

An autoethnography of lifestories recorded on the community radio on the island of Barra.

By

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Abstract

In agreeing with Geertz's claim that culture is experiential (1973), I aim to present an interpretation of a lived experience. It is an autoethnographic reflection of my experience as a volunteer radio host for the community radio station on the island of Barra in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. At the heart of my argument is spoken language and its meaning. From a selection of themes of transcribed lifestory interviews, I aim to show that culture, diachronically shaped in the island's collective historical experience of its past relationship to the sea, transforms itself through language to create a coherency of our present living experience. Indeed, my argument is that the collective conceptualisation of community and tradition, and the more individualised concept of identity, as conduits of culture, are constructed through contextually significant linear and non-linear narrative language, which is the result of temporal, ever-changing phenomenological processes. This synchronic interpretation, based on a snapshot of a collective public space, uses a critical discourse analysis of the island's oral history to demonstrate how lifestory narratives reflect and refract coherency of a historical specific time. In such slightly skewed reflections, the locality finds itself. But in its refracted form, it moves beyond the parochial into territory where themes uncover age and gender differences. The differentiation of meaning produces a coherency that is echoed in feminist discourse. Looking through the theoretical lenses of anthropological and sociological perspectives, I argue that in the construction of lifestory narratives, the power relationships of a wider capitalist society are embedded, and, as such, reflect our lived experience, which gives meaning to what we understand as culture.

Ethics Approval Granted 2015

Here are the comments from the Ethics Committee on the proposed research.

Although the Committee found it rather odd that there seems to be an equation between copyright and ethical clearance in the proposal, but we are happy to give clearance to the project. If the material is indeed in the public domain, we can't think of any great problem about using them for further research, given that the student started her PhD while she was still carrying out the interviews, presumably this was planned and we are working on a presumption that she asked for the interviewees' permission.

A solution to this would be that, since the interviews are already in the public domain, she could simply quote from and cite them (broadcast date/archive reference etc.) without the interviewees' permission – interview by proxy, so to speak.

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B' i sin reul's an oidhche dhoilleir...

Moran taing.

Part One

1 Chapter One: Introduction

When you talk to me about my research, do not ask me what I found; I found nothing. Ask me what I invented; what I made up from and out of my data. But know that in asking you to ask me this, I am not confessing to telling any lies about the people or events in my stories or studies. I have told the truth. The proof is in the things I have made how they look in the mind's eye, whether they satisfy your sense of style and craftsmanship, whether you believe them, and whether they appeal to your heart (Sandelkowski:1994:61).

My thesis set on the island of Barra – see the map on page 3 – the southern most island of the archipelago of the Western Islands of Scotland. It is an autoethnographic research story of a radio show on the island's community radio station, Siar FM, a programme of lifestory recordings on *Barra Island Discs*, which has broadcast to a local and global audience three times a week from its inception in 2009 to 2021. Gaelic is the indigenous language of the community and is spoken by the islanders. My interviews were not carried out in Gaelic because I was not sufficiently fluent. Everyone I interviewed spoke English and were happy to do so – no one expected to be interviewed in Gaelic. Bilingualism, and the political issues pertaining, feature as a theme. This dissertation, an autoethnographic interpretation of culture, is presented in two parts, comprising seven chapters. In Part One, chapters one to three ethnographically explore the setting of the show and develop a method of analysis based on the content and form of the lifestory interviews. The analysis is interdisciplinary and is situated in the theoretical approaches of oral history, sociology, and anthropology. Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven make up Part Two. They analytically apply theory to practice so that three tenets of modernity – community, identity, and tradition – are conceptualised from the language of the community. Culture is language and language is culture. Culture is the relational product of a series of everyday temporal processes which, when synchronically explored in the experiential language of the ordinary, reflect the world we live in, the words we use to define who we are in the community which shapes our identity and traditions.

1.1 Chapter Summaries and Research Questions

Chapter Two introduces my methodology of autoethnography, which focuses on how I use my own story of a community radio host to conceptualise the cultural significance of the stories I recorded initialising the shape of my themes. Secondly, I introduce a brief international comparison of the increasing popularity of community radio to show how its purpose is considered to be democratising and radical. I consider how local perspectives challenge the cultural behemoth of the BBC by comparing and contrasting the differences between the community radio in Barra and Radio nan Gaidheal. I offer my own community radio host experience to contextualise the background to the data lifestory collection. I introduce lifestories and explain how I crafted an analytical methodology by looking at two individual transcripts and compositing them in order to focus on the content of lifestories as a form of social reproduction. The chapter introduces the people of Barra and my relationship to them.

Chapter Three adds to the methodological paradigm by arguing that the community radio lifestories are a form of oral history. It does this by considering a literature review of oral history and situates my argument in broader academic terms. Furthermore, it presents my contribution to the academic argument by suggesting that there is a differential in narrative between linear and non-linear telling of lifestories, which is age. I consider the significance of age and how it is not only a chronological description but an indicator of success and resilience. To conclude the chapter, I present a historiographic trawl through Barra's oral history secondary sources to highlight the significance of time and space as a variable of the lifestories, which are a form of the island's oral history.

Chapter Four is about conceptualising community from sociological and anthropological theories. It uses Barra's Big Story, which is its relationship with the fishing industry, to exemplify the theories in practice. In addition, my autoethnographic methodology considers my story of community and how it transformed as I moved from being an outsider to an insider.

Chapter Five considers the theoretical position of identity, presenting a critical discourse of the lifestory narratives from the younger and older generation and applying the methodological analysis constructed in Chapter Three. It shows how identity is revealed through a series of age and gender themes which are memory related. I consider the ethics involved in a close reading analysis of the lifestories.

Chapter Six conceptualises tradition from the theoretical positions of social reproduction and considers how time and space contribute to its construction. The idea of tradition is exemplified in the lifestories of the older generation and their community contribution to the stories, music and song of the island. The chapter concludes part two of the thesis by considering my contribution to the academic discourse on lifestories, both theoretically and methodologically. It finishes with the policy recommendations I would like to be considered.

Chapter Seven revisits the aims and objectives of the autoethnographic exploration of the cultural interpretation of a collection of lifestory narratives recorded on the island's community radio. It discusses the success of the methodology of autoethnography and the importance of interconnections between one's own story and the stories of others. It finishes with a brief summation of the ethics involved in such a research project.

Research Questions:

Chapter One: The overarching question is how does a qualitative autoethnographic methodology conceptualise culture from a data collection of lifestories collected on community radio? How do I project an island and autoethnographic background to the thesis?

Chapter Two: In what ways does an autoethnographic critical discourse analysis research methodology of the lifestories on community radio reveal significant qualities of community radio as a method for revealing interconnecting and cross-generational themes of lifestories?

Chapter Three: How can I position my lifestory narratives in a broader critical academic discourse and what are the differences that arise as a result of this?

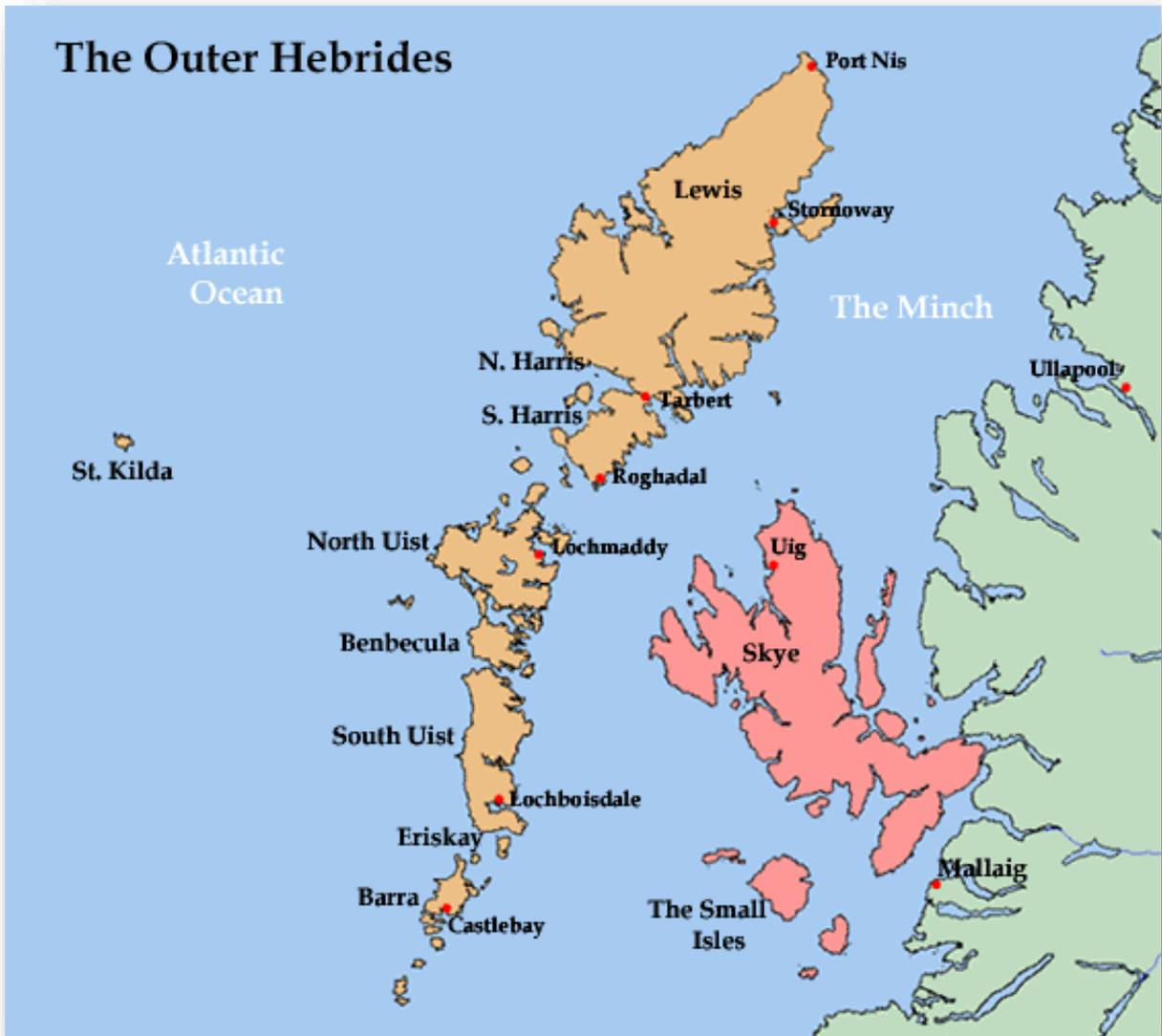
Chapter Four: How can a comparative sociological and anthropological theoretical discourse be conceptualised in Barra's Big Story?

