"Too tired to speak?" Investigating the reception of Radio Grahamstown's *Lunchtime Live* show as a means of linking local communities to power

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my mother, Conilia Makora.

ABSTRACT

This study sets out to investigate *Lunchtime Live*, a twice-weekly, one-hour long current affairs show broadcast on a small community radio station, Radio Grahamstown, to understand its role in the local public sphere, and its value in helping civil society's understanding of and involvement in the power structures and political activities in Grahamstown. *Lunchtime Live* seeks to cultivate a collective identity and promote public participation in the public affairs of Grahamstown. As a key avenue of investigation, this study seeks to test theory against practice, by evaluating *Lunchtime Live's* aspirations against the audiences' perception of it.

This investigation uses qualitative content analysis of selected episodes of recorded transcripts of the shows that aired between August 2010 and March 2011, together with the audiences' verbalised experiences of this programme through focus group discussions. The study principally uses qualitative research informed by reception theory.

The research reveals three key findings. First, that resonance rather than resistance is the more dominant 'stance' or 'attitude' towards the content of *Lunchtime Live*. Residents interviewed agreed that the programme is able to give a "realistic" representation of their worldview, and thus is able to articulate issues that affect their lives. Second, that whilst the programme is helping establish links between members of the civil society as well as between civil society and their political representatives, residents feel that local democracy is failing to bring qualitative improvements to their everyday lives and that more 'participation' is unlikely to change this. Most respondents blame this on a lack of political will, incompetence, corruption and populist rhetoric by politicians who fail to deliver on the mantra of 'a better life for all' in the socio-economic sphere. The study finds a scepticism and even cynicism that participatory media seems to be able to do little to dilute. Thirdly, in spite of the largely positive view about *Lunchtime Live's* capacity to be a platform for public engagement, its participatory potential is structurally constrained by the material privations of most of its listeners. Given that in order to participate in talk shows and discussions audience members have to phone in, economic deprivation often precludes this. It is clear from this research that despite shows such as *Lunchtime Live* that are exploring new techniques of popular involvement, the voice of the ordinary people still struggles to be heard.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1. Introduction

This study seeks to investigate the meanings made by listeners of *Lunchtime Live*, a 'talk-back' live format discussion show broadcast on a small community radio station – Radio Grahamstown – which uses "citizen journalists"[1] to generate much of its content. The audience of this twice-weekly show is composed of predominantly Grahamstown's black community. This study seeks to understand the programme's value, particularly in terms of community members' understanding of, and involvement in, local politics and issues relating to local government in Grahamstown[2]. It is important to understand the role this programme is playing in marginalised communities such as Grahamstown East[3]. Taking the position that in any society there is a substantial diversity of perceived interests and that some interests are better represented and served than others (Glaser 1997: 12-13), can *Lunchtime Live* be perceived as serving the interests of the poorer black population in Grahamstown East by giving them a "voice" to participate in public processes?

The study is rooted in contemporary discourses on the socio-political dynamics shaping South Africa's democracy and draws on contributions from scholars writing on what has been identified as the key characteristics of South Africa's transition to democracy. In particular, the chapter draws on contributions from Heller (2009) and Beall et al. (2005), and others, to advance the argument that the alienation of marginalised groups from large flows of public discourses hampers democratic deepening in South Africa. The central argument of Heller (2009) and Beall et al. (2005) is that there is on-going chasm between civil society and the "power elite"[4] in South Africa, advancing similar arguments as to why this is the case, and how it has developed.

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[1] See section 1.4 below for a discussion of this concept.

[2] As will be shown in section1.2 below, Grahamstown as a city falls under the much larger Makana Municipality

[3] See section 1.6 for the socio-economic background of Grahamstown.

[4] I use this term loosely, after C.W. Mill's *The power elite* (1956), and drawing on more contemporary ideas of both a political elite. In this study, I use the term to refer to individuals whose privileged positions in society (for example business people and politicians, municipal officials) enable them to make decisions that deeply affect society, and influence the manner in which resources allocated and shape public agenda (see Mills 1956; Bond 2005).

This will be followed by a discussion of key aspects of the history of broadcasting in South Africa, looking at continuities and discontinuities pre and post 1994, as broadcasting, previously modelled to serve the white minority, attempted to democratise and de-racialise itself.

This chapter proceeds to highlight that the rise of community radio is an attempt to contribute to the "democratisation" of the public sphere in the post-apartheid South Africa by empowering previously disempowered groups with access to what was and indeed is, one of the most powerful mediums in South Africa.

1.1 The socio-political context of consumption: key dynamics shaping South Africa's democracy

This study draws on various scholarly analyses of South Africa's transition to democracy (Beall et al. 2005; Heller 2009; Sachs 2003; Southall 2003; Neocosmos 1998; Giliomee & Simkins 1998; Wasserman 2010; Sparks 2009; Marais 1998). These works, which broadly fall into the category of "transition literature", acknowledge the success of South Africa's negotiated transition to democracy, but draw attention to the continued domination of privileged groups via the repositioning of partnerships between elites in the post-apartheid era and the continued marginalisation of groups historically disempowered through apartheid. Therefore, Sparks suggests that South Africa manifests tendencies of "elite continuity", where there is considerable continuity in both institutions and personnel (for example, institutions like broadcasting, civil service and the army) between the old and new regimes (Sparks 2008: 2009).

In addition, and with reference to the media in particular, Sparks notes that the contradictory processes of both the partial democratisation of the media and its simultaneous 'marketisation' are implicated in the often alienated relationship between state and civil society that emerges post 1994. This distancing between elites and the mass of ordinary people has, these scholars argue, inhibited democratic consolidation in post-apartheid South Africa. Others have noted that if South Africa is emblematic of anything, it is the simultaneous intertwining of democracy and marginalisation (Von Lieres 2005: 23).

Beall et al. (2005) and Heller (2009) in particular suggest that a weakened interface between the state and society has manifested itself in the relative incapacity of civil society to participate in opinion formation, and indeed, decision making (Beall et al. 2005; Heller 2009). In addition, the contradictory processes of citizens' safeguarded legal statuses and a range of rights including the freedom of speech and expression are contrasted to the continued exclusion from economic equality and empowerment as well as opportunities for participation in the public sphere (Von Lieres 2005: 23), alluding to Heller's suggestion that these rights and freedoms remain 'statuses' only without much deeper meaning in 'practice' (Heller 2009: 6). In recent political theory, there has been a shift away from the focus on questions of justice to the need to address what Mouffe (2000: 4) calls a "democratic deficit" related to actual practices of citizenship and democracy (cited in Von Lieres 2005: 24), grounded, ultimately, in the need for greater economic emancipation. This study, in particular, seeks to understand meanings made by audiences that are located at the heart of this 'democratic deficit' within a context of severe inequality and poverty.

1.2 The context of consumption: an overview of the social, economic and political background of Grahamstown

1.2.1 Socio-political background

To understand the way people appropriate and make meanings of *Lunchtime Live*, it is crucial to first delineate the context of consumption and examine the social relations, institutions, distribution of power and resources (Thompson 1995: 368) within which the cultural consumption to be studied takes place.

Grahamstown is a small university town and education centre located in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa. It was established by Colonel John Graham as a military garrison in 1812, and was the first town to be established by the British in the Eastern Cape (Moller & Radloff 2010: 53). Both Boer and British subjugated the Eastern Cape over a century and the defeated Xhosa nations became a major source of labour for the diamond mines of the Northern Cape as well as forced evictions from the Western Cape (Ruiters 2011: 3). In the 20th century, many black Africans forcibly evicted from farms found final destination into nearby

Grahamstown (see Edwards 2011: 126). These trends, and continual influx has increased pressure on this largely educational and cultural centre with very few employment prospects except for those offered by Rhodes University, a couple of elite private schools (Lemon 2004: 278) and a small service sector.

Lemon (2004) describes Grahamstown's history as consisting of three distinct settlement patterns. Firstly, the spacious and treed former all-white suburb in the western part of the town was laid down in the earliest phase of colonialism. Secondly, the coloured settlement that forms a transition belt between the previously all-white suburbs in the west and the previous black-only townships in the east were established later in the 19th century. Thirdly, as already alluded to and in stark contrast to the western side, was the establishment of the black townships of Fingo Village, Tantyi, Makana's Kop, and other more recent informal and formal settlements stretching further east (Lemon 2004: 28). Typical of a city built in the colonial and then apartheid era, the black townships are characterised by a mixture of informal and formal settlements side-by-side, poor schools and sports facilities, and high levels of poverty as opposed to the relatively affluent and once whites-only western suburbs.

Grahamstown's main sources of employment are the educational institutions (including Rhodes University), the local government, hospitals, and other service type jobs in, for example, retail. With an unemployment rate approximately as high as 70%, Grahamstown is one of the poorest cities in the Eastern Cape (Lemon 2004: 279; Moller 2003: 53). While the Eastern Cape is the second largest of the nine provinces in South Africa by size, it is widely seen as the poorest, least resourced and administratively weak of all the provinces (Ruiters 2011: 8). Government transfers in the form of social grants as well as wages are the main sources of income in the province. (Moller 2003: 55).

Much of the private businesses in Grahamstown are white owned, as indeed is 60% of the prime commercial agriculture land (sheep, ostrich and fruit farming) in the Eastern Cape Province (Edwards 2011: 126; Ruiters 2011: 9). Africans and some so-called "Coloureds"[5]

5 The term "coloured" varies with context of use. In South Africa whilst its usage existed before the Colonial and then apartheid governments's attempts to codify it, it generally refers to people of mixed descent and particularly to those with Khoisan, Malay, African backgrounds. (Frankental & Owen 2007; Victor 2007). In South Africa, 'coloureds' were also identified along language and cultural lines as they largely spoke Afrikaans, although English speaking 'Cape Coloureds' where also noted by the late 1890s (Patterson 1955: 36). Elsewhere, and in different historical contexts, this term has generally been used to describe people of mixed parentage or, as in the United States of America, as "people of colour" (see Frankental & Owen 2007).

make up the bulk of the labour force. The divide between the predominantly rich white and Indian community on the one and the extremely poor black African community on the other is perpetuated by the crisis in Eastern Cape Education, and the differential education provided by the schools which cater for these different groups. For example, a survey conducted by Lemon (2004) revealed that on average, black township schools had a Learner Teacher Ratio (LTR) of between 21 and 24 students per teacher whilst the predominantly white elite schools had a LTR closer to 10 students per teacher (2004: 280). In addition, the Eastern Cape Department of Education has the highest number of vacant posts (Hendricks 2011: 255) compared to other provinces in South Africa. Overall in 2010, the Eastern Cape matric pass rate was 58, 3%, with many black schools in Grahamstown failing to matriculate half of its final year class (Blaine 2011).

Whilst the Grahamstown is home to some excellent educational, cultural and religious institutions (Holleman & Paterson 2002: 15), these largely remain inaccessible to the predominantly poor black communities. In addition, whilst Grahamstown offers some opportunities to young people due to its closeness to the city centre and diverse extension projects, these are unequally distributed with the materially advantaged youths (predominantly white) being more exposed to development opportunities through their schools, spare time activities and community contacts (Moller 2003: 53).

Overall, Grahamstown, like the province and country it is located in, is thus marked by large disparities in income, and the preservation of the many of the class and racial inequalities of the apartheid era.

1.2.2 Media presence and cultural activities

By contrast to the material deprivation of the majority of its population, Grahamstown is relatively media rich. For example, Grahamstown is home to South Africa's oldest independent paper, *Grocott's Mail*, a community newspaper that has served the informational needs of at least sections of the community since its establishment in 1875. In addition to this, Radio Grahamstown, one of the first community radio stations in South Africa, broadcasts 18 hours a day. On an annual basis, Rhodes University hosts what is billed as the world's largest gathering of African journalists at the Highway Africa conference. In 2010, Rhodes University also hosted the World Journalism Educators' Conference (WJEC) in conjunction with Highway Africa. To add to this, the school of journalism also runs a number

of outreach programmes in conjunction with the local schools and community, including the citizen journalism programme run by *Iindaba Ziyafika* (see Chapter 1, section 1.2 for the *Iindaba Ziyafika* project).

Whilst this relatively high level of 'media density' and allied media activity may be conducive of a more lively public sphere, Sparks (2001) has cautioned against making such simple and straightforward conclusions, arguing that the presence of media institutions per se is no gauge of the depth of democracy (Dahlgren 2005 citing Sparks 2001). Sparks contends there can be all kinds of political information and debates in circulation, but there must be some connections between these communicative spaces and the processes of decision-making. This echoes Heller's notion of "vertical associational axis" (2009: 6) the theoretical space where, in Heller's conception, civil society engages with the state and thus influence policy. Whilst South Africa has been commended for having robust democratic institutions, it stands accused of having failed to create a deep civic culture where people feel able to engage with power (see Beall 2010; Heller 2009). The meanings assigned to *Lunchtime Live* by its audiences are deeply influenced by unequal social relation, institutions and distribution of power and resources within this community. This study attempts to make sense of these meanings against this background.

1.3 Marginalisation and disempowerment: a brief background to the history of broadcasting in South Africa, with a focus on community radio

It is important to situate the current operation of community radio stations in South Africa within a broader historical context. In South Africa, broadcasting began in 1924 when three radio stations where issued with licences to broadcast in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. For decades, South Africa's broadcasting sector reflected the discriminatory, exclusionary and separatist philosophy of pre-apartheid and apartheid power structures, where the black majority remained at the periphery and had very limited access to media. For example, the promulgation of the Broadcasting Act in 1936 following recommendations by the former British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) Director-General, John Reith[6], made no

[6] Following John Reith's Directorship at BBC, Public Service Broadcasting became associated with the following broadcasting responsibilities:

- providing citizens (as opposed to consumers in the market approach) with information that will allow them to participate fully in their societies;
- fostering their development, curiosity and education;
- tapping the best of a nation's cultural resources in literature, art, drama, science, history, et cetera; and

mention of the black audiences (Tomaselli & Tomaselli 1989: 31) at all, effectively excluding this group from cultural representation. As a result of this, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) broadcast only in English and Afrikaner languages for many decades.

In 1950, a commercial radio station, Springbok Radio, was introduced. This was in view of SABC's recognition of falling licence fees, a scenario that worked against the corporation's desire to increase its broadcasting coverage to cater for the predominantly rural Afrikaner-speaking and urban English-speaking white population (see Tomaselli & Tomaselli 1989). Importantly, Tomaselli & Tomaselli highlight how the institutional structure of broadcasting and its white supremacist slant marginalised the black population:

> It is noticeable in the development of broadcasting that, as with other consumer products, it spreads downwards in the class structure and outward from the urban centres to rural areas, or, from the metropolis to the peripheries. In countries where broadcasting is based on the BBC model, the claims of both broadcasters and the state that the technology of broadcasting is available as a "public service" or a public right conceals these unequal relations, and the ideology at the programme level (Tomaselli & Tomaselli 1989: 35).

The marginalised black population was only incorporated into mainstream national broadcasting after the National Party (NP)[7] recognised the ability of radio to help promote the ethnicity-based policies of apartheid. Only then was "Radio Bantu" established in 1959 (Tomaselli & Tomaselli 1989: 35), broadcasting in indigenous African languages. For the first time then, radio as a medium was brought to the mass of South Africans but then only largely as a mechanism of division and control.

Until the beginning of the 1990s, the SABC had monopoly over both radio and television broadcasting and, in addition, was run as the unalloyed propaganda arm of the Afrikaner-controlled NP (Bosch 2003: 67; Olorunnisola 2002: 129). The corporation's close affiliation with the ruling NP had a strong influence on its programming, channel structure, staffing, and the language policy of all radio and television services under its management (Olorunnisola 2002: 129 citing Giffard et al.1997).

- expressing national and regional cultural diversity (Fourie 2003: 150).

[7] The party of the Afrikaner-led government known for its apartheid policy. It ruled South Africa from 1948 to 1994 and later disbanded in 2005.

With a view to democratising civil society input in the formation of public opinion, political negotiators during South Africa's transition to democracy went out of their way to put media reform on the agenda early. The establishment of community-based radio stations formed part of this reform (Tomaselli 2001). The origins of community radio stations in South Africa lay in the grassroots politics and cultural struggle of the 1980s, where the anti-apartheid movements saw community radio stations as providing potential voices for the oppressed to play a role in informing and mobilising communities against apartheid (Tomaselli 2001: 233). The post-1994 proliferation of community radio stations has to be seen in the context of deliberate attempts to increase access to media in an era where, nonetheless, and at the same time, the state and powerful business interests are using their power and resources to shape mainstream media discourses for their own interests, at the cost of broader participation and popular democracy (McChesney 1998; Negrine 2001).

Bosch's (2002) study on South Africa's Bush Radio, emerging in the 1990s out of the Cassette Education Trust (CASET) during the 1980s, nevertheless did not locate its origin entirely in grassroots resistance, or in the working class struggle as often found in the literature of earlier community radio stations (e.g. the Bolivian tin miners radio in the 1950s or the Radio Sutatenza in Colombia in 1947). Rather the founders of CASET were people with relatively privileged statuses such as teachers, white liberals, artists and students (Bosch 2003: 116). As with Radio Grahamstown, the creation of media channels is often more complex than it seems at first glance.

In 1993, the body set up to negotiate the transition to democracy, CODESA, drew up the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act (IBA), whose key tasks included making policy on broadcasting; issuing licences; regulating and monitoring broadcasting activities in South Africa without interference from the government (Olorunnisola 2002: 130).

The establishment of the Independent Broadcasting Act (IBA 1993) set the motion for a deep restructuring of media in South Africa. One of its core mandates was to open up the airwaves to previously excluded voices and to establish viable market conditions for diverse and independent broadcasting (Barnett 1999; Sparks 2009: 201-202). The IBA launched a Triple Enquiry Process aimed at understanding how SABC could be reformed in terms of financing, cross-ownership, and local content (Sparks 2009: 202). The enquiry recommended that the SABC sell its six commercial radio stations to bidders with a significant representation

from “historically marginalised communities” and that white owned capital forge alliances with black empowerment groups, giving the first opportunity for black South Africans to have access to the commercial broadcasting sector (Barnett 1999: 657). The IBA was also charged with the responsibility of limiting cross-media ownership, enforcing local content quotas and enquiring into ways of financing broadcasting (see Giffard et al. 1997).

With the view of fostering public access to the broadcast media as well as enhancing diversity of opinions, the IBA introduced a three-tier broadcasting system: public service, commercial, and community broadcasting (see IBA 1997). Whilst the notion of “community” in community broadcasting is fraught and not clearly based on a rigorous conceptual framework, the IBA makes provision for two types of community broadcasting; those that broadcast for a geographic community and those that broadcast for a community of interest. Radio stations that target a geographic community are those that serve communities whose commonality is determined by listeners residing in the same geographic area. Community of interest radio stations define their listeners in terms of a specific common interests, whilst these interests can be religious, ethnic, cultural, and institutions such as a university, etc. (see Tomaselli 2000:5; Bosch 2003: 106; Jankowski 2002). Van Zyl (2003) has argued further that where no “community” existed before, interest groups in a geographical setting may come together to apply for a radio licence and, once granted, a community is created around the radio station’s interactivities (cited in Mavhungu 2009: viii). In this case, the granting of a licence might well be an important initial step towards forming a community or enhancing a sense of community.

In post-apartheid, especially with the liberalisation of media and formation of community media, community radio stations may be conceived as a potential platform for giving voice to the marginalised – those whose views have been “de-centred” by both commercial and political pressures. Throughout much of South Africa’s media history, “non-Europeans” had been ‘eavesdroppers’, to cite the evocative phrase coined by Hatchet and Giffard **(**Olorunnisola 2002: 127 citing Hatchet & Giffard 1984: ix), a designation that also connotes passivity and this audience’s lack of legal status as citizens. South Africa’s broadcasting sector reflected the social and political cleavages of apartheid’s separatist philosophy, where the black majority remained at the periphery of power and away from media access.

1.4 Describing the Lunchtime Live radio show

Rhodes University's School of Journalism and Media Studies located in Grahamstown, South Africa's Eastern Cape Province launched the *Iindaba Ziyafika* project with a strong citizen journalism component in 2009. "*Iindaba Ziyafika*" is isiXhosa and means "the news is coming" in English. The project is sponsored by the USA-based James L. and John S. Knight Foundation, and is made up by a number of sub-projects implemented through relationships with *Grocott's Mail* (a community newspaper now owned by Rhodes University) and *Radio Grahamstown* (a community-owned radio station on which *Lunchtime Live* is broadcast).

Lunchtime Live is a 'talk-back' live format discussion show broadcast twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays between 1pm and 2pm, and has been on air since August 2010. The show is presented by a group of "citizen journalists"[8] who are drawn from the largely black Grahamstown East community and who were trained to produce journalism content for *Grocott's Mail*. As a result, some stories broadcast on radio also feature in either *Grocott's Mail* or *Grocott's Online* as follow-up features. Most of these citizen journalists have never worked as radio presenters before. They are encouraged to produce "hyper local"[9] news, one of the aims of which is to promote local democracy by opening up the local public sphere.

Lunchtime Live's news content broadly fits into five typical segments. These usually feature at least one story that relates to the functioning of the Makana Municipality, and then shift to a three to five minute focus on a particular ward, some crime reports, and, most often short arts, culture, and sports stories. The languages used for broadcast are divided between isiXhosa and English. Where possible, protagonists in the stories are invited into the studio, or contacted via phone, to discuss issues related to that story. The studio has a telephone line enabling listeners to phone in, as well as a Facebook page and email addresses to which

[8] While citizen journalism is a contested terrain, at the most general level it refers to journalism produced by non-professionals (Steenveld and Strelitz 2010: 1 citing Rosen 2004). Goode (2009: 1288) argues that the concept of citizen journalism resists "settled boundaries" as it has been used to denote untrained journalists in certain instances and trained or partly trained journalists in others. Such forms of journalism are increasingly enabled by digital technological revolution that makes it possible for citizens to produce and participate in media more easily, even if they are not trained as journalists.

