed to such a large degree into a collective, affectively reflexive, mass memory" (p. 68). This is a function not only of their lyrics, but for their production values also, which mark them out from modern music. It is not only the music that has changed over a lifetime then, but everything that goes into producing and broadcasting it. There is nostalgia at work, certainly, an access to a past self, but by this mechanism listeners are also "en masse,

continually aware of our place within the affective parameters of the present" (Crane, 1986, p. 68). This is the continual process of being and becoming in, through, and over time.

The daily, hourly structures of radio programming "function[s] as a kind of meta-language, a grammar of temporality which draws in the listeners and produces her (economically, as a commodity, and experientially, as a listener)" (Berland, 1990, p. 187) This is the idea of radio marking "industrial time" (Berland, 1990, p. 179), marching the listener on through their busy, industrious day, a foreperson on a production line. Hobson (1980) recorded a similar observation, noting that for women working in the home, switching the radio on in the morning is "the first boundary in the working day. In terms of the 'structurelessness' [sic] of the experience of housework, the time boundaries provided by radio are important in the women's own division of their time" (Hobson, 1980, p. 94). Several participants in this study described reaching for the radio first thing in the morning, almost as though it propelled them into the day, while for others, listening before bedtime was an anathema. As a boundary for identity work, Hobson's writing suggests that the time brackets offered in listening, the breakfast show, the afternoon show, move homebased listeners through their working day to their leisure. Listeners in this study described this in relation to their mothers, though less in relation to themselves. The implication is that industriousness of work in the home is overseen by the broadcaster, supporting subtle shifts in their role during the day.

On this daily or hourly level, according to Berland (1990), listeners are marched through a programme towards advertising, cast backwards and forwards in time, but always towards the next commercial. This is clearly a reflection of commercial radio, but the effect is the same in non-commercial broadcasters who are measured against the same ratings. In this case, programmes might replace advertisements, and the grammar is at the scale of programmes rather than microphone breaks, but the effect is the same: An insistence that, in the very near future, we will provide just what you want, you only need to keep your radio tuned to this station. The past is accessible, the present is in progress, and the future is coming up after the news. Stay tuned.

Night time listening – where time and space collude

Differences between day and night listening, such as those observed by listeners in this study, are well documented elsewhere (Bierig & Dimmick, 1979; Douglas, 2004; Hendy, 2010; Keith, 2001). Hendy (2010) goes so far as to note the effects of "changes in the earth's [sic] ionosphere after sunset" (p. 16) which lets AM signal travel much further by night than day. Brenda talked about her experience of this atmospheric phenomenon and being able to tune into 2UE from Sydney in the evenings. The world is changed, ionically, sonically, and culturally after dark. More generally though, listeners in this study were reporting a shift in themselves

overnight, rather than the radio waves. They wanted to hear different things, but they, themselves, the receivers, were different during night time listening. To lie down in the dark to sleep is to make ourselves vulnerable. The external self, a day time self, is put to bed; the internal self listens alone.

Hendy (2010) wrote that having been displaced by television as the entertainment of choice during that relaxed, post-dinner period in the evening, radio listening became the focus of early mornings, a time-pressured period of activity when attention is short. The conscious, attentive listening which pre-dated television was lost, then, except for amongst late night or overnight listeners. Perhaps it is in night time listening that Douglas' (2004) concurrent "sense of national unity and, at the same time… conspiratorial sense of subcultural difference" (p. 23) has its clearest expression. Yes, we are a mass audience, but we are a small, select mass audience, listening deeply, a community at a knowable scale, rather than an amorphous, national mass.

Night listening, as described in this study, often made reference to feelings of reflection or nostalgia. Night time listening, or listening in the dark, allows a more fluid movement through time (Douglas, 2004) and so through memory, allowing easier access not only to an individual past, but to a collective past (Hendy, 2010). *The Shipping Forecast* (1949–) on BBC Radio 4 demonstrates this in a spectacular way: Each night, just before 1am, the BBC transports millions of listeners around the seascapes of Britain via *The Shipping Forecast* (1949–), a report on maritime conditions around the British isles. This once vital maritime safety service is now utterly redundant in the sense of shipping. Its appeal now lies in nostalgia, both for the broadcast itself and for a time when places could still be unknown. Hendy (2010) wrote, "it is *individuals* who remember in the literal, purely physical sense, it is the *community* which determines what is 'memorable' and how something will be remembered" (p. 224, emphasis retained). The places listed in the shipping forecast will likely never be glimpsed by the forecast listeners. That is hardly the point. Collectively, BBC listeners have determined that the time when this broadcast was an essential service, and the places it commemorates are memorable, and this is how both the time and places will be remembered. Hendy (2010) goes beyond this, suggesting that sound and listening might connect us with pasts beyond our own lifetimes, which could link our sense of identity and belonging to ancestors beyond our physical encounters. The possibility of accessing collective memory through night time listening , whether a group of family [Betty, Den], friends [Naomi, Pat], or a broader collective [Carrie, Bob], is possibly more readily available at night, thanks to a "residual contact with the sublime" (Power & Chandler, 1996, Introduction – Postcards from the Edge) offered by darkness.

Douglas (2004) said that this sight-less listening links to pre-literate cultures. Hendy (2010) noted the way some listeners will listen with their eyes closed or with the lights low on purpose to enhance the listening experience. Perhaps it is our pre-language selves, the selves of gestures, a self without comparison to others, to which un-sighted listening can link us. At night, without the intermediary of the person, unconcerned with the perceptions of others, the self listens in the company of the self. If day time listening creates a kind of "intimate public" (Loviglio, 2005, p. xvii) in which to test our ideas in the company of others, listening in the dark "offers a window to invisible worlds" (Hendy, 2010, p. 228) where we might imagine ourselves in the company of the past. There is company for our public person by day and company for our private self by night.

Space

Radio is variously tasked with forming a national identity and being an intimate medium. Listeners in this study spoke of wanting global connections and local news. This contradiction in the scale of its functions has not gone unnoticed. Berland (1990) talked about radio considering itself to be a local mass media, able to make itself seem local "without arising from or contributing to the continuity of local cultures" (p. 186). She is specifically talking about music radio formats, discussing the centralised global nature of music recording and the decentralised global nature of music dissemination. Similarly, Howard Newby expressed the function of the BBC Local Radio network, saying

> The talk helps to define their relationship to one another and make each more aware of the nature of the particular community in which they live … without this grassroots radio, the national networks' rapport with most of the population would be impaired. (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1977, p. 2)

The suggestion here is that the local identity informs the national identity, but there is no suggestion that the national has anything to offer back to the local. Participants in this study described the interplay between local and national. Beverley and Pat, both RNZ listeners, described experiencing transport or traffic conditions local to them which were not reflected in their listening. Beverely was aware she might have gotten this information on a local station; Pat thought it odd not to hear this reported on the national station. Betty enjoyed hearing radio which reminded her of living in Samoa. Pat and Ruth both remarked that even when they travelled to the other end of the country they could get the same content. Ruth listened to Pacific news and recalled sailing in those areas. The idea that radio can give the impression of being local without contributing in those places is absolutely reflected in these experiences.

Berland (1990) linked radio, space, and isolation by looking at communications in the broadest possible terms, taking in communicative infrastructure such as roads, public spaces and private listening devices. Radio as a media, she argued, binds spaces together, creating centres where

broadcasts are created and peripheries at the farthest reaches of reception. In doing so, radio not only moves *through* spaces, it produces or at least defines them. Radio brings together communities which are otherwise fractured by their physical spatial conditions and poor urban planning (Berland, 1984). Berland (1984) suggested that, though we are not really listening, we stay tuned to radio

> to keep from being depressed or isolated, to feel connected to something, to enfold ourselves in its envelope of pleasure, information, power; while the absence of any spontaneous or innovative event, or of any specific (vs. [sic] abstract) intimacy, contributes ultimately precisely to this depression, which after all is merely a sideways description of powerlessness, of being prevented in various ways from achieving anything spontaneous or innovative, of having or living a new idea. (p. 33)

Because we are organising society in ways which isolate and individuate us, we need the radio, which, paradoxically, enables or supports this fragmentary social arrangement. Radio profits from making us feel connected, at the same time as being an invaluable tool for allowing us to be driven apart, from the centre to the periphery. Radio supports the conditions which make it indispensable, and we look to it for a salve from those same conditions.

Space, listening, and company

What creates the sense of company in listening is a sense of seeing a self in the context of others. There was a time when this would have only been possible in the presence of others, whether that context was mediated or physical. For participants in this study, that contextualising work was possible within their own homes, but this is a relatively new arrangement. The relationship between space, radio listening, and company changed dramatically when radios shifted from being a shared community resource enjoyed in public to being enclosed in our domestic spaces. Moores (1988) wrote of this shift "from the collective occupation of exterior space towards a family grouping which had withdrawn to interior space" (p. 25). The very public discourse taking place in radio broadcasts now issues forth from the dresser or the bench or the mantelpiece, rather than the lectern, stage, or pulpit. The corollary to this is that rather than reacting to these public utterances in public, it was now possible, even necessary, to do so in private. Upon entering the home, the "unruly guest" (Johnson, 1981, p. 12), that is radio, could "create a non-public social space" (Tacchi, 1998, p. 27). For listeners in later life, this private public space might have a particular significance since typically, and for a number of reasons, older people withdraw from public spaces as they age (Wanka, 2018). Radio brings that public space to them. Here it is not that radio isolates us, but it might owe a debt to those conditions which keep us indoors.