Chapter Five: How is identity conceptualised by generation separation of lifestory narratives and what is the significance of its outcomes?

Chapter Six: How does tradition position lifestory narratives as a discourse on temporality and how is the significance of temporality exemplified in the lifestory narratives of the older generation?

Chapter Seven: This explains the interconnecting relationship between theory in practice and the methodology of autoethnography to show how the contribution of each chapter added to an exposition of culture, and considers the ethical considerations of doing so.

1.2 Map



Map One: Island of Barra (www.scotlandinfo.cu)

‘...if you see a string of islands as a clawless lobster as I do, then Barra forms its tail...’ (Hall, 1999:1)

It is 100 nautical miles from the mainland and measures 14 miles in circumference, covering an area of approximately 17,000 acres. It is surrounded on the west side by the imposing Atlantic Ocean and on the east, by the Sea of the Hebrides. The community at the centre of my research is surrounded by the sea.

As Tönnies tells us: ‘*Gemeinschaft* of locality may be conceived as a community of physical life’ (1955:38).

1.2.1 General Overview of Barra

Barra is the southern most of the large islands of the Outer Hebrides, an archipelago sitting on the west coast of Scotland. It is approximately 14 miles in circumference and extends over 17,000 acres of land. It has a population of approximately 1,200 people. Employment is provided by a small inshore fishing industry, tourism, the public sector, and health and education. Over 60% of the islanders are Gaelic speaking. Agriculturally, crofting is a way of life. Of the 6024 crofts on the Western Isles, 443 (3 are owner occupied) are used in Barra to provide foodstuffs like potatoes and to keep livestock.

Geographically, its land mass is a habitat for wading birds, including oyster catchers and herons. Its machair¹ (grassland) is also home to many genera of orchid. Located some five sea hours from Oban by ferry and an hour by plane from Glasgow, it is surrounded on the west coast by the Atlantic Ocean and on the east side by the Sea of the Hebrides. Castlebay and its neighbouring island, Watersay, provide the most naturally sheltered harbours on the west coast of Scotland. Castlebay has a natural sheltered harbour, from which the main town takes its name. In the bay, Kisimul Castle can be seen. It is accessible only by boat. It is the traditional home of the clan chief, the MacNeil of Barra, whose flag flies when he is resident on the island. The history of the MacNeil clan on Barra can be found in the records pertaining to Niall of the Nine Hostages, a 4th century High King of Ireland. The MacNeils were granted a charter to Barra in the 15th century by both the Lord of the Isles and James VI of Scotland (Haswell-Smith, 2005:72.) According to the Barra ‘Phoney’,² MacNeil is one of the most popular names on the island. The onomastic process by which this has evolved is discussed in Chapter Six.

¹ The word ‘machair’ is Gaelic, meaning an extensive, low-lying fertile plain. ‘Machair’ has now become a recognised scientific term for a specific coastal feature, a type of dune pasture that is subject to local cultivation and has developed in wet and windy conditions (Harwood, 2012).

² Barra phoney book is the telephone directory on the island published by Voluntary Action Barra Watersay. In the 2013 directory, MacNeils make up 18% of the names listed and 54% of all the ‘Mac’ surnames. There are more than twice as many MacNeils than there are MacLeans and MacKinnons.

Barra exists on the edge of the sea. Its beaches have always provided food for the island community. The cockle strand, or to give it its local Gaelic name, the ‘traigh mhor’ (big beach), is covered every day by the tide and has been fished daily for cockles for hundreds of years. Reference to this bounty is found in Donald Munro. When writing a description of the Hebrides in 1549, he comments on ‘the cockles of Barra’ (Miller, 1999:46). In the 18th century, during times of famine, as many as 200 cartloads of live cockles were collected from here every day (Haswell-Smith, 1996: 221). The main difference since Munro visited the island is that the cockle strand is now also a runway. When the daily plane lands, the cocklers must remain within certain boundaries. But with a bucket, a rake and a spade, and a lot of hard toil, Barra cockles still provide sustenance for the island community. Interestingly, the industry surrounding the cockling has always inspired commentary from people, one such person being Sir Compton Mackenzie³ (Mackenzie, 1947), whose home is nearby. Such was his desire to protect and care for the local fishers and cocklers that he joined forces with the Gaelic scholar, John Lorne Campbell, to form the Sea League in the 1930s as a campaign organisation to persuade the Government to protect local fishermen (Haswell-Smith, 1996:221). Presently, the inshore fishing for crustaceans provides much needed employment on the island, both for fishers and for those employed in the fish processing factory of Barratlantic. Like the other islands of the Outer Hebrides, direct and indirect fishing provide necessary employment – currently the islands are home to the largest fleet of inshore fishing boats (90% is shellfish, 10% white fish) in Scotland, supplying the domestic and European markets with shellfish. Throughout the islands, over one thousand people are involved in the fishing industry. Other employment is found from navigational and mariner skills learned from an early age which has enabled the men traditionally and, since the seventies, women to venture out into the seas and oceans of the world to earn a living.⁴ The maritime skills of the Barra fishers and merchant navy officers mean they are sought after in ports everywhere (Miller, 1999:36). Chapters Four and Five provide a more detailed account of the local fishing industry and employment.

³ The famous fictional account of the looting of the SS Politician of 50,000 cases of whisky. The dedication of *Whisky Galore* is ‘To all my dear friends in Barra in grateful memory of much kindness and much laughter through many happy years’.

⁴ The impact of the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 on the career choices of island women has not been researched, but effectively the act has made an impact because at the time of writing, I know at least three women from Barra families have chosen to go to sea, all with the Merchant Navy.

Not only do the islands share the same industries but they also share a similar cultural history of the experience of the Clearances when people were made to leave to make way for livestock. This history, interpreted differently by each island, nevertheless tells a story of loss and fortitude, and is remembered in their songs and stories. Chapter Six discusses this in detail. The first FEIS (festival of music) began in 1981 on Barra. This celebration of traditional Gaelic music, song and storytelling is now a Scotland-wide organisation, which encourages other communities to learn the history, values and stories associated with Gaelic communities.

Despite the islands' similarities, their religious celebrations differ. Barra is the only island thought to be named after a saint – St. Finbarr of Cork, who, with St Columba, travelled from Ireland to Scotland to convert people to Christianity. Consequently, the island celebrates its Catholic heritage.

Like the other islands, Barra tries to maintain its current population and is actively involved in projects to sustain a healthy economy, which will support the community. A projected fall in population means that organisations such as Coimhearsnachd Bharraidh agus Bhatarsaidh Ltd (Barra and Vatersay Ltd) are searching for economic solutions that can encourage an active community for the foreseeable future.

1.2.2 Books and Oral Recordings of Barra

I researched the historical significance of books and oral recordings which shaped Barra's history to the present time. To understand the island's culture so that I could position the recorded radio lifestories of the *Barra Island Discs* collection in it, I had to contextualise Barra. Below, the books listed provide an overview of the island's experience and its people's historical struggles in the face of forced emigration and absentee landlordism, which resulted in land raids in both Vatersay and Eoligarry. Additionally, I listened to the voices of the island community from recordings available at the Barra Culture and Heritage Centre (The Dualchas), recordings from the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh University and the local community radio library at Siar FM. From both the written texts and oral accounts, I have gained invaluable information, which has contributed to my understanding of the identity and traditions of the community.

Branigan, K. *The Last of the Clan, General Roderick MacNeil of Barra 41st Chief of the Clan MacNeil*. Gloucestershire: Amberley, 2010.

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Tait, C. Guide to the Outer Hebrides. 2011. Accessed April 2013. <<http://www.charles-tait.co.uk/guide/wisouv/2011pdf/10barra2012>>

1.2.2.1 My contribution to this collection

My thesis adds to this collection by presenting an academic autoethnographic oral history research analysis of the island voices in the 21st century. Methodologically, it builds on what has gone before by applying a critical discourse analysis to create a platform which foreshadows the islanders' words, expressing what community, identity and tradition mean to them. Voices describing local experiences are now rightly regarded as an excellent method of self-determination because they bring new perspectives and challenge the views of the past by providing first-hand accounts of what it is like to live in Barra in the present day. Intergenerational, age and memory bring together the past and the present. By closely examining the above texts, I have explored the island's relationship with the past and, where appropriate, used it to contextualise the community as it exists today. To illustrate this point, I spent considerable time researching the island's relationship to the fishing industry as a means of exploring the importance of the industry to the community. Contextualising the present from the written texts of the past explains the social and economic significance of the fishing industry in the community today. Furthermore, my research helped me to elicit cultural inferences showing how the industry not only indicated social and economic contexts but how it also permeated into every aspect of cultural life. My thesis brings together the written texts of the past and explores their impact through the present day lifestories of the community. An example of this can be found in the description of the Vatersay Raiders by Nanag Gillies in her *Barra Island Discs* interview and Ben Buxton's in-depth narrative of the historical context.