[9] News content that could attract local audiences and provide viewers with a strong sense of neighbourhood reality, making them particularly aware of other people's living conditions (Berger 2007: 20), or about a particular suburb, or about a few city blocks (Dugmore 2010).

listeners can send messages during the show. SMS and MXit (instant messaging from mobile *phones*) have also been used on some shows. The primary intended target audience for the radio show are "the poorer residents of Grahamstown East, whose voices and information sources are constrained in terms of newspaper and web access" (Berger 2007 :5).

Lunchtime Live encourages the local community of Grahamstown to participate in local debates through its community-oriented shows, and in so doing provides them with opportunities to engage in the practice of citizenship (see Berger 2007: 5). It believes that citizens can exercise their rights by being "producers" rather than just "consumers" of news. Citizens are encouraged to use "new media" technologies such as MXit and SMS (instant messaging from mobile phones) and Facebook to participate in this programme.

1.5 Objectives of Study

The research seeks to investigate the meanings made by *Lunchtime Live* listeners, predominantly drawn from Grahamstown's black community and who are marginalised from mainstream media discourses. The study attempts to understand the programme's value in terms of the community's understanding of, and involvement in, local politics and issues relating to local government in Grahamstown. This study tests *Lunchtime Live's* claims against its own practice by adopting an approach that first seeks to understand the normative foundations and philosophical underpinnings informing the *Lunchtime Live's* 'desired' output *vis a vis* the audiences' perception of the programme's actual delivery.

1.6 Methods of study

The study uses qualitative research methods as it seeks to understand how Grahamstown's poor black community appropriate and actualize the meanings they draw from *Lunchtime Live* in their daily interaction with it, as well as amongst themselves as audiences with specific focus on their understanding of, and relationship with, a broadly conceived 'local politics'.

Firstly, the researcher carried out a qualitative content analysis of selected samples of both actual audio and transcripts of the *Lunchtime Live* show's recorded episodes. Qualitative content analysis is an interpretive approach that explores the meanings that are embedded in media representation, as opposed to the frequency of particular themes (Nueman 1997: 273).

Secondly, and drawing on reception theory, the study constituted six focus group discussions with members of the community who listen to the radio show. Focus groups allow participants to "verbalise" their experiences of media products, enabling the researcher to explore the processes through which recipients actualise media meanings and incorporate them into their lives (Schroder et al. 2003: 122; Ang 1990: 162).

1.7 Structure of the study

Including this chapter, this thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 provides a background to the study, outlining what the study seeks to investigate. The chapter also outlines a general background and context for *Lunchtime Live*, its audiences and their social location.

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework drawn upon, in particular Habermas's (1989) public sphere theory, which provides a broad frame of understanding the role of *Lunchtime Live* in the local public sphere, especially the communities' interaction with and involvement in the deliberation of local power structures. The chapter also uses theoretical insights drawn from scholars commenting of the nature of South Africa's post-1994 democratic dispensation, specifically Heller (2009) and Beall et al.'s (2005) notions about the of lack of 'democratic deepening' and 'fragile democracy' as well as Sparks' (2008, 2009) notion of 'elite continuity'. In attempting to locate the journalistic forms that best captures what *Lunchtime Live* is attempting to do, the chapter gives a brief overview of both "alternative journalism" and "civic/public journalism" theories.

Chapter 3 situates the study within the methodological framework of reception studies. It outlines the main research traditions of reception studies, highlighting its shifts from the media "effects" to the recognition of the "active audience".

Chapter 4 outlines the methods, techniques and procedures employed for data collection. The chapter overviews the use of qualitative research methods rooted in reception theory, as well as outlining the logic behind the sampling strategy used.

Chapter 5, the most substantial chapter, outlines the findings of the study, and discuss them in detail, drawing together the theory, method and data collected during the fieldwork.

Chapter 6, briefly, as a conclusion, pulls together the main findings of the study, and suggests some general implications for our understanding of democracy and media in South Africa, as well as suggesting areas of possible future research.

CHAPTER 2

THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND COMMUNITY MEDIA

2. Introduction

This chapter gives an overview and critique of Habermas's (1989) concept of the public sphere and provides some theoretical perspectives on the role of community media in particular within public spheres, as a background to the central theoretical approach of this study. The main theoretical approach to this study is media and democracy, a theoretical lens espoused in Habermas's seminal work *The Structural Transformation of the public sphere (1989)* which argues for the centrality of media in enhancing democracy. This theory sets much of the 'tone' for the subsequent critique of *Lunchtime Live* and its claims to some kind of efficacy in helping overcome the 'democratic deficit' referred to in the introduction. Whilst Habermas's original theory of the bourgeois public sphere is important in conceptualising the role of media in democracy, the study takes into cognisance some revisions that this theory has undergone, especially in the hands of Fraser (1996), Landes (1988) and Eley (1987) and other scholars, including Habermas himself.

The study also draws insights from more recent commentators on South Africa's democracy, who argue that democratic deepening has not been achieved because of both apartheid's legacy effects and new policy and approach that have promoted differential access to the public sphere among different social groups (Heller 2009: 125; Beall et al. 2005) and therefore, largely had the effect of excluding the voices of marginalised from the public sphere.

2.1 The concept of the Public Sphere

Habermas's notions of the normative role of media in a democracy was popularised through his seminal work: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989). His project was an attempt to develop a critical theory of society with the intention to further the self-emancipation of people from domination (Held 1980: 250) so that democracy can prevail. Habermas's conceptualisation of the public sphere takes its cue from a series of social changes that occurred during the eighteenth and nineteenth century in Britain, France and Germany.

This period was characterised by a growing public culture of critical political discussion fostered by letters and novels, as well as the flowering of discussions in coffee houses and salons as private individuals debated the politics governing them (see Roberts & Crossley 2004; Calhoun 1996). Most importantly, the emergence of an independent, market-based private press fostered a new public engaged in critical political discussion (Curran 1991: 83).

These conditions, Habermas theorises, made possible the formation of what he regarded as a bourgeois public sphere, "where a large number of middle class men, qua private individuals came together in reasoned argument over key issues of mutual interest and concern" (Roberts & Crossley 2004: 2). Even so, the public sphere is not, in Habermas's formulation, a place, object, institution, or organisation – it is a voluntary open discussion forum where ideas and information are shared leading to the formation of something approximate to "public opinion" (Habermas 1989: 360; Habermas 2004: 49).

In the 19th and then particularly from the 20th century onwards, various forms of media increasingly provide the platform through which such discussions and debates take place. Following this Habermasian reasoning, the media plays a crucial role by providing the space for democratic participation and interaction, where society participates in the formulation of public opinion.

For Habermas, the public sphere is idealised as an arena where citizens interact as equals, and where the 'best' ideas excel on the basis of reasoned judgement (see Calhoun 1996; Habermas 1989). The public sphere mediates between society and the state, where the public organises itself as the bearer of public opinion (Papacharissi 2004: 30). As many commentators point out, the effectiveness of the public sphere depends on both the quality of discourses; and the quality and quantity of participation (see Calhoun 1996; Fraser 1996; Habermas 1989), in order to realise a potential to form a zone of mediation between the state and private individuals (Roberts & Crossley 2004: 2).

The public sphere is constituted, in Habermas's view, in every conversation that takes place between private individuals assembled to form a public body but behave neither as business nor as professionals transacting private affairs (Habermas 2004: 350). It is at its best when removed from the influence of the state or commercial interests, enabling citizens to question and find solutions beyond both state authority and commercial interests (Fraser 1992: 111). At a community level, such a conception

resonates with some of the stated ambitions of the producers of *Lunchtime Live* especially with its use of citizen journalism. State authority and commercial interests are seen as exerting pressure in determining the nature of discourses that circulate in the media as well as access to the media itself (Papacharissi 2009: 30; Carey 1995). Free discussion by 'ordinary people', as might be provided in a talk show radio format, could counteract this.

The public sphere was thus firstly, conceived by Habermas as distinct from the state because it is an arena for the production and circulation of information that can be, in principle, critical of the state, and is secondly, distinct from the official economy for it is not an arena of market relations but that of debate and discussion on issues of what was conceived of as public affairs (Fraser 1996: 110-111). Such distinctions are critical for understanding the operation of democracy (Fraser 1996: 111).

Much of what has been described thus far captures what Habermas idealises as a democratically constituted public sphere using the experiences of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe. He conceptualises this notion of the public sphere as emblematic of a democratic space and contrasts this with contemporary developments in late capitalism where, for example, commercial interests dictate the media content and where politicians have usurped the public sphere for the operation and discursions of party politics. Because of this, Habermas argued that the public sphere is in decline and is no longer accessible to all (see Habermas 1989; Roberts & Crossley 2004: 6).

2.2 Critiquing the Habermasian concept of the public sphere

Nevertheless, despite his own elaborations, and self-critique, Habermas's conception of the public sphere has been subject to a great deal of additional scholarly attention and sustained criticism. Critics of his public sphere concept are of the view that if Habermas's theorisation is to give an adequate critique of the limits of actually existing democracy, it needs to be subjected to critical interrogation and reconstruction (Fraser 1996: 57). This arises out of the view that Habermas's original theory was a critique on the rise and decline of a historically specific and very limited form of the public sphere, what others have called the "liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere" (Dahlgren 1997; Curran 1991: 83; Fraser 1992). Therefore, it has meaning within this particular context where the bourgeois

assembled, for example, in salons and coffee houses to discuss trade and commerce – and public policy. As such, it cannot be imported wholesale or by analogy into the present day where society is firstly, polarised by power struggles between social classes, gender struggles, and where the public is generally fragmented into many groups and identities with competing interests (Fraser 1992: 113) and secondly, in large scale, nation-states with multiple media channels. The present era has gone far beyond the forms of societal conditions of the kind of largely face-to-face dialogue envisaged by Habermas in his classical public sphere.

In the more modern era of mass media, notions of the public sphere have had to be significantly modified. Mass media, overall, might facilitate public deliberation, but it might also at the same time displace it. Putnam (1996) for example, concludes that television is responsible for the displacement of time (and energy) previously devoted to civic affairs and is largely responsible for promoting "passive" involvement in politics. Later, Putnam (2000) laments how even by the late nineteenth century, much of American society had generally abandoned its communal ties, choosing rather to pursue private endeavours[10].

From the perspective of modern commentators, current societies have everywhere been infiltrated and transformed by commercial interests, so that the eighteenth century book clubs that used to be source of communication have now been replaced by government sponsored public relations campaigns, whilst the "welfare mass democracy" has contributed to the blurring of differences between state and society resulting in what has been conceptualised as the manufacture and manipulation of public opinion (see Curran 1991: 83; Garnham 1990: 360; Fraser 1996: 113). Commentators argue that the expansion of the state has led to an increased involvement of administrators and technicians in social and economic affairs (Held 1980: 251) so much so that civil society is left with little input in the formation of public opinion. Thus public opinion is no longer founded on what Habermas conceptualised as rational and collective debate, but is rather much more shaped by the state and commercial imperatives, as these have taken a more and more central role in determining the nature and access to public discourses.

[10] This notion of individualisation, anomie and dislocation is thoroughly explored in Putnam's landmark work, *Bowling Alone* (2000).

The most forceful critique of Habermas's classical public sphere is that it was in fact never democratic, but was rather founded on a systematic exclusion of marginalised groups, especially along gender, race, class, language and age basis (see Fraser 1996) and as such, falls short of its egalitarian claims. Habermas (1989) himself admitted that his conception of the bourgeois public sphere excluded women and other social groups, but still argued that the bourgeois public sphere has the capacity to transform from within (Fraser 1996; Held 1980; Curran 1991; Garnham 1990).

Arguing from a feminist perspective, Fraser (1996), Landes (1988) and Eley (1987) criticise Habermas's public sphere for excluding and marginalising women to domestic confines, arguing further that the growing disparity between class and race that are characteristic of late capitalism favour the participation of certain groups over others, especially male over female. Therefore, the women's movement not only raises important questions about the material inequalities suffered by women, but importantly also challenge the dominant masculine codes or modes of political operation (Keane 2004: 367). In line with this, critics argue in favour of a revised theory of the public sphere that acknowledges the existence of different *publics* in line with the reality of modern society that is generally composed of fragmented social interests and groups. There is therefore a need, these theorists suggest, to re-orient Habermas's conception of an 'official' public sphere, which in principle assumes that there is consensus on what could be regarded as public interests, when in fact society is not a homogenous group as to have similar interests.

The criticism of Habermas's public sphere concept signals a movement away from his assumption that society, in principle, has some kind of widely shared normative values and interests that can be collectively addressed in a single public sphere, towards an understanding that sees society as composed of more vibrant and diverse values and principles that can be addressed, and indeed are, by different public spheres. This criticism widens the scope of the public sphere, allowing it to be more inclusive and accommodative of diversity.

Keane usefully describes three levels that form "constituencies" of the modern public spheres. These are what he calls the micro-public spheres, meso-public spheres and the macro-public spheres (Keane 2004). The micro-public sphere represents all social

movements that comprise of low profile networks of small groups, organisations, local contacts and friendships while meso-public spheres are those "spaces of controversy about power" encompassing millions of people in a nation state. Macro-public spheres are global public spheres that are a consequence of the international concentration of media capital dominated by American, German, British and French media firms (2004: 367-70).

The conceptualisation of these three levels of the public sphere is an attempt to show the inadequacy of Habermas's theorisation in the context of 21st century societies where, for example, the global movement of capital is opening up supranational public spheres beyond the traditionally conceived national public sphere. The implication is that attempts to tie the theory of the public sphere to the institutions of public service broadcasting or narrowly wedging it between the state/economy and civil society would not be reflective of the modern networked society (Keane 2004: 374). The Internet has widened the public sphere to global audiences, forming what some commentators refer to as the "virtual public sphere" (Papacharissi 2004).

Despite these criticisms, the theory of the public sphere is central to this study. As Fraser puts it, those who are "committed to theorizing the limits of democracy in late capitalist societies will find in the work of Habermas an indispensable resource" (1996: 109). The following section thus proceeds to discusses how the formation of community radio stations in South Africa is implicated in the debate about enhancing democracy by opening up the public sphere in better and deeper ways to local communities.

2.3 Community media and the public sphere

This debate about public spheres is important in terms of locating and understanding the actual operation of local democracy, and for thinking about local public spheres. Scholars of participatory democracy acknowledge that community media can help create alternative public spheres that resist traditional state authority and commercial imperatives (see Murdock 1990; Golding & Murdock 2000). Such theorisations are partly responsible for the emergence of community radio stations in many parts of the world in the 1980s.

As briefly outlined in Chapter 1, in South Africa, political negotiators during the country's negotiated transition to non-racial democracy put media reform on agenda forcefully, proposing a set of measures aimed at freeing media from state control and the ideological ramifications this entailed (Tomaselli 2001). This is especially so in view of the manner in which the National Party government had maintained a stronghold on the media, narrowing and controlling the public sphere, and thus helping to enable its separatist policy to exclude and marginalise subaltern groups from participating in the public sphere.

The establishment of community-based radio stations was therefore an important part of democratising South Africa's public sphere. Moreover, it was an acknowledgement that larger circuits of discussion and deliberation, which can be conceptualised as the meso and macro public spheres, as formulated by Keane above, needed to be formally supplemented by projects that encouraged the development of micro-spheres. This kind of formulation becomes particularly important as the political and 'delivery' architecture of the new South African state, post 1994, which places an emphasis on local levels of power, came into operation.

Section 2.4.1 below, and Chapter 5 of this study capture the notion of the 'voice' of the marginalised and this concept's usefulness in conceptualising community media. At the local level, it was envisaged that community media, and community radio stations in particular, could play a significant role in giving voice to the marginalised – those whose views are "de-centred" by both commercial and political pressures, and especially black South Africans who had been relegated to the margins during the apartheid era.

Practitioners and academics go further to suggest that community media can also play an important role in actively promoting social change (Mytton 1983; IIboudo 2000), even while acknowledging that community radio stations are characterised by "strong normative and ideological overtones", germane to particular local polities. In South Africa, community radio stations are tasked, through ICASA, with the responsibility of fostering a culture of "civic responsibility and empowerment", and are characterised by local programming, local participation and local ownership in terms of management and control, in order to achieve a culture of participation. (Tomaselli 2001: 233).

Community media have been identified as producing "partial publics", or what Hansen (1993) interestingly refers to as a "segment of the plural", rather than the singular (cited in Urla 1995: 246). Thus unlike Hebermas's bourgeois public sphere, which is conceptualised in more monolithic terms, community media provide the space for the emergence of counter-public spheres that can question the legitimacy of the dominant and established public sphere (Urla 1995: 246). These public spheres are often decidedly oppositional to commercial imperatives and to the state's control over the terms of public discourse, as well as the exclusions that such control entails (Urla 1995: 246).

Commenting on the nature of Bolivian tin miners' radio stations, which date back to 1947, Huesca (1995) argues that these radio stations established networks for social solidarity and class action for the tin miners. These community radio stations were seen as providing what Fraser refers to as *subaltern counter-publics* (1996: 123) and were seen as working to solidify community engagement as well as maintaining linkages with workers unions (see Huesca 1995: 104).

Theorists of community media see the strength of community radio as predicated precisely on its defiance of 'professionalism', especially with regard to the use of language. Writing about the Basque free radio stations, Urla (1995) notes during focus group discussions that her respondents argued against the use of formal language because it went against community radio stations' commitment to freedom of expression (1995:253) as members of the community would not be able to use their own languages to express themselves. As this study will show in Chapter 5, the issue of language and the community's "voice" will be dealt with during the presentation of focus group discussions, bringing out what *Lunchtime Live's* audiences think are the implications of English language use in the local public sphere.

The above illustrates how community media provide solutions to some of the criticisms levelled against Habermas's public sphere theory, especially the notions of "rational debate" and the claims that "the best ideas excel on the basis of reasoned judgement" (see Calhoun 1996; Habermas 1989) both of which assumes certain levels of what may be termed a critical consciousness. Rather, as Fraser puts it, knowledge of social and political issues is not equally distributed in societies (see Fraser 1996). The notion of rational debate thus presupposes a society with relatively equal and ease of access to

communication platforms where members of society are able to express themselves, which then itself can become a way of excluding sections of the population since societies have differential access to cultural codes (see Fraser 1996; Landes 1988 and Eley 1987). Community radio attempts to bypass such structural barriers as they strive to be accessible, and are committed to the use of local languages, thus bypassing issues of literacy and proficiency in languages used by mainstream media.

Nevertheless, some critics have been very cautious in their theorisation of community radio as a democratic space to capture the voices of the marginalised. For example, Huesca's (1995) experience with the Bolivian tin miners' radio stations compelled him to call for a more conservative approach to the notion of "participation". Rather, his experience has shown that the daily realities of struggle may militate against the full participation by community members. In addition, critiques have also noted that community radio still suffer the constraints and bottlenecks typical to those experienced by corporate mass media where information still flows from the centre down to the people, and that participation tend to be controlled by the moderators in the studios (Huesca 1995; Olorunnisola 2002).

In addition, community radio stations also have to entertain and attract audiences. They are not 24-hour 'civic education' platforms. Many stations indeed do not pay much attention to their public service, participatory and public deliberation mandates, but instead just play music all day. Few stations even feature regular news bulletins – Radio Grahamstown, for example, does not.

2.4 Theories of Journalistic forms best exemplified by Lunchtime Live

From the above context and location, it is easier to understand *Lunchtime Live's reason d'être* as an attempt to move beyond the practices of mainstream journalism and create a more inclusive public sphere. Its overt civic oriented thrust approximates to some liberal pluralist notions of a journalism that envisages a democratic communication system as one reflecting social and cultural diversity as well as one that mediates between citizens and the press through public deliberation (Norris 2004: 118; Dahlgren 1995; Dahlgren & Sparks 1995). It is thus useful to briefly explore these journalistic forms and therefore, the

next section highlights some of these forms of journalism and suggests that, in *Lunchtime Live*, we can note traces of both alternative journalism and public/civic journalism.

2.4.1 Alternative media and Citizen Journalism

Lunchtime Live best exemplifies a form of journalism that can be regarded as "alternative" to the mainstream. Alternative media sets about offering the means for democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from mainstream media (Atton 2002: 4). According to the programme's producers, *Lunchtime Live* seeks to provide a platform that invigorates civil society -- as well as helping to create the conditions in which alternative viewpoints and representation of their social formation are brought into the public domain. This connects with the values of alternative journalism, which aims to convey perspectives not covered by mainstream media, as well as advocating for social change (Haas 2004: 115). This connects with Heller's conception of the vertical and horizontal axes of interaction in society, where the vertical axis involves the interaction between the state and society while the horizontal axis involves interaction between members of society as rights-bearing citizens as they generate solutions to pressing issues in their communities (Heller 2009). This can involve face-to-face interaction in informal circles such as with family, friends, and colleagues, but also involves community and other media.

This in turn links to the insights generated by critics of Habermas's public sphere theory who point out that dominant ideologies are *under* constant threat from "counter public spheres" (Fraser 1996; Landes 1988; Eley 1987). Most importantly, a democratic public sphere is anchored on a pluralistic media system, which allows 'dissident' groups to command an effective communication system, fostering "sectional loyalties" (in the form of class, gender, race, and ethnicity) (Curran 1991:104).

Here it is useful to note Gramsci's theory of hegemony[11] which argues that society is a formation of contests between unstable social coalitions seeking to gain control over strategic institutions by winning the minds and support from within contesting sections of

[11] The notion of hegemony is very complex. Gramsci posits that hegemony is the ideological supremacy of one group over the other, which is achieved through persuasion (though force may be used) by those in leadership and the consent by those led. The dominated accept and support dominance in the belief that it is in their own interest to do so (see Hobsbawm, 1982; Gramsci 1970: 80)

society (see Curran 1996: 132; Dahlgren 1997: 54-55). Gramsci pioneered a theoretical approach that conceptualises ideology as not the monopoly of the ruling class, or as something immutable. For Gramsci, hegemony is an achievement that has to be continuously re-made for it is contestable – ideology can potentially be challenged and redefined (Dahlgren 1997: 54-55; Downing 2001: 16). People's material and social experience constantly remind them of the disadvantages of subordination and thus pose a constant threat to the ruling class (Fiske 1987b: 259). The media provides the platform on which such alternative discourses are popularised, and if the media is accessible enough to a range of publics, dominant discourses are challenged and reformulated. In many ways, that is exactly what *Lunchtime Live*, as a show, seeks to do.