Berland (1990) wrote that "social processes cannot be understood outside of space. If spatial and social process are indistinguishable, then the production of audience is inseparable from

the production of spatial relationships" (p. 186). We have the image of the middle-class man of the 1930s, sitting in his living room with his headphones on (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991), sonically isolated from the adoring family surrounding him who eagerly await this second-hand dispatch from the wireless. This new, nation-building device sets him apart from his closest relationships. Keightley (1996) wrote about hi-fi equipment in the 1950s and how it "may have been used by white middle-class men during the period as a means of reclaiming domestic space from their spouses" (p. 151). The ways we use sound to create domestic spaces is relevant to the company we have or seek in those spaces and has, previously at least, varied for men and women.

Study participants who shared domestic spaces described negotiating sound in those spaces, with Bob commenting that 'I'm malleable – if she wants to listen to something I'm quite happy to have that … That's the only way to be. Can't have 62 years of marriage without being malleable'. It is reasonable to consider that domestic spaces and how we occupy them has changed considerably since the 1950s. Certainly, Bob's willingness to negotiate domestic listening spaces is a far cry from the idea that he is reclaiming the space. Faye's experience of sharing domestic listening spaces, and the care and attention shown to her by her husband in arranging her listening devices demonstrates a switch from his company in the day to the company of others overnight. For Faye, in wearing headphones, the intention is not to exclude her husband or to keep her listening private, but to allow them both to use the space in a way that meets each of their needs in the moment.

Tacchi (2009) connected radio listening, mood, and the self in domestic spaces. While the idea of home is one of "a space of refuge, comfort and support" (Wilkinson, 2014, p. 2456), recent geographies of the home having begun to challenge this idea, bringing to light the understanding that home can easily offer none of these positive attributes and many, many negative and isolating alternatives (Wilkinson, 2014). Prior to the entry of radio into this space, women at home used telephone technology both to speak with one another, and simply listen to others speaking amongst themselves (Martin, 2012). Tacchi is concerned not with the grand, nameable emotions of joy or anger, but with emotions in the mundane form, the "everyday, affective dimensions to people's lives" (p. 175).

Listeners in this study described the ongoing work of contextualising themselves, and talked about managing their mood within their domestic spaces using radio listening [Pat, Brenda, Garry]. It was this sense of listening to manage the emotions connected to new motherhood which so influenced this study. For the listeners in this study today, radio supports this mood management in the routine and rhythms it can provide. "In a world where emotional security and balance are highly desired, and yet severely challenged, radio sound can be understood to

provide one of the links between social life and reflexive self" (Tacchi, 2009, p. 181). One of the ways it does this is by offering a routine, a "rhythm for the everyday" (Tacchi, 2009, p. 181). In the ongoing project of maintaining a domestic equilibrium, radio offers temporal stability. "In the domestic arena in Britain, isolation, loneliness and depression are potential threats to one's social self; the self is managed, in part, by the use of sound and can, in some cases, be evoked by that same sound" (Tacchi, 2009, p. 181).

Thompson (1995) observed that "the process of self-formation is increasingly nourished by mediated symbolic materials, greatly expanding the range of options available to individuals and loosening– without destroying– the connection between self-formation and shared local" (p. 207). This is exactly the way Carrie described using the radio, not that it replaced her community in anyway, but that it told her more about her community than she could know otherwise, or in a more timely fashion than she might otherwise discover it. It was commonly understood among participants in this study that, if for some reason, people were limited in their community engagement, the radio would be a substitute. This feeling of connection, even the potential for this connection not yet realised, offers a sense of company, or the potential of company, should you decide to draw on it. Radio listening creates spaces, domestic, local, and national, and helps connect people to and within them.

Conclusions

This study illustrated that older listeners in Aotearoa New Zealand have been becoming alongside radio for most of each of their lives, and that they continue to do so. For these listeners, radio supports their sense of self, as well as their sense of identity and, in doing so, can be experienced as company. Radio and its audience are in a mutual process of becoming, with neither identity fixed or final: Later life listeners in Aotearoa New Zealand and radio in Aotearoa New Zealand are contemporaries, in a way, and continue to shape one another in a symbiotic process. Listeners exercise their agency in selecting the content they engage with in continuing to develop and maintain their self and identity. At present, older listeners are supported in this work by the radio available to them, in terms of both the content and the devices. At least one study participant described having given up on having a television when the technology moved beyond her comfort zone. Others were clear that they were willing to adapt to changes in radio delivery, but that was certainly not universal. As listeners age out of the regularly reported data, there is a risk that this symbiosis will be upset, with listeners continuing to use the radio resources they have in their identity work where possible, but with radio no longer benefiting from their collective, measurable input.

It is not possible to predict whether the mechanisms by which today's older listeners construct company through listening will be available to the older listeners of tomorrow. It is possible to

say from this study's findings, that, since radio in Aotearoa New Zealand is itself in a perpetual state of becoming, it is in a good position to continue to grow alongside its present audiences that they too may enjoy these shared, companionable experiences in later life. In order to do that, radio in Aotearoa New Zealand must remain supple and in dialogue with its audiences, provide references for them through each life stage that they may, together, draw on these later.

This research demonstrated that there is an audience of engaged, active listeners who value and can critique broadcasting practice and development. Including this age group in regularly reported listener data would go some way to reflecting their needs and experiences as the industry continues to develop. Since even public radio in Aotearoa New Zealand continues to gauge itself against the standards set by commercial radio, it is relevant to point out that an entire swathe of the listening audience is missing from their official, regularly reported data. The mutual becoming enjoyed to date by older listeners and radio in Aotearoa New Zealand is at risk if these listeners are no longer recognisable in the data which drives decisions around broadcasting policy and practice. There remain broader questions, however, as to the potential to realise any social value from services which measure their success using metrics which position listeners as consumers. If what lies at the heart of loneliness is alienation rooted in neo-liberal social and political life (Hertz, 2020), there is an inherent flaw in seeking company in the outputs of an industry in which audiences are most valuable as consumers.

The increasing fragmentation of radio and the proliferation of listening options might increase the likelihood that a listener will find something which resonates with their 'I' as and when they seek it out. Thompson (1995) wrote that "with the development of modern societies, the process of self-formation becomes more reflexive and open-ended, in the sense that individuals fall back increasingly on their own resources to construct a coherent identity for themselves" (p. 207). Radio is a resource with which to construct just such a coherent identity. Having a greater variety of radio resources with which to do that means more listeners might access the sensation of being in the 'in-group' through listening, and might then find company through this identity-supporting resource.

Fragmentation is a double-edged sword, offering at once opportunities for everyone to see themselves reflected but also the inherent division implied in each of us ensconced in our own discrete groups. The cohesion of a national identity once promised by radio has exclusionary potential since an entirely homogeneous society is no more attractive than an entirely fractured one. The challenge then, in terms of the connective possibilities of radio, is not to see fragmentation and cohesion as a binary, but as a continuum. Each listener needs an opportunity to hear themselves reflected and the opportunity to see themselves in context,

preferably in a context broader than their own in-group. The drive then is not for homogeneity but an inclusive, welcoming centre, well connected to its peripheries, just as Newby (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1977) and Berland (1990) have described.

Broadcast infrastructure is a public utility. Radio frequencies are a public utility which can be deployed howsoever the state decides. This research has implications for how this public utility might be used in service to alleviate or avoid experiences of loneliness. At present, the vast majority of radio frequencies are put to commercial use. Increasingly, evidence suggests that neo-liberalism is linked to loneliness (Barreto et al., 2021; Becker et al., 2021; Hertz, 2020). Employing vast public utilities to neo-liberal ends is an unnecessary alliance. Radio has connective properties inherent in the technology. As shown in this study, radio listening can contribute to people's sense of self and social identity. This state owned enterprise can be employed in service to *The Social Cure* (Jetten et al., 2012), as a suite of tools, 'upstream' from the known, and potentially fatal consequences of loneliness (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). In this next iteration of radio's becoming, let it be to this end.

Reflecting on the purpose of the research

The purpose of this research was to understand how older radio listeners experience the radio as company. It has realised this purpose in that it offers a theory explaining the processes at work in producing this experience. Unexpectedly, it has also generated a theory of the interplay between radio listening, identity, and company.

The data in this study offer rich insights into the listening habits of listeners in Aotearoa New Zealand aged 75+ years. It remains the case that this audience is unrepresented in the regularly reported publicly available listener data produced for commercial and public outlets. They need no longer been unheard: Listeners in this study have described a rich, varied, highly engaged listening life. They continue to become themselves, each with the support of the other, in the company of one another, whether this is officially noted or not. Perhaps, having outgrown the commodifiable listening age bracket, older listeners have developed a relationship with the radio beyond this transactional mode to something more reciprocal. The problem of measurement remains, however, since it is by quantifiable metrics that broadcasting policy decisions are made, not only for public broadcasters, but commercial ones too. The visibility afforded by an appearance in the ratings creates an incentive to serve that audience. It is difficult to make the case for the needs of an audience you cannot see or hear, even if that lack of visibility can be explained by your having shut your eyes and ears.