What is exemplified here is that the written texts provide a detailed historical background, which contextualises the spoken language of today in its historical specificity. This symbiotic relationship of how language is socially formed is theorised and exemplified in Chapters Five and Six.

1.3 My Autoethnographic Journey

My background is rooted in arts and humanities. Prior to embarking on my PhD project, I completed an undergraduate MA at the University of Glasgow and an MSc at the University of Strathclyde. In 2011, after 18 years of teaching secondary school English, I completed a MRes degree at the University of Stirling. This degree focused on a post-colonial interpretation of the novels of the contemporary Irish novelist and playwright, Sebastian Barry. During this research year, and in the intervening years, between 2009 and 2014, I spent time designing, producing, and recording a programme, *Barra Island Discs*, for the community radio station, Siar FM. As a consequence of the enhanced theoretical knowledge and cultural understanding I gained from my research degree, my perception changed, and I began to look upon my radio interviews as island stories, a collective representation of a cultural oral account of the island community, recorded ‘from below’. The data of this thesis is formed from the language of those interviews. The corpus of my PhD project is a collection of life story narratives gathered during my five-year volunteering post as a radio show host on Siar FM. Those narratives provide an insight into the culture of an island community, essentially an interpretation of their own culture in their own voices. From the outset, my main objective has been to present my story collection as a form of autoethnographic academic research. What distinguishes my project and differentiates it from other island research into culture is that it is a study of how to construct an academic argument from the ‘bottom up’, in other words, from the data of a selection of stories, including my own. It means, in effect, that the methods presented are a result of a ‘mixed bag’ taken from the disciplines of anthropology, literary criticism and sociology.

Intrinsically fluid, the labyrinthine processes of the research culminated in a phenomenological journey. What follows is a reflective summary of those processes, coupled with a discourse on how the application of enhanced phenomenological understanding impacted on my lifestory and the other lifestory narratives. In a way, the more I learned, the more meaning I found in my radio show interviews, until they had metamorphosed into life story narratives, which, when critically analysed, presented significant symbolic generational and gender differences of meaning. In effect, the learning process became a discourse of finding meaning for the lifestory narratives in their own historical specificity: they created a record of their present life from memories of their past.

The research is an autoethnographic critical discourse, interpreting how spoken language represents culture. Analytically, it is multidisciplinary, rooted in anthropological, sociological

and language study methodology. In looking for culture, it conceptually triangulates community, identity and tradition, and investigates the symbolic inter-connectedness between language, social structures and processes to show how culture is embedded in the everyday lived experience of lifestory narratives.

Using autoethnographic academic research while simultaneously developing an awareness of the significance of my interpretative skills has been a journey of discovery and achievement. Reflexively, the process of change from interviewer to academic researcher has developed my awareness of the difference in meaning between etic and emic. This important distinction between outsider and insider impacts the analyses of the personal lifestory narratives. Subsequently, I researched others who had also suffered from ‘Malinowski’s dilemma’, including Barre Toelken of ‘The Yellowman Tapes’ (1998), as well as reasoning the legal arguments and precedents of Bruce Miller (2011), who champions the use of oral history in the courts of Canada to protect the land rights of indigenous peoples. Bochner (2012), Ellis (2014), Parman’s (1990), MacDonald’s (1997) and Dorian’s (1981) (auto)ethnographic research inspired confidence in me to further develop my research skills.

The democratic nature of oral history of providing an example of ‘voices from below’ was further complemented because of how they were gathered on community radio. It provided a ‘public space’, where islanders could chat ‘hegemonic free’ about their lives because community radio is free from commercial input. In Scotland, there is no reflective critical discourse on community radio, and I had to look further afield, specifically to countries which differ geographically in terms of land mass, to find theoretical discussions. In summary, much of the analysis centres on how community radio has challenged the bourgeois intentionality of Habermas’s ‘public space’ and its effectiveness in providing a tool for social cohesion. But rather than foreshadowing the media role of community radio as my focus, I choose instead to present a critical discourse of the personal narratives because this was the best way to allow the language of the radio interviews to define for themselves the island’s culture. To organise the many processes this involved, I divided culture into three concepts – community, identity and tradition. The discourse which follows reflects those concepts.

Significantly, my project shows how a ‘grassroots’ third sector cultural experience can be used as a method for examining and exploring academic concepts in a meaningful way. At its heart is a critical discourse on the symbolic use of the language of personal narrative. Like the

lifestories, it is a textual analysis of word choice. Meaning flows continually throughout the body of the thesis, beating the steady rhythm of culture.

Clearly this project has its limitations. In the classic autoethnographic tradition, it is a messy and multi-disciplinary reflexive interpretation of culture, which weaves theoretically in and out of the critical language of anthropological and sociological perspectives. As an innovative discourse, it offers new ways of looking at the different processes involved in personal lifestory narratives, specifically illuminating how age impacts their linear and non-linear formation.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

My main aim was to inductively construct an argument from the data. Lifestory narratives represent a cultural interpretation worthy of academic research. I wanted to show that their content and form could undergo a form of textual analysis to explore and define culture by critically interpreting the significance of the contextualisation of language within a historically specific discourse. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis proved invaluable because 'it is evident that producing discourse is part of wider processes of producing social life, social relationships, and social identities' (2010:265). These are culturally important processes — see Diagram 1.

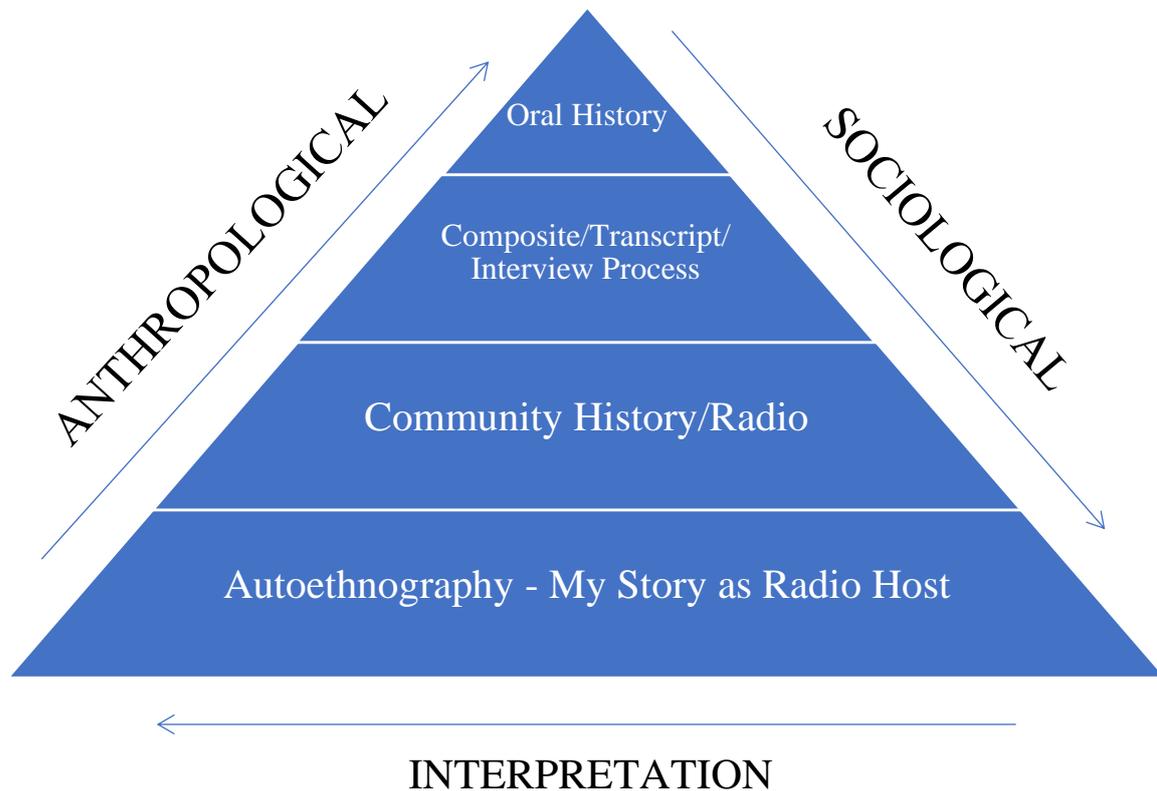


Diagram 1: Aims and Objectives Part 1

The ‘social’ presents interview themes of shared experiences such as employment, family, and religion, three tenets of modernity. In preparing this assertion for an academic audience, I had to consider how shared voices of community radio interviews could provide an autoethnographic representation of the island’s culture. This presented a twofold challenge because, on the one hand, I required a contextual space to tell the story of the emergence of the data, while simultaneously, I required a theoretical location where lifestory narrative themes could be reflected upon. Inspired by the holistic methodology of the ethnographic studies of

Malinowski (1922), Levi-Struass (1966) and Geertz (1973), and the autoethnographic studies listed previously, I aimed to combine an autoethnography of the island voices with a critical discourse analysis of their language. My aim was to argue that the methods of both represented a world in microcosm, in effect, a critique of the tensions, contradictions, and power relations of capitalism and, at the same time, celebrate the richness of everyday experience as a vehicle of research.

In achieving my aim, the following objectives explain the processes and provide the framework of my thesis. They are prism-like in that the product of each unfolding process added meaning to the next process. It was a journey of discovery.

My first objective was to explore community. As Parman (1990) notes in *Scottish Crofters*, this ethnographic method is useful because, for an island community, fishing, like crofting, is not a job but a way of life: its role, culturally, permeates every aspect of an islander's life. I looked at the industry of fishing and how the community had forged an identity. I considered its social and economic impact by researching the symbolic effects of that impact on the three main themes of employment, family, and religion – areas of shared experience. The culmination of my first objective provided an understanding of the holistic significance of the sociological development of the meaning community. An analysis of this is provided in detail in Chapter Four.