For a country undergoing socio-political and economic change aimed at integrating previously marginalised groups into the mainstream as is the case with South Africa, it may be useful to think in terms of Gramsci's (1971) notions of "*organic* intellectuals"[12], or Freire's (1989) thinking that a working class revolution can best be informed by conscientising the underclass using their everyday language and images that are common to them as a way of instilling a genuine "organic" and 'people-centred" revolution. Gramsci's theorisation was an attempt to articulate the extent to which the working class could generate its own intellectual force, capable of emancipating working class societies on the basis of its organic ties to the thinking and feeling of the subaltern groups (see Fishcman & MaLaren 2005:434; see also Freire 1989).

Development practitioners have appropriated these notions, arguing that radical media should give marginalised communities their natural "voices", opposing the often elite and disembodied language and images used in mainstream. In a paper that examines the initial unfolding of the *Iindaba Ziyafika* citizen journalism project, Steenveld and Strelitz employ the notion of "voice" to suggest that radical media is distinguished from mainstream media precisely through its experimentation with language use so that the "voice" of the marginalised is given the centre stage. This stands in opposition to mainstream approaches which valorise

[12] Whilst intellectuals are elite precisely because of their privileged possession of superior knowledge over others, Gramsci's notion of organic intellectuals moves beyond the class limit of intellectualism, to the function that the intellectual plays in helping ordinary people to think about changing their lives, conceptualised by Gramsci as revolution, i.e. an intellectual who is deeply rooted and organically linked to the daily lives of the subaltern groups (see Fishcman & MaLaren 2005:434; Badaloni 1979: 93).

elite modes of expression that reinforce unequal power relations and reproduce dependence and domination (Steenveld & Strelitz 2010 drawing on Rodriguez 2001 and Downing 2001).

As an analogous experience, Urla (1995) noted how the "free radio" movement (also referred to as alternative radio stations) in the Basque region of Spain was used by the youths as counter-hegemonic tools for registering their disenchantment with party politics (1995: 246). She notes how free radio became a platform for young people's expression of their daily experiences, as well as their concerns with issues of unemployment, lack of housing, compulsory military service and drugs (1995: 248). It is interesting to note the insurgent undertone with which the youths attempted to give voice to their "minoritised language (as well as) their not-so-polite critiques of the state" (Urla 1995:246). Such tendencies find echoes in the kind of language used in *Lunchtime Live*.

2.4.2 Public/civic journalism

Lunchtime Live also displays traits of public journalism, especially in its commitment to promote an active local public sphere where citizens actively participate in the formulation of solutions to their problems. Notable advocates of public journalism (e.g. Rosen 1999; Merritt 1998 and Charity 1995) assert that it is committed to promoting active citizen participation in democratic processes.

Instead of perceiving themselves as disinterested or unconcerned onlookers, journalists should be "political actors" (Haas 2007: 5; Rosen 1998: 7). As will be shown in Chapter 5, the role of a civic or citizen journalist is understood, by *Lunchtime Live's* producers, largely in relation to their role as intermediaries between the state and civil society. Public journalism is also linked to notions of active participation by the public in the political processes of their communities, connecting with Habermas's notions of "deliberative democracy" (Haas 2007: 5). This form of journalism sees citizens as participants as opposed to passive spectators to democratic processes (Haas 2007: 6).

These notions reflect a major shift from mainstream journalism, and other social and newsroom pressures that often force journalists to focus attention on the perspectives of elite actors (Haas 2007: 5-6). Mainstream journalism distances journalists from the

concerns of ordinary citizens and does not promote Heller's (2009) notions of 'horizontal" and "vertical" linkages within society and power blocs. Whilst public journalism has been criticised for lacking a philosophical position regarding the 'public" that it serves, Haas (2007: 26) is of the view that Habermas's (1989) theory of the public sphere together with Fraser's (1996) critique of the same best provides the philosophical position that journalism should take with regards to its conception of the public. He posits that Habermas's notions of "deliberating public" committed to "common deliberation" best provides a philosophical foundation of public journalism (Haas 2007: 26). Such claims also form the thrust underpinning *Lunchtime Live,* especially with its promotion of the use of local language and modes of expression, and the use of mobile-based cell phone technologies to participate in the show.

2.5 South Africa's civil society, the state and the public sphere

Theoretical perspectives of civil society and political involvement

In view of the founding thrust of *Lunchtime Live*; which is to integrate social groups through increased coverage of local news, as well as helping reconnect people to the social and political processes that govern their lives, it is useful to look in more detail at recent work on South Africa's transition to democracy. Writing on the state of democracy in South Africa's post 1994 transition to multicultural democracy, Heller (2009) and Beal et al. (2005) argue that subordinate groups still have limited opportunities for meaningful engagement with the state. Whilst South Africa's Constitution guarantees a range of rights including the freedom of speech and expression, right to free association and to vote for candidates of choice - these rights and freedoms remain *statuses* only without *practice* (Heller 2009: 125 citing Somers 1993; Von Lieres 2005: 22). Therefore, Heller argues, despite the civil liberties and the guaranteed freedoms, South Africa's civil society remains "highly constricted, leaving little room for the practice of citizenship" (Heller 2009). This is so because the state and powerful commercial interests still enjoy overwhelming dominance in supplying and controlling discourses in circulation in the public sphere.

Heller (2009) argues that state dominance in the public sphere militates against a free associational field, and as such issues of concern in the public sphere are shaped by influence

from state authority with little input from the members of the public who often remain non-active in discussing solutions to issues that affect them.

Most importantly, Heller is of the view that this asymmetrical relationship manifests in the "vertical dimension of democracy" (Heller 2009:132), that is the relationship between civil society and the state – because political parties not only monopolize the channels of influence but also exert considerable power in setting the agenda in the public sphere (Heller 2009: 132-3). To borrow from Gramsci's theory of hegemony, the relationship between the state and civil society can thus be conceptualised as relations of domination in which subordinate groups actively consent to and support belief systems and structures of power relations that do not necessarily serve – and indeed, may work against-those groups' interests (see Mumby 1997). Gramsci (1971) as argues that:

> The "normal" exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary regime is characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally…Indeed the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion – newspapers and associations, which, therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied (Gramsci 1970: 80).

As outlined above, Heller (2009) argues that deliberation in the public sphere takes place along two axes: the horizontal and vertical associational axis (Heller 2009: 6), where the horizontal linkage invokes the Tocquevillian view of democracy premised on the interaction among individual members of society as rights-bearing citizens. However, a context of pervasive inequalities that characterise many societies (and specifically South African society) can and do distort the associational 'playing field' and produce a range of political exclusions (Heller 2009: 125) along this imagined horizontal axis. Vertical linkages involve the state-society ties, which can also in turn be weakened by a relatively narrow 'institutional surface area of the state' (Heller 2009: 126). The conceptualisation of these two axes tries to capture both how people come together to generate ideas, identify problems, work out solutions, as 'community', or as "imagined communities" after Benedict Anderson's theorisation (1983), while simultaneously engaging with state power and involving state-based power structures in the formulation of both public opinion and in creating solutions to pressing issues (see Dahlgren 2006: 277).

In addition, Heller's contribution echoes the criticism levelled against Habermas's concept of the public sphere, especially the view that it is premised on the exclusion of a range of social groups along class, gender, race and ethnicity (see Fraser 1996; Landes 1988 and Eley 1987). In South Africa, exclusion from the public sphere is exercised predominantly along the class divide, especially in view of the historical legacy of apartheid, which encouraged differential investment in infrastructure and services on racial grounds (Barnett 1999: 649). Sparks posits that while the apartheid state was capitalist, it was a distinctive form of capitalism he describes as "racial capitalism" (Sparks 2009: 197 citing Louw 2004). This was also reflected in the broadcasting arena where the SABC was originally conceived along the racial divide according to the logic of apartheid, and policy privileged white audiences for whom there was richer supply of media than speakers of African languages (see Bosch 2003: 73; Baker 1996: 213 cited in Sparks 2009: 198).

More recent critics draw attention to the continued domination of privileged groups through the repositioning of partnerships between elites in the post-apartheid era and the continued marginalisation of groups historically disempowered through apartheid (Sparks 2008; Sparks 2009; Wasserman 2010). Sparks is therefore of the view that South Africa's transition to democracy is best explained as an "elite continuity" (Sparks 2008; Sparks 2009). He argues that coupled with the contradictory processes of both the partial democratisation of the media and its simultaneous 'marketisation' during the post-1994 era, the alienated relationship between state and civil society is deepened. This distancing between elites and the mass of ordinary people has inhibited democratic consolidation in post-apartheid South Africa.

Though Sparks uses the theory of elite continuity to analyze South Africa's post-apartheid order, the theory is originally an attempt to explain the fundamental axes along which change has largely taken place in post-communist societies. Among its chief tenets, the theory of elite continuity sees the old communist order reshaping itself into a private capitalist class after transition to democracy and, in terms of media; it reflects a high degree of continuity in structures and personnel, and a highly partisan press (Sparks 2009). By analogy, the sociological and economic consequences of South Africa's ending of apartheid capture a combination of notions of both elite continuity and some democratic renewal (Sparks 2011: 12). For example, SABC still retains its centrality in the broadcasting sector, with, at a level of rhetoric, a commitment to more inclusive approach and demeanour. And while the press

exchanged some ownership between older elites and new BEE[13] elites, it retains many of its core audience who are predominantly white, whilst many 'old titles' still dominate the market (Sparks 2009). Citing Louw (2004), Sparks observes that the beneficiaries of the compromises that enabled South Africa's democracy are predominantly the small black middle class and white large-scale business, while the losers are the country's black underclass, plus few white and coloured Afrikaners who now face political and economic marginalisation (Sparks 2009: 200).

The notion of elite continuity is reflected in the nature of concessions that the main negotiators committed to. For the NP, compromise entailed ending white monopoly and allowing the ANC to participate in elections, whilst for the ANC compromise entailed moving away from radical aims towards policies that respect the needs of business (Gelb 2005: 369 cited in Sparks 2009: 199). The international and domestic power balance in the 1990s meant that even if the ANC came into power, its government would heavily depend on the goodwill of skilled and capital-rich whites, the inherited civil society and overseas donors and investors (Glaser 1997: 8). One can therefore note that whilst the NP relinquished political power, white South Africans, and their international allies have maintained a tight hold over access to capital. This has been true for the media too. For example, Tomaselli (2000) noted that the transfer of media ownership only benefitted a few within the ANC elite, and whilst the previous white owners surrendered their control over nonessential elements of their business, they did so in order to retain their core assets (Tomaselli 2000: 283; Sparks 2009: 203). The erstwhile radical press was absorbed by the more moderate mainstream media. Broadcasting in particular continues to serve the interests of the wealthier sections of the population who are still overwhelmingly white (Sparks 2009: 203).

In the media, the political allies who enjoyed state protection during the apartheid era were replaced by the political allies now enjoying the ANC government's protection (Sparks 2011: 13). In addition, the government still commands greater control of media content both through its continued control of the SABC and, more recently, vigorous attempts to pass restrictive media laws (see also; Sparks 2010; Wasserman 2010). The ANC has been suspicious of the press, and responded through media censorship, and currently, proposals have been forwarded to restrict the availability of information (The Protection of Information

[13] Black Economic Empowerment. This is a government initiated economic policy aimed at economically empowering black South Africans.

Bill) and to regulate the press through a proposed "Media Tribunal" appointed by parliament (Sparks 2011: 14).

2.6 Conclusion

The notions of elite continuity, and contradictions in the vertical and horizontal axis of power (and in particular Heller's formulation of these notions), serve as essential background to understanding the broader socio-political background within which *Lunchtime Live* is located. This theory illuminates where Radio Grahamstown is located, provides a basis for understanding why local politics in Grahamstown might be expected to be fraught, and provides a background for understanding how old elites and new elites vie for power, and how the marginalised struggle for voice -- and resources. This chapter drew on public sphere theory to argue that South Africa's civil society is constricted in its associational capacity as well as its ability to formulate public opinion. It argues that South Africa's socio-political arrangement displays the remnants of apartheid influences characterised by inaccessibility to state power and resources by the civil society. Overall, while the resistance movements that informed the anti-apartheid rule remain intact, government and business, through their resources and influence, still occupy a central position in determining much of the terms of public discourse, and in the process often leave out the voice of the ordinary citizen. Many civic organisations are historically aligned to ANC, and some seem to have become vehicles for the extension of ANC (Glaser 1997: 12; Friedman 1991). Typical of emerging democracies in the third world, the media arena mirrors this through the coupling of media freedom with 'responsibility', where the media is expected to support the government and its national and developmental goals, thus becoming more of a 'guide dog' rather than a 'watchdog' -- even if this means curtailing press freedom (Wasserman 2010: 569; Voltmer 2006: 4; Gurevitch & Blumler 2004: 338; McQuail 2005: 178).[14]

[14] Notions of "guide dog" and "watchdog" are some media and journalism models that theorise the functions of media in democracies. Whilst the "watch dog" function relates to media's responsibility to curtail and criticise the excesses of those in power, the "guide dog" function relates to media's responsibility to help or lead society in making decisions by providing information that encourages society to participate in its own governance (see (Gurevitch & Blumler 2004; McQuail 2005; Wasserman 2010; Voltmer 2006).

CHAPTER 3

AUDIENCE STUDIES: TRACING THE DEVELOPMENT OF RECEPTION ANALYSIS

3. Introduction

The development of audience research is a result of successive attempts to understand the relationship between audiences and media texts. This chapter introduces a brief overview of the major "turns" in perspectives (Bennett 1982: 32) in the development of audience studies and shows how Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model is central and still useful to this tradition. The chapter proceeds to highlight the essence of reception studies in understanding the relationship between *Lunchtime Live* and its audiences.

Overall, major developments in audience research broadly oscillate between two competing perspectives - those theorists who emphasise textual power over audiences and those that emphasise audience power over texts. The early tradition stressing textual power are concerned about the "effects" that media has on its audiences whilst latter debates centre on how the audiences and producers of media texts who share the same cultural codes, make meaning production a shared activity between audiences and texts (Morley 1992: 45; Schroder et al. 2003: 128).

3.1 Early tradition – brief overview of the "effects tradition".

The first major perspective on the relationship between media and audiences was what has been termed media effects studies, predicated on the "hypodermic model" of media influence where the media was seen as having the capacity to "inject" their audiences with particular stimuli (messages). Such inoculations, the theory held, could then cause audiences to behave in particular ways (Morley 1991: 16; Strelitz 2000: 37; Morley 1992: 45; Katz & Lazarsfeld 1955: 16). Mass media was seen as creating "mass audiences" with a "lowest common denominator" of tastes, thus implicitly associating "mass culture", "low taste" and "mass audiences as synonymous (see McQuail 1997: 12).

This was attributed to the twin process of industrialisation and urbanisation, where the urban working class was seen as defenceless against media propaganda and its manipulation, and importantly their lack of education and mindless exhausting labour made them vulnerable to manipulation (McQuail 1997: 12-13). Mass media was also seen as creating dependence for basic psychic needs for its audience in terms of identity and self-realisation, and in the process concealing rather than exposing differences in class interests (see Morley 1991: 16). The mass society tradition is thus characterised by a number of intersecting themes – the decline of the organic community, the rise of mass culture, and the social atomisation of the "mass man" (Bennett 1982: 32; Morley 1991: 16).

The Frankfurt School[15] advanced the strongest version of the mass society thesis. Scholars in this tradition held a negative view of the media, and as a result, their contribution to audience-text relationship generally became known as the "pessimistic thesis". The Frankfurt School's Marxist edge centred on exposing the role played by ideological institutions (media institutions) in reproducing and perpetuating unequal relations of domination. Central to the Frankfurt School's critique is their formulation of the term "culture industries" to describe the mass production and the commercial logic that drive the system of media production (Kellner 1995: 28-29; Strelitz 2000: 37; Fiske 1992: 45). This capitalist production logic was seen as ideologically enslaving an already economically and culturally impoverished working class through standardised media content that provides escapist daydreams that serve to obfuscate unequal power relations.

The pessimistic view of the Frankfurt School reflected the authors' experience of the breakdown of Germany into fascism during the 1930s (McQuail 1999: 12; Morley 1992: 42). They saw mass media as having the effect of cementing fascist hegemony, an effect so wide and never conceived as possible prior to the era of mass media (see O'Sullivan et al. 1994: 168; Brooker & Jermyn 2003: 5). The formulations of the Frankfurt School fused both the Marxist and mass society perspectives to espouse media's effects in impeding the formation of a socialist political consciousness among members of the working class (Bennett 1982: 42). In other words, media was seen as possessing something

[15] The leading figures in the Frankfurt School are Theodore Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Max Hokheimer who were associated with the Institute for Social Research founded in Frankfurt in 1923.

of a hypnotising effect that dulled the potential of the working class from recognising the ideologies purveyed by the ruling class (see Morley 1992: 43) and realising their own oppression, as well as from taking action to end it.

Contributions from the political economy of media have also been instrumental to the development of the effects tradition. Their argument for textual power is premised on their view that the production and distribution of media texts takes place within specific economic conditions that place rigid constraints on the range of textual meanings (see Golding & Murdock 2000; Garnham 1995; Murdock 1990). They are of the view that the system of production determines the range of media texts available as well as the ideological content of those texts. Garnham captures this view thus:

> A delimited social group, pursuing economic or political ends, determines which meanings circulate and which do not, which stories are told and about what, which arguments are given prominence and what cultural resources are made available and to whom. The analysis of this process is vital to an understanding of the power relationships involved in culture and their relationship to wider structures of domination" (Garnham 1995: 65).

By the 1950s and 1960, Robert Merton had provided an early challenge to the media "effects" tradition, and argued that the mass society tradition focuses too much on the contents of propaganda messages (for example, the appeals, rhetorical devices, stereotypes and emotive language of propaganda) at the expense of the "processes of persuasion" (for example which people are persuaded and which are not) (Morley 1992: 47-48).

Even though Merton's contributions did not lead to widespread theoretical reform, Morley noted, it did influence subsequent studies by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955). Subsequent developments of the notions of the "two-step flow" model of communication and of so-called "opinion leaders" and their influence are attributed to this era. The "two-step flow" model recognised the importance of "primary groups" (opinion leaders) who offer a "protective screen" around the individual so that the assumed direct media effects are less powerful (Morley 1992: 48). Their findings revealed that media effects are largely limited to reinforcing what people already know, and that opinion leaders play a dominant role in influencing what people think (Morley 1992: 48; see also Klapper 1960).

Schroder et al are of the opinion that individuals' membership to various groups such as the family, the school, and peer groups determine their cultural identities and communicative repertoires, and it is these forms of socialisations that become other zones of mediation or influences on the meanings assigned to media materials (2003: 5). In this sense, it can be argued that the audiences of *Lunchtime Live* make sense of this programme using a set of cultural repertoires and identities at their disposal, a theme the study will return to later in Chapter 5.

As mentioned earlier in the introduction of this chapter, the assumptions about the broader structure of particular societies, in particular epochs shape the lines of enquiry that bodies of media theory take. Therefore, it is telling to note that the "limited" media influence tradition owes a great deal to the political philosophy of liberal pluralism that is predicated on particular notions of individual autonomy and which, indeed, celebrates such autonomy.

Studies by Katz and Lazarsfeld during elections in America have also shown that media "reinforces" or provides signposts that guide people to vote in predetermined ways that reflected their original intentions (Curran 1996). Studies on moral panic, for example, have shown that media are able to mobilise moral panic around particular issues perceived to be symptomatic of a wider malaise in society, but only because they reinforce existing attitudes and fears (Curran 1996: 150). In similar vein, studies have also shown the success of the tabloid press in mobilising public anger against welfare cheats, for example, by drawing on deeply entrenched animosity against the "undeserving poor", predispositions that can be traced centuries back (Curran 1996: 150). Thus, it is argued, media reinforces "pre-dispositional characteristics" (see Harrop 1987; Blumler & Gurevitch 1982; Blumler & McQuail 1968).

3.2 Shifting Perspectives - Active Audiences

The gravitation towards audience power received a major boost from the contributions of an Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1971; 1981; 1985), briefly alluded to in Chapter 2. Gramsci's theory of hegemony conceptualised society as in constant contest between shifting social formations seeking to gain control over strategic institutions (e.g.

media institutions) by winning the minds and support from within contesting sections of society (see Curran 1996: 132; Dahlgren 1997: 54-55). Gramsci's theory of hegemony sees ideological domination not as 'given' or under the constant monopoly of the ruling class through the media. Rather, it is an achievement that has to be continuously redefined. Ideology can potentially be challenged and redefined (Dahlgren 1997: 54-55) for people's material and social experience constantly remind them of the disadvantages of subordination and thus would, in most cases, pose a constant threat to the ruling class (Fiske 1987b: 259).

The social experience of the subordinate groups provides cultural resources with which to resist the dominant ideology (Fiske 1987b: 258). The media provides the platform through which such contestations of discourses take place, and if the media is accessible enough to a range of publics, dominant discourses are challenged and reformulated.

Uses and Gratifications research

Halloran's much cited phrase: "we must get away from the habit of thinking in terms of what the media do to the people and substitute it for the idea of what people do with the media" (cited in Morley 1992: 51; O'Sullivan et al. 1994: 155) represents a major research shift in reception studies. In this regard, earliest attempts to understand what use audiences make of media were advanced through the *Uses and Gratifications* research during the 1970s and 1980s. Through a number of surveys and focus group studies, researchers found an enormous use that media is put into by the audiences, varying from promoting a sense of belonging, companionship, forging a sense of identity, gaining a feeling of being in control, providing a source of relaxation and pleasure, among other uses (Curran 1996: 127 citing Blumler & Katz 1974; Rosengren et al. 1985; Rubin 1986; Zillman & Bryant 1986).