This research was a reaction to the outrageous fact that the lives of people in some of the wealthiest nations on Earth are at risk for want of society. Feelings of company are incredibly valuable; without the company we desire we become lonely. Loneliness is a wholly negative

experience with life-limiting and potentially deadly consequences for individuals (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010) and democratic societies (Arendt, 1958). What this research contributes is evidence for the process by which older radio listeners in Aotearoa New Zealand experience company in radio listening. For these listeners, radio provides a companion with which to undertake identity work, and through which to appreciate their sense of social identity. Radio is a powerful tool in mitigating the conditions which give rise to loneliness.

New knowledge

It is not new to link radio listening to identity. Nor is it new to link identity to loneliness. What is new in the findings and theory offered by this research is an understanding of how these processes work together such that radio listening may be experienced as company. Previous studies (Domenget, 2003 in France; Inthorn, 2020 in Britain and Germany; Krause, 2020 in Australia) have considered how radio listening accompanies older listeners in their daily lives. The contribution to new knowledge offered by this research is in revealing the active, internal processes undertaken by older listeners to achieve this sense of company.

Other studies (e.g., Travers & Bartlett, 2011) have tried to harness the connective power of radio to alleviate loneliness in older people using specific programming. This study is not attempting to say that radio listening alleviated loneliness in participants or that there is a formula for radio programming that might alleviate or ameliorate loneliness in listeners. This study theorises that there is a process by which older radio listeners can experience the radio as company, whereby they are supported by radio listening to undertake identity work, and then to see their identity in context.

The new knowledge offered by this study suggests that being able to select the content for themselves (having power and control) and being able to use this content to access past selves, are important to being able to maintain a concept of self, in order to experience listening as company. This study also makes the case that it is important that listeners can establish and use boundaries such as taste, time, and space to manage this identity work in the creation of company through listening.

Novel methods

This study contributes to novel methods in grounded theory research. It is new to explore the listening relationship in the visual ways offered in this study. Histories of listening, particularly those concerned with the technical aspects of listening, very often feature illustrations of radios, others still advertisements for radios or radio programmes. No other grounded theory study of radio listening includes contemporaneous word and image data on the topic. These

visual data and their analysis offer a contribution to grounded theory methodology where image data is seldom used, despite the methodological support for its inclusion.

Study strengths

This research has been founded on reciprocity. Its strengths lie in its commitment to addressing power and assumptions, and imbuing an ethic of care in the design and undertaking of the work. At no stage did I approach this study as though it was a study *of* or *on* older listeners; this was and always has been a study *with* older listeners. I bring to the table absolutely no experience of radio listening for company in later life. I have relied completely on study participants to provide insights into that specific experience. My contribution lies in asking the questions and applying my skills to analyse their responses. A strength of this study then lies in the methodological requirements of grounded theory to fully explore the research instrument before it is put to use, and then to be keenly aware of where its peculiarities come into play. It is reciprocal.

This reciprocity has manifest throughout, in the exchange of jam and jamming knowledge, but in less blunt ways too: In exchange for approaching participants with dignity and care, they have placed their trust in me. Evidence of this trust is seen in my having been granted access to intimate, private spaces both physical and emotional.

Participants in this study were made aware of their power and given opportunities to exercise that power. Participants set meeting times, asked questions, directed my photography, reviewed summaries of our conversations and made corrections and, in some cases, contributed additional materials. Very often during our research conversations participants remarked that they were thinking about things for the first time. They became researchers too, analysing their own experiences anew and giving voice to new knowledge as part of the research process. The generosity and perspicacity of the study participants is surely one of its strengths.

The use of visual data in this study of an aural medium brings to light some of the materiality of listening and adds to the discussion of the relationship between listening and space-making. Very often, research into listening leans into the ethereal qualities of the disembodied radio listening experience. These images remind us that there is a material, tactile, physical element to radio listening too, and that this is part of the experience.

As a new grounded theory researcher, I found that many of the methodological considerations were very well explicated in existing texts. The means by which to go about these early stages of establishing a study were very clear. What I found less explicitly described were the machinations of the very manual, laborious, slow work of moving data around and reshaping

it. A strength of this work is in the disclosure of the procedural elements of theory-building. The use of diagrams in the analysis and presentation of that analysis illuminate what might otherwise be opaque processes. Displaying these diagrams adds to the validity of the work. For her outstanding contribution in this regard I owe a debt to O'Callaghan (2016) who did similarly in her own thesis and gave me the courage to do so here.

Study limitations

This study has achieved its purpose and objectives. It is not, however, without limitations. While it was never the objective of this study to be representative of the population, neither was it the intention for it to be confined to any one demographic. As it happens, the study attracted predominantly Pākeha women.

Though the study was equally open to men, and indeed undertook theoretical sampling of men, men are under-represented in this study. There are many possible explanations for this, not least that all members of the consultation group who contributed to the design of the study were women. This consultation led me to focus on company, rather than loneliness. Of the men who did participate, two were reluctant to identify the radio as company during our research conversation. It is possible that, had I consulted a group of men, or a group of mixed genders in the beginning, my study design may have been more attractive to male participants.

There was a cultural gap between study participants and myself: I come to this research as an immigrant. In research conversations, participants shared memories of cultural icons or historical events which had no meaning to me because of this remove. I am certain that this changed the tenor of some exchanges. There is also an age gap between participants and myself. I cannot relate first-hand to the experience of retirement or reflecting on career, or the loss of a parent or spouse. I saw the value of relating to experiences in young adulthood or early motherhood, and wonder what value might be gleaned by an older person undertaking this research with their peers.

The period of data creating bridged a monumental social and cultural event in the COVID-19 pandemic. Study participants did not reflect that this had changed their listening, but it is undeniable that the world had changed around them. Certainly my experience as a researcher felt changed by the break; I found myself more anxious to meet people quickly, and more aware of the generosity and intimacy inherent in visiting a stranger in their home. It is impossible to say how the study might have been different without this seismic interruption.

Implications

The relationship between media and the formation and practice of selfhood is a pressing concern. The participants in this study were 'radio natives', raised in the early days of radio's social and domestic ubiquity, in the same way we now talk about 'digital natives', for whom digital and social media have held that same position. This study has intentionally focused on the positive outcomes of this intimate, lifelong relationship. It is not difficult, however, to imagine alternatives: Lifelong alienating experiences, for instance. For all the fragmentation offered by radio, with the implied promise that there would be something for everyone, broadening the scope of who might then see themselves and their interests reflected in the media, new and digital media, offers vastly most granular possibilities. As with radio, there are risks associated with such fractured media consumption and communities.

What participants in this study demonstrated, however, was that it was not only in listening to things which were to their tastes, but in listening to things which were not to their tastes, that proved valuable. It is true that participants, generally, had a limited listening repertoire, but within that programming they were liable to encounter things they did not like. They might, at that time, move away from the radio, or 'edit' the sound, but even if their mode of listening changed, they were exposed to ideas or opinions with which they might disagree. Digital media, and social media in particular, is designed to edit those for us, meaning we are, less and less, exposed to things with which we disagree or which challenge the ideas we hold about ourselves and those around us.

At the time of preparing this thesis, Aotearoa New Zealand has done two things to which ideas raised in this thesis about media and identity might usefully contribute: 1) undertaken to redesign its public media offering, and 2) established The Centre of Research Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism He Whenua Taurikura. This research centre is part of a response to an act of domestic terrorism visited on Aotearoa New Zealand in March 2019. The perpetrator of this violence was radicalised and sought infamy in digital and social media spaces. Identity is shaped by and reflected in the media with which we surround ourselves. This research suggests that this media might provide us with company in our later life. There is other evidence which suggests it might radicalise us to despicable acts of violence. This research outlines a theory for reaching one of those outcomes. It is relevant to consider that the same mechanisms by which we achieve a positive social identity alongside and through the media of our choice might also be an avenue to other, less positive outcomes.

For radio

The study findings imply that there is value in addressing the macro-social or upstream factors enabling, exacerbating, or encouraging loneliness and a lack of social connection among older people, and making changes at a population-level. Radio policy and radio production have a role to play in this remedy: To address this lack of connection, the findings of this study imply that those with responsibility for using and managing the public utility, that is radio frequencies, must look at the ways we are connecting to see which of those serve us and which do not. It is also timely to consider which of our current media and connective technologies could serve us better if we could make space for new actors with more inclusive agendas. In order to enjoy that 'we' feeling (Hendy, 2013), radio must cater to us as a collective of individuals, it must allow us to imagine our community and our own place in it, shifting us from a 'one' to a 'many'. The global population is ageing; people in the oldest ages are at risk of loneliness and isolation. Hilmes (2012) noted that, under certain conditions, radio listening can allow us the feeling of participating in 'mass ceremony', or sharing experiences with neighbours near and far. At present, however, in the current imagining of older listeners as an amorphous, indistinguishable mass, the conditions Hilmes described are unlikely to be met or, at best, could be improved upon.

"Sound exists not only because it is created, but because it is heard" (Street, 2017, p. 3). It is essential that those creating the sounds remain accountable to those hearing them, serving the interests of the hearer, and not primarily the creator. The relationship between the state (the frequency), the technology (which has no feelings on the matter), the sender (the broadcaster), and the receiver (the audience) can indeed give rise to an 'imagined community' at the point of reception, the sense that the receiver is part of something else. That imagining is predicated towards togetherness, something shared. If the technology is to be put to some use in the sense of reducing the risk of loneliness, the actors up the chain, that is, the sender and the state, need to focus on a sense of something shared, rather than something commodified. Radio in Aotearoa New Zealand is not fixed, but evolving, alongside the nation still. The proposed changes to public broadcasting are an opportunity to critically assess the role and function of public broadcasting and strive for a service that supports listeners, and potential listeners, without reference to exploitative metrics or habits.