My second objective was to explain the space from which the radio interviews had emerged. To that end, I presented a detailed description of the symbolic significance of the radio station's geographical location and explored the structural reasons for why the programme, *Barra Island Discs*, became an important part of the island's cultural tapestry (2016). The importance of space and time in explaining how meaning is constructed made me realise culture is defined by a framework of web-like processes.

Having learned the importance of the autoethnographic process, I explored the significance of the changing content and form of the interview from its inception. Another process emerged, leading to an examination of participation and audience response. My third objective, therefore, focused on the interview. This involved the unfolding of three distinct processes. The first, which forms the basis of my argument, is that my interviews were an effective tool for analysing culture. The key question was: how could I describe my interviews? Searching for an answer took me into the world of oral history and the growing cultural significance of using oral accounts for understanding historical processes. Oral history, like other forms of history,

has many different interpretations, and crucial to my development was the work of Vansina (1985), Finnegan (1992), Cohen (1985), and Linde (1993). Learning from their research, I categorised, selected, and thematically linked my data, so that my interviews turned into lifestories. The second process was to find a way of analysing my lifestories. As the lifestory resulted from a conversation, the first part of the process was to find a way of describing the significance of the interaction between two people. I researched psychological theories based on Goffman's portrayal of the roles we assume – me as a 'radio show host' engaging in banter with my 'guest' and how the flow of information from those roles ended with a lifestory. Conversation analysis appealed, initially, and I used the works of Hutchby (1996), Calhoun (2002), Sacks et al. (1974), and Tolson (2006) to learn about the significance of the social solidarity formed between two people. Useful as it was in explaining the importance of the hierarchy of the linguistic units and their significance within a conversation, its analytical function did not, however, put social context as the most important indicator for finding culture. Subsequently, the works of Fairclough (1992, 2003, 2010, 2016) whose theoretical work is based on conversation analysis, adds another layer of analysis taken from literary textual analysis: his focus is to uncover the significance of spoken language in producing social context using critical discourse analysis.

The third process was the final metamorphic change from transcription to narrative form, a form which became a carefully edited and constructed piece of narrative. I chose to do this because Fairclough's analysis made the most sense, in that, for him, meaning is constructed from the way in which individual words are used in their social context. Consequently, I engaged in a process of textual analysis, a close reading of my lifestory narratives. The development of this process involved researching how others had constructed and found cultural meaning from their studies. On reflection, I realised that I had been looking at my project from a somewhat illuminating objective macro level lens in that I thought the nexus of my project was outside of my own experience, when, in reality, a micro level analysis would place me at the nexus of it.

My final objective involved two processes: The first was to learn how I could create meaning from the construction of word choice in individual sentences. To do that, I had to research what in effect meaning meant, and how it is that meaning is used to define culture. Meaning is multi-layered, a culmination of a series of processes. Interpreting meaning is interpreting many layers. In a way, it was like a 'double hermeneutic' (Smith, 2003). My interviews could be described in different ways. For example, they could be considered testimonies but what they

were, essentially, depended on how I interpreted the community I was living in. I was using my interpretation of community to interact during the interviews and my questions were based on our shared experience as members of the community. If anything, this process was learning to accept that I was at the nexus of the project, and that the learning processes I had so far been involved in were about finding my academic voice through a process of autoethnography so that I could present my interpretation of how others, guided by myself, presented their stories about living on Barra. Two interesting questions arose: First, how did other oral history researchers interpret their collections and express meaning and, second, how different were they from mine?

Finally, I examined other oral history collections gathered from the island to consider how they had (re)presented the island. Using a historiographic approach – essentially comparing and contrasting methods and results – I learned that the context of history defines method, which impacts the multifariousness of meaning. What I understand here is that when one looks back in time, there are many interpretations, and their significance is defined by the interpreter. From this process, I concluded that my collection of lifestory narratives could indeed be an effective way of representing the culture of the island.

Presenting my objectives and describing the impact of the unfolding processes on my development as a researcher, I have learned that *I* applied meaning to *them* by engaging in meaningful discourse. My aims had developed methods from the processes and the final process was to show how that island experience was part of a larger societal construction. To argue the methodological effectiveness of the analysis of the lifestory narratives, I had to pass them through a conceptual construct and look at them from inside a conceptual prism of community, identity, and tradition. These constructions were built from the perspectives of the theoretical arguments of the interdisciplinary processes of sociological structural functionalism and anthropological symbolic interactionism. In summing up, the dissertation which follows is about finding the difference age, memory and gender make when reflected onto the above-described constructional framework – see Diagram 2.

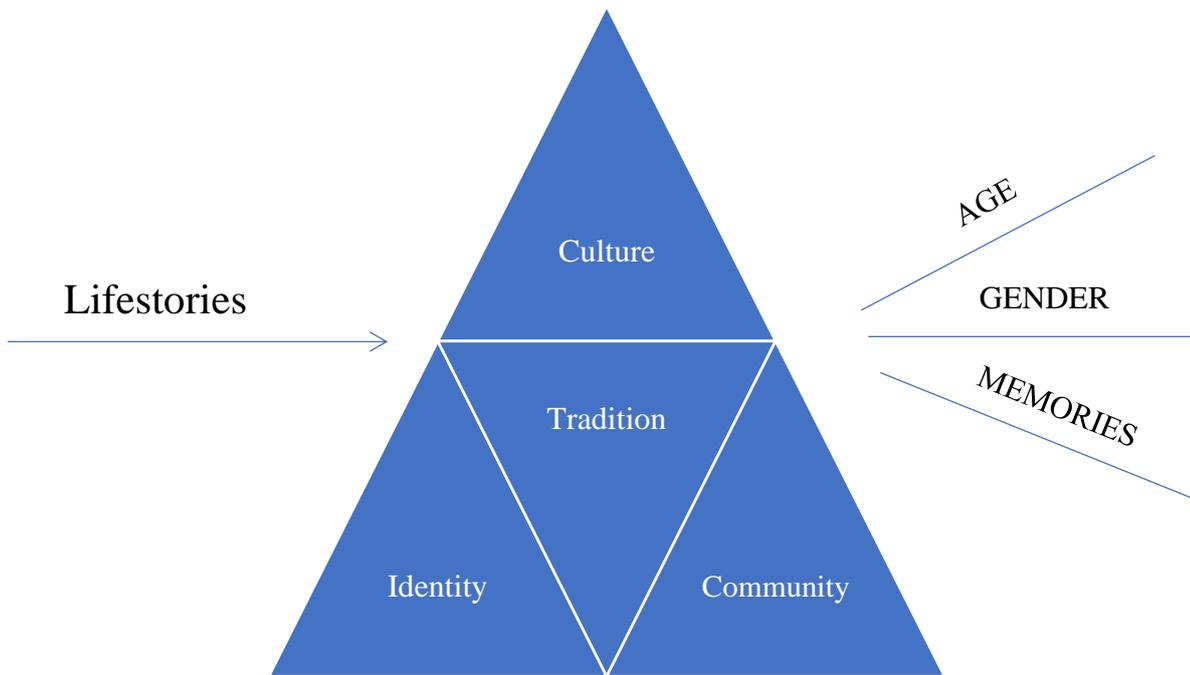


Diagram 2: Aims and Objectives Part Two Cultural Prism

The image of the prism suggests an object with several sides which selects and changes the rays that pass through it but whose principal luminosity changes depending on what variables are being explored.

2 Chapter Two: Autoethnographic Methods, Community Radio, the people of Barra and Ethical Considerations

‘Community Radio is the lifeblood that stands as a reminder, too, that listeners are much more than passive consumers in mass communication. In towns and villages across the country, community radio plays such a positive role in all our communities nationwide, and in particular in helping to preserve local culture and traditions. So today, on National Community Radio Day, let us celebrate the strength and beauty of the spoken word, and pay tribute to the valuable role that community radio has in entertaining and empowering all our citizens.’

President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, Address to Nation on National Community Radio Day 2021.

2.1 Introduction

The aim of Chapter Two is to present a critical discourse detailing the processes involved in designing an autoethnographic method to interpret and analyse a selection of interviews taken from *Barra Island Discs*, a radio show on Barra and Vatersay community radio. It presents a short description and a detailed discussion of the selection processes involved in choosing lifestories as data. The language of lifestories, symbolic of relational living practice, is a product of interconnecting conceptual processes triangulated between community, identity, and tradition, which, I will argue, reflects culture. Therefore, this chapter aims to explore what community radio is both generally and, in Barra, specifically. In Barra, it contextualises increasing popularity as a media source free from hegemonic forces. The chapter is made up of two parts. Firstly, I present an introduction to why autoethnographic methodology is best suited to telling my and others story of community radio. It offers an international perspective of community radio and offers a discourse on its increasing popularity in Britain conceptualised comparatively with BBC Radio nan Gaidheal. Furthermore, I present the methodological processes involved in shaping my lifestories into research data followed by an introduction to the ethics involved in data collection.

2.2 Autoethnography

Autoethnography introduces the creative process of writing a story about stories. At the heart of the data is me, so my methodology encapsulates three distinctive processes: auto, meaning a description of the self; ethno, meaning the cultural production of language, and graphy, to write. In the pages which follow, I present my story as part of the research process. It is a method of interpreting the world through my voice, a reflective first-hand account of oral history. Methodologically, it examines the transformative impact of my journey from a teacher to a volunteer radio host to my role as a researcher. In the process of writing, I reflect and give insight into my personal responses and comment on the interpersonal dynamics of those who contributed their lifestory narratives to the data. Additionally, it examines my unconscious motivations and implicit biases, including my emotions, intuitions, experiences, meanings, values, commitments and pre-suppositions, which shaped my knowledge and understanding of the cultural developmental processes. This important point means that my language is critical, as it explores the interrelationships between myself, others and society. Throughout each unfolding process, I reflect on the construction of my identity and explore how others define theirs.