The *uses and gratification* approach thus perceive media use as a highly selective and motivated activity, during which people use media in the hope that doing so will gratify certain needs (Ang 1990: 159). Therefore, when people use media, they *actively* do so, and their selection of particular programmes is dependent on these media's perceived capability to satisfy their varying needs.

The *uses and gratifications* approach has nonetheless been criticised on a number of premises: firstly, its overemphasis on "individual" uses and gratifications, a similar premise on which the "mass society" tradition and its notions of an "atomised individual" has been criticised. As Morley puts it:

> We need to break away from the uses and gratifications approach, its psychologist problematic and its emphasis on individual, private readings…showing how members of different groups and classes, sharing different cultural codes, will interpret a given message differently, not at the personal idiosyncratic level, but in a way systematically related to their socio-economic position (1992: 54).

Secondly, critics have argued that the model overstates the openness of cultural codes, which renders media messages open to potentially almost unlimited "multiple readings" (see Hall 1980; Morley 1992). For example, Hall (1980) argues that media texts are not totally open and polysemic as such, but that media messages are "structured in dominance", with "varying degrees of closure" (cited in Morley 1992: 52). Curran goes further to posit that the conventional categories of media's role such as educating, informing and entertaining have no relationship with what people *use* media for in practical situations, and these categories are therefore inadequate formulations that are derived from media's manifest content (1996: 127).

Katz (1959) radically posited "even the most potent mass media content cannot ordinarily influence an individual who has no use for it in the social and psychological context which he lives" (Katz 1959 cited in Morley 1992: 49). Further, Katz argues that the uses and gratifications approach failed to locate the qualities that make certain media more attractive than others to satisfy audience needs, and which elements of content help to attract the expectations that the audience seek to gratify (1959). It is against this background that Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model was developed with the view to integrate these two perspectives (Morley 1991: 17).

33 Reception analysis

Research traditions emerging in the 1980s began to call for the possibility of integrating contributions from the two previously contending perspectives of textual power

on the one hand and audience power on the other, and to put these under the banner of reception studies (Jensen & Rosengren 1990). As such, Schroder et al. conceptualised reception research as a "cross-fertilisation project" (2003: 123). For example, reception studies draws from the uses and gratifications perspectives in its formulations that audiences make active choices for media to satisfy particular needs, and from the mass society tradition in its insistence that media texts are encoded under determinate conditions that limit the range of possible meanings.

Many of the most influential contributions arguing for audience power came from Cultural Studies and the work done at the Centre for Contemporary Communication Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University in the 1970s. Cultural Studies draw heavily from semiology, communication theory, sociology and psychology and it argues that although media texts are structured according to well-defined codes and conventions, there is a need to place a deep emphasis on the active choices, and on the uses and interpretations of media materials by their audiences (O'Sullivan et al. 1994: 157; Morley 1991: 17). Indeed, it is anticipated that during focus group discussions, knowledge will be generated about how listeners of *Lunchtime Live* make use of and interpret this show as they interact among themselves as citizens as well as with their political representatives.

The legacy of the Birmingham School is its conceptualisation of media as characterised by constant ideological struggle for definitions of the world (after Gramsci's notions of continual contestation) and whilst this struggle is based on unequal conditions between dominant and repressed social groups, the outcome is fundamentally unpredictable (Schroder et al. 2003: 41). The model makes use of the notions of 'active audiences' by arguing that the audience is at the same time both the receiver and source of message. This is because audiences are able to assign "new" meanings when they read media messages appositionally, thus becoming sources of the new meanings (Mattelart & Mattelart 1998: 89).

Particularly important to these theoretical advances is Halls' encoding/decoding model whose greatest value was that of freeing media texts from "ideological closure" (that media producers "lock" the meaning of media texts, which had been the notion that was predominant in the "media effects" tradition) – and thus shifting away from the emphasis on the texts towards the reader as a site of meaning production (Fiske 1987a:

64). Hall's encoding/decoding model marks an important turning point in British Cultural Studies, and its legacy informs the dominant view taken by researchers in reception studies. Because of its centrality to reception studies, a brief outline of Hall's encoding/decoding model provides the necessary springboard for the research done with audiences of *Lunchtime Live*.

3.4 Foundation of Reception Analysis: the encoding/decoding model and its theoretical gains

The encoding/decoding model was precursor to the focus on audiences as the key site of meaning making, opening up the idea that texts do not have a single meaning, but rather are relatively open, capable of being read in different ways by active audiences who will not necessarily accept the dominant position being "preferred" (Fiske 1987b: 260; Strelitz 2000: 38) by the creators of the content.

Key tenets of Hall's (1980) model are three possible "reading positions" that audiences can adopt. Firstly, the *dominant* reading position produced by a viewer situated to agree with and accept the ideology and the subjectivity the text produces. Secondly, the *negotiated* reading is produced by a viewer who fits in the dominant ideology in general, but inflects it locally to take account of his or her social position. These viewers are situated not in a position of conformity or opposition to the dominant ideology, but in positions that conform to it in some ways, but not others. Even though they accept the dominant ideology in general, they modify it to meet their specific situations. Finally, the *oppositional* reading produced by those whose social position puts them into direct opposition with the dominant ideology (Hall 1980; Schroder et al. 2003; Fiske 1987). During data analysis in Chapter 5, it is anticipated that these different 'reading" positions will be indicative of the nature of the relationship between *Lunchtime Live* and its audiences.

Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model proposes that media texts have meaning within the terms of reference supplied by the codes and repertoires that the audiences share, to some greater extend, with the producers of the messages (Morley 1991: 17; Strelitz 2000: 46). Again, as will be shown during the discussion of data obtained from

group discussions, emphasis will be placed on whether the sharing of both a cultural and geographical space by the audiences and producers of *Lunchtime Live* has any significant bearing on the meanings and importance assigned to *Lunchtime Live*.

The central focus of Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model is that it shows an association between audiences' social situation and the meaning that audiences may potentially generate from media messages. It takes a position that readers are engaged in the productive work of making meanings, or co-making meanings, but under determinate conditions – and these conditions are produced both by the text, the producing institutions and the social history of the audiences (Morley 1989: 19). In this context therefore, it is anticipated that the meanings assigned to *Lunchtime Live* by its listeners are likely to be shaped by their socio-political and economic context as described in Chapter 1, as much as by the intention of the producers.

When analysing media text such as *Lunchtime Live*, one is not dealing with a fixed structure of meaning, but rather with a complex exchange of experiences at the disposal of the producers of *Lunchtime Live* and its listeners intersect (Schroder et al. 2003: 128). In line with this, Hall's (1980) model hypothesises the possible tensions that may be generated between the structure of the text, which bear the dominant meaning (ideology), and the social situations of viewers, which may put them in opposition to that meaning (ideology) (Fiske 1987b: 260). Reading or viewing media then, Fiske continues, becomes a process of negotiation between the viewer and the text (Fiske 1987a: 260). As Morley puts it also, the meaning of a text is determined by the outcome of the encounter between a set of discourses that the reader brings and those brought by the text (Morley 1992).

The production of meaning is therefore, a shared practice, or better still, as the constructionist approach proposes, 'things don't just mean' we *construct* meaning (Hall 1982). Reality does not exist independently; it is produced through the "labour of *making things mean*" through a process better known as "signifying practice" (Hall 1982: 64). The encoding/decoding model thus straddles across two opposing spectrums; the dominant text view and the dominant audience view (Abercrombie 1996).

3.5 Essentials of Reception studies

The essence of reception studies is that it opens up more avenues for enquiring about the 'impact' *Lunchtime Live*. For example, it helps the researcher think about whether indeed the context of consumption of this radio show has any impact on the nature of its relationship with its audiences and the potential meanings assigned to it. As Thompson puts it, to understand the way people appropriate and make meaning of media texts (including their perception of the world), it is crucial to first reconstruct the context of consumption and examine the social relations, institutions and distribution of power and resources (1988: 368) within which such media is consumed. An understanding of the Grahamstown East community's perception of *Lunchtime Live* may not easily be divorced from the nature of the community's social relations, the social institutions that shape the community's values and the manner in which power and resources are distributed.

As such, it is these particular social relations and institutional arrangements that media producers consider when producing programmes for a particular market, allowing them to modify their contents accordingly (Thomson 1988: 368). Chapter 1 of the study has already made a case that the Grahamstown East community is something of microcosm of the broader South African society. It manifests some residues of apartheid, and the conditions of a largely elite transition, as seen in the vastly unequal access to power and resources on the basis of race and class (see Sparks 2009; Wasserman 2010; Heller 2009; Beall et al. 2005; Barnet 1999). Drawing on reception theory, this socio-political and economic arrangement has a relative influence on the manner in which the Grahamstown East community relates with *Lunchtime Live*, especially the extent to which the show is able to 'tap' into the people's experiences, and provide a platform for the exercise of democratic participation on the local public sphere.

As suggested above, rather than viewing the media as all-powerful in setting terms with which to understand the world, reception studies acknowledge that audiences are "active" interpreters of media meanings, sometimes in complicity with or directly opposed to the dominant reading of media texts (Jensen 1987; Jensen 1988; Morley 1982; Hall 1980). The structured break between the producers of media messages and recipients means that recipients of mediated messages are, so to speak, left to their own devices (Thompson 1995: 29). Jensen (1988) posits that audiences themselves:

> are characterised by their strategies of understanding, what is sometimes referred to as interpretive communities, and these communities may criss-cross the socio-economic categories thus contributing to what appears to be a wide variety of decoding possibilities" (1988: 4).

He further posits that the audiences themselves could be conceived as texts that need to be analysed with the text of the media (1988: 4) and as such this particular study takes cognisance of the centrality of the audiences as texts whose social experiences cannot be divorced during the analysis of *Lunchtime Live*. The audiences may constitute what has been referred to as "interpretive communities" (Ang 1990; see also Jensen 1988) whose sharing of relatively similar cultural codes facilitates a certain understanding of the world that is only accessible if one is a member of that culture, or has an understanding of their context of experience.

The text/audience nexus in reception analysis is thus deeply embedded in the *social context* of everyday life in which people use the media. In the process of making meaning, the audiences of *Lunchtime Live* employ codes or interpretive repertoires acquired and developed through their social and cultural experience (Schroder et al. 2003: 124). Reception studies' focus is on the social and historical contexts that help people to make sense of media texts in ways that are meaningful to and accessible to their daily experiences (Schroder et al. 2003: 122). This study is principally interested in understanding the audiences' appropriation of meanings from a community radio programme in the specific context of Grahamstown, and uses the available literature about this area of study to see how this has a bearing on the appropriation of meaning to this cultural product, with particular reference to the community's understanding of and relationship with the local power elites.

Reception analysis is interested in the 'social meanings', that is, meanings that are culturally shared by communities that share "commonalities of experiences". To highlight this, Ang uses the term "interpretive communities" or "subcultures" to denote groups of people who make common interpretations of texts (Ang 1990: 16).

Johnson's notions of (1987) 'circuit of culture' best captures the interconnections that exist between media institutions, journalists and their audiences and how these influence the manner in which media construct and represent the world. It offers a starting

point from which to begin to understand news as a 'social construct', produced by organisations and individuals who are part of the society which it influences, and is in turn influenced and shaped, by these cultural products (see Johnson 1987).

Chapter 5 of this study will analyse how *Lunchtime Live's* 'embeddedness' in the community, especially how its community-oriented shows as well as its use of citizen journalists who live in the community of its target audience, is implicated in the audiences' perception of it. As outlined above, Johnson's model acknowledges that media institutions "tap" from the lived realities of these same audiences, together with the cultural experiences of the journalists that work in the media institutions (Johnson 1983; du Gay et al. 1997; Hall 1997). The conceptualisation of news as a 'social construct', as highlighted above, is greatly implicated in Cultural Studies' insistence on audiences as 'co-producers' of meaning.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the basic understandings and theoretical trajectory that inform reception research and has argued that this tradition is a product of a cross-pollination of successive traditions that sought to understand the relationship between media texts and audiences. The chapter outlined a trajectory of reception research that can be traced to early traditions of the hypodermic model of media influence (Morley 1991: 16; Morley 1992: 45; Katz & Lazarsfeld 1955: 16) and the critique of this via, especially, input from various Cultural Studies theorists and the work at the Centre for Contemporary Communication Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University in the 1970s. This shifted the locus of power from those producing the media, and of media texts in and of themselves, to an understanding of audiences as actively involved in the production of meaning. Reception research thus combines a qualitative approach to media as texts, producing and circulating meaning in society, with an empirical interest of audiences as co-producers of meaning (Jensen 1988: 3).

The usefulness of reception studies to this particular study is that, as a research tradition, it is concerned with exploring the various factors that have a bearing on the manner in which audiences make meaning of *Lunchtime Live*. The socio-political background and context outlined in Chapter 1 is anticipated to assist the researcher in

determining whether the context of consumption has any particular implications for reception and meanings mobilised by listeners consuming *Lunchtime Live*.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

4 Introduction

In the quest to generate empirical data on the meanings that the listeners of *Lunchtime Live* amass from this show, the study uses a qualitative research design informed by reception theory as discussed in Chapter 3. Emphasis is thus placed on how the audience appropriate and actualize the meanings they draw from *Lunchtime Live* in their interaction with it, as well as amongst themselves as audiences with specific focus on their understanding of and relationship with a broadly conceived "local" politics. To achieve this, the study conducted an empirical analysis of "media discourses" with "audience discourses" (see Jensen & Rosegren 1990: 219; Jensen 1988: 3) so as to understand how listening to this radio show could be a site for the rekindling of public discourses in an environment where the mainstream media largely exclude the poor and marginalised communities.

This chapter describes and discusses the research design used by this study. It proceeds by outlining the philosophical premises informing reception research (the foundation of which was established in Chapter 3), the epistemological foundations of reception research, the research and sampling procedure (qualitative content analysis and focus group discussions) and the data analysis procedures.

4.1 Research design and procedure

4.1.1 Qualitative Research and its Philosophical consideration

The methodological approach informing this study was principally qualitative. Jensen (1988: 4) observes that qualitative empirical methods of data gathering are closely associated with reception studies. The goal of qualitative methods is accessing the "insider" perspectives characteristic of members of a culture (or subcultures) (Priest 1996:103; Babbie & Mouton 2001: 271). The philosophical underpinnings of qualitative

research are deeply rooted in phenomenology, and phenomenology takes the actor's perspectives as the starting point (Bryman 1984: 77) or, as others have put it, phenomenology is committed to seeing through the eyes of the observed (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 28). Phenomenology is a research tradition that allows the researcher to immerse themselves in the lives of the studied population, in order to explore some of the taken-for granted assumptions about particular social formations, allowing the researcher to explain these in the manner experienced. The data gathering methods associated with phenomenology are open interviewing, ideographic descriptions and qualitative content analysis (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 33; Bryman 1984: 77-78).

The attempt to understand the meanings assigned to *Lunchtime Live* therefore required the researcher to capture the accounts, discussions and understandings expressed by the radio programme's listeners, as they emerged through group interviews. Qualitative researchers enter the field of research to "produce" rather than to "verify" knowledge (as is the case with quantitative researchers), and as such qualitative research can be conceived as "inductive" in that it seeks to build bodies of knowledge or new theories (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 273). Qualitative research emphasises the possibility of discovering novel or unanticipated findings, and is open to possibilities of altering research plans in view of unforeseen occurrences (Bryman 1984: 78).

This is opposed to quantitative research, which tends to analyse social behaviour from the outside and impose empirical concerns upon social formations (Bryman 1984: 78). Qualitative researchers seek to build new theories, and as such they face the prospect of not knowing what it is they don't know whereas quantitative researchers "know" (in principle) and embark on a quest to verify what they already know (Bryman 1984: 78). It is in this sense that qualitative research has become associated with various terminology, such as "constructionist approach" (thus seeking to construct knowledge), theory generating, inductive, interpretive, and a hermeneutic approach (see Bryman 1984; Babbie & Mouton 2001).

Another important philosophical issue critical in qualitative research is the way it deals with matters of the generalisability of its findings. Generalisability may be defined as:

> [T]he extent to which one can extend the account of a particular situation or population to other persons, times or settings than those directly studied (Maxwell 1992: 293).

Qualitative research does not allow for immediate generalisation of its findings to wider populations for it acknowledges that it is not possible to understand everything, even in small settings (Maxwell 1992: 293). The limitations for the generalisability of qualitative research findings can be traced to the sampling techniques normally used, which are usually purposeful or theoretical (Maxwell 1992: 293) rather than random sampling or other methods of attaining statistical representativeness such as those used in quantitative research. As will be shown below, this study used a purposive sampling technique.

Maxwell (1992) distinguishes between two aspects of generalisability: external generalisability and internal generalisability. External generalisability involves generalising findings to other communities, groups or institutions whilst internal generalisation involves generalising findings within the community, group, or institution studied to persons, events, and settings that were not directly observed or interviewed (Maxwell 1992: 293). This study was committed to producing internal generalisability by producing careful accounts or "thick" descriptions of the population studied (Maxwell 1992), making clear the unique, idiosyncratic meanings and perspectives constructed by individuals and groups who live in Grahamastown (see Cho & Trent 2006: 328).

Coming at this issue from a different perspective, Bryman used the terms monothetic, to denote quantitative research traditions and ideographic, to denote qualitative research traditions. As such, monothetic traditions establish "general law-like findings" which can be deemed to hold irrespective of time and place (and therefore, can be generalised to larger populations), whilst ideographic traditions "locate findings in time-specific locales", and the generalisability of such findings may not be possible (Bryman 1988: 100). Although this study likewise is located within the ideographic tradition, some of the conclusions this study will make can be used to illuminate some of the major concerns besetting South Africa's transition to democracy, and the way the media in particular is involved and implicated.

4.1.2 Epistemological foundations of reception studies

The research methods used in this study hinges on the theoretical positions suggesting how to conduct reception studies. This section briefly outlines the epistemological imperatives of reception research. Epistemological issues can be broadly defined as the assumptions about what we are able to know about the social world, and how we can access this knowledge (see Spicer 2004: 294). Qualitative research takes a position that accounts of reality are never absolute but rather are relative to, and dependent on, communities of inquirers on whose perspective the account is based (Maxwell 1992: 284). This is contrasted to quantitative research's assumptions about knowledge that hinge on presupposed sets of theories of what should pass as warrantable knowledge and obtainable through the application of scientifically based methods. Quantitative research's assumption of knowledge is that there exist some absolute truth/reality which can be established by applying rigorous, systematic, and objective scientific procedures to get reliable and valid knowledge (see Cho & Trent 2006: 319; Maxwell 1992: 283; Bryman 1984: 77).

As indicated above, researchers attempt to go into the field without sets of preconceived assumptions or hypotheses of what they are studying. Nevertheless, this is not to imply that there is no place for validity in qualitative research. Rather, one applies the concept of validity primarily to accounts, not methods:

> The application of the concept of validity does not depend on the existence of some absolute truth or reality to which an account can be compared, but only on the fact that there exist ways of assessing accounts that do not depend entirely on features of the account itself, but in some way relate to those things that the account claims to be about (Maxwell 1992: 283).

Therefore, the epistemological foundation of reception research is principally anchored on the qualitative methods of accessing knowledge through the medium of "extended talk" with the researched (Schroder et al. 2003: 147). It seeks to highlight the audience's experiences with *Lunchtime Live* by allowing those involved to talk their experiences in an open situation of the qualitative research interview, where they have considerable power to influence the agenda (Schroder et al. 2003: 147). Reception research view audiences as "co-producers" of meaning, and argues that the social setting of

consumption produces “interpretive communities” that help to shape the meaning that audiences assign to media texts (Jensen 1988). As such, this study is interested in analysing the meanings obtained at the “interface” between *Lunchtime Live* and audiences, with emphasis on audiences as actively involved in the production of meanings in their day to day experience with this show (Jensen 1988: 3). Also worth noting is that, as with other methodologies in audience research, the data and findings of a reception study should be seen as discursive constructions produced jointly by the researcher and the informants’ interaction in the research encounter and by the researcher interpreting the interview transcripts (Mabweazara & Strelitz 2006).

4.2 Research Procedure and Sampling

The study adopted a two-staged research design, which enabled corroboration of data obtained through one technique with the other. The section below outlines the two stages of the research process and the sampling procedures applied; qualitative content analysis and focus group discussions:

4.2.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

This study principally used focus group discussions to access verbalised accounts of the audience of *Lunchtime Live’s* understanding of its value, particularly in terms of their understanding of, and involvement in, local politics and issues relating to local government in Grahamstown. To be prepared as facilitator in these focus group interviews, the researcher conducted a qualitative content analysis of recorded transcripts of *Lunchtime Live* episodes allowing the researcher to first develop an understanding of the media product under study (following techniques suggested by Schroder et al. 2003: 154). By definition, content analysis is a technique used for gathering and analysing the content of media texts and how they are combined. Content analysis refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas and themes and how these are combined in a media text (Deacon et al. 1999).

Qualitative content analysis is an approach that examines the relationship between the text and its likely audience, acknowledging that different users can possibly read media content differently. It is an interpretive approach that explores the meanings that are

embedded in media representation, as opposed to the frequency of particular themes (Neuman 1997: 273). Attempts to understand the value of *Lunchtime Live* in the lives of the listeners required, as Jensen & Rosengren (1990: 214) suggest, a comparative examination of the audience data with the content data.

What characterises reception analysis is, above all, an insistence that studies include a comparative analysis of media discourses with audience discourses – content structures with the structure of audience responses regarding content (Jensen & Rosenrgen 1990: 214).

In addition, analysing the contents of *Lunchtime Live* enabled the researcher to, as Alasuutari puts it, explore how meaning is "organised" in *Lunchtime Live*, and the ways in which audience experiences are mediated and negotiated (1995: 27). To this end, therefore, the researcher used content analysis to familiarise with the ways in which *Lunchtime Live* texts are constructed and especially, the preferred meanings inscribed in it. The preferred meanings of the *Lunchtime Live* text may also be traced to its editorial objectives. This study, as will be explored in Chapter 5, created a comparison of what Abercrombie (1996) refers to as the dominant text view and the dominant audience view to gauge what sense the audiences of *Lunchtime Live* make of it.