For older listeners

The implications for older listeners arising from this study perhaps relate less to the older listeners of today and more to the older listeners of tomorrow. The older listeners in this study were pleased with the radio available to them, though almost all of them suggested improvements when asked. Aotearoa New Zealand has two nation-wide strategies around

supporting people to live well in later life: *Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua 2019 to 2034* (The Office for Seniors, 2019) and the *Healthy Ageing Strategy* 2016 (Associate Minister for Health, 2016). The findings of this study imply that broadcast radio can support meeting the strategic goals set out in these documents, specifically with regard to inclusion, participation, and contribution. There is a clear and present danger to today's older listeners that the current provision will not be maintained in the forthcoming scheduled changes to public broadcasting. Depending on the scale and breadth of these changes, this may compromise the attributes older listeners currently rely on to undertake their identity work and maintenance. In order to preserve this capacity in any new provision, the interests of older listeners, a growing demographic, need to be protected in the establishment of this new entity. It seems that older listeners themselves will need to agitate for these provisions and protections. The lack of available data on their listening habits at present may make this difficult.

The implications of this research for the older listeners of tomorrow are much broader in nature. Today's older listeners create company from radio listening because radio listening is part of their sense of identity, and supports them to perform identity maintenance and development in an ongoing way. The capacity for radio to do this is predicated on a lifetime of becoming within earshot of the radio. In order that the older listeners of tomorrow be able to realise this function of radio listening, radio needs to remain present, relevant, and consistently so throughout their lives, beginning with forming early listening memories and carrying on over the life course. This is not to say that radio provision should remain unchanged, rather that if tomorrow's older listeners are to be able to realise the same benefits of radio listening as the older listeners of today, radio needs to be in a perpetual state of becoming and adaptation alongside them.

This research found that older radio listeners are very well aware of the structures that surround their listening experiences and are in an excellent position to contribute to their maintenance and development. The barrier to their doing so at this point is that they have not been asked. While data on listening among older people remains uncollected there will be little on which to base decisions about how best to serve this audience. The same thing which makes us 'old', excludes us from radio audience data, and may be a key driver for loneliness: The requirement that older people are either economically productive or at the very least, compete in a marketplace.

For loneliness alleviation, prevention and research

Listeners in this study experienced company as a function of two, linked processes, both of which they managed themselves. Research into social identity models and loneliness is already

highlighting that maintaining social identity is a protective factor in avoiding experiences of loneliness. This research offers a means by which to understand how older listeners achieve this through radio listening. There are any number of media through which audiences seek connection and companionship which may benefit from a similar analysis.

For grounded theorists

The integration of images as data into the grounded theory methods used in this study implies that there is greater scope for the use of image data in grounded theory research than is currently being utilised. Grounded theory began as a means by which to enquire into the world around us with rigour but without the positivist epistemological and ontological constraints which dominated research at the time. It has, and will hopefully continue, to evolve, finding new spaces to explore and new ways to support enquiry which challenge prevailing research orthodoxy. Word data are rich and nuanced and require little in the way of equipment to create and analyse. In terms of qualitative research, however, it is very much the prevailing orthodoxy. Image data remain on the fringes of current grounded theory methods. Though this project relied on an old technology, that is film and a camera, very many researchers today walk around with entirely adequate image gathering tools in their pockets. This project implies that grounded theory methodology can support the use of image data which can prompt rich, insightful analysis using grounded theory methods.

Summary – A grounded theory of radio listening as company among older listeners

This research has produced a theory of listening as company among older listeners:

> Radio listening creates an experience of company for older listeners by supporting a knowledge of self and an appreciation of self in context. Through radio listening, older listeners are able to challenge, comfort, extend, and affirm their self-identity within the boundaries of taste, time, and space.

The listening experiences of older listeners are predicated on a lifetime of listening, in which radio has supported their identity work and maintenance through various moments of acute and routine identity shift. Older listeners use time, space, and taste as boundaries to this identity work, meaning they retain control over and manage this process.

Radio and broadcasting infrastructure is a public utility with the potential to support listeners to create company. At a time when our understanding of loneliness is both personally and academically burgeoning, this tool has great potential to support communities. Understanding how older people are using the technology at their disposal to create the social contact they want has huge potential as our means of communication diversify and approach a second century of broadcast radio in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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Legislation

Broadcasting Act 1989
Radio New Zealand Amendment Act 2016
Wireless Telegraphy Act 1903

Participant Interviews

Faye, 4 December 2019, Waikato
Naomi, 12 December 2019, Auckland
Bob, 18 December 2019, Waikato
Jan, 21 December 2019, Waikato
Betty, 23 January 2020, Auckland
Pat, 24 January 2020, Auckland
Brenda, 31 January 2020, Auckland
Carrie, 27 February 2020, Waikato
Beverley, 12 March 2020, Auckland
Graeme, 16 December 2020, Waikato
Ruth, 17 December 2020, Waikato
Garry, 18 December 2020, Waikato
Jo, 17 March 2021, Waikato
Den, 28 April 2021, Waikato
Anne, 20 May 2021, Waikato

Appendix A – AUT Ethics Committee (AUTEC) Approval

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

19 August 2019

Matt Moltgaard
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Matt

Ethics Application: **19/267 In good company: Constructing company through radio listening**

I wish to advise you that the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) has approved your ethics application at its meeting of 12 August 2019.

This approval is for three years, expiring 12 August 2022.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Inclusion in the Information Sheet of the follows:
    a. The AUT logo;
    b. A section on risks as per section I.1.2;
    c. Advice that participants can review transcripts of interview;
    d. In the costs section approximate time participants will be required to give.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: amber.hammill@aut.ac.nz; Valerie Wright-St Clair

Appendix B – Mātuaranga Māori Committee Feedback

School of Clinical Sciences
Mātauranga Māori Committee

Verification of Māori Consultation

This document provides verification that the research project named below was discussed with the School of Clinical Sciences Mātauranga Māori Committee, Auckland University of Technology. Specific comments and recommendations are indicated below.

Title of project: Listening Alone: Constructing company through radio listening		
Research Team members and affiliations:		**Meeting Date:** 05/06/19
Discussion Areas	**Discussed**	**Comments/ Recommendations (see next page)**
Whakapapa: Relationships		
Researcher experience in field	X	C1, R3
Consultation with local stakeholders	X	C5
Consenting process		
Clarity of data usage	X	C7
Dissemination of findings		
Benefits to participants	X	C1
Tika: Validity of the research		
Clear purpose of project	X	C1
Relevance to Māori	X	C4, R4
Likely outcome for participants, communities, other stakeholders	X	R3
Participant recruitment methods	X	C3, R2
Māori involvement in project (participants, researchers, etc.)	X	C2, R1
Manaakitanga: Responsibility and respect		
Participants' access to appropriate advice		
Participants treated with dignity and respect	X	C6, C8
Privacy and confidentiality		
Whānau support	X	
Transparency of research process	X	C8
Mana tangata: Power & Authority		
Reciprocity (acknowledgements, compensation, gifts)		
Risks of participation identified		
Ownership of outcomes		

Informed consent process	X	

Comments from applicant/s

1.	This research brings Amber's personal and professional experiences of radio and her experience of working with socially isolated people in the community together. She is interested in exploring how these things connect, i.e., how the function of radio as a service and the experience of disconnect, isolation, and loneliness intersect, and specifically the role that radio has in helping people feel connected.
2.	The focus on >75 year old people is driven by the fact that this sub-group are not reflected in commercial radio figures in NZ, rendering them somewhat invisible.
3.	Amber is based in the Waikato and is open to recruiting people across that geographical region so long as she can get there and back in a day.
4.	It is anticipated that research will involve up to 30 people, of which it is hoped n=3-6 will be Māori.
5.	Amber has already undertaken consultation into some aspects of language (e.g. "radio listener"), as well perceptions of loneliness within one's own age group. This has informed her proposed approach.
6.	It was acknowledged that the topic of loneliness may have stigma attached to it. This has been formative to the framing used in the current study re: focusing on radio as 'company' rather than an explicit focus on loneliness per se.
7.	Photography will be used to capture the participants radio in context (radio by the favourite chair, etc.) given this is potentially formative as a symbol of their relationship with the radio.
8.	Amber indicated that feminism is inherent to her worldview and so is necessarily a lens that she brings to this research. This does not necessarily mean that 'feminism' will be explicit for participants. Rather, it has helped to articulate her position as a researcher, and related implications with respect to her research approach (e.g. prioritising dialogue and transparency, being aware of power in the conversations, etc.)

Recommendations made by Committee

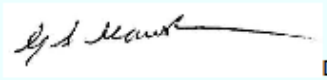
The committee would like to thank you for your genuine and thoughtful engagement with this process.