Furthermore, it is important that the data of shared experiences, epistemologically, are given space to develop as an academic discourse and are not regarded as something less than the detached objective writing, a style which is the hallmark of the early ethnographies of Malinowski, Geertz and others, who inadvertently contributed to my understanding of the anthropological and sociological processes involved in understanding the web-like processes of culture. At the time of my interviews, I did not know how my story would be a mechanism for exploring the epistemic and aesthetic characteristics of the storytelling processes of the lifestory performance on the island's community radio; but as my autoethnographic journey developed, their voices found space to express their interpretation of community, identity and tradition. Autoethnography is a series of unfolding processes because it acknowledges my changing sense of self. I did not know the direction they would follow; hence, I found myself both afraid and surprised as I learned about my motivations for becoming both a radio host and a researcher. I address these concerns under the chapter section titled 'Autoethnographic Journey'.

Equally, autoethnography is empowering because, in following my lifestory along with the others, it provides an insight into the collective experience of the 'women's story'. What I mean

by this is that I have gained an insight into how entrenched patriarchal forces are embedded in language constructions. As a woman, I understand that my lifestory is shaped by those forces but when analysing other women's experiences, it illuminates the deep-rooted negative processes of patriarchal power. This is exemplified by juxtaposing their experiences with men. It empowers their experience both as mothers and home makers which is often regarded as secondary to men. This is discussed in chapters three, five and six. Similarly, the theme of age is presented positively because along my autoethnographic journey, I recognised that the lifestory narratives of the older generation contained rich research data. Their chronological age of retired individuals, often negatively presented, is paradoxically a positive example of resilient ageing. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Three, where I follow the cultural significance of aged people with the research of Clark (1967) and Kaufman (1987), who suggest that when researching members of the older generation, culture must be considered as an important variable. Effectively, autoethnography is not only my transformative and empowering lifestory experience with others, but also an excellent method for capturing the uniqueness that was *Barra Island Discs*, a community radio story of the island of Barra.

2.3 The Role of Community Radio

Community Radio occupies a rare space in media and communication because its role is to inform and entertain local listeners free from market forces. As such, it lacks its own language of critical reflection because the controlling orthodoxy of current media research is based on commercial and state controlled public radio and television. I have chosen to examine how community radio's unique role impacted the data, in the sense that it provided a space that was free from the constraints of commercialisation and state controlled broadcasting. As a researcher, I found the language content and the interconnections and interrelationships that ensued were more effective than basing my research on the technical aspects of the radio show. Additionally, the voices informed a local listening audience about their cultural lives, and I wanted to find out the significance of this information. Hence, the focus of this chapter is to examine the language rather than the technical and licensing information of the wavelength hertz because, as ethnographic research, it aims to present how culture can be conceptualised in a local framework. However, in foreshadowing the content and form of language content from community radio, I do not diminish the role of those whose research focuses on the technical assemblage of radio because it too is very significant.

With the onset of electromagnetic wave transmissions at the beginning of the 20th century, radio's unique power captured and transmitted world events into people's homes. Sound recordings of voices increasingly dominated people's homes in the twentieth century – in the Western world this was overtaken by television. Radio brings information and entertainment to millions of listeners. Its ability to enter people's imaginations has made it a useful tool in advertising, and, more importantly, its ideological content conveys hegemonic dominance which is exemplified in this chapter by the BBC. This dual purpose created the first two tiers of radio: public and commercial (Hallett and Wilson, 2010). Subsequently, radio became part of the huge empire of communications and mass media and is reflective of the broadcasting behemoth which controls output and which is representative of increasing globalisation. A lack of alternative democratic political systems means liberal democracy has become captive to the competition for more powerful representation in a world dictated by capitalist power (Fairchild, 2012). Consequently, the ever-present drive for profit means commercial and state-sponsored conglomerates, ensure that public and commercial radio's output does not challenge the controlling superstructures of capital.

Lewis and Booth (1989) note that compared to film and television, radio is hardly noticed in the academic literature, and lacks a language of critical reflection and analysis. However, its ownership does have such a language: there are specialist university departments dedicated to it, that is media studies departments. Greater research into radio's role is needed, especially the role of community radio. Radio in the community continues to be critically analysed methodologically from within an interdisciplinary framework that weaves in and out of various anthropological and sociological models. Its democratic and 'not-for-profit status' means it cannot be defined by 'following the money', and, paradoxically, it is for that reason that it is rich for research purposes as an alternative form of media, a third tier. Significantly, this alternative third tier of radio (Hellitt and Wilson, 2010:5), sitting somewhat uncomfortably at the feet of the leviathan, means its product, free from hegemonic relationships, exists in a spacetime defined by the community that designs, produces, and broadcasts its output: a space and time relative and responsive to a specific locale. Putting aside its functionality of technological mega-hertz wavelengths and myriad licensing concerns, my argument considers how the content of one programme broadcasting in one locale can be critically explored to present an academic discourse on culture. Everyday spoken language recorded and broadcast will define in its own words its sense of culture. Consequently, experientiality, culture's

synchronic reflection of temporality, is a discourse of phenomenological processes which reflects space and time in a historically specific moment.

2.3.1 How Is Community Radio Defined?

The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) defines community radio as follows:

when radio fosters the participation of citizens and defends their interests; when it reflects the tastes of the majority and makes good humour and hope its main purpose; when it truly informs; when it helps resolve the thousand and one problems of daily life; when all ideas are debated in its programs and all opinions are respected; when cultural diversity is stimulated over commercial homogeneity; when women are main players in communication and not simply a pretty voice or a publicity gimmick; when no type of dictatorship is tolerated, not even the musical dictatorship of the big recording studios; when everyone's word fly without discrimination or censorship that is community radio (Jose Ignacio Lopez Vigil, 1997).

The philosophy of community radio makes it a medium for the voiceless, the mouthpiece of oppressed people (be it on racial, gender, or class grounds) and generally as a tool for development. Community Radio is defined as having three aspects: non-profit making, community ownership, and control and community participation. Essentially community radio is not about doing something for the community but about the community doing something for itself, that is, owning and controlling its own means of communication (AMARC 1998).

An effective strategy for the community radio station is to present what cannot be offered by any other radio station: that is, it should broadcast local content with a local flavour. The local radio station must dwell on its strongest reason for existence – local events, issues, concerns, and personalities. If a local station can conduct exhaustive reportage of what goes on in a community on a regular basis, there is no way a regional or national broadcast can compete for listenership. The element of proximity is the most potent quality that the community radio should capitalise on. People are enthusiastic to know on a daily or even hourly basis about the people and events unfolding next to their place of abode (Tabing, 2002). The functional role of community radio is methodologically significant because its role as a local resource for local talkers and listeners shaped my research. Its community role places it within the field of

ethnographic research because it reflects how people live their lives. Therefore, my analysis of it weaves in and out of a multidisciplinary matrix made up of anthropological, sociological, and literary analysis. If one considers the creative aural participatory space it has for marginalised and underrepresented voices, it is an area that deserves to be developed. Downing's (1984) seminal work, *Radical Media: The Political Experience of Alternative Communication*, addresses issues pertinent to this. Downing's work builds on Sean MacBride's UNESCO-funded research of 1980. In 1983, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (Lewis, 2006:18) lobbied for global community radio stations, requesting that 4000 stations be based on every continent. In 1984, John Daring's text, '*Radical Media: The Political Experience of Alternative Communication*,' charted the rise of social movement media. According to Lewis (2006:28) Downing's text became one of the first academic texts to explore the practice of alternative media. It is interesting to note the significance of the growth of community radio around the world. This can be exemplified in the following perspectives.

2.3.2 International Perspective

Before MacBride's (1980) seminal UNESCO report, *Many Voices: One World: Communication Today and Tomorrow*, which recognises community radio's role as instrumental in creating a more just social order based in local communities i.e it allows local voices to give meaning to their shared experiences, to engage in phenomenological processes which serves to free people from the power constraints of the superstructure. UNESCO tried to look at ways world communication could be decolonised and democratised. In Daring's (1984) work on the radical use of the media, he considered how community radio can be used to challenge the status quo of political systems. Subsequently, much of the language of critical reflection became based on community radio's role in effecting a more democratic social order of society.

Throughout the world, community radio is used for the democratisation of people and to enhance the quality of life. The international differences in how it is used highlight the enriching features it provides to communities. Exemplars of its role can be seen in post-apartheid South Africa as noted by Fombod and Veli Jigane (2019), where it is used to provide organisational information to women's groups, non-governmental and civic groups about diverse matters on health, education and agriculture, providing up-to-date information on these. This primary role of information exchange in countries that have undergone great ideological

change reinforces its communication strength. In post-Soviet Poland, Doliwa (2019), notes how community radio has been used to invite social gain in communities where disaffected groups had used it as a tool of dissent. In Australia, it is used to connect townships that are separated by vast distances and to provide a tool for radicalising and addressing issues of marginalisation. Its ‘freedom fighting’ status remains in countries where the political landscape changes, for example, Venezuela, Bolivia, Guatemala, and Uruguay (Martin:163), and in 1940s Latin America, it provided an outlet for alternative voices to be heard, garnering support for greater democratisation and the ownership of the means of production. Radio Sutatenza is a good example of this. Throughout these countries, an organisational strategy was broadcast that challenged government corruption.