Nevertheless, as Schroder et al. further advised, it was considered necessary to abstain from a very detailed preliminary textual analysis of *Lunchtime Live*, but rather just to familiarise oneself with the programme sufficiently to be able to pursue the research question that motivates this study (2003: 126). As the study is principally audience research, it sought to background the voice of the researcher and foreground that of the audience so as to access the audience's perspectives of this cultural product.

The researcher acknowledges some of the weaknesses of this method. For example, Hansen et al. points out that content analysis is never value-free because it starts by delineating certain dimensions or aspects of the text for analysis, and in so doing, involves making subjective choices of what to analyse (1998: 95). In addition, content analysis has been accused of lacking a theory of meaning, and the difficulty of making informed inferences either from text to intensions and factors surrounding the production of texts, or from text to their social impact, influence, interpretations and reception (Hansen et al. 1998: 94). Despite this, content analysis of the programme was considered

necessary in order to prepare the researcher to conduct focus group discussions with an informed knowledge of the content under study.

The study therefore analysed selected samples of both actual audio recordings, and transcripts of the *Lunchtime Live* show's episodes that the researcher recorded. The purported claims of the programme were for later comparison with the actual listeners' experiences after the focus group discussions. The aim was to identify gaps, if any, between the editorial thrust of the show obtainable through content analysis, and the *actual sense* of it made by the listeners. Qualitative content analysis thus helped the researcher to identify the "preferred meanings" encoded in this news programme, setting the backdrop for the subsequent focus group discussions with the audience on their attitude to the show, their perception of it and political significance of its contents.

From the inception of the show in August 2010, the *Iindaba Ziyafika* Project has recorded and archived all the radio shows broadcast until March 2011. Given that the show broadcasts twice a week, translating into 8 times a month, a total of 32 shows had been recorded by end of March 2011. (The total of 32 arises out of the fact that the station closed down because of public holidays by mid December 2010 and opened later in February 2011). This period was politically significant to the civil society because it covers a period during which South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) embarked on a nationwide strike in May 2010 demanding higher wages. Effectively, the salary negotiations between SAMWU (a working class union representing the largely underpaid municipal employees) reflect the on-going power struggles between the small but powerful state elites and the working class majority. Following this, the country held municipal elections in May 2011. 2010 was also significant in that it is the period when the government lobbied for the Protection of Information Bill (POIB), a Bill that mandates the state to classify some information as inaccessible to the public. With eight shows in a month, the researcher deemed it adequate to analyse two samples a month, and thus creating a sampling frame of 16 shows for the eight months from August 2010 to March 2011.

This sampling frame was divided into the total population of 32 to give an interval of two. This was used as the starting point so that every second element in the

sampling frame of 32 shows was selected to give a total of 16 shows. Therefore, a total of 16 shows were analysed.

From this sample, only the more 'political' features of each show were examined (i.e. not music or the weather reports for example). The researcher was able to identify five typical categories that form a day's broadcast and these were considered for content analysis. These usually feature at least one story that relates to the functioning of the Grahamstown Municipality, a focus on a particular ward, and then, crime reports, and some arts, culture, and sports stories. In principle, the content categories that were selected for analysis approximate to what Hansen et al. (1998) refer to as the content that is "about" or that refers to the subject or is relevant to the research question (p 105). The study focused its analysis on the show's ward-to-ward feature, municipal report, the crime report feature and sport. *Lunchtime Live* was analysed in terms of its particular representation of the dynamics of life in the communities, the construction of the producer and the assumed audience identities, the mode of address, the sources used, and the stories highlighted or ignored. As Morley puts it, when analysing these media texts, it is important to look at the assumptions that lie behind the content:

> There will be assumptions made about the audience and these assumptions need to be made visible if we are to understand the implicit messages which a programme/text may transmit over and above what is explicitly said in it (1992: 84).

The mode of address -- that is how the stories "speak" to the audiences -- helps construct the relationship between the audience and the text (Morley 1992: 83). As explored in Chapter 3, Morley further suggests that to understand the relationship between text and audience may require one to examine two distinct types of constraints on the production of meaning, that is, the internal structures and mechanisms of the text that invites and blocks certain readings and the cultural background of the reader, which has to be read sociologically (Morley 1992: 75). In order for the researcher to understand the latent meanings inscribed in *Lunchtime Live's* representation of the social world, the study found it necessary to go beyond content analysis and use other methods of investigation that enabled the researcher access the audience-based understanding of the media text. This necessitated the use of focus group discussions.

4.2.2 Focus Group Discussions

The focus group interview is the most widely used qualitative research technique in reception studies. This is because it assists in answering the concerns about how readers "interpret", make sense of, interact with, and create meaning out of media content within their social context (see Maun & Posel 1998: 116; Silverman 2004: 178; Ruddock 2001: 135-136). Focus groups allow participants to "verbalise" their experiences with media products, allowing the researcher to explore the processes through which recipients actualise media meanings and incorporate them in meaningful ways into their lives (see Schroder et al. 2003: 122; Ang 1990: 162).

Focus group interviews brought together small groups of people to participate in a planned discussion of *Lunchtime Live*. The aim is to allow participants to discuss the programme and bring out data and insights in ways that simulates how they would 'naturally' generate and appropriate meaning to it in their normal day-to-day interactions (Hansen et al. 1998: 281). Fiske posits that it is important that media texts resonate with audience experiences, arguing that for media messages to make sense to audiences, they must "provoke conversation", and it is by taking up and re-circulating news orally that people construct aspects of the public sphere as relevant to their own (Fiske 1992). It is these re-circulated discourses that take place in the public sphere that the researcher sets up focus groups to bring out.

Despite cynicism by qualitative researchers about the possibility of accessing "true accounts of reality", researchers who engage in qualitative interviewing are usually of the epistemological position that it may be possible to access at least 'truer' accounts of reality. This can be noted in some trends in social research insisting that if a trusting and close relationship can be established between the researcher and the researched, it is possible to access true or at least truer accounts of the social formation. As such the researcher made efforts to establish rapport and trust with the prospective group participants whenever they visited the radio station. A trusting relationship between the researcher and the researched allows for spontaneity and honest conversations to take place. As Seal (1998) puts it:

> [A]uthentic accounts of what 'things are really like' will be given in moments of emotional intimacy where souls are bared and pretence is stripped away. Getting past defences, or falsity, through developing trusting and honest relationships can sometimes become almost an end in itself (Seal 1998: 209).

In addition, because of their interactive nature, focus group discussions simulate a public sphere where individuals freely and openly discuss issues and in the process generate rich and believable qualitative data (Lunt 1996; Deacon 1999: 55). They allow for candid and normal environment where participants discuss, debate and disagree about key issues. Whilst other scholars think that focus group discussions have some disadvantages -- of sometimes being dominated by some group members who may want to impose their views over others -- a counter-response to this is given by scholars who posit that focus groups resemble real life situations where some individuals are more influential than others (Hansen et al. 1998: 263).

4.2.3 Sampling and recruitment of groups

Ruddock argues that sampling for focus group discussions is flexible, dependent on the situation and the criteria that the researcher finds appropriate for a particular study (2001: 133). For these reasons, this study used the non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher purposively selected known active listeners of *Lunchtime Live* and, through 'snowballing', further contacts were suggested. The researcher benefited from attending *Lunchtime Live's* diary meetings and was able to identify some active listeners who frequented the radio station during their errands in town. After agreements, the researcher took their contact numbers. Emphasis was placed on members who were residents of Grahamstown East, and had a shared symbolic connection in the regular listening to *Lunchtime Live* (see Schroder et al. 2001: 13; Ang 1990: 160). This allowed the researcher to engage with "naturally occurring groups of like-minded people" (Lunt & Livingstone 1996: 82) as these people are symbolically connected through the consumption of the same media product. The researcher used this sampling method because it enabled some balancing of selected members' demographic variables such as gender, age and class. Also, it was important to select members who were willing to provide the desired information and had something to say about *Lunchtime Live* as well as

being representative of the population (Schroder et al. 2003: 159-160; Hansen et al. 1998: 265). Each group was made up of mixed categories of men and women whose ages range from 20 to 50 years to encourage diversity of opinion (Lunt & Livingstone 1996: 82).

Hansen et al. (1998: 265) argue that one should conduct at least six group interviews until the responses repeat themselves and no new ideas are generated. Whilst there is no unanimity in the number of group members, some scholars propose between 5 and 10 (Deacon 1999: 57), 6 and 10 (Hansen et al. 1998: 270), whilst Schroder et al. suggest between 3 and 4 members in order for the moderator to effectively manage the group (2003: 162). An important consideration in determining group size is the issue of manageability of the group by the moderator as well as the opportunity to give all members the chance to participate (Merton et al. 1990: 137). Vaughn et al. are of the view that large groups are difficult to manage whilst small groups fail to generate debate (1996: 51). This research held six group discussions, ranging between three and five members per group. This was mainly due to the resources available to the researcher and the number of listeners willing to take their time off from their daily chores to participate in the group discussions.

Efforts were made to select neutral and convenient interview venues so that the participants feel comfortable. In this case, two group interviews were conducted at a community hall in Joza Extension 9 (located in the townships), three at the premises of Radio Grahamstown in the city centre and one in one of Rhodes University's seminar rooms. These were largely neutral settings for both the participants and the interviewees. As moderator, the researcher's task was to make the participants feel at ease and comfortable during the discussions, the intention being to make them speak freely about their experiences with *Lunchtime Live* (see Schroder et al. 2003: 143). The study played excerpts of selected episodes of the show in order to simulate the audiences 'normal' listening situations and thereafter, got the audiences to speak freely about the show (see Schroder et al. 2003: 111; Lunt & Livingstone 1996: 275; Hansen et al. 1998: 275). Immediately after playing these excerpts, discussants where asked to speak about these particular shows and as the discussions progressed, the moderator asked questions encompassing their general experience with *Lunchtime Live* generally as they listen to it every day.

Overall, the interviews with listeners of *Lunchtime Live* comprised of 40 interviewees, aged between 20 and 50 years, all of whom are residents of Grahamstown East. There were 22 men and 18 women among the group. Of these, 2 men and 2 women participants were 'coloureds'.

In addition to the discussions held with the listeners, and for the purposes of getting producer-centric views of what *Lunchtime Live* is actually trying to achieve, the researcher also convened another group discussion with the producers of the show. This group consisted of the citizen journalist's Editor affiliated with *Lunchtime Live*, the producer of the show, and three citizen journalists who source stories for the show as well as present them.

4.2.4 The Interview Guide

In conducting the group discussions, the researcher followed an interview guide with a list of questions revolving around the research's objectives as highlighted in Chapter 1. As Deacon (1999: 66) advises, the researcher conducted pre-test sessions with the interview guide and recorded the discussions with the intention of noting areas of improvements on the techniques of interrogation. Lessons drawn from the pre-test group informed subsequent group interviews. An audio reorder was used to capture the data during these group discussions. As moderator, the researcher also asked follow-up questions to verify statements said earlier. In an attempt to make the discussions more conversational, the researcher employed other interpersonal techniques that saw the researcher attempting to engage in "real" conversation with "give and take" as well as treating respondents as equals to elicit honesty and realistic responses (see Daniels 1983). A Xhosa-speaking citizen journalist[16] who lives in the same community was in attendance to probe issues further in a vernacular language where participants could express themselves fully and to their satisfaction, in English. The citizen journalist assistant had been carefully briefed about the key objectives of the research. Even though the moderator allowed participants room to indulge in extended elaborations, attempts were made that the

[16] Many thanks to Kwanele Butane, the Citizen Journalist Editor who took his time off his busy schedule to help with during group discussions as well as translating isiXhosa into English.

discussions did not stray too far from the key questions of the research (Fontana & Frey 1994371).

The interview guide served the purpose of guiding the discussions so that they focus on relevant topics. As put by Schroder et al. (2003: 156), it was 'like' the agenda. Whilst the interview guide was prepared in advance, the researcher was not limited to asking the questions provided in the interview guide since it came out that some unanticipated information would pop out, allowing the researcher to ask respondents to explain farther. Before interviews commenced, the researcher sought permission to record the interviewees' discussions, and guaranteed them confidentiality (Hansen et al. 1998: 277). The voice recorder was also tested before the commencement of discussions to ensure that the equipment was functional. Members were asked to identify themselves with biographical information such as name, age, sex, employment status and residential location before more detailed discussions began. This information was later useful in relating their responses to social class and socio-cultural influences on the way they perceived *Lunchtime Live*

A similar approach was used during interviews with the producers and citizen journalists involved in creating the show.

4.3 Data analysis procedures

All the interviews were transcribed and those in isiXhosa were translated into English for purposes of analysis. Efforts were made to ensure the interview data retained its original sense and meaning during transcription. The researcher made effort to transcribe all the data into print as early as possible when memories of the discussions were still fresh. After this, these notes were read and re-read in order to increase familiarity, picking up particular themes and noting contradictions and agreements among groups where these could be found. This data was then analysed and interpreted, taking cognisance of the fact that group interviews are not finished accounts of the audience's experience with *Lunchtime Live* (see Jensen 1988: 4). As the data was recorded verbatim, the researcher's role was that of analysing these into meaningful and coherent accounts of the audience's experiences, picking out the most salient themes (see Jhally and Lewis cited

in Ruddock 2001: 138-139). Thus thematic coding was used as the mode of analysis. Jensen explains this method as an inductive categorisation of the interview transcripts into concepts, headings or themes (Jensen 1982: 247). This is a complex process that involves comparing and contrasting the different elements of meaning.

4.4 Difficulties Encountered

Whilst the research process generally went well, some challenges were experienced in the field. One related to bringing together all the expected discussants at the discussion venue. For example, in one of the two groups conducted in Joza Location, not all the members turned up as two of them gave excuses. As a result, the discussion went on with only three instead of the planned five members. In one instance, a group discussion had to be cancelled and rescheduled for another day since three of the five members could not make it because of other commitments. However, with patience and persistence, all the planned group discussions were conducted.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter mapped out the research design and procedure implemented by the study. As highlighted in chapter 3, the methodological approach to this study is principally qualitative and, as Jensen (1988: 4) observes it is the qualitative empirical methods of data gathering that are most closely associated with reception studies. The study used a two-staged research design of qualitative content analysis and focus group discussions of both the listeners and the producers of the show. The data collected from these techniques will be analysed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

5. Introduction

As outlined in previous chapters, this study is an investigation into the meanings made by listeners of *Lunchtime Live*, a 'talk-back' live format discussion show broadcast on a small community radio station – Radio Grahamstown – which uses citizen journalists to generate much of its pre-prepared content. The audience of this twice-weekly show is composed of predominantly Grahamstown's black community who are somewhat marginalised from mainstream media (Berger 2007). Building on the theoretical standpoints articulated in previous chapters, this chapter presents the findings of the research with the objective to understand *Lunchtime Live's* value in the everyday lives of the listeners, particularly in terms of their understanding of, and involvement in, local politics and issues relating to local government in Grahamstown.

In view of the above-mentioned, this chapter presents the findings and analyses the data obtained from content analysis of *Lunchtime Live,* interviews with the producers of the show, as well as accounts of its audience's experiences with the programme to understand this show's role in the local public sphere. Content analysis was conducted on 16 shows recorded between August 2010 and March 2011. To facilitate the analysis of data gathered through focus group discussions, which is the primary data collecting method used by this study; this chapter begins by discussing data obtained through qualitative content analysis.

5.1 Qualitative content analysis findings

Qualitative content analysis of *Lunchtime Live* was conducted to establish its content as a community news programme. As indicated in Chapter 4, the study abstained from in-depth textual analysis as qualitative content analysis was carried out to familiarise the researcher with the media product under study as well as to prepare the researcher for

the in-depth focus group discussions that followed. Through qualitative content analysis, the following salient features about *Lunchtime Live* were explored: news selection practices, news orientation (and the implied desired relationship with audiences), assumed audiences, as well as *Lunchtime Live's* relationship with the local power elites within Grahamstown. These will be explored below, but first a rudimentary structure of the contents of the *Lunchtime Live* show is shown in the table below:

Name of Section	**Issues covered**
Ward to ward feature	Issues happening in particular wards of the Makana Municipality. These range from development projects implemented by the municipality to service delivery issues
Crime report	Police awareness/report on crime incidents in the community, police activities in the community.
Arts and culture	News on local artists, visiting artists, entertainment guide for the weekend, arts activities taking place in the community halls.
Sport	Sport news for local schools, local community teams, visiting teams
Weather	Weather report for Grahamstown

5.1.1 Lunchtime Live's newsroom production practices

An analysis of the content of the show needs to be supplemented, considering that this is a 'live' show, with some analysis of newsroom production practices and background activities that take place on a typical day. During the fieldwork period, the researcher was actively involved in the activities at the radio station during which he attended the dairy meetings held by the citizen journalists as they prepared a day's show. On a typical day,

the meeting starts with the production team taking turns to comment on the previous show, pointing out what went wrong and what went right. The pitching of story ideas for the next show follows this. Interestingly, although discussion was allowed and encouraged, the producer always makes the final decision as to whether or not a particular story would be worthy broadcasting, as well as recommending which sources to contact. The Producer is also responsible for editing the stories before broadcast. Citizen journalists go out to follow up their stories in time before one o'clock, as the programme broadcasts during lunchtime.

5.1.2 Lunchtime Live's news orientation and perceived relationship with audiences

Outlining the news orientation of *Lunchtime Live* allows the researcher, as Jensen & Rosengren suggest, to conduct a "comparative analysis of media discourses with audience discourses – content structures with the structure of audience responses regarding content" (1990: 214). This is in tandem with key insights from reception studies, as outlined in Chapter 4 -- that the meaning of media texts is constructed by both the texts and the audiences -- and such a shared process can be understood by studying the production practices together with the consumption practices.

In tandem with the qualities of a community media, *Lunchtime Live* displays an evident orientation to providing local news. It predominantly covers community-oriented issues, prioritising what could be called 'welfare issues' affecting disadvantaged members of the community living in the townships. For example, as the municipality battles to provide clean water for its residents, Grahamstown's poor townships bear the brunt of water shortages. As such, *Lunchtime Live* produced a special programme in which the municipality was invited to explain the cause of water shortages in the townships (9 September 2010). *Lunchtime Live* also reports on crime and issues related to poverty. For example, the march against increasing rape cases in the townships (11 February 2011), a family failing to bury their daughter because they could not afford burial expenses (27 August 2010), a widow failing to access foster grants for the upkeep of grandchildren (19 October 2010), increase in drop-out rate in local schools (22 October 2010) and the upcoming local female boxers (24 September 2010).

As discussed in Chapter 2, this form of journalism and its community-oriented shows is informed by some forms of both advocacy and public/civic journalism traditions. These forms of journalism conceptualise a journalist as intervening and advocating for those who are denied power as well as pointing out to them the consequences of power imbalances in society (Janowitz 1975: 619). Their role is that of mediating between citizens and the state through public deliberation (Norris 2004: 118; Dahlgren 1995; Dahlgren & Sparks 1995). Notable advocates of public journalism are of the view that public journalism is committed to promoting active citizen participation in democratic processes (see Rosen 1999; Merritt 1998 and Charity 1995). The notions of public or civic journalism were largely developed in the United States of America as an effort to "reconnect Americans to the public life from which they have become disconnected" (Hanitzch 2011: 39), an approach which resonates with the overall *Iindaba Ziyafika* project's internal 'slogan' of 'reconnecting people to power'.

5.1.3 Lunchtime Live's relationship with the local power elite – the municipal officials and politicians

Lunchtime Live news also gives particular attention to municipal reporting. Since the objective of this study is to understand the audiences' perceptions of *Lunchtime Live* and its role in society's understanding of the processes that impact deeply on the lives of these audiences, it was imperative that content analysis focused on *Lunchtime Live's* attitude towards the local power elites, especially the local government, and local political representatives.

The overview of qualitative content analysis done for this study revealed that the programme gives a fair balance between exposing both the municipality's misdemeanours as well as reporting, often much more positively, on developmental projects implemented by the municipality. For example, the then Mayor apparently flouted tender procedures by allocating a tender for community soccer development to a supplier of soccer kits without advertising the tender in public media (7 April 2011). The story was given context to show how the mayor flouted tender processes, i.e. what he did, as well as the implications of such actions. A follow-up story was broadcast on the tension between the Municipal

Manager and the Mayor following her report to councillors about the Mayor's breach of tender procedures (29 March 2011). Also discussed, further into the year, was the local authority's failure to spend the 2010/2011 capital expenditure and conditional grant amounting to R53.7 million despite unfinished projects in the community and service delivery problems (19 April 2011).

With reference to the municipality's developmental projects *Lunchtime Live*, carried various stories about the drafting of the municipal budget, encouraging people to attend a series of public meetings where the council visited different municipal wards to give feedback on the previous year's budget as well as soliciting recommendations on the forthcoming budget (the municipality's IDP/Budget road show-15 April 2011). There were also stories about the Mayfield Housing Development Project expected to start in January 2011 (29 October 2010), goat rearing project (25 March 2011), the municipality's new eco-friendly power station that uses wind (18 February 2011), the face lift of Nothando Hall in ward 9 (14 December 2010), the construction of a community park in Fingo Vilage (5 April 2011), the electrification for Zolani and Phaphamani informal settlements (5 April 2011).

Overall, there was a reasonable balance of stories that critiqued actions of the local power elite and those that covered municipal projects in a positive light. Many of the stories were relatively 'balanced' in their own right.