1.	While the context for the decision to include people >75 years old was helpful, it was noted that this has the potential to limit Māori involvement in the study (given shorter life expectancy, particularly for men). The committee suggest a

	lower age band for Māori to increase the likelihood that their perspectives are captured in this research.
2.	The committee were keen that some consideration be given to recruitment opportunities that would increase the likelihood of Māori involvement in the research. For example, Whānau Ora services, Tainui Iwi and Radio Tuinui may be good avenues for recruitment. Tammi (committee member) has a sister-in-law working in Māori Research Centre at the University of Waikato – she may be able to recommend some local connections.
3.	The committee highlighted the value of engaging some cultural support for Amber. This would be helpful in: a) framing the research in a language that would resonate for Māori, b) helping you to navigate tikanga when visiting Māori whānau, and c) supporting interpretation of culturally relevant findings. There may be an opportunity to engage Māori students in the work to provide that support.
4.	There was some discussion about the possibility that a feminist lens which draws on western notions of feminism may risk making assumptions about the role that wahine play within Te Ao Māori. The committee urge Amber to remain reflexive about this through the course of the research.

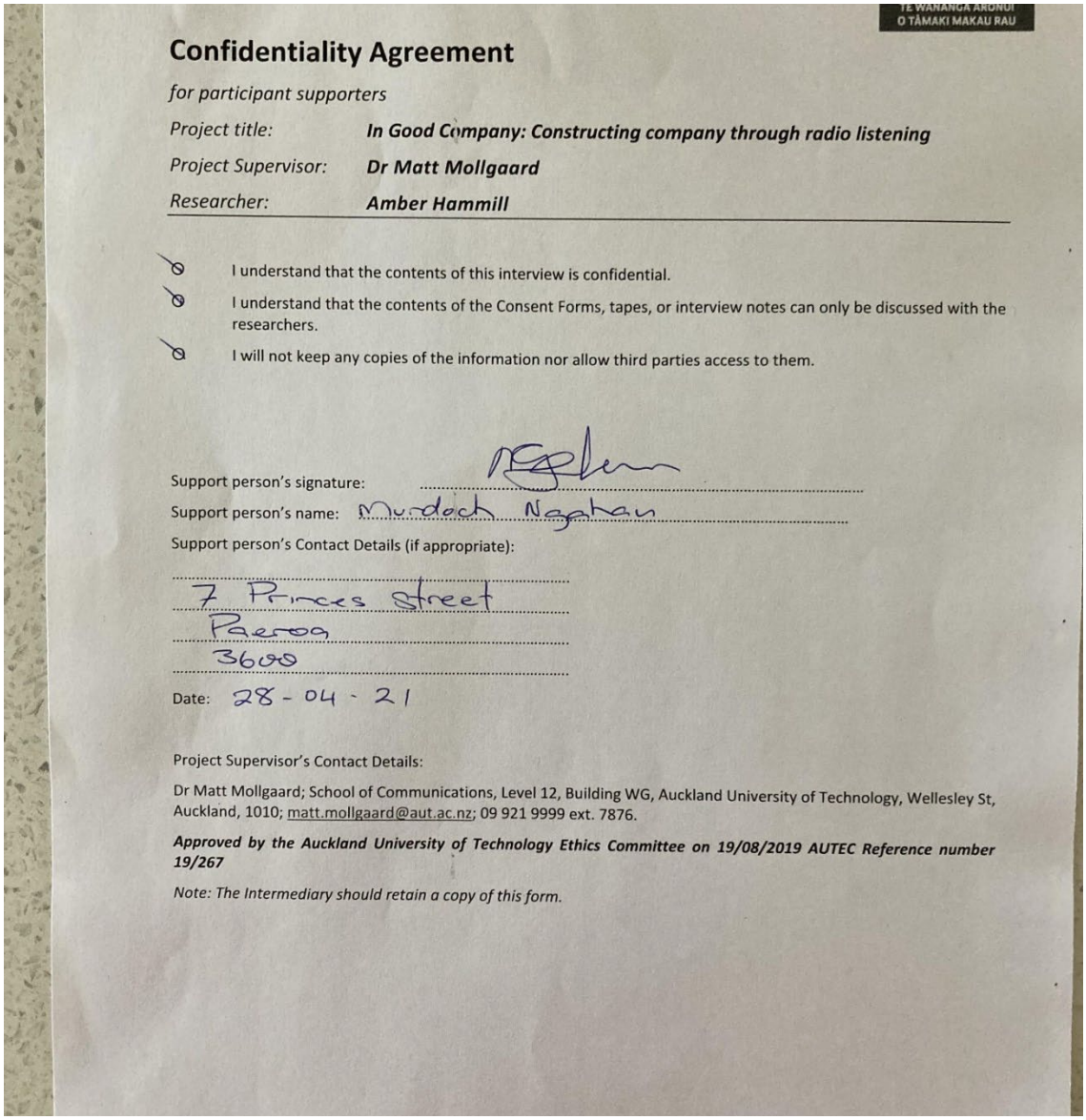
Please contact Nicola Kayes at nkayes@aut.ac.nz if you have any questions about this feedback.

You may be contacted in 12 months' time for feedback about the process and the usefulness of these comments and recommendations to your project.

Signature:  Date: 10/06/2019

Grant Mawston
Mātauranga Māori Consultation Committee

Appendix C – Confidentiality Agreements



TE WĀNANGA AROHĀ O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Confidentiality Agreement

for participant supporters

Project title: ***In Good Company: Constructing company through radio listening***

Project Supervisor: ***Dr Matt Mollgaard***

Researcher: ***Amber Hammill***

- ✓ I understand that the contents of this interview is confidential.
- ✓ I understand that the contents of the Consent Forms, tapes, or interview notes can only be discussed with the researchers.
- ✓ I will not keep any copies of the information nor allow third parties access to them.

Support person's signature: .....

Support person's name: Murdoch Nathan

Support person's Contact Details (if appropriate):

7 Princes Street
Paeroa
3600

Date: 28 - 04 - 21

Project Supervisor's Contact Details:

Dr Matt Mollgaard; School of Communications, Level 12, Building WG, Auckland University of Technology, Wellesley St, Auckland, 1010; matt.mollgaard@aut.ac.nz; 09 921 9999 ext. 7876.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 19/08/2019 AUTEC Reference number 19/267

Note: The Intermediary should retain a copy of this form.

Confidentiality Agreement

for designer

Project title: ***In Good Company: Constructing company through radio listening***

Project Supervisor: ***Dr Matt Mollgaard***

Researcher: ***Amber Hammill***

☑ I understand that the material provided is confidential.

☑ I understand that the contents of the Consent Forms, tapes, or interview notes can only be discussed with the researchers.

☑ I will not keep any copies of the information nor allow third parties access to them.

Designer's signature: ....

Designer's name: .....Edwina Whale.....

Designer's Contact Details (if appropriate):

7 TAYLOR HOUSE.....

22c SUTHERLAND ROAD.....

LONDON.....

E176SS.....

Date: 15.06.2022

Project Supervisor's Contact Details:

Dr Matt Mollgaard; School of Communications, Level 12, Building WG, Auckland University of Technology, Wellesley St, Auckland, 1010; matt.mollgaard@aut.ac.nz; 09 921 9999 ext. 7876.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 19/08/2019 AUTEC Reference number 19/267

Note: The Intermediary should retain a copy of this form.

Confidentiality Agreement

For the proofreader

Project title: *In Good Company: Constructing company through radio listening*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Matt Mollgaard*

Researcher: *Amber Hammill*

- v I understand that all the material I will be asked to proofread is confidential.
- v I will not keep any copies of the information nor allow third parties access to them.

Proofreader's signature: .....

Proofreader's name: .....Shoba Nayar.....

Proofreader's Contact Details (if appropriate):

e-mail: snayar19@gmail.com.....

.....

.....

.....

Date: 6 July 2022

Project Supervisor's Contact Details:

Dr Matt Mollgaard; School of Communications, Level 12, Building WG, Auckland University of Technology, Wellesley St, Auckland, 1010; matt.mollgaard@aut.ac.nz; 09 921 9999 ext. 7876.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 19/08/2019 AUTEC Reference number 19/267

Note: Please retain a copy of this form.

Appendix D – Participant Information Sheet

In Good Company: Constructing company through radio listening

Participant Information Sheet

You are invited to take part in a research project investigating how older listeners use the radio for company. The project is being carried out by Amber Hammill, a PhD candidate in the School of Communications at Auckland University of Technology, under the supervision of Dr Matt Mollgaard and Professor Valerie Wright-St Clair.

Please read this document carefully to help you decide whether you would like to participate.

The project

In radio studies research, it's common for people to say they use the radio for company, but we don't have a very good idea of how this works. People have attempted and evaluated different ways of intervening to alleviate loneliness and keep people socially connected, but so far, very few studies have examined the potential for and ways in which the radio is used for company.

What is the purpose of this research?

Discovering more about how people are able to use the radio for company will hopefully a) help radio makers maintain and/or enhance these qualities in their radio production; b) articulate for broadcasting decision-makers what it is that needs to be preserved or enhanced in broadcasting policy; c) help older people and those alongside them to consider ways that radio might be of use as a form of company. The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

Invitation to participate

You are invited to participate in this research because you use the radio for company, speak conversational English and are aged 75 or over (or 65 if you are Māori) and live in the community.

What are the benefits or participating?

Participating in this research is an opportunity to share your enjoyment of radio listening with another radio fan. Participating is an opportunity to talk in detail about your listening habits, to have these recorded and studied in a way they are not in regular commercial audience research.

The results of this research will be available and shared with people making radio, and people making decision about broadcasting. Have a record of what older people in Aotearoa/New Zealand value about radio might mean those

qualities can be enhanced or protected so that people can continue to enjoy listening now and in the future.