Indeed, Mauricio’s (2017) critical commentary on Colombia’s Catholic-sponsored ACPO Radio Sutatenza, operating as the first community radio between 1947 and 1990, focuses on community radio’s role in challenging structural inequalities and injustices. But the research fails to acknowledge that this challenging role arose because of its qualitative role in improving the lives of rural Colombians by providing educational programmes, teaching literacy, improving health care and connecting communities together. I assert that ‘HK7HM’ grew not because of its radical voice, although that was there. It mushroomed because it was based in the local, in providing programmes which responded to the needs of a community, its flexibility shaped around the relationships of the community. Improved education created greater awareness of inequality, but this, I would argue, is secondary to the primary role of radio in the community which is for local voices to give meaning to local concerns, interpreting and contextualising culture in transmission.

Community radio’s success in responding to cultural needs is exemplified in the following. In South Africa in 2011, listeners of Maputaland community radio, which covers the north-eastern coastal region, Kaza Zulu-Natal, airing over the municipality of uMkhanyakude district, rose from 152,000 to 580,000. Broadcasting in several languages, ranging from Zulu and English to Tsonga, Ndebele, and Afrikaans, its appeal and success is that it responds to the needs of the community. The listening audience increase is in direct response to local participation and the station’s response to diversifying to local community needs, including the inclusion of the many languages spoken in this vast geographical area. Post-apartheid South Africa has seen some 62 community radio stations produce and distribute programmes which reflect its cultural diversity (Fombod, 2019). Community radio’s third-tier media role, antithetical and

emancipatory, may paradoxically challenge the superstructure of a fledging new government, but arguably this is secondary to its role.

Similarly, Jayaprakash and Shoemith (2007) draw attention to the responsive needs of 'All India Radio Ooty', located in the Nilgiri hills, which caters to the diverse needs of tribes such as the Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas, Irulas and Badagas, who have been brought together to learn about agricultural innovation in an effort to provide sustainable economic growth to rural communities. The social relationships which find meaning in the product of community radio are an example of its success in responding to the needs of the community. Nirmala (2015) additionally notes the gender-specific role of community radio. Particularly in India, where half the population is women, radio in the community is used to provide information on essential aspects of women's health, which is important to those who live in rural areas. Gendering the role of community radio is certainly an area which, similarly to other aspects of community radio, could benefit from research.

In Ireland, not only do they celebrate community radio participation with a designated national day of recognition but radio stations are organised by Community Radio Forum of Ireland (CRAOL), which represents and manages 20 licensed stations. There are currently 42 stations waiting to be fully operational. Gaynor and O'Brien note in their report, *Drivers For Change Community Radio in Ireland*:

Community radio has played a key role nationally and internationally in scoping out space for a type of media operation that is fundamentally different to the mainstream commercially-orientated institution...the emphasis is on extending communication rights to all members of the community while also focusing on the importance of equality of access and participation...In many ways, Community radio is constructed by and, in turn, constructs and reconstructs its communities (2010:41).

2.3.3 British Perspective and the Differences Between Community Radio and BBC

That the international narrative is in discord with the UK's is a direct result of the state-owned monolith which claims to cater to the diversity that is British society. Gaynor and O'Brien's (ibid.) research on the principles of communication rights has little opportunity of development in the UK because the Royal Charter mission statement of the British Broadcasting Corporation

(BBC), the world's oldest national broadcaster, aims to provide impartial high quality and distinctive output and services to inform, entertain and educate in a way which reflects and represents the diverse communities of Britain so that arguably there is little need for community radio stations. The responsibility of the BBC to fulfil the requirements of the Royal Charter means that the services provided internationally by some community radio stations are provided to the British public via the BBC licence fee.

However, voices listened to on state-owned radio did not until recently reflect the cultural diversity of the British listening public. Moylan (2018) notes that this was because of the BBC's centralised uniformity. Centralisation means that decisions on the editorial scheduling and content of programmes are decided by policymakers working within the BBC guiding principles. Therefore, programmes follow a centralised model so that entertainment, information and education cover issues from the rural and the urban, the older and younger generation, the poorer and the wealthier and the innovative and the status quo based on editorial decisions made at the BBC's centre in London. Independent of the changing political hues of the British government, Hall (1986) argues that the BBC represents the dominant hegemonic forces of the ruling capitalist class. The state monopoly of the BBC represents a core set of values and, despite diversifying into national and regional networks such as BBC Scotland/Wales/Northern Ireland, there is a uniformed programming schedule aimed at a listening audience of an imagined community, a community which does not recognise differences. In other words, it presents a national dominant narrative of homogeneous values. Alongside dramas, media shows and landscape images, the BBC presents imagined shared experiences in stories of triumph and sorrow. In effect, it defines the cultural construction of the perceived nation of Britain. As Hall notes (*ibid.*) its productive output represents the controlling structures of the British state.

Subsequently, until relatively recently, the sound of voices emanating from BBC-controlled radio stations echoed a 'received pronunciation', which alienated listeners who did not share the values of those speaking to them. In other words, it did not represent the diversity of modern Britain. Communities which were different from the perceived imagined community were 'othered' by the BBC. Cayer (2007) notes there was a growing awareness of the lack of diversity of immigrant communities, particularly those who came to Britain from the Commonwealth. The imagined community of the BBC reflected a predominantly white male upper middle class; hence, there was a growing demand for community radio stations which focused on underrepresented and marginalised communities, such as Ujima Radio, based in St.

Pauls in Bristol. Community radio arguably reflected the differences of a cosmopolitan British society.

Many differences exist between the state-owned BBC and community radio: Size and power are manifested in the differences between the real and the imagined audiences they serve. In Diagram 3, I have shown the difference between the size of BBC radio reflecting the whole of society and community radio reflecting a community of that society: it is a subset of a large media sphere.



Diagram 3: Size difference between BBC Radio (Blue) and Community Radio (Black) is indicative of their sphere of influence.

In diagrams 4 and 5, the power difference between the hierarchical structure of BBC and cyclical power sharing of community radio is shown. I have included Radio nan Gaidheal.

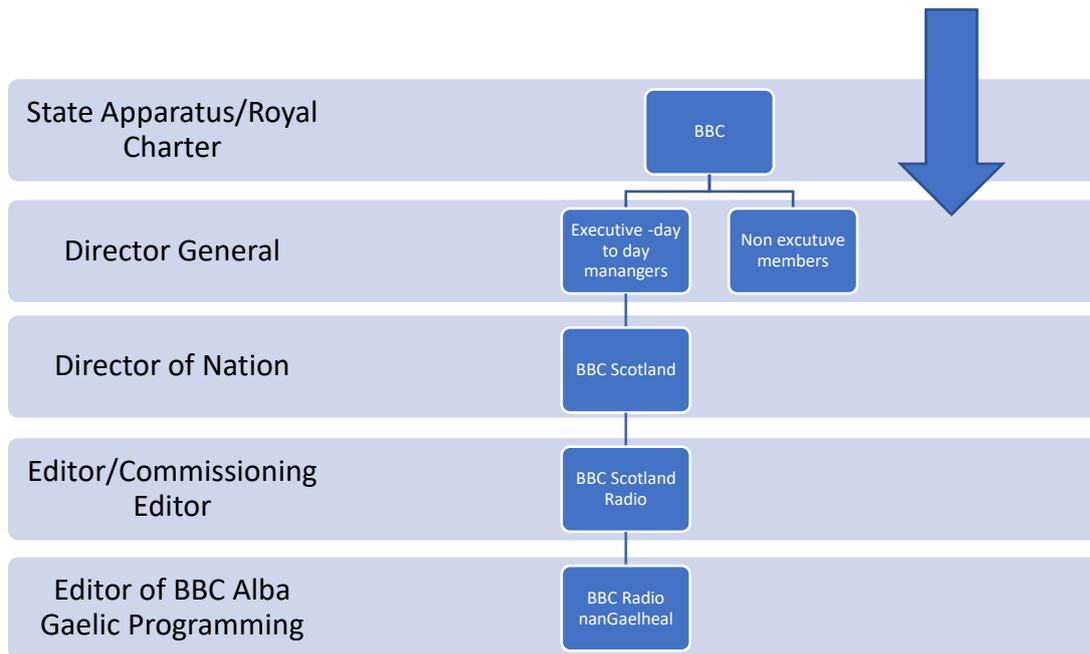


Diagram 4: BBC Hierarchical Structure

In the above diagram the centralised dominant hegemonic control is detailed by showing how power is executed through hierarchical editorial decisions. These decisions shaped by distributing the licence fee to the greatest amount of listeners imagines its audience as

- an imagined British State listening audience
- an imagined nation of Scottish listening audience
- an imagined Gaelic speaking audience. All decisions relating to these top-down processes are editorially decided from above.

The diagram below contrasts with the top-down approach. I have presented it as a circle of the power sharing of the local community radio station. The arrows indicate how the community operates the station. In other words, there is no hierarchical structure because it is operated by

volunteer members of the community. It represents a real community made up of shared experiences.



Diagram 5:

Consequently, community radio's power is limited to one community. This, paradoxically, makes it more responsive to those who use it because its control is shared by the listeners and volunteers of the community. Effectively, output reflects the voices and shared experiences of the community who maintain it, whereas state-controlled BBC, an 'extraordinary hybrid beast' (Hall, 1986:44), has the power and influence of the institutions of the state to shape the rhythms of our working lives through its carefully uniformed planning and organisational structures and interprets and beams world events into the homes of an imagined community, claiming that it knows what is best.

This difference between the real and imagined means that marginalised groups will strive for a licence for a community radio which reflects their interpretations of the world around them. Despite the geographical diversification of the BBC into smaller nations and regions, the levers of the centralised uniformity of scheduling and programming are ever present. For example, the news bulletins appear at the same time irrespective of where you are watching. The use of different dialects and accents fail to mask the imagined national and regional characteristics of

the scheduling and content format. A recent change at BBC Radio nan Gaidheal⁵ (an arm of BBC Radio Scotland) in 2022 resulted in a new schedule. The new programming focuses on podcasts based on interviews from around the different Gaelic-speaking communities. In addition, its focus is to move forward to appeal to a younger Gaelic-learning audience. Service Editor Ishbel MacLennan noted:

This relationship between BBC Radio nan Gaidheal and the audience is a special one, as their voices and stories are the heartbeat of the service every day. It is now time to take the next step, reflecting our community as it is now, facilitating that cross-generational conversation, celebrating the wealth of talent on and off-air and utilising the opportunities afforded by different platforms to build relationships with new audiences (Radio Today, 2022).