As emphasised above, one of the advantages of community media is its proximity to the community it serves, allowing local governance issues to be solved through direct public input (Kivikuru 2006: 13). In addition, there is a close association between community media discourses with notions such as "development", "participation", and "accessibility" (Huesca 1995; Tomaselli 2000). However, during the Makana Municipality's IDP/Budget road shows: (13 May 2011 in Ward 9; 17 May 2011 in Ward 10 and 11; 18 May 2011 in Ward 2, 5 and 6), *Lunchtime Live* reported that these public meetings were characterised by low attendance. In many wards, members of the public did not turn out to participate in discussions aimed at the eventual drafting of the municipal budget. During focus group discussions, the researcher observed that certain members of

the community boycotted the local government elections -- or at least indicated that were not going to participate in the election[17].

Lunchtime Live also reports on more overtly party political developments taking place in Grahamstown. For example, the launching of a new political movement (New Deal) by a local advocate (19 October 2010), a Rhodes University student vying as independent candidate for ward 12 (5 April 2011), political violence involving ANC and COPE supporters during a debate held at the Settlers Monument (12 April 2011).

Overall, a snap shot of *Lunchtime Live* coverage patterns revealed that this current affairs show gives a reasonable mix of important issues such as municipal reporting, political reporting and what could be called welfare issues affecting disadvantaged members of the community living in the townships. But how do *listeners* make sense of *Lunchtime Live* and what role does this programme play in shaping the dynamics of local communities' participation in the local public sphere as well as their perception of the local power elites? It is to answering this question that the study now turns.

5.2 Focus group interviews (Producer-centric views)

5.2.1 We are citizens too, we tell the stories of the citizen

As will be shown in the interview transcripts below, *Lunchtime Live's* citizen journalists see themselves as the 'eyes and ears' of the public, and they often find themselves 'taking sides' with the citizen. This illuminates Heller's (2009) notions of horizontal connections in society as prerequisite for community interactions as society defines common problems and moves towards the formation of a common understanding of the 'public good'. The citizen journalists involved in the show believe that their close proximity to the people puts them at an advantage because they are able to share the same experiences with these people.

[17] Total voter turnover for Local Government Elections has been decreasing over the years. Whilst in 2009 voter turnover increased to 79.36% up from 52.38% in 2006, there was a deep slump in 2011 with a voter turnover of 55.93%. (see *Grocott's Mail* 10 May 2011; IEC South Africa Website; http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/Local-Elections-2011/Grahamstown-set-for-low-voter-turnout-20110512).

During focus group discussions with the producers of *Lunchtime Live*, it was evident that this proximity allows for stories to be generated from grassroots up:

> **Khaya**: it is an added advantage because for some of the big stories that I have done, I would have got a call from members of the public who have confidence that I will take those issues seriously and I will report on them. They will give me privilege that such and such an event is happening so I should be informed. I am not sure if they could do the same with the *Grocott's Mail* Editor. Because he doesn't live in close proximity with the people. So even if they see me in their area, it's an addition to kind of trusting me. It's more like an imaginary closeness.

Another concurs that as citizen journalists, they are the eyes and ears of the community and unlike national broadcasters, they give a specific focus on local issues:

> **Odwa**: If you look at the people who are involved in *Lunchtime Live*, they are citizen journalists. Citizen journalists are the eyes and ears of the community. So we are trying our best to keep the community informed about what is happening in and around the Makana area.

> **Malibongwe:** If you look at SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation), they are covering national stories. It's national news. How many times do you hear about Grahamstown news on national television or national radio? Our focus is in Grahamstown.

> **Bongi**: What makes citizen journalism special in Grahamstown and with us at *Lunchtime Live* is that we are able to report on stories at the grassroots, understanding the people at the grassroots. We are unlike national media. That is what makes us different.

As is well described in the literature on alternative media in Chapter 2, journalists working for alternative media strive to report from the position of citizens, as members of the community, as activists, and as fans (Atton 2009: 265). *Lunchtime Live's* use of citizen journalists enables it to deal with the real issues affecting the community partly because the reporters share the same repertoires and community space with those reported on. This

has complex implications for fairness and a semblance of objectivity. The citizen journalism Editor working on *Lunchtime Live* affirms this position, acknowledging that it is also very tempting to take sides with the citizens.

> **Kwan**: Even though we try to use a neutral report, we will be biased because we are an integral part of the community, we are affected by these issues. We report of the absence of water because we didn't bath that morning. It's unlike taking an SABC reporter from Port Elizabeth and bring them to report and get a few sound bites and go back. We know stakeholders, we know people who are affected, and we know the people who are affected more than the others.

Johnson's (1987) notions of circuit of cultural production offers on illustrative starting point from which to understand news as a social construct, produced by organisations and individuals who are part of the society which influences, and is in turn influenced and shaped, by these cultural products.

These producer-centric views of the programme are corroborated by listeners. Nkululeko, a resident of Fingo Village and active *Lunchtime Live* listener, agrees that he finds *Lunchtime Live's* content focussed on the issues that beset everyone in the society.

> **Nkululeko:** Those presenters live what they are talking about because they are part of the community and they know exactly what is happening there. They don't stay in town away from the people and talk about the townships because those people (who stay in town) know nothing about the townships. It's very important when you live in the same community and even if you interview people, you interview them on top of what you know and what you feel as well. I believe what these guys talk about is something that is affecting them as well so they are talking about real things and when people contact them to tell their stories; they are telling stories that are relevant because they can trigger something that is known by the journalists.

5.2.2 Language use, 'voice', assumed audiences and access

Lunchtime Live's news is highly "hyper-local" and focuses on issues predominantly affecting the poorer sections of Grahamstown using a broadcast language mix of both English and isiXhosa. English is often used in conjunction with news pieces

containing official or expert opinions. Therefore, *Lunchtime Live* assumes an audience that is reasonably competent in both languages. Nevertheless, the contextual section of Chapter 1 has shown that the poorer residents of Grahamstown East comprises of both the former black-only townships and the former 'coloured'-only settlements. Coloureds are often fluent in both English and isiXhosa, but this might be less true of black residents. During group discussions, there were mixed feelings from audiences about the use of English language. For example, whilst some elderly listeners of *Lunchtime Live* expressed general discomfort with English language, they were of the view that it is the younger people who need to know more about what is happening in their communities, as they are somehow still socially and politically active than the elderly.

> **Mrs Noxolo**: Many of us who are old and never went to school cannot speak or hear English. Their (*Lunchtime Live*) problem is that they keep switching between isiXhosa and English so in the end I losing out when they use English.
>
> **Mr. Noxolo:** But you must understand that even some of the youths here cannot speak or hear that language (English) too. So that means they will not participate in the debates that you are talking about. Even if they want people to phone to the radio, the young ones must phone because they are the ones who are most affected. They need jobs and when taxi fares go up, they are affected the most because they travel more than us. Because most of the old people do not speak that language, we don't participate in your radio show.

Indeed, some members of the community used both isiXhosa and English language during the group discussions. Many of them insisted that whilst they can follow by listening to some of the studio debates in English, they cannot follow some of the debates. But not everyone is as sanguine about this. One Fingo Village resident was particularly angry about the use of English, saying there were some white people in the studio who were speaking English only throughout the name-change debate[18] held last year:

[18] The Provincial Geographical Names Committee initiated a debate on whether Grahamstown should be given a name that reflects a more local identity or retains the name 'Grahamstown'. This has formed the basis for at least one episode of the *Lunchtime Live* show.

> **Nomakhaya:** During the name change debate, I was angry because most of the people in the studio were using English. That's why I did not even call in. How can they say they want to change the name (from Grahamstown) to reflect the local people but still use that language? I think you people should change. There were many white people in the studio again.

Nevertheless, some members who were more comfortable with English language argued that whilst they did not have problems with using English, there was need for someone in the studio to do translations for the benefit of those listeners who are not comfortable with English.

> **Nadia**. I think the host of the show could just summarise what one speaker would have said in another language just for the sake of those that do not speak the other language. For example, one person using a particular language could have a whole lot of good things said, but someone who does not understand that language will definitely miss that out because no one is translating those things to them. The name-change debate was a very important issue because changing Grahamstown's name affects everyone; both the poor and the rich, those who can speak English and those who cannot.

It is arguable that some sections of the population are missing out on some of the issues discussed because of the language imperative, and as a result are constrained from participating in the mediated local public sphere. Through a number of critics such as Fraser (1996), Urla (1995) and Dahlgren (1997), the researcher has shown in Chapter 2 that language can be another form of exclusion, among other forms, which may prevent marginalised groups from participating in the public sphere.

Writing from a postcolonial perspective, wa Thiong'o (1986) problematises the use of European languages by black Africans writing African literature. He argues that language is the carrier of a people's culture and values, and as such it is also the medium through which individuals and the community foster relationships. He advocates for African intellectuals to write literature in their own language since it is the only medium through which they are able to fully express their thought processes without the hindrance of struggling to articulate the "peculiarities of the African speech and folklore" (1986: 7). A similar argument can be put forward that for *Lunchtime Live's* audiences to express their daily experiences such as street protests and burst sewer pipes they need to use a language that they feel comfortable using.

Following their study of the *Iindaba Ziyafika* project, Steenveld & Strelitz (2010: 13) drew on Rodriguez (2001) and Downings (2001) and their notion of "voice" to illustrate how alternative media is produced by marginalised groups whose mode of expression (both language and form) are different from that used by mainstream media and is thus valorised specifically on the basis of its ability to frustrate the mainstream media's inclination for using 'middle class' modes of expression. They note that mainstream media's mode of expression is usually classed, raced and gendered and is based on the modes of speech of (white) middle class males expressing their world (Steenveld & Strelitz 2010: 13 citing Fraser 1996). The use of English language is difficult in communities such as Grahamstown where English is often a second or third language, and where the education system ill-prepares members for engaging in such discourses. They also parallel the use of the middle class language to Habermas's ideal of "rational critical debate" as this presupposes a society competent in such elite modes of expression. It assumes a linguistic community that shares one language, and the community is envisioned as both reading and writing in this particular classed and gendered way.

Nonetheless, Steenveld & Strelitz's analysis was based on their study of the *Grocott's Mail*, a print medium. Their concern about linguistic competences is appropriate in terms of print media, whilst electronic media such as the radio has the advantage of "bypassing" such limitations of print media, especially print media's demand for a fairly literate readership (and particular skills to create such content). Unlike print media, radio "bypasses" literacy constraints, and its reliance on the voice from the studio is compensatory for its "transient" nature (Crisell 1994: 3) whilst the print media's voice may be regarded as the "disembodied" and "distant".

In this particular study on *Lunchtime Live*, where the researcher investigated the audiences' use of radio, it emerged that whilst the use of English language on radio might still be a hindrance to audiences' appreciation of the discourses discussed, it may not be as deeply limiting as it may be in the print media. This is because, as Crisell (1994: 2) points out, radio does not require as high levels of concentration as print media does, and that radio's level of linguistic expression is fairly simple and easy to follow. Crisell argues further that, despite the seeming limitations of "invisibility", radio uses a range of compensatory devices, and he refers to these as "signposting" and "framing" where radio presenters keep reminding listeners about the subject of discussion and what will come

next (Crisell 1994: 3; Chignell 2009: 68). As seen in the comment by one of the interviewees, radio is more popular in Grahamstown:

> **Nkululeko:** The fact that there is a big number of people listening to Radio Grahamstown shows that. Especially if you go around in the township, you will hear most of the time if it's not Radio Xhosa, its Radio Grahamstown. They are listening because they can hear the language because it's flexible to them…. It's what they can hear. Even if you are not educated, they can hear and you can be able to tell and put forward your views about what is being said. So they do appreciate it a lot.

Others suggest that it is not always about what language is used, but what level of jargon is deployed:

> **Emily**. What I liked about the advocate (who was invited in the studio to discuss issues of Grahamstwon's name change) was that he was not using big language. He was using language that can be heard by the audience. There were no technical terms.

Others expressed that since *Lunchtime Live* addresses a public sphere characterised by linguistic diversity, it is important to use English language too:

> **Collin**: Radio Grahamstown addresses both "coloureds" and blacks. All these people are listening to it. So it's good to use English also because some of the coloured people only speak English.
>
> **Nico**: I think the mixing of language is very good because you are speaking to people from the community which speaks many languages

On the other hand, whilst *Lunchtime Live* encourages listeners to use cell phones and other means of communication such as SMSs and MXit (instant messaging from mobile phones), these remain somewhat inaccessible and are not so particularly "cheap" or accessible to communities such as Grahamstown East. For example, some members argued that listeners of the programme are failing to engage in real participation because ordinary residents cannot afford to call the studio on their phones:

> **Thembi**: And then they were encouraging people to call or SMS their name of choice during the name change debate. They were charging us R1.50 for an SMS. I don't think that is right. I think you were discouraging people. It should be at least cheaper. Don't take it for granted that everyone is able to phone on their Cell phones. Some people did not afford to call not because they didn't want but because they could not afford the R1.50. Remember you are dealing with the people from the townships and many of these are not employed and are not able to recharge their Cell phones with money every day.

Indeed, some suggested that phoning the studio is really not a good idea, that rather *Lunchtime Live* should "come to the people" and broadcast out of the studio, or possibly make a toll free line available:

> **Thami**: Sometimes you really have to go to the people, instead of asking them to call the radio. The presenters could come to the community hall and ask people to come and talk live on radio. You have to understand that some people in the community cannot afford to make a call, worse even to pay a taxi fare to come into town. People are poor and they do not have access to mobile phones. I don't know how feasible this would be, but I also think they need to have a toll free line to which listeners can just call for free.

Another interviewee suggested 'embedding' journalists more intimately in the community:

> **Nadia**. Maybe what *Lunchtime Live* could do is sending a reporter right on the ground in the community and have him report 'live' with people saying what they think. You should never take it for granted that everyone is able to call. Besides, for the debates to become interesting, sometimes people need to be mobilised. Mobilise them by going into the community and let them talk on the microphone. Even if people want to talk, they may not even have the energy to sit down, listen and phone. Not everyone would take that extra effort. But the radio station can do that and more people will be encouraged. Remember this is a poor community where people cannot even afford to recharge their phones.

Others were of the opinion that it is not only the costs associated with mobile phones, but that other people do not have access to mobile phones in the first place.

Nonzi: the problem is also that people do not have access to telephones where they can call and participate in the programme. Most of Grahamstown is like a rural area and they cannot afford to make a phone call. The only people who call are those that can access a free phone call, maybe from their work places. But those ones that have real problems, the problem still remains because they cannot even afford to say their problems or views in the first place. I think rather, if you can go straight to the community hall and broadcast live from there, not to ask people to come into town or to call.

5.2.3 The voice of the elite first?

Lunchtime Live's approach to sourcing does not differ from that used by mainstream journalists. In its founding documents, *Lunchtime Live* locates its target audience as "the poorer residents of Grahamstown East, whose voices and information sources are constrained in terms of newspaper and web access" (Berger 2007:5). Nevertheless, this seems to be contradicted by *Lunchtime Live's* reliance on official and elite sources, a practice that further alienates the voice of the marginalised groups. Critics of journalism and its claims to "reflecting on reality" argue that 'reality', apparently, is 'the political work by which events are constructed by those who happen to currently hold power' (Schudson 2000: 183 citing Molotch & Harvey 1974: 111). In corroboration of insights by Heller's (2009) and Beall et al.'s (2005) notions of lack of democratic deepening and fragile stability, and Sparks's (2008; 2009) notions of elite continuity informing much of the theoretical insights building this study, there is a notable absence of the "voice" of the marginalised.

Radical journalism critics are of the view that journalists' use of official and elite sources serve to legitimate already established discourses, rendering new and contradicting views as illogical or not worth getting space for reportage (Hackett 1984: 248). They view journalism as the story of the interaction between reporters and government officials, both politicians and diplomats (Schudson 2000: 184). These are the sources that provide information – the raw materials used by news organisations (McCullagh 2002: 65). Because of time constraints to meet newsroom deadlines, *Lunchtime Live's* citizen journalists prefer using official and "trusted" sources whose official positions, critics argue, guarantee reliable and stable supply of news everyday (Schudson 2000: 184).

In addition, some commentators of community media are of the view that the local press has developed a reputation for being parochial, and under too much influence from the local power elites (Lang 2004). During the researcher's short stint at the radio station as part of this research, there was evidence that *Lunchtime Live* benefits a lot from expert and official comments from Rhodes University professors, for example. One problem is that when the media reports the views of what is clearly part of the political and social elite, it reinforces the hegemonic dominance of the elite that populate state institutions, as primary 'definers' of public opinion. Often, in more mainstream media, the only instances where the poor and less powerful members of society feature in news is when they are presented as a threat to social order (see van Dijk 2009) or as material for vox pop interviews for human interest stories (Ross 2006 cited in Atton 2009: 268).

Legitimacy, credibility and newsworthiness are attributed to official sources and as such, these are privileged and shape the worldview more than less powerful members of society may be able to do (McCullagh 2002: 67). *Lunchtime Live's* citizen journalists defended their use of official sources on the grounds of both bringing public officials to account and on the grounds of 'fairness' and some notion of journalistic 'objectivity'. As such, the citizen journalists Editor argue:

> **Kwan**: Our philosophy of news gathering is pretty much the same with that of the mainstream media except that we differ in operation. We focus on highlighting the plight of the citizen and then to balance the story up we then talk to the authorities because it's pointless to just highlight the plight of the community and not seek responses to their questions. So we do need that voice from the authorities to explain why we didn't have water yesterday. So that our listeners can know whether to expect more water shortages in the future or if the problem has been solved for good.

Critically, this defence may be construed as falling short of admitting that constraining resources limit the number and variety of sources that these journalists interview for their news.

Lunchtime Live Producer, Khaya Tonjeni, defended the use of such elite voices on the grounds of bringing leaders to account:

> **Khaya**: If people cannot get the Mayor to come and address them when they *toyi toyi* at the community centre, we have the responsibility to record the mayor and play that on air. So that becomes pivotal.

Apparently disclosing the constraints of limited resources on the range of sources selected for interview, the citizen journalism editor, Kwan, also conceded that resources often propel the show to pick up the phone and get the often more readily available and thus easy to contact 'elite sources' for their commentary:

> **Kwanele**: we need resources: finance and otherwise. So if we can get more resources I believe that we can do more of this work. Maybe even produce more than two shows per week. Because with current affairs… the mainstream radio stations' current affairs is three hours or more not just one hour. So we need resources because we need to get around town. We need taxi fairs or even better still somebody can sponsor a vehicle so that we can be able to go around town.

Against the constraints of limiting resources, which often compel the citizen journalists to use the readily available voices, *Lunchtime Live* provides possible avenues for foregrounding the voice of the marginalised too. This could be possible in view of the resident statuses of the citizen journalists in the community within which they report, making it easy to navigate all the labyrinths of the community's diverse interests. In addition, and as highlighted by the audiences during group discussions, *Lunchtime Live* could adopt a forthright approach by going into the community and conducting outside broadcasts so that the voices of those that cannot phone the studio can easily be picked up. This requires more resources as already outlined above.

5.3 Focus group discussions (Audience-centric views)

The focus group interview findings are presented and discussed under various sections, attempting to answer the key issues raised by the initial research questions, and theoretical considerations outlined thus far.

As previously explored, particularly in Chapters 3 and 4, because of its grounding in phenomenology, qualitative research seeks to understand human nature from the point of

view of those who experience it – thus the views of *Lunchtime Live* audiences. Below are the thematic groupings of audience responses about their perception and experiences with *Lunchtime Live*.

5.3.1 Attitude to topics discussed

This section discusses the audience's attitude towards the actual topics discussed on *Lunchtime Live*. It argues that the audience's attitude towards, and perception of the show, significantly influences the nature of relationship that they have with *Lunchtime Live* and, importantly, the meanings they are likely to assign to it. Particularly important is the audiences' perceived 'realism' or lack thereof of *Lunchtime Live* – that is *Lunchtime Live's* ability to depict what is real in the world of those that it addresses. Drawing on the notion of 'realism' allows the researcher to understand if *Lunchtime Live* audiences feel alienated from it or drawn to it through the discourses it highlights, thus accounting for their desire to participate in it or lack thereof. Even though the notion of realism has been mostly used by researchers studying television popular cultural texts (see Ellis 1982; Ang 1985), its essence lies in illustrating the relationship between audiences and texts. To illustrate the essence of 'realism', it is important to take a brief detour and give an overview of its basic principles.

Ellis defines 'realism' as "the expectation that a particular representation should present a 'realistic portrayal' of character and event" (1982: 6). Ellis posits further that the notion of realism in media representation should be seen as a complex network of conventions of portrayal and conventions of audience expectations alike (Ellis 1982: 9). Yet what is real to one may not be real to another, as one's reality is tied down to social experience and familiarity. For example, during the researcher's attendance to one diary meeting, a white Journalism student from Rhodes University pitched a potential story idea about covering the then upcoming Animal Rights Week. This was to the astonishment of the citizen journalists whose understanding of 'real' issues worthy reporting are those of poor service delivery and people living in the plastic shacks of Grahamstown's informal settlements. After much debate and the white student's insistence on covering the story, it

was eventually approved but was given as a very small timeslot towards the end of the show.

During group discussions with *Lunchtime Live's* audiences, there was a general feeling that *Lunchtime Live* discusses issues that audiences are able to relate to. For example, Kethiwe, a resident in the Joza location of Grahamstown East's townships expressed that she would not want to hear celebrity news on *Lunchtime Live* because, as she puts it, "this is not my kind of lifestyle… I like issues that affect people in general not gossip about celebrities because celebrities don't affect me generally". One can draw from her utterances that *Lunchtime Live* draws support from its emphasis on "hyper local" news slant.

> **Kethiwe**: I like the show because it talks about issues that affect Grahamstown people. In Grahamstown we've got lots of issues. Poverty in Grahamstown is in our face. Yah, that's what I like about that show. Issues that affect people in general, not gossip about celebrities because celebrities don't affect me generally.

Other interviewees concur:

> **Limisa**: My first impression was like 'this is good'. Grahamstown needs this! So it's a good show and it discusses real issues – issues affecting everyone in the community like our problems with the municipality, a widow failing to pay rent and things like that. You don't hear that stuff on SABC and when you hear this you know that this is home.