Your participation benefits me in working towards my PhD, but also by helping to explore and find answers to a question which has long interested me. An opportunity to learn how others experience one of the researcher's favourite past times represents a huge benefit and privilege to her.

What will happen in this research?

I would like do an interview with you in your home. I would like to make an audio recording of the interview, but this recording will not be shared outside the research team. You are welcome to ask someone to sit with us, if you like. If you would like to do the interview somewhere other than your home, we can arrange that instead.

I would also like to take a photograph of your radio where you keep it and use it. You will not be in the photo.

After our interview, I will send the typed content of the interview for you to review. You will be able to say whether there are things you want to add or don't want me to include in the study. I will also send copies of the photos so you can let me know whether there are any you don't want included in the study.

What is in involved if I participate?

* one interview at your home (or elsewhere); please ask to see my ID when I arrive
* one follow-up contact by post, email or phone to share photos and invite comment on interview data
* one contact sharing the summary findings, with information about how to access the whole thesis if desired
* potentially, an invitation to attend an event such as a book launch or exhibition opening.
* including reading and reviewing this information, doing our interview, and reviewing the typed content, I estimate participating in this study will take about 3 hours of your time. There is no other cost to participate.

What are the risks if I participate?

It might be awkward discussing listening behaviours or disclosing experiences of loneliness. Your identity will remain confidential, so you will not be identifiable within the study.

You might feel embarrassed about having photos of your radios in your home included in the research, particularly if radios are kept in private spaces such as your bedroom. I will send you the pictures to review and you will be able to withdraw any you don't want included in the study.

How will my privacy be protected?

Nothing in this study is more important than your safety and privacy. You will have the option to use only your first name, or a different name completely in the study. Your consent forms, interview recordings and transcripts, and photos from the study will be kept at Auckland University of Technology during the

study and will be destroyed six years after the study finishes. You can withdraw from the study at any time before it is completed and all data relating to you will be destroyed.

What should I do if I want to particpate?

I hope you will take some time to consider this request. You might want to talk it over with your friends and family too. Please let them know they are welcome to contact me to ask about the study anytime, also.

If you are willing to participate, please complete and return the consent form which follows. Once I have your consent form, I will call you to discuss a meeting time.

Will I be able to see the results of the research?

Yes. I will send you a summary of my findings. You will be welcome to access my whole PhD through the Auckland University of Technology website scholarly commons once I have submitted it.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Matt Mollgaard; School of Communications, Level 12, Building WG, Auckland University of Technology, Wellesley St, Auckland, 1010; matt.mollgaard@aut.ac.nz; 09 921 9999 ext. 7876.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz , 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Amber Hammill
School of Communications
Level 10, Building WG
Auckland University of Technology
Wellesley St
Auckland
1010
amber.hammill@aut.ac.nz;
02041635965.

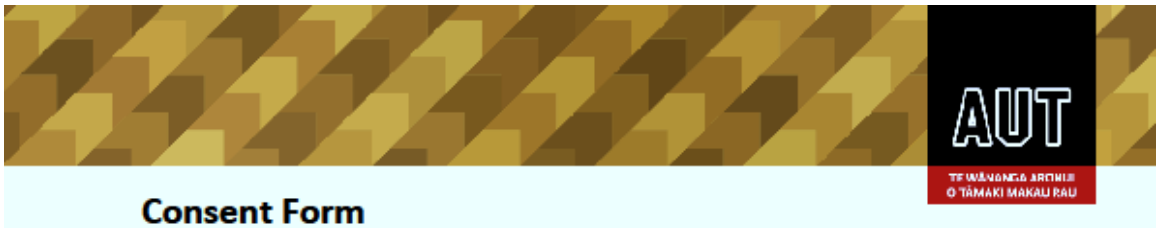
Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Matt Mollgaard
School of Communications
Level 12, Building WG
Auckland University of Technology
Wellesley St
Auckland
1010
matt.mollgaard@aut.ac.nz
09 921 9999 ext. 7876.

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your reference.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 19 August 2019, AUTEC Reference number 19/267.

Appendix E – Consent Form



Consent Form

Project title: ***In Good Company: Constructing company through radio listening***

Project Supervisor: ***Dr Matt Mollgaard***

Researcher: ***Amber Hammill***

- O I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 3 July 2019.
- O I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- O I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- O I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- O I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- O I permit the researcher to use the photographs that are part of this project and/or any drawings from them and any other reproductions or adaptations from them, either complete or in part, alone or in conjunction with any wording and/or drawings solely and exclusively for (a) the researcher's portfolio; and (b) educational exhibition and examination purposes and related design works; and (c) all forms and media for advertising, trade and any other lawful purposes as stated on the Information Sheet.
- O I understand that any copyright material created by the photographic sessions is deemed to be owned by the researcher and that I do not own copyright of any of the photographs.
- O I agree to take part in this research.
- O I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): YesO NoO

Participant's signature: .....

Date:

Participant's name: .....

Participant's contact details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

.....

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 18/08/2019; AUTEC Reference number 19/267

Appendix F – Recruitment Poster

Hello listener!

Do you use the radio for company?

Would you like to participate in a research project?

Amber Hammill from Auckland University of Technology is looking to speak to people for people aged 75+ (or 65+ for Māori people) who use the radio for company. Would you be willing to share your experiences with her?

For more information contact
Amber Hammill 02041635965
or amber.hammill@aut.ac.nz

AUT

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11/11/19; AUTEC Reference number 19/267

Appendix G – Seasons Magazine Piece

Radio media still all go for the 50+

Tuning into older radio listeners

[HAMILTON] 'I just have the radio on for a bit of company'. It's a common refrain in many older households, but a PhD researcher in the Waikato wants to delve deeper into radio companionship. Can you help?

When you think about it, a noisy box on a shelf isn't the most obvious company, but PhD candidate Amber Hammill from Auckland University of Technology (AUT) says she thinks many people are tuning in for just that reason. "Lots of academic research suggests that people use the radio for company, but we don't have a good understanding of how that works", says Amber.

Amber's research will look into how the experience of radio as companionship works.

"Regardless of how old you are, there's something very comforting about a familiar voice, and lots of people find that in the radio," says Amber. People of all ages use the radio for company, but this research will focus on people over 75, who aren't captured in radio listening data in New Zealand. "This research will give people a chance to share their experiences, which will give great insights a little researched topic and demographic."

During her Master's degree, Amber started looking into the possibility of radio as a way of avoiding loneliness but didn't find much research.

In 2018, she moved to New Zealand from the UK to start her PhD with AUT. Shortly after, her partner's work meant an opportunity to explore beyond Auckland and they set up home in Hamilton, where she has based her research.

Amber hopes that this study will help radio stations create programs for people of all ages. "If radio makers know more about what people value and how they want to feel when they're listening, they have a better chance of pleasing their audiences," she says.

"I've managed to design a research project where I get to sit with people and talk about listening to the radio – what a fantastic job!"

If you're over 75 (or over 65 and Māori) and use the radio for company, Amber would love to hear from you. You can contact Amber Hammill on amber.hammill@aut.ac.nz, 02041635965, or at Auckland University of Technology, School of Communications, 55 Wellesley Street (E), WG building 12th Floor, Auckland 1010.

THAT SIGNIFICANT BIRTHDAY

by Sue Edmonds

Some people long for that birthday
Stopping work, getting a Gold Card
Funds arriving every second Tuesday
And enjoying all that spare time!

For some a travel agent is next
To plan journeys and cruises abroad
After a lifetime of staying at home
The sights of the world have allure.

For others the house is too big now
Too much keeping it going and clean
Something smaller and modern's a drawcard
Where it's handy to library and mall.

But first there's a marathon cleanout
With the sorting and saving to do
Asking the family what should be kept
Or taken to op shops and dump.

If there's money, not much of a problem
To fill in those very long days
But when it's all spent it gets dreary
And budgets don't thrill as a craze.

The family's spread widely these days
Flat out with jobs, schools and lives
So long visits are out of the question
Emails and phone calls must suffice.

While they've still got that licence and motor
They can trundle to meetings for olds
And listen to lectures prolific
Finding out what goes on in the world.

They need to be loved by their doctor
Failing health gets them all in the end
Hobbies like golf can't be played every day
When the knees and the hips start to bend.

For those where the job was their lifeline
With no home tasks bar mowing the lawn
Finding something to do all the days and weeks too
Is a problem that many will learn.

So start now to find some new hobbies
Widen interests and make some new friends
With lifetimes now longer the need is now stronger
To be busy right up to the end.

Appendix H – Interview Guide

Interview Guide

In Good Company: Constructing company through radio listening

These questions relate to three central themes: listening practice, listening experience and listening engagement. The idea is to probe the experience of listening which specifically relates to feelings of company – how it arises, what it includes, what it might relate to and where it is not. Notes in square parenthesis and italics are intended as prompts. If the participant is able to talk freely on the topic without any prompts, these aren't necessary.

Question 1

When you think back over your life so far, how has the radio featured? Has it always been a source of company, or is that something new to you more recently?

Question 2

Could you talk me through when, where and how you would listen to the radio on a typical day?

Question 3

We're here talking now because you said that you listen to the radio for company:

- **Can you tell me more about that 'company' feeling?**
- **Could you describe that feeling of company?**

[For instance, is it related to a particular time of day, or a program, or presenter? Are there particular times you find yourself listening for company more than other times, and what are they?]