A close reading of this suggests that the change of focus is more about increasing the listening audience of the station by appealing to a younger audience than a genuine attempt to make it more representative of the diversity of the Gaelic communities. For example, in the second sentence, the repetition of ‘now’ suggests that times have changed and that it must appeal to ‘cross-generational’ listeners. Effectively, the following line qualifies the meaning when it states they want to widen their appeal to a younger audience which will appreciate the ‘different platforms’ of streaming podcasts, blogs and other social media – a move away from its aged, imagined audience. It is interesting that age becomes the differential agent of change rather than culture. That is because like the other channels of the BBC monolith, culture is imagined to be the same. It is this homogenous cultural assumption which means that despite the linguistic similarity, there is a demand for community radio in the Gaeltachd area.

Indeed, there are currently seven small independent community radio stations operating,⁶ which suggests that BBC Radio nan Gaidheal must widen its appeal to cater for cultural heterogeneity. The ability to represent and voice local cultural diversity is the main reason that community radio will continue to grow in popularity. Arguably, the main difference between

⁵ A 1985 amalgamation of BBC Radio Highland and BBC Radio nan Eilean which airs to the Gaelic speaking communities, the Gaeltachd, in the highlands and islands of Scotland dedicating some ninety hours of Gaelic language broadcasting, recognised this.

⁶ Argyll FM, Cullin FM, Lochbroom FM, Nevis Radio, Oban FM, Two Lochs Radio, Isles FM.

BBC radio and community radio is that one represents the voices of local interpretations of the world today and the other represents an imagined dominant hegemonic interpretation voiced in the Gaelic language.

2.3.4 Scottish Perspective

In Scotland, Ofcom has allocated eighteen community radios stations and seven small independent radio stations – see footnote 6 – to transmit including those mentioned in the above section. Most of these stations cover specific geographical rural and urban areas, supporting the argument that there is a listening audience that demands to hear voices which share language similarities and cultural experiences with each other in a community setting. As a representation of spacetime, a community radio station is a place where the interaction of shared social experiences is a reality rather than having alienating aural sounds beamed from afar. That there is a great need and demand for community radio in Scotland is evidenced by the competition for Ofcom licences. In 2012, Dr. Alasdair Allan, the then Scottish government minister for Learning, Science and Scotland’s Languages, began the following research after participating in *Barra Island Discs: ‘We are Community Builders, Part of the Fabric’: A Review of Community Radio* (2012). This document gathered information on a disparate group of local organisations that operate and serve local communities. The research highlighted the lack of any government-sponsored department with the responsibility of monitoring the effectiveness of community radio. It noted there was ‘a lack of strategic thinking in the sector’ (2012:2). The inclusion of the word ‘sector’ is a misnomer because it suggests there is evidence of commonality with community radio stations for it to be considered as such, but this is not evidenced in any research. However, the key omission from this research is that many other radio stations are operating in Scotland without full Ofcom licences which suggests their functionality and ability to respond to the local needs of a community have been ignored. Further development of the role of community radio is required before it can confidently claim to be a sector. For example, the community radio on Barra and Watersay, which is ‘broadcast’ on a 12-hour radio internet licence, is omitted from the research, but it is recognised by the community as an organised community radio. The hills on Barra make it too costly and difficult

to situate airdials to broadcast on an Ofcom licence. There are areas of the island where the radio signal is intermittent, especially during inclement weather. Conclusively Scotland lacks organisational structure.

2.3.5 Emancipatory Role and Gender

Research carried out by Duna (2015) in Nigeria notes the emancipatory role of community radio as a research tool for gender analysis. Despite the increased participation of women in community radio on university campuses, the management roles and programme selection processes are still dominated by men. The point which Duna's research highlights is that despite the greater democratisation of the media in community radio, the entrenchment of patriarchal society is embedded in the processes. So, while community radio in principle can increase female participation in media and counter their marginalisation in the male-dominated superstructures, it reflects the hegemony, with data showing that men control the programme output and the technology of the station. Duna concludes: 'women's voices are yet to be included in the local public sphere of the various communities where community radios are operational' (ibid.:189). My experience leads me to a similar conclusion because although women were engaged in the broadcasting of the programmes on Siar FM, it was men who filled the management and IT roles and who were the employees of the station. This disjuncture between greater female participation at one level but not at another reflects the 'glass ceiling' and is echoed in a 1996 United Nations report on the Status of Women in Media. The report seeks to promote equal opportunities and positive action to increase the role of women at all levels of public media.

2.3.6 Community Radio as a Counter Public Space

The thread that runs through the emancipatory discourse is further developed in the theoretical work of Habermas and Fraser's critique of it. Habermas, in his seminal work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, introduced the idea of the public sphere, which community media analysts (Lewis, 2006:21-22) have used to conceptualise the space in which community radio operates because it is open to all members of a community to establish and maintain social relationships with each other discursively. In other words, access is not denied to anyone. Furthermore, he argued communicative action takes place in those spaces based on mutual understandings of language. As interpersonal relationships regulate membership of social groups, social life is reproduced, and the different experiences of that life construct a

dialectic discourse which is critical. For Habermas, language is intrinsically critical. Hence, it is emancipatory because, as he argued, it has the potential to challenge the status quo.

However, Fraser argues that Habermas's idea of an 'equitable' public sphere is flawed because the premise of his argument is based on historical assumptions where women were actively excluded from the public spheres. The public sphere, she claims, is one, which, as well as being bourgeois in its intentionality, is gendered and therefore excludes millions of people who are marginalised from the dominant patriarchal hegemonic discourse. Fraser coined the phrase 'counter publics' and argues that there are places which operate in spaces which do not fit into Habermas's public sphere. Fraser's idea is compelling because it deconstructs Habermas's conceptualisation of the public. She introduces the idea of spaces being gendered, and indeed it is this point which Duma raises. On the one hand, Habermas's idea of the public sphere superficially seems like useful tool for conceptualising the space of community radio because it defines a space where people voluntarily come together. However, if one adds Fraser's critical points to the analysis, community radio can be perceived as a counter public space, an alternative public sphere in which women's voices freely articulate their own stories outside of the male supremacy of the dominant hegemonic patriarchy.

The question is: did *Barra Island Discs* provide a counter public space in which the women's lifestories found a shared space to articulate themselves? I address this in chapters three, five and six when I analyse the language of the lifestories in closer detail.

Patridge argues that:

[t]he intentions of community radio lie close to the heart of (that) contemporary desire, shared by so many, for a less centralised, less commercialised but more personal and participatory social order. The open and democratic media is an essential element within the infrastructure of such a state The essence of community radio lies in participation... (1982:14)

The point is that community radio exists when it is being used by the community for the community. It is a space which, as Calhoun notes:

exists to create social networks through means that are not market-based. The value placed on community radio participants and audiences is not a commercial construct, it is a civil one. Access is not based on one's ability to pay for it (2002:152).

In Britain, community radio's role is the antithesis of the state-owned and controlled BBC, and its privately funded rivals, such as ITV. Its function is to benefit the community which it serves. It is then a 'tool for conviviality...autonomous creative inter-course among persons that takes the form of individual freedom realised in personal interdependence' (Illich, 1973:80), which happens through the construction of a variety of social relationships. Beneath the immediate surface tangle of diverse sounds lurks a coherent sonic assemblage – sonic, discursive, material, technological, social and historical mediations that are the result of the multitude of social relationships that hold each assemblage together (Born, 2005:8). This collection of relationships forms the context in which claims made by individual presenters to some credible form of representation to an organised public are made, tested, and assessed. It is within these social relationships that any claims to truthfulness or sincerity go from the hypothetical to the actual. (Fairchild, 2012:85)

Within a counter public space, a unique language construction is made, one which is not constricted by the hegemonic powers which shape our lives. I argue that the personal data contained in this research project is a unique construction of community and the identity of an individual resulting from the space in which it is made. However, to make sense of that claim, it must be analysed as a reflection of the social world in which we live. Additionally, personal data is shaped by our shared understanding of the world around us, data filtered through a counter public space, and as such, it reflects the power relations between us – the distorted acoustical reflection of the social world in which we exist. Arguably those power relations are not hegemonic because the community radio interview process is there for the greater good of the community in a space created and designed by the community.

Community radio occupies a rare space in media and communication because its role is to inform and entertain local listeners in a mode that is free from market forces. As such, it lacks a language of critical reflection because the controlling orthodoxy of current media research is based on commercial radio and television. I aim to examine how community radio's unique role impacts the language used during an interview process, in the sense that it provides a space that is free from the constraints of the dominant hegemonic forces. Space shapes language; therefore, the content of this chapter is influenced by the role of community radio in allowing voices to express themselves in the ordinary.

However, this final point raises interesting points about the interconnections of the methodology of the community radio and oral history in that both are democratising means of

communication. For example, the western hegemonic tradition of capitalism based on exploitation and profit is not amenable to recoding life stories in the ordinary. The experientiality of the ordinary challenges commercialism's profit making. Commercial radio must adhere to market forces of increased consumerism and therefore the stories heard on commercial stations are from those who have lived gilded, fantastical lives (like written autobiographies) to increase its audience size which then attracts advertising revenue. Community radio is free from market constraints because it is not market based and its focus is community orientated. Community and commercial radio employ the same science of radio waves but the ideology surrounding their purpose and outcomes is completely different. Hence I would argue that life stories in the ordinary would not be found on commercial radio which represents the western hegemonic tradition. Only on community radio where it democratises into a form of oral history do life story narratives reflect the language of the present in a spacetime free from the constraints of the market forces.