Indeed, others think that *Lunchtime Live's* "live discussion format", as opposed to a pre-recorded format, makes it more realistic. As shown by the comments below, pre-recorded shows tend to lose their originality because some information is edited out as the producer "streamlines" what he considers as "relevant" information.

> **Colin**: Every time when you hear those guys in the studio you know that everything that they are saying is "live", it's not recorded. It's him (the presenter) and the microphone and us the listeners. So each and everything that he says, we

will have a chance to question him right there. So I like *Lunchtime Live* because it's live and it tells us real issues.

The above interview extracts suggest that there is some consensus about what the *Lunchtime Live* show is trying to do, and some shared understanding of what is 'reality' to the audiences. In their different understandings of reality, one can note a common rallying point; that *Lunchtime Live's* discourses are not divorced from the listeners' experiences. For example, Kethiwe's reality is measured by what affects her and the people in Grahamstown in general. For her, *Lunchtime Live* reports on her "kind of lifestyle…not gossip about celebrities because celebrities don't affect me generally… Poverty in Grahamstown is in our face". For Limisa, *Lunchtime Live* discusses "our problems with the municipality, a widow failing to pay rent and things like that". Taken together, these interview extracts show that people make sense of things that they relate with as individuals as well as a community.

As argued in chapter 3, audiences use interpretive repertoires acquired and developed through their social and cultural experience (Schroder 2003: 124). Thus, the meaning assigned to *Lunchtime Live* is not divorced from the socio-cultural experiences of its audience and its ability to highlight these determines the meanings assigned to it. Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model shows that the position that readers take in relation to the text is shaped by its ability to speak to the audience's social experiences. If the media text is acutely inflected away from the audience's experiences or has no connection to some recognisable reality of their experiences, it is more likely such texts will be read 'oppositionally' or audiences might redeploy its orientation to fit their lived realities so that they become comfortable with that particular text. In the above extracts, it is evident that *Lunchtime Live* texts, overall, tap into the audience's experiences and thus do not require a major 'redeployment' of its ideological position.

In similar vein, it may also be useful to draw on Fiske's (1987a) proposition that media messages are capable of mobilising social change if these messages resonate with the experiences of the audiences.

> There is some evidence that finding a discourse in a text that makes sense of one's experience of powerlessness in a positive way is the vital step towards being able to do something to change that powerlessness (Fiske 1987a:).

Further, Fiske posits how important it is for media texts to resonate with audience experiences, stating that for media messages to make sense to its recipients, they must "provoke conversation", (and) it is by taking up and the recirculation of news orally that people construct aspects of the public sphere as relevant to their own' (see Fiske 1992). From the brief interview extracts cited, and from other interviews, it is clear that resonance rather than resistance is the more dominant 'stance' or 'attitude' towards the content of the texts. In addition, the interview extracts below show that listeners are drawn to *Lunchtime Live* when it presents issues that have perceivable consequences for their lives:

> **Sithandazika**: I wouldn't really mind about the technical problems such as when the presenters suddenly go off air or the fact that the presenters sound amateur-like. I put my focus on the topic that was discussed. To me this was really a serious topic and it grasped my attention. I was hearing people talking about the Information Bill but I did not really think about it until I heard this on *Lunchtime Live*. I didn't think these issues can affect me. It was when I heard that guest,… I think it was the *Grocott's Mail* Editor when he said that the Bill infringes our freedom of expression. I then realised that it is an issue that can affect me too.

Others are enthusiastic about *Lunchtime Live* because of its interventionist approach to what could be regarded as disconnected local elites and civic society.

> **Siphokazi**: People have problems with the municipality. So in this case *Lunchtime Live* is very helpful. I think the topics discussed are very relevant because people are affected by this whole idea about the municipality failing to do their work. It's very worrying that the government want to protect some information from the people so who will expose the municipality if they keep stealing our money. Yes, I do respect people's privacy but when you are a public person you should expect that because you are a public figure.

5.3.2 A space for "the people"- no politicians please!

One group was particularly against even the idea of bringing politicians in the studio during the show in order to generate the dialogue in the first place. The reason is that they

believed that politicians often usurp the space supposedly meant for public forum and use it for their own narrow political gains. Chapter 1 and 2 have posited that commentators attribute the failure of democracy to the domination of the public sphere by powerful elites from government and business and the subsequent stifling of the voices of the less powerful and this finds powerful resonance on the ground. For example, Thembi argued:

> **Thembi**: I don't like it to be made a political platform, but rather a social platform … if it's a political platform you end up overlooking issues that are affecting people right now, so it mustn't be like a political debate but rather a social debate where u are looking at ordinary people. We don't want political people coming in and debate politics on our shows...this must be people's platform.

In agreement, other informants asserted the need to involve the ordinary citizen, one who identifies and speaks the language of the common person so that debates become relevant to the listeners:

> **Nico**: to bring in the ordinary person could help keep people more interested. It must not just be high profile people, otherwise why would the listeners care if it's just high profile people. In this situation people will have no say in the whole thing.

> **Emily**. It would have been much better if they bring into the studio someone who is more like us.

One informant observed that inviting technocrats only into the studio defeats the purpose of a community radio station, which should be to elevate the voice of those about whose development, is the subject of discussion:

> **Nadia**. Considering that this is a community radio station, I think they could have just invited an ordinary person from the community. I think there were far too many high profile people with authority, which is fine but they should also include the community members as well. And considering that the target audiences are the residents of Grahamstown East, then the opinions of those people should come out more.

More cynical about political elites, and apparently distrustful of them, one informant thinks political elites bring nothing new into *Lunchtime Live* debates, but rather they rehearse the same political rhetoric that proffers no solution to everyday problems:

> **Nico**: no, but ward councillors also represent a certain political point of view. The problem will be that the people on the ground may never have a say in this whole thing. The councillors could just say that this is what the party says.

The above remarks show the level of disaffection which members of the community have for their local political representatives. There can be noted traces of a deep lack of trust for political actors. The crowding of the public sphere by both business and the state are strong indications of the continued marginalisation of the masses by powerful businesses and political actors who are able to determine the range of discourses available in the public sphere, a trend which reproduces the apartheid system in the post-apartheid era. From Nadia's comments below, it is evident that she is concerned with the crowding of the discursive space by powerful elites:

> **Nadia**: I think there were far too many high profile people with authority…, the name change affects the wider community of Grahamstown and considering that the target audiences are the residents of Grahamstown East, then the opinions of those people should come out more."

In agreement to Nadia, Nico is concerned about bringing councillors into the studio because they represent political parties, and as such this would be tantamount to auctioning the public sphere to political propaganda, leaving the ordinary person with less space to contribute in the public sphere.

5.3.3 An imagining of a shared community?

Some scholars find connections between community radio and Anderson's (1986) conceptualisation of the role of the media in creating "imagined communities". They note that radio listeners tune in, in their thousands, to a radio programme airing at a specific time and as they listen, create a shared simultaneity of experience that underpins the formation of "imagined communities" (Hilmes 1997: 11 cited in Hugh 2009). While the

listener is solitary, he or she is aware of being part of a 'community' of other listeners whose relationship is the shared discursive space where people's voices and imaginations meet in debate, thereby enhancing radio's participatory potential (see Crisell 2001: 248; Hendy 2000: 2). Distinguishing between the local from the national and global, Lang (2004: 154) conceives the local as characterised by a cognitive dimension of shared knowledge about the history of the common public sphere as well as face-to-face interactions.

The interview extracts below show how the audience exhibit a shared simultaneity of experience not only through their shared symbolic connection to *Lunchtime Live*, but also through a shared community space. This is exhibited mostly through their sharing of similar experiences, which *Lunchtime Live* is able to explore:

> **Nkululeko:** These presenters talk about things happening in the community. So it's like the presenter will ask a question; "Hey, have you seen something like this and that in the townships? And then people will call and say; "Yah I have noticed it too". I remember for example, when Kwan told me that he will be interviewing the prospective Mayor and because many people know him, we were all listening to what he was saying.

Others go further to suggest that this shared community space invokes even a sense of solidarity and tolerance by listeners when the studio crew battle with technical problems during broadcast.

> **Ketiwe**: Sometimes the presenters just go off air whilst we are listening, and sometimes you hear the presenters talking in the studio in the background of a recorded tape and we ask ourselves, what is going on? Anyway, we don't take it serious because we know that elsewhere everyone is affected. It's such a silly thing and you can let them go away with it. It's Radio Grahamstown at the end of the day, its fine! You can't really blame them. We all know that this is our community station and that they will be experiencing problems too. So when we hear these, we know that the people in the studio are just like us, they are part of us and that they make mistakes too.

When members of the audience hear that different parts of the community are experiencing similar problems as their own, they feel addressed 'as one', and as sharing similar concerns. They may even be able to identify voices of people from other wards as they register their concerns on radio. Interestingly too, they are confident that *Lunchtime Live* reporters have a fair knowledge of what the community needs because these reporters are residents of this same community.

> **Collin**: Last year when we had water problems, the people from *Lunchtime Live* went around places recording people talking about this problem in their areas. I remember this because we didn't have water in extension 9 and in Tantyi too, they didn't have water. So we know that we have the same problem with the people of Tantyi if *Lunchtime Live* visits these areas and report on these issues. Sometimes when they interview people on the radio you can even know the people speaking.

This is crucial to civil society's ability to contribute to the formulation of public opinion as espoused in Habermas's (1989) notions of interactive democracy. One could also draw on Keane's (2004) conceptualisation of the "micro-public spheres" which he idealises as low profile networks of small groups, organisations, local contacts and friendships that helps the survival of small and locally-based public spheres. This can be captured in the above remarks by Nkululeko as he makes reference to an 'imagined' listener who calls the radio station to confirm the presenter's observations about what is happening in the townships. Nevertheless, theorists, including Habermas himself, are of the view that the deliberative dimension of public life is in rapid decline. Mass media is criticised as the chief agent for the "dumbing" of political consciousness and civic of life. For example, as outlined in Chapter 2, Putnam's (1996) concern with the general abandonment of communal ties by the late nineteenth century American society in pursuit of private endeavours is blamed on what could be conceived as the socially atomising effects of mass media. This is especially so with commercial media and its propensity for entertainment-based programming that lacks critical reflection on social formation.

In spite of this critique, the guiding principle informing the rise of community media in South Africa was a deliberate effort by pro-democracy groups to integrate previously marginalised societies into the mainstream communication processes so that the majority could contribute to the formation of public opinion (see Tomaselli 2001; Barnett 1999: 650; Kivikuru 2006: 7). In addition, the influences of the UNESCO-commissioned enquiry

and related debates around the effects of top-down flows of communication, a debate rising strongly in the early 1980s, contributed to major policy shifts that favoured people-driven initiatives.

5.3.4 Connecting people to power

Many participants made detailed references to issues that clearly resonated with own experiences, and made them feel the show was making a contribution to connecting people to power.

> **Emily**. The programme is making us to become aware about these civic issues like the name change debate, the budget issues, the municipal elections and the water problems. It's very important for society to know what the name Grahamstown means, how the municipality is using their money, why there is no water and the municipality does not explain yet they need their votes when it comes to voting. So it's also good to make sure that throughout the show, they give people the means to have their voices heard otherwise it would be worthless listening in the first place.

This interviewee drew links to this 'voice' and a sense of access and empowerments.

> **Nico**: This way we feel empowered, even though some people cannot afford to participate in these civic issues. Since not everyone will be able to participate during the shows, there must be offices where people can write to or a place in Grahamstown where people can go to and present their issues.

One interviewee suggested that at least the show opens up the possibility of moving away from elite-only politics, and has the possibility of feeding local debates into the agenda of the more national media.

> **Nonzi**. I think it is important for people to sit and debate on this radio programme because this constitutes a grassroots level interaction. It is at the grassroots that transformation takes place. So for change to take place it must involve the masses, not just one person who says this is my opinion and you expect things to change. So the more people you have the more politicians are going to listen and change will take place. Bigger media will even pick it up and it gets a lot more attention on it. Sometimes it's a pity that people may not realise that this is the starting point of

power. It starts from a community radio station and it's picked up at national media level and it goes on like that.

As argued in Chapters 1 and 2, the post 1994 South Africa still displays remnants of apartheid's unequal access to power and resources on race, class and gender divides, continuing the marginalisation of previously disadvantaged groups. Notions of elite continuity and fragile stability have been drawn to illustrate how the negotiated compromise to democracy has retained the very fundamentals of apartheid's separatist tendencies and unequal power relations (see Sparks 2009; Wasserman 2010; Heller 2009; Beall et al. 2005; Barnett 1999). The attempt to address these inequalities informs the fundamental objectives of *Lunchtime Live*, building on to the larger goals instigating the rise of community media in South Africa. This is what the Producer of *Lunchtime Live* had to say during focus group discussions:

> **Khaya**: Our function is called connecting people to power. We planned that deliberately because we found a disconnect between the people who are in power and the general citizen. If people cannot get the Mayor to come and address them when people do *toyi toyi* at the community centre, we have the responsibility to record the Mayor and play that on air. So that becomes pivotal.

In agreement with the Producer's observation as shown in the interview extract above, responses from *Lunchtime Live* listeners acknowledged that there is often a distant relationship between the people and their representatives in local government and local political representatives. There was a strong indication that the people elected into public offices are inaccessible to the people they represent. This confirms some of Heller's (2009) arguments that whilst the country's negotiated transition succeeded in putting in place a democratic infrastructure as a democratically elected government and the rights-based constitution, these institutions have not always succeeded in creating effective connections between citizens and power. Some of the respondents in the focus group discussions made points along these lines very forcefully:

> **Bulungwe**. Some people do not know their councillors. Even the way the wards are divided. People do not know their wards. For example, you don't even know which

ward they are in because each and every time there are changes. They do not understand the ward system.

Collin: and also the problem is that the councillors that we have only come to the people when it's time for voting. One thing that could help them would have been to go door to door. For example here in extension 9, our councillor stays in extension 8. He does not come to extension 9 to hear what people have to say, what people need. Those are some of the problems that people are facing.

Overall, this section has shown that whilst members of the community generally acknowledge the efficacy of *Lunchtime Live* in its attempt to bridge the gap between power and people, this is frustrated by what could largely be described as lack of political will by those in positions of power, incompetence, and party politics. Through the various focus group discussions conducted, there was evidence of general social disquiet and apathy as will be shown below, resulting in some members boycotting the 2011 Local Government elections. This apathy is also registered in some members' revelations that some individuals do not know their ward councillors, for example, as these are mostly inaccessible and make appearances only during elections, testifying to the dislocation between civil society and power.

5.3.5 Media consumption and preferences: political significance of such preferences

Following the processes of industrialisation and the pervasive presence of mass media in many spheres of life, researchers of communication have been grappling with difficult questions about the potential consequences of media consumption. Whilst there appears to be a general trend towards viewing audiences as involved in actively selecting and using media, researchers still hold on to the belief that media is capable if influencing and shaping individual perceptions of the worldview. As explored in Chapter 3, this notion owes a lot to early critical and more pessimistic researchers of mass communication who viewed mass media as capable of 'causing' its audiences to behave in certain ways, or implicating the media in 'dumping down' people's political consciousness through the media's parochial focus on

entertainment at the expense of providing information that equips citizens with the knowledge to make informed decisions. A lot of studies on media influence have, for example, been much concerned with whether media influences or promotes violent behaviour by children or its potential consequences on 'moral behaviour'. Post Fascist Germany writers such as Adorno, Marcuse, and Hokheimer as well as media critics working from a political economy perspective, such as Murdock, McChesney and Garnham believe that mass media can be used by powerful groups as an instrument for social control. As explored in Chapter 3, such scholars think that the commercialisation of media has the effect of diminishing the critical consciousness of the audience by increasingly focusing on entertainment-based programming to lure customers.

During focus group discussions, the researcher noted that *Lunchtime Live* appears to appeal more to older listeners, whilst younger people seem to prefer listening to other commercial radio stations whose programming comprise of music and advertisements only. These responses were predominantly from young listeners who kept comparing *Lunchtime Live t*o other commercial radio stations such as Algoa FM. As indicated earlier in section 5.2.1 above, the audience's attitude to a media text determines the meanings they are likely to assign to it. Kivikuru's (2006) study on South Africa and Namibia showed that a typical young suburban or township listener is fond of a particular disk jockey at the station, and more often listens to several other stations – and if the community radio station does not meet his liking, the station is dropped (Kivikuru 2006: 14). In the interviews, one youth suggested:

> **Mkosi**: I normally like the television. If it is radio, I prefer listening to music. If *Lunchtime Live* is on, I listen for a while but most of the times I just end up switching to other stations to listen to music, especially Algoa FM because they play good music. I normally listen to *Lunchtime Live* because I like the weather man. He is so funny.

Others also echoed this theme:

> **Kethiwe:** I listen to music most of the time. I like listening to Algoa FM because they play "good music". Some of the times if my parents are there I listen to *Lunchtime Live*.

> **Colin**: the other thing is that on Radio Grahamstown there are some shows in the morning where they play some music. Most of the young people are listening to those shows that they know there will be some music. They must give the youths the interest to go to *Lunchtime Live*. That will be another way of puling young people to listen to it.

Others expressed that young people do not have the time to sit down and listen to radio, as they are preoccupied with other commitments:

> **Thami:** you don't find young people at home listening to radio these days. They are out and about, or in town. So its old people who listen to these kinds of programmes. The young people would rather listen to Algoa FM where there is music. The other thing is also that during the day some of them are at school.

An understanding of the youths' media preferences allows for the exploration of the political significance of their media preferences and the symbolic meanings of such activities. In Fiske, and particularly in the post-modern turn in cultural studies, the dominant ideology thesis is challenged, mobilising understandings that see the consumption of media products as the production of resistive pleasures. Evident in this strand of cultural studies is that the making of meaning from media consumption is deeply implicated in the ongoing social struggle (see Strelitz 2000: 41). Fiske posits that these pleasures are motivated by the desire to produce one's own meanings of the social experience and the pleasure of inscribing subordinate meanings. In addition, drawing on revisionist literature of Habemas's notions of the public sphere, there is evidence that the original modernist perceptions of a single and consensus-bound public sphere does not speak to the reality of the present era in media consumption (see for example Fraser 1996; Curran 1991; Garnham 1990; Fiske 1995). The conceptualisation of power as residing in the dominant power bloc is beginning to give in to views that see power as dispersed in diverse social formations representing different social interests, including those of the formerly marginalised groups.

This position allows us to consider if by preferring such entertainment-based programmes over *Lunchtime Live*, youths are involved in the production of Fiske's notion of "resistive pleasures". On the other hand, critics such as Dahlgren (1989); Garnham (1995); Cohen (1980) have posed questions on the political significance of such cultural practices. This is especially so in view of the fact that much of the music played on most entertainment-

based radio stations, including Algoa FM, is often American-based pop music hitting the music charts of the day. Based on this observation it could be argued that rather than viewing these as resistive pleasures, these cultural practices could be regarded as "coping" with (see Strelitz 2000: 42 citing Garnham 1995: 69) the political dispensation that does not offer them a space to participate in the processes that govern their lives. One could also draw on critical theorists' understanding of popular cultural text as responsible for the de-politicisation of masses and the emasculation of critical political consciousness.

Based on the above, one can conclude that whilst the show provides avenues for community dialogue with some prospects of finding solutions, it fails to provide for the youths' entertainment needs. Whilst it is debatable to infer or dispute the political significance of such preferences, it was evident that a segment of the young people in Grahamstown did prefer music-based stations (which would accurately describe what Radio Grahamstown does most of the time) over the actual *Lunchtime Live* show.

5.3.6 Beyond apathy: They don't care anymore, they are just too tired to speak

Whilst the majority of the audiences acknowledged the efficacy of *Lunchtime Live* as a platform for some form of intra-community dialogue, part of the audience expressed lack of confidence in participatory processes overall. Some members of the community expressed that they did not see any reason for participating in the 'public sphere' because doing so would largely be meaningless verbal debate, and not do much to improve things. This seems to mirror Heller's (2009) comments on South Africa's transition to democracy and the significant constitutionally guaranteed democratic institutions but these rights and freedoms are described as remaining *statuses* only without people experiencing them as meaningful day to day *practices*. In principle, it would be envisaged that civic rights and freedoms are key anchors in the emancipation of citizens. This also seems to frustrate democratic theorists' conviction in the accessibility and organisational capacity of localities to transform opinions into political actions (Lang 2004: 152).

Nkululeko: You know when I am talking about somebody who is hopeless, I mean one who doesn't even care even if their voice is heard or is not heard because they think it won't make any difference. You can say that the government is doing ABC and is supposed to do DEF but they will tell you who are you to tell us what to do?

Nomakhaya: They want to change Grahamstown's name, but I didn't call the radio to comment about that because I am not interested. No matter what name they give it, to me it's just the same.

More trenchantly, one informant undermined even *Lunchtime Live's* own aspirations to be meaningful force for dialogue, access to power, communal deliberation.

Babalwa: There are people who always phone but there is no change. There are people who are always commenting, especially during the elections, I was listening. They are commenting..

With a deep sense of resignation, another informant lamented that the lack of will by the leadership makes participation in electoral processes something of a farce, and that some members of the community are choosing to boycott elections as a result:

Babalwa: People are so tired because of the promises but they don't fulfil them. We are so tired really. For example, in this ward most of the people didn't vote. That's why the ward will end up to another party besides the ANC. I won't say which party.

The above extract illustrates the level of frustration and a deep sense of resignation that characterises the attitudes of some of the members of the community. There is evidence that some sections of the civil society have apparently lost faith in one of the core fundamentals of democracy – the right to freedom of expression as enshrined in the national constitution.

Nkululeko: The way people are drinking, alcohol abuse and staff. They don't care anymore. There are no activities that can take communities together like maybe soup kitchens because people here don't eat. What they care about is alcohol. You

> find a lot of youths in taverns most of the time. So I believe that somehow they have lost hope.

Similar concerns are raised by the Chair of the Unemployed People's Movement[19], Ayanda Kota, in an article published in the *Mail & Guardian*. He alleges that because of hopelessness and despair, people have resorted to alcohol abuse and generally not caring much about their lives.