Question 4

When you're listening, and it feels like company, who is involved in that feeling, for you? *[Eg. Is it just you and the presenter, or are you thinking about others too, like other audience members, people you know who listen, other people on the show itself?]*

Question 5

Are there times when you don't want to listen, and what do those times feel like? How are they different? *[Eg. What makes you turn off, or stops you from turning on or changing the station?]*

Question 6

Do you ever do things other than listen, like, take up suggestions that people are making on the radio, or go to an event you hear about on the radio, or have a sticker on your car, or call up with a request, or anything like that?

Question 7

Do your friends and family listen to the radio too? Is it something you talk about very much?

Question 8

How do you feel about what you hear on the radio generally? Are there things you'd like to hear but can't find?

Question 9

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your experience of listening to the radio for company?

Appendix I – Photography Protocol

Photography Protocol

In Good Company: Constructing company through radio listening

The intention of these photographs is to show how the participants' radio(s) is situated in the listening space. It is not necessary to capture any details of the device itself, but rather its surrounds and how it relates to those. Discussion with the participant will indicate how the radio is used in the space, how it fits into their habits/routines, the importance of the object itself if any, and this is what the photograph should document.

Do

Get the interview started before taking the photographs

It doesn't matter at which point in the interview the photography takes place, it can be at which ever point feels natural or when there is a natural break in the conversation. It is probably not a good idea to start with the photograph as the conversation will indicate what it is relevant to capture in the frame.

Confirm consent & privacy protection

Ask the participant whether they are willing to show you their radio. Reassure the participant that any identifying content – address labels on correspondence, faces within photos, etc – will be obscured from any published photographs.

Try to take a photo that reflects the relationship of the radio to the objects around it

If it hasn't come up in the interview already, ask them about how and when they interact with the radio in the space. This will give a guide as to what is relevant for the frame of the photograph. For instance, if the object itself is special, and it is alongside other special items (eg. souvenirs, mementos, photographs), they are relevant to the radio and should be included in the frame. If the radio is part of a morning routine which also features a cup of tea and a toast, it might be relevant to include the kettle or toaster in the frame, if they are proximate, or to let the framing show that the radio is in the kitchen somehow. It might be that the radio is used for relaxation while enjoying the view, or while in a particular chair, in which case, where possible, it is relevant to include those things, perhaps.

Photograph as many listening devices as is relevant

If the participant has more than one radio or listening device photograph as many as the participant is willing for you to shoot, be mindful to record any details of how the devices differ or how their use differs.

Photograph portable devices where they are used

If the participant listens on a portable device, photograph it wherever they are most likely to use it. This may be more than one location. Alternatively, it could be photographed where it is stored when not in use, along with any accessories such as headphones.

Do not

Do no manipulate or move any objects.

If the participant wants to change the arrangement of or composition of the photo, that is their prerogative, however, do not suggest any movement, tidying, arrangement etc. The idea is to document the object in space as it is used by the participant.

Do not include the participant in the photograph.

Appendix J – Coding Sample

WHO	SAID WHAT	INITIAL CODES
JAN	[22:01] Well the first thing that happens in the morning is it's turned on, whoever wakes up first (that could be 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock) and whoever, I mean we're both lucky – we sleep well, so it doesn't wake the other one up. So, and, we do like listening to talk back. We listen to Newstalk ZB. And I think probably just for the same reason, we're interested in what people have to say and we do a certain amount of shouting at it at times.	having a routine; "we're both lucky – we sleep well"; negotiating listening space; identifying with a station; wanting to hear from others; "we do a certain amount of shout at it at times"; engaging with the content;
A	Very good.	
JAN	Especially Jack. I have to say 'If you hear Jack shouting, it won't be at me'	
	[laughter]	
JAN	But it's good, it's good. And we often have different opinions on things, obviously, but it does, it does give you, it keeps you up with the play and it keeps you up with the way people are thinking, and…	"we often have different opinions on things, obviously"; orientating yourself by listening to others; understanding your views in relation to others; comparing and contrasting;
A	What gets you shouting?	
JAN	Oh, mostly, mostly – well we're right wing in our politics I guess – and when it's somebody that is promoting or proposing something that we just feel would not be good for, you know, that's our, that just opposes to the way	speaking as a 'we'; having a shared position; speaking from experience; knowing what you know;

	we approach things like that. But it's not so much that, it's more, I think you know, often it can be nasty, people can be nasty, or say something that we feel is just simply putting a wrong slant on things, but that can happen often on both sides – it's not just. So that's probably it and in Jack's case it's usus – well, sometimes with me too – it can be the cricket umpires or the referees! [laughs] Or whatever. Or people… I can't think of anything specific, but it's often, people promoting something that we can't see practically how it would work. Or from our experiences we know that well, if you did that well, this'd happen, sort of thing.	"people can be nasty"; "putting a wrong slant on things"; engaging with the content; speaking from experience; knowing what I know; from experience;
A	Does it feel like you're trying to correct them, would you say?	
JAN	Yes, I don't know. Cos in a lot of cases people wouldn't want to be corrected because that's the way they believe and they would think the same about us, sort of thing.	"people wouldn't want to be corrected"; they know what they know;
A	And do you ever pick up the phone and do the shouting, or is it just.	
JAN	No, no, no. I don't. But I have rung in a couple of times over things I feel I want to put my point of view across.	"I feel I want to put my point of view across";
A	And what's that like?	
JAN	It's a bit scary, cos I've got to think carefully [25:17] what, how I'm going to say it usually, but it's just. And I know one day, it was actu-	"It's a bit scary"; making the call; thinking about presenting my views; remembering the call; remembering

	it was really about the fact, which I did feel strongly about at the time even, and, it's also more so now, that when I was a young mother, and at home, a full time mother, and that was my role in life – I wasn't feeling sorry for myself or anything, that was how it was. And I felt I was keeping informed and, you know, but socially, if you 'just a mother', you were just a mother, and you… And I remember at the time thinking, you know, 'motherhood is so important, and it's so undervalued, there's no status attached'. And I mean, I didn't expect to be held up on a ped, or anything like that, cos I was doing, I had the choice. And, but, I always was conscious of the fact that there was no, it was undervalued the importance of, for the next generation, that mothering thing. I mean I wasn't necessarily a perfect mother, by a long shot, but just the whole that mothering thing.	the experience; speaking from experience; sharing my knowledge; "I wasn't feeling sorry for myself or anything"; "I felt I was keeping informed"; being 'just a mother'"; knowing what I know; "motherhood is so important, and its so undervalued, there's not status attached"; loosing status"; challenging people's perceptions; making a choice; feeling rejected by others and standing up to that; arguing for the value of mothers; recognising my limitations; "that mothering thing";
A	[whispered] She doesn't exist…	
JAN	No, no she doesn't actually. Some people like to think they are… [laughs] And this was, was talking about you know, more parental leave, and more mothers going back to work sooner, and they should be, and you know, there's just those, you know, 'you don't feel valued if you're not at work' and just, or 'you should', or the expectation that you should go back to work. …	being told what to do; being spoken down to; standing up for myself; managing the expectations of others; sharing my experience;

Appendix K – Constant Comparative Analysis

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1		Power / Agency / Control SELECTIVE HEARING	Habit / Familiarity / 'Knowns' (fans?) / Ubiquity over time	Identity	Content / Connection (voice/presentation/informed/excellence)	Meeting my needs/tastes	Replacement / Access to past	Maturing with the radio / learning at your mother's hem / intergenertational exchange	Acquiring knowledge / learning from others on the radio / Being / Keeping 'up with	Alongside / Companion / Busy-ness / Time
2	**Category**	Power / Agency / Control SELECTIVE HEARING	Habit / Familiarity / 'Knowns' (fans?) / Ubiquity over time	Routine / Identity (cc Habit/Familiarity/' Knowns' (fans?)	Content / Connection (voice/presentation/informed/excellence)	One to one / something for me / contact /suggestion / interaction	Replacement / Access to past	Maturing with the radio / learning at your mother's hem.		Alongside / Companion / Busy-ness / Time
3	**What's going on here? What's behind the data?**	Exercising choice, demonstrating that this is a relationship based on respect, pleasure and is freely entered into.	Becomes invisible, almost, unconscious habit, automatic function.		I am defined by my relationships.					
4	**How does this help me answer my reseach question?**		The radio becomes a consequential stranger. Irreplacable.		People are selective about their relationships - these companions are *chosen* not inflicted.					
5	**Eg.**	Eg. Bob (power)	Eg. Garry	Eg, Ruth - that's their time thing; that's what they do. Eg. Ruth - that's my routine.	Eg. Naomi, Pat – excellence in presentation	Eg. Naomi in bed	Eg. Bob – replacing choral singing / organ		Eg. Brenda – learning gardening and household tips.	Eg. Pat 'It's not like you were idle' (while child rearing)
6		Eg. Faye (while falling asleep)	Eg. Pat	Eg. Naomi - don't touch the dial	Eg. Jan – informed opinion	Eg, Betty	Eg. Faye - music		Eg. Pat & recipes	Eg. Bob 'There's always something to do'
7		Eg. Den & Radio Tainui.	Eg. Jan	Eg. Graeme - my sister listens to this; I listen to this.	Eg. Brenda – they don't think before they speak	Eg. Jan & the cookbook	Eg. Naomi – replacing gardening		Eg. Jan and recipes	Eg. Brenda – multi-tasking

10Nov21 | 29June21 | 16June21 | 14 May21 | 21April21

Appendix L – Initial, In Vivo and Focused Codes with Categories

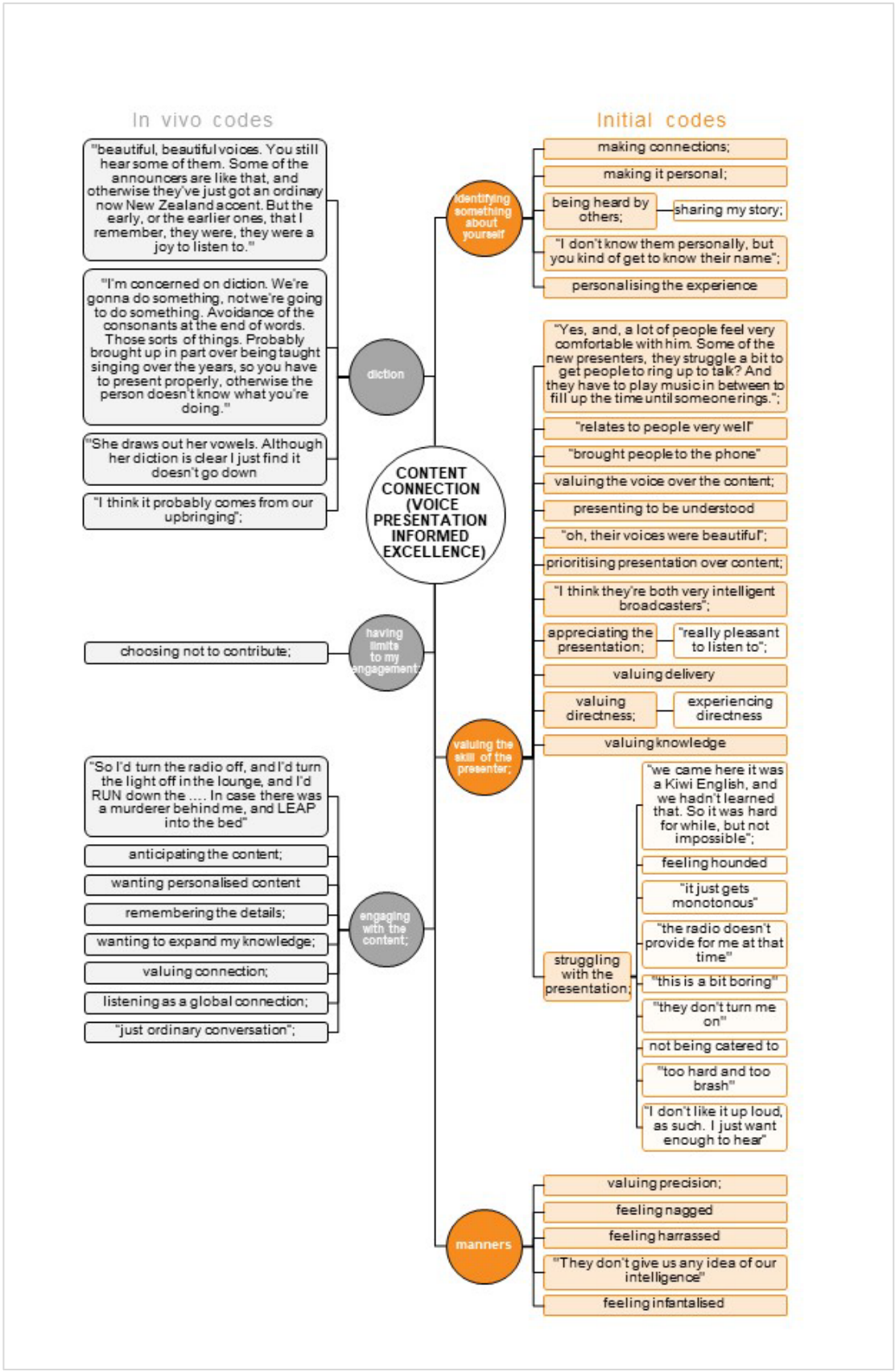
Column A shows initial and in vivo codes colour coded by participant; this image shows a sample of those coded as **having an identity as an audience-listener-citizen**.

	A	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
1	SPLITTING – In Vivo / Process (ing) / Initial	knowing myself	having an identity as an audience _ listener_ citizen	Identity _ creating & affirming self	seeing yourself reflected _ feeling 'seen' _ feeling understood _ feeling known	knowing what I know	boundaries _ barriers	wanting to contribute my knowledge and experience;	Wanting to be part of something _ join	Knowing & Meeting my needs_tastes	knowing what I like ("it's the ability to listen to it, to the things I want to hear")
360	"almost like he's talking to you"		1		1						
364	"actually got to know them"		1		1						
390	"regular listener"		1								
514	having a listening identity;		1								
559	being known as a listener;		1								
578	"my programme";		1		1						
579	"my quiet little announcers";		1								
614	asserting myself as an audience;		1								
655	bringing you along;		1						1		
664	being loyal to a station;	1	1							1	1
668	being intolerant;	1	1								
687	"so that I didn't miss that";	1	1							1	1
767	ritualising listening;		1								
796	not being conscious of the audience;		x								
801	making myself known to another listener;		1								
873	having an unexpected audience;		1								
875	having a sense of other listeners;		1								
876	having a listening routine;		1								
888	developing a relationship with other callers;		1						1		
890	conversing about what I've heard on the radio;		1								

Column A shows initial and in vivo codes colour coded by participant; this image shows a sample of those coded as **my listening past**.

	A	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
1	SPLITTING – In Vivo / Process (ing) / Initial	my listening past	Replacement _ adapting	addressing age _ ageing	Access to past _ Being in touch with a past self _ Accessing a past self	knowing myself	having an identity as an audience _ listener_ citizen	Identity _ creating & affirming self	seeing yourself reflected _ feeling 'seen' _ feeling understood _ feeling known
446	remembering listening;	1			1				
450	recalling listening;	1							
451	recalling content;	1							
687	"so that I didn't miss that";	1			1	1	1		
712	"it wasn't just background like it is today";	1							
768	remembering the show;	1			1				
774	remembering devices;	1							
937	"I was used to being in touch with what was happening";	1			1			1	
977	"it does from time to time instigate a discussion or something";	1			1				
1063	remembering early NZ radio;ert	1			1			1	
1102	missing old songs;	1			1				
1253	having a history;	1							
1254	having a history;	1							
1403	being resigned to change;	1	1		1				
1436	"I've got memories of, sort of, wandering into the lounge after	1			1				
1438	"So I'd turn the radio off, and I'd turn the light off in the lounge	1							
1440	"I don't really remember [5:36], oh, no: I do remember getting,	1			1				
1441	**"cos we were flatting, and there was no radio ever in the flat**	1			1				
1443	"the radio was really important in those days, because I had le	1	1		1		1	1	1
1444	"Really good, to have something to, have the news on, some a	1	1				1	1	

Appendix M – Diagramming Initial & Focused Codes & Categories



Appendix N – Image Data with Initial Codes

having a 'spot'

being alone

trusting

needing

making space

accommodating

being delicate

resting

tidying

comforting

Faye_1-edit-1.jpg

accompany-ing

taking notes

caring

being close

Faye_1_edit-2.jpg

being alongside

ordering

making space for

connecting

soothing

reaching

being discrete

being private

suffering

prioritising

accepting

fitting in with life

being adaptable

prioritising

adjusting

Naomi_bedroom_2.jpg

being accessible

being comfortable

necessary

being essential

letting

needing support

being supported

needing

accomodating

being close

reaching

resting

being alongside

finding space

making space

being connected

being informed

Betty_edit-2.jpg

knowing what I need

being accessible

comforting

keeping close

being close

taking care of myself

Betty-edit-1.jpg

resting

meeting my needs

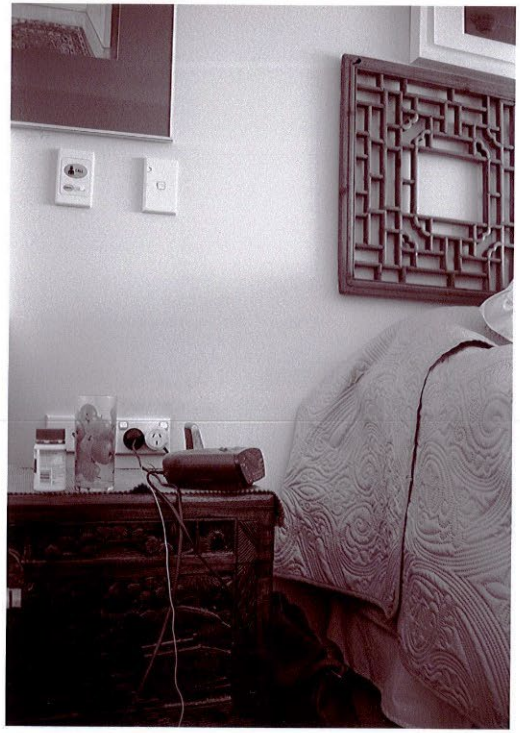
staying well

looking after myself

taking care of myself

having the essentials

plugging in



touching

being a priority

attending to my needs

knowing what matters

resting

being connected