> After 17 years of democracy, our townships are broken. All you see are drunken men and women walking aimlessly like zombies, their bloodstreams flowing with cheap alcohol. This is how we drug ourselves against the nightmare of a democracy that is really neo-apartheid and not post-apartheid. This is how we drug ourselves against a society that has no respect for us, no place for us and no future for us. In the Eastern Cape they drink umtshovalale. In KwaZulu-Natal they drink isiqatha. In Gauteng they drink gavani. In the Western Cape they drink spirits. ... My people, young and old, have been silently taken to their graves because of the effects of alcohol. We are poisoning ourselves to drug ourselves against the horror of our lives. Throughout South Africa, young people smoke antiretroviral drugs. It is a well-known thing (Kota 2011).

Democracy theorists envision an informed citizen who is able and willing to participate in the democratic processes as prerequisite. Nevertheless, there can be major drawbacks if these processes and media messages are found irrelevant by certain members of society, or where the public sphere does not create motivation for collective action (Kivikuru 2006: 6).

In this particular study, whilst some interviewees alleged that the black residents of Fingo Village[20], for example, did not vote for their ward councillor, their white counterparts in town (who shared part of the ward's delimitation) were more likely to vote.

> **Brian**: For example, in this ward most of the people didn't vote. So we don't know how things will go on with the services because this ward goes straight into town and the people who voted are the white people in town. So that shows that people are de-motivated about local politics.

[19] A protest movement representing unemployed people in South Africa, demanding their citizen right to employment.
[20] One of the poor black settlements

In addition, there were overtones of insecurities about expressing statements that question established political parties such as the ANC. As shown below, Nkululeko observes that it would be too dangerous if one is heard openly criticising the ruling elites as this can even jeopardise, for example, one's prospects of getting a job:

> **Nkululeko**: You can say that the government is doing ABC and is supposed to do ABC but they will tell you who are you to tell us what to do? The next thing is you may spoil yourself a reputation in the future if you are looking for a job and you find yourself in trouble because they won't accept you because you were talking too much. If you talk too much, they will shut you down!

This is in agreement with what Heller (2009) identifies as political patronage arising out of a single party dominance where state institutions and resources are accessible to a powerful minority whose political links are powerful. It could therefore be argued that people avoid open criticism of the established system as this has implications for one's employment prospects. One group expressed how job vacancies in the municipality are only accessible to people with powerful political links.

> **Babalwa**: and the way they hire people, you find that you have got good qualifications to take a position in the municipality only to find that the person they employ does not even have those qualifications. It's just that this particular person is known or this family is known around. That is where the problem is because that person won't know the job and delivery is going be very slow.

Indeed, Nomakhaya confirms this, adding that those that tend to be politically active are those who are benefiting directly through their membership of these political parties, and they often seem to do so for selfish reasons and personal enrichment:

> **Nomakhaya**: Yes, when they want to hire people they take from their sisters and brothers. The problem is inside the municipality. It's only those who are benefiting who are more supportive on the political side because they benefit and they are part of the "parties" and they are well known. If you are not well known then you will not get any recognition.

One informant pointed out that to be part of this 'cult', one has to prove unquestionable loyalty, as there are too many others who are willing to trade integrity for membership:

> **Nothando**: But even if you are part of "the party", there is still a long queue. They will tell you to come later. We don't know you yet. You still need to work more for the party even if you have good ideas..

At another level, it may be important to view people's resistance to participate in public processes as counter action against an establishment where underprivileged minority groups have not enjoyed the greater economic prosperity as part of a deepening democracy. As highlighted in earlier chapters, the beneficiaries of the compromises that enabled South Africa's transition to democracy were ultimately just a fairly small section of the black middle class and what has been described, rather generically, as white capital and big business, while the losers have been the country's underclass, plus some working class whites and coloureds who now face political and economic marginalisation (Sparks 2009: 200; see also Sparks 2011). The new elite, so this argument goes, seeks to protect and entrench its interests by actively shaping public discourses that do not threaten their interests whilst at the same time the marginalised majority seek alternative routes of resistance.

Overall, it is clear that there is a deep sense of indignation over the failure of political representatives to deliver on their electoral mandates, and disenchantment with practices such as party politicking and the awarding of council jobs on the basis of political connections and patronage. As has already been pointed out, drawing on Heller (2009) and Beall et al's. (2005) insights, some members of civil society use activism as a ladder to achieve personal ends, and once in the political ranks become ambassadors of the elite instead of being advocates of the poor. The indignation of ordinary people was registered in some people boycotting the local government elections in May 2011 and indeed, in many other anti-social or 'opt out' activities, including widespread use of alcohol and drugs of various kinds.

5.3.7 Possible futures?

In spite of the apparent sense of resignation expressed by some informants as shown in the transcripts of the previous sections, there appear to be others who expressed some level of optimism. They point to the potential that *Lunchtime Live* has to mediate linkages and trust between the ruling class and the masses of the society.

As will be drawn out from the interview transcripts that follow, what the audiences suggest as ideal solutions resonates with what the producers of *Lunchtime Live* claim to be doing, yet the audiences think that they are not doing enough of that. In section 5.2.1 above, the producers of the show claimed that they aim, overwhelmingly, to tell stories of the poor. A comparison of these claims with what the audiences expressed seems to contradict this somewhat. Many informants expressed the view that the show could do well by approaching the people who, despite them not being elected public figures, are able to stand up for the poor masses and possibly find life changing solutions. Many referred to the Unemployed People's Movement and its Chair, Ayanda Kota:

> **Siphokazi**: there are passionate people out there. People like Ayanda Kota are very passionate about these issues. I think his voice is really very powerful and he really stands for the community. Sometimes it's not about elected people only who can stand in for the people. Ayanda Kota is very forceful and is well known around.

Implicitly disqualifying the relevance of elites who have, as shown in earlier sections, been described as "untrustworthy", "unreliable" and often motivated by self-aggrandisement, Noxolo makes it clear that "the people", and not the leaders, are the champions of change because they are in touch with the reality of poverty and they suffer the inconvenience of poor service delivery and political patronage:

> **Noxolo**: Like those people from the Unemployed People's Movement, they should be there on the show. Those people know poverty. Those people are on the floor. Those people would know what they are talking about rather than someone who would be talking about something they read from the internet, for example a Rhodes student who just browses the internet… People in Grahamstown are poor.

Others refer to the involvement of diverse grassroots movements, believing that these are motivated by more genuine causes and have the potential to bring solutions:

> **Khethiwe**: There is this something called Students Solidarity Movement from Rhodes University, and there is also,… I forgot their name but they are also working with Unemployed People's Movement. Those are relevant people that the show can approach. Those are people who know what it means to be poor, those are people who are living in poverty and have never worked before, they walked the township and they have been with the people.

In agreement, Siphokazi thinks that academics can also play a significant role:

> **Siphokazi**: Jah! There are community leaders like Ayanda Kota from Unemployed People's Movement (UPM). I think that person is relevant because he is from the community. It is relevant to bring other people from the community too and have debates in the community halls. You also need to bring people like … academics.

This implies that the claims made by the show's producers that they are "telling the story of the poor" falls short of audiences' actual articulated perceptions. Indeed, sections 5.2.2; 5.2.3 and 5.3.5 provide evidence of an apparent lack of the "voice' of the marginalised. The overreliance on elite modes of expression (e.g. English language), the dominance of elite voices as news sources defining the worldview and the general "crowding" of public sphere by politicians who are regarded as not only untrustworthy and unreliable, but also generally lacking commitment to act out their responsibilities militates against the producers' claims to telling the story of the marginalised.

Much of what the above transcripts have shown bears strong parallel with Gramsci (1971) and Freire's (1989) insights. Gramsci (1971) argues that in order for a community to counter the hegemony of a dominant force, and indeed turn the fortunes of the oppressed, there is need for a cadre of what he calls "organic intellectuals" who, by their deep attachment to the community of intervention, are able to articulate and indeed offer practical solutions to the needs of the marginalised. In conjuncture with Gramsci, Freire (1989) argues that true change is something that "people" do for themselves with the help of others, in their own language, and not something done 'to them' by experts (Purcell 2011). Ultimately, the "organic intellectual" is deeply rooted in the livelihoods of those that he/she serves and is thus mutually reciprocal with them.

Whilst the informants could not specifically pin point what social movements like the Unemployed People's Movement have done in changing the lives of the majority of poor residents, there is evidence that such movements command great support. There is hope, and indeed potential, that *Lunchtime Live* can potentially be a zone of mediation between marginalised groups and power elites without necessarily over foregrounding the voice of the elite. Indeed, and guided by some of the principles of "community" in community radio already espoused in Chapter 2, it is possible that if *Lunchtime Live* is owned and run by the "community" with a specific goal for self-emancipation, such ambitions are achievable. Whilst these could be overcome, *Lunchtime Live* needs, to start with, to abide by the normative values of citizen-centric reporting and thus elevate the voice of the marginalised.

6. Conclusion

Three dominant themes were explored in this chapter. Firstly: that resonance rather than resistance is the more dominant 'stance' or 'attitude' towards the content of *Lunchtime Live*. Secondly, that whilst the programme is helping establish links within members of the civil society as well as between civil society and their political representatives, residents feel that local democracy is failing to bring qualitative improvements to their lives because of lack of political will, lack of competence, and large-scale corruption, as politicians largely fail to deliver their electoral promises or meet the deep expectations of a 'better life for all' in the socio-economic sphere. Thirdly, in spite of the largely positive view about *Lunchtime Live's* capacity to be a platform for public engagement, its participatory potential is structurally constrained by two factors: firstly the continued downplaying of the voice – understood both theoretically (after Rodriguez (2001: 160) and Downings (2001: 52)) and Steenveld & Stelitz's reworking) and literally, of the economically and politically disempowered groups in favour of elite views in defining public discourses, and, as importantly, this key group's inability to participate fully because of constrained material conditions, such as little money for phone air time, couple with what appears to be a long-festering and very deep political disenchantment.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6. Introduction

The aim of the research was principally to investigate the meanings made by the listeners of *Lunchtime Live*, a 'talk-back' live format discussion show broadcast on a small community radio station – Radio Grahamstown – which uses citizen journalists to generate much of its pre-prepared content. This study sought to understand the programme's value as a cultural resource, particularly in terms of community members' understanding of, and involvement in, local politics and issues relating to local government in Grahamstown East.

In order to explore these issues, the study used a qualitative research methodology with qualitative content analysis and focus group interviews being the primary tools (see Chapter 4). These methods allowed the researcher to explicate the content structure of *Lunchtime Live* and discern the audience's verbalised experience with this particular content.

Drawing together the various bodies of theory and the field work, it is clear that *Lunchtime Live's* relationship with its audiences is predicated on its ability to foreground the issues that touch on the lives of its audiences, such as their problems with the municipality, poverty, crime, housing problems and others, but less in actually giving people the "voice" to express their opinions. *Lunchtime Live's* ability to tap into what audiences described as their own daily realities derives partly from its use of citizen journalists who, as highlighted in Chapter 1, live in the same community with the target audience and as such, are subject to the same processes of socio-political and economic marginalisation. Because of this, *Lunchtime Live* is able to explore what one might call 'first hand' experiences of the target audiences. During the analysis of focus group discussions data presented in Chapter 5, the researcher noted that the audiences shared what one may describe as a common set of problems, both of an economic nature (high unemployment, low wages, and generalised poverty) and, on a more political level, the municipality's inefficiency in service delivery, slow turn-around times, unresponsiveness, and, often the sheer incompetence and ill-will. There was general audience consensus that *Lunchtime Live* gave a fair coverage of these more political issues. Qualitative

content analysis of the *Lunchtime Live* also revealed the show's extensive coverage of these issues in its programming.

The study also noted that *Lunchtime Live's* audiences acknowledge and recognise the programme's attempts to bridge the gap between local residents and local power elites. Indeed through focus group discussions and content analysis of selected episodes of *Lunchtime Live*, it was clear that *Lunchtime Live* could partly be viewed as an on-going attempt to *conscientise* residents about issues of power and critiquing the use and exercise of power through the coverage of municipal activities as well as other local political-arena developments. In Chapter 1, the researcher argued that the 'marketisation' of the media and the government's powerful influence over public opinion formation largely crowds out less powerful members of society who, as a result, are not able to participate in public opinion formation. *Lunchtime Live* clearly attempts to be a small antidote to this.

Chapter 2 argued that the development of community media in South Africa was largely an attempt to address this 'crowding out' and power imbalance, and community media was believed to be capable of giving voice to marginalised population groups. Through insights from reception theory, the researcher showed how the context of reception, especially the programme's ability to highlight audiences' lived realities, is largely implicated in the audience's enchantment with the programme or lack of it. In this study, the focus group discussion data yielded results that point to the programme's largely successful attempts to 'link people to power'.

However, during focus group discussions, together with corroborating data from content analysis of selected shows, the researcher noted that a number of elements worked together to reduce the potential impact of the programme. Partly because *Lunchtime Live* uses a mixture of English language and isiXhosa, and partly because the citizen journalists reflexively used elite sources to give commentary on and proffer solutions to community problems, the programme did not achieve as much success in meeting the producer's stated aims. As explored in Chapter 5, although it can be argued that many members of the local elite in Grahamstown are also 'organic intellectuals' who have 'just happened' to go into formal politics and/or get jobs in the municipality, they are just not perceived in this way by ordinary people. There is a sense that politicians, regardless of their prior status, are, once elected, just in it 'for themselves'. The target audiences of *Lunchtime Live* are composed of the largely

black African population who speak English as second language and indeed are themselves disempowered by poor education from ill-resourced township schools. The voice of the marginalised is largely absent and indeed overshadowed by that of local elites such as Rhodes University's academic staff, for example, and other 'experts', and particularly by local government officials who populate public offices.

Qualitative content analysis in Chapter 5 has shown that *Lunchtime Live* relies heavily on these official perspectives, effectively marginalising the voice of the local working class population who are the target audience for *Lunchtime Live*. The study suggests that Gramsci's (1971) notion of the "organic intellectual' and Freire's (1989) notions of the use of everyday language (see Chapter 2.3.1 of this study) are important, as they suggest ways beyond *Lunchtime Live's* current reliance on modes of expression informed mostly by the mainstream media's approaches.

6.1 Some suggestions of avenues for further research

These findings nevertheless suggest some areas of possible future research that may be fruitful, particularly in terms of enhancing the role of community media in local democracy. This particular study drew on Gramsci's (1971) and Freire's (1989) insights about "organic intellectuals", whom they argue (in slightly different ways) are central to provoking grassroots thinking and helping generate 'bottom up' solutions to the problems besting any society. Future research could therefore, focus on understanding how these "organic intellectuals" emerge, relate to community, and how they view their role in society and the opportunities afford by local media. Research could focus on how these organic intellectuals "act" as agents of social change, the constraints they meet in their spheres of influence as well as what role they perceive as being played by the community-oriented shows such as *Lunchtime Live* in either advancing or limiting the scope of their role in the public sphere. More specifically too, it would be interesting to investigate how organic intellectuals view themselves in relation to constitutionally elected public figures so as to see if indeed they consider themselves as the "alternative voice" to elected politicians.

Secondly, in view of the deep-rooted poverty as well as the general sense of despondency in the communities, it would be worthwhile for future research to focus on how community radio programmes such as *Lunchtime Live* might be utilised as a platform where people discuss and share entrepreneurial and other economic skills that might enhance the power of audiences to participate in their own upliftment. Building on the notions of organic intellectuals, it would be worthy to investigate how certain individuals – organic entrepreneurs -- can use the platform of community shows such as Lunchtime Live for informing and inspiring the community towards economic self-reliance, rather than the focus on just 'delivery' from government.

Lastly, this study has shown that many young people clearly feel alienated from *Lunchtime Live* because the programme does not serve their interests in ways that are obvious to them. These findings call for two possible research areas. Firstly, it would be important to investigate whether the youths' preference for music over current affairs shows such as *Lunchtime Live*, for example, is indicative of individual penchants for music, or indeed whether the consumption of music is induced by other motives, for example escapism or some form of youth identity formation, or some combination of these factors. Secondly, research could focus on how *Lunchtime Live's* programming could be redesigned to suit the needs of youths so that this population segment does not continue to be as alienated as it appears to be in the local public spheres.

APPENDIX 1

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE (LISTENERS OF *LUNCHTIME LIVE*)

1. Welcoming participants

Welcome everyone and thank you for taking your time to attend this discussion. I am Stanley Tsarwe, and I am the moderator of this discussion. I am a student from Rhodes University and this research is part of the academic requirement for the Masters in Journalism and Media Studies. With me here is Kwanele Butane, who is assisting me in the moderation and please be free to use isiXhosa language.

2. Participants' Demographic profiles

Would you please tell us a little about yourself, including information such as:

- name,
- age,
- gender,
- Employment status,
- Location of residence,
- Which media you have access to use and prefer most.

3. Ethical issues:

We would like to talk to you about your experiences with *Lunchtime Live*. We want to know what role *Lunchtime Live* is playing in your lives, specifically whether or not *Lunchtime Live* is helping you to understand how the municipality functions as well as other developments in the community that are important in your lives. Is it making you aware of who to approach if there are problems in the community and is it giving you the opportunity to say out your wishes about how the municipality, how to vote during election, how school boards are elected and run as well as what your councillors are doing? We wish to stress that this is your time to say out your views about *Lunchtime Live*, especially how it is or is not helping you in your everyday lives.

You will be doing a lot of the talking and please feel free to say your feelings about this radio programme. There will not be right or wrong answers. Respect others when they give their ideas and do not feel out of place when you have nothing to say. If you have negative comments please feel to express them, they are very useful to us.

During discussions I will be asking questions occasionally to guide the discussion. I will be using a tape recorder to record your voices but this information is confidential. It is only for academic purposes and will not be published anywhere.

This discussion will take about 60 minutes. I will start by playing one episode that we recorded so as to refresh your memories about issues discussed on *Lunchtime Live*. However, your discussions are not limited to this recorded show.

4. About listening to *Lunchtime Live*

We will listen to one episode from *Lunchtime Live*, and some of you may recognise it. This is an episode taken from the name-change debate as well as one about water problems in Grahamstown.

4.1 General media consumption

a) Which media do you normally use?

b) How did you get to know about *Lunchtime Live*?

c) What is it that you like about that type of media?

4.2 Attitude towards *Lunchtime Live*?

a) When you were listening to this programme, what is it that you liked or interested you most?

b) Did you find anything you didn't like? What is that?

c) As you listen to *Lunchtime Live* at home, do you sometimes phone the studio to participate in the debates, and if not why?

d) Is there any issue that you particularly remember most that was discussed on *Lunchtime Live*?

e) How popular is this programme in the communities?

f) What do you think is the reason of popularity of lack popularity of *Lunchtime Live*?

4.3 Language Use:

a) What do you think about the use of English language during broadcast?

b) Have you ever phoned *Lunchtime Live* and what language did you use?

c) Do you think listeners are not able to participate because of language?

d) What do you think about the presenters of the show?

4.4 The programme's relevance to the lives of the listeners

a) Do you like the topics discussed on *Lunchtime Live*?

b) What do you think they should discuss most?

c) How different is *Lunchtime Live* from other current affairs programmes?

d) Does *Lunchtime Live* tell you how the municipality is working?

4.5 Linking civil society to power

a) Do people of Grahamstown know their councillors?

b) Do you think the people of Grahamstown know who to see if they have a problem?

c) Is *Lunchtime Live* making any difference about how you relate with the municipality, local politicians and local school boards?

d) Do you remember if *Lunchtime Live* brought anyone from the council, political parties or school boards into the studio? Did you like what they were talking about?

e) If the Mayor was to be called again into the studio, what would you ask him?

f) What do you think is the greatest worry of the people of Grahamstown and how do you think this can be solved?

4.6 Summing up

Do you have anything more that you would like to say about *Lunchtime Live*?

Thank you once again for attending this discussion. If I have additional questions that I would like to ask may I contact you? If you need to know more about this study and wish to comment more please get in touch with me on 0843580248.

APPENDIX ***2***

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE (PRODUCERS OF *LUNCHTIME LIVE)*

Welcoming participants

I thank you for taking time off to discuss *Lunchtime Live*. I want understand from you, as producers of *Lunchtime Live,* what you intend to achieve and what it is that motivates you in doing your work. I also want to know what you think about your audiences. In addition, I want to understand the following: your relationship with these audiences, where you get much of your news commentary from, what you understand by citizen journalism as well as whether or not your work is similar to other journalists who work for national broadcasters.

1. Participants' Demographic profiles

Could you please introduce yourselves and give detail to the following information about yourselves:

- Name
- Age
- Employment status
- Location of residence

2. About your work as Citizen Journalists

2.1 Objectives/ambitions

a) What do you hope to achieve with this show?
b) Do you believe that this programme will be able to fulfil your ambitions?
c) Are there any obstacles that you see as working against your ambitions?

2.2 Source of motivation

a) What motivates you as you present the show?
b) Would you care if people did not listen to this show?

2.3 People's Attitude towards *Lunchtime Live*

a) Do you often hear people talk about you because of your involvement in the programme?
b) What do people say about you?
c) What is your attitude to this show?

2.4 About their work as citizen journalists

a) What kind of journalists do you think you are?
b) Can there be a difference between a citizen journalist and a professional journalist?
c) As a citizen journalist, do you also consider ethical issues such as objectivity, accuracy, fairness and neutrality?
d) When you report about a broken sewer pipe, do you report to intervene on the side of the community or you remain neutral?
e) Given that your target audiences are marginalised economically and politically, what do you think is the role of journalism?

3. About the civil society in Grahamstown

a) Do you think people in Grahamstown know where to seek help; for example if one wants to report a burst sewer pipe, how to contact their local school board, etc?
b) What kind of relationship is there between the general public and their representatives in council or local politicians?
c) What is the people's general attitude to voting?

Summing up

Does anyone still have anything to say?

I thank you for the information you provided. Should I need additional information can I come back to you? I also congratulate you for the work you are doing and I hope you will be able to realise your goals.

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