2.4 My Autoethnographic Journey 2: *Barra Island Discs*

Purposefully, my research is autoethnographic. It aims to present how culture can be conceptualised in the local. As the radio host of the interview process, my role, self-reflexively, is integral to the analysis of this thesis. Therefore, the oral and aural processes, instigated because of *Barra Island Discs*, provided data to conceptualise culture. My research traces the ways an interpretation of the culture of an island community, the core, can be interpreted to provide ways of looking out into the world. Generally, community is smaller than society but larger than a group; it is a concept about the social arena, the metaphorical meeting place where our emotional need to belong is acted out. It encompasses humanity's struggle to change the emphasis of the personal pronoun from 'I' to 'we';⁷ community watches sparring academics jostling over boundary fences to define territories; it drives philosophical enquiry and defines our collective existence. Malinowski (1922:7) notes that fear of loneliness drove us out of cave dwellings into wider arenas: celebrating similarities and contesting differences is the culture of a community. It is the collective window, the vantage point for all autoethnographers. My

⁷ I am alluding here to Sorokin's theoretical dichotomous framework between familistic and contractual relations, wherein familistic relations represent a fusion of the ego into 'we' (Loomis, 1957:18-19).

interview data, taken from *Barra Island Discs* interviews five years after the show had come to an end, is retrospective. In other words, I did not carry out interviews to provide data for an academic study based on phenomenological processes; rather, the data are taken from interviews that were recorded primarily to improve the quality of my life.⁸ This is relevant because methodologically my research comes from the ‘bottom up’; the spoken voices of the interview processes guided me to explore concepts which were signposted experientially. Hence, the strategies employed during the process of my ‘fieldwork’ differed considerably from those of a fledging student armed with Malinowski’s ethnographic principles.⁹ This strategic difference raises interesting questions about how power, particularly economic power, and the subsequent lack of it in a small community affected my data collection and the conceptualisation of culture. Ultimately, my interpretation and data analyses were shaped by a series of transformative life changes.¹⁰ Personal revelation is a springboard into a rippling pool, which shapes the data of *Barra Island Discs* because ‘interpretations are produced in cultural, historical and personal contexts and are always shaped by the interpreter’s values’ (Springer, 1991:178). Importantly, at no time during the interviews did I ever consider myself a researcher handling data. This is key to understanding why the community cooperated with the radio programme in the way it did; it was seen as ‘a laugh’. Had it been the other way around and the interviews carried out as part of a research project, I do not think such data would be available. I am of this opinion because I think there is a reticence on the island, borne through hard experience of a mistrust of ‘official’ sources. Therefore, the islanders would not have shared their lifestories with outsiders in the same way they did with me.¹¹ Secondly, this is relevant because, in the past, academic researchers have ‘othered’ the island community and

⁸ I did the interviews as a means of engaging with the local community. The benefits of this were symbiotic: I took the opportunity to fill my time and reinvent myself as a radio presenter and at the same time the community digitally recorded its stories using the new equipment funded from the third sector. Ian Stephen, poet, author, and playwright, in his review of *Voices Galore* (2016) in *Northwords Now*, described me as a ‘schoolteacher turned volunteer radio presenter’ (Stephen, 2017:28).

⁹ See *The Subject, Method and Scope Of This Inquiry*, the Introduction to *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Malinowski, 1922:1-25).

¹⁰ I was dismissed from my principal teacher role after management restructuring.

¹¹ Councillor Donald Manford noted during the discussion in his *Barra Island Discs* interview (2013) that there is a school of thought which argues that small remote rural communities who rely on public investment to keep their infrastructure in place will present a particular image of the community to ensure future investment.

focused on ‘Gaelic songs’ and ‘Gaelic storytellers (School of Scottish Studies),¹² recording ‘handpicked’, ‘chosen’ individuals whereas the interviews of *Barra Island Discs* were open to everyone in the island community and semi-structured. Indeed, it was clear that some islanders were delighted to be ‘invited’ for an interview – perhaps they were the ones who had previously been ‘overlooked’. The beauty of lifestory interviews is they recognise that because everyone has a life, they possess a story to tell of that life. Hence, the *Barra Island Discs* experience was open to everyone¹³.

I understood fully the need to be inclusive and I came to the interviews from a background in social science research, specifically equality and discrimination. I kept detailed records of gender, indigenous status, and the employment of every one of my guests. I tried to make my interviews as representative of the island as possible. For example, in terms of gender figures, the ratio of male guests to female guests is two to one. To counter that, I specifically went out in search of female voices. That more males than females agreed to be interviewed is probably an indication of how women undermined their own contribution to the Barra community. Whatever the reasons, and there will be many, further research would be necessary to extrapolate them. But these are external to the actual performance of *Barra Island Discs*. The attributes I brought to each performance were the energy to encourage others to speak and the ear of a good listener.

But within those attributes lie labyrinth structures, the dynamics of talking and listening. The difficulty for me was to find a form of analysis which could explain the intersections of the lattice-like framework. Autoethnography allowed me to examine the impact of my position,

¹² Among the archived materials on Barra in the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University are recordings of Gaelic songs and tales. Nan MacKinnon (1902-82), daughter of a Vatersay Raider, provided lots of local songs and stories for recorders who came to the island. Recorded by J.L. Campbell in 1937 and by James Ross in 1961, he described his research as a ‘major fieldwork project which has culminated in the recording from this singer of what is possibly the greatest individual repertoire ever to be collected’. I differentiate this research from my own, which was based on open ended lifestory interviews.

¹³ Only on one occasion did the station manager object to my guest, claiming the females in the office would feel uncomfortable in his presence. I felt ashamed that I could not facilitate the interview and noted that the person in question was a ‘homer’. This was a colloquial name to describe young orphans who were sent from Catholic orphanages to work crofts – islanders were offered payments to house the children. On reaching adulthood, many left and did not return. That this person had remained on the island to become a great sheep shearer and had a week previous to the proposed interview been filmed by a German film company showing aspects of ‘Life On Barra’ did not prevent his exclusion. His experience is noted in a two part BBC/Alba programme, ‘*Air Fasdadh*’ – The Homers <http://www.mnetv.tv/newsroom/seriesinfo.aspx?nid=29>

my perspective, and my role as a researcher. Therefore, I sought to provide insights by examining my personal responses, interpersonal dynamics, unconscious motivations, and implicit biases in my approach. Self-reflexivity, allowed me methodologically to present an evaluation of the research processes and comment on their outcomes (Clifford, 1992:532). My own emotions, intuitions, experiences, meanings, values, commitments, presuppositions, prejudices, personal agendas, and knowledge created relevant contexts on an interpersonal, institutional and cultural level (Gill, 1993), which made sense of the ethnographer's mess.

2.4.1 Barra and Vatersay Community Radio – Siar FM

Siar FM is Barra and Vatersay Community Radio, a community-led radio project, which started in 2007 here on the isle of Barra. It is a local station with community programming reflecting the island's unique blend of community interests, language, history, and cultural diversity. The station has over 20 volunteers¹⁴ and is listened to in over 100 countries across the world.¹⁵

It is broadcast on a 12-hour radio internet licence.¹⁶ Set up by local community members, such as Donnie MacNeil of The Vatersay Boys, Jessie MacNeil and Eoin MacNeil, past and present directors of Voluntary Action and Barra and Vatersay (VABV), it is publicly funded by grants from Bord nan Gaidhlig, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Gaelic Arts For All. The radio project operates in what Fairchild calls a 'public sphere' (2012:34) and reflects the knowledge and the system of meanings in the lives of the island communities of Barra and Vatersay. The medium of radio and the wonderful pictures it makes in our heads has always had an entertaining function but probably more so on a small remote island such as Barra. The radio provides essential lifesaving information for the island community. The fishing community depends on radio to maintain their employment and survive the inclemency of the sea and arguably has a greater respect of its power. Television did not arrive in Barra until 1968;

¹⁴ Gaelic productions such as *Gagail is Gaire* (translates as 'Having lots of Laughter'), *Upraid* (translates as 'Uproar') and English-speaking *Storytime* and *Danny's Celtic Ceilidh*.

¹⁵ www.siar.fm. This is the internet site which hosts Barra and Vatersay Community Radio. The station's mission statement was written by Murdo MacNeil, station manager, and can be accessed on the website.

¹⁶ The hilly terrain of Barra make it too costly and difficult to situate transmission aerials to broadcast on an Ofcom licence. There are areas of the island where radio signal is intermittent, especially during inclement weather.

therefore, the islanders probably appreciate the radio's value more so than the television-saturated mainland population.

The radio station sits adjacent to the pier and is housed in the back room of a wooden shed, where it shares office space with Voluntary Action Barra and Vatersay, the organisation that filters community activity and publishes the island's newspaper. Its geographical position gives it a central place on the island; 'it is downtown Castlebay, the metropolis of the island' (Ross, 2009). The landscape of the island means it was situated at the epicentre of the community close to the Castelbay to Oban ferry terminal. It has all the technological paraphernalia of the 21st century: cables for computers, cables for microphones and recording equipment.

In November 2009, two months after losing my job as a schoolteacher, I volunteered to host a show for the station. Although I had lived and worked on the island for six years and had learned the basics of indigenous Barra *Gaidhlig* (Gaelic), I knew very little about the history of the island and even less about the island culture. To feed that hunger, and, being mindful of the station's mission statement, I set up a chat show based loosely on BBC'S Radio Four's *Desert Island Discs*, thinking it would be interesting to interview people living on a real island rather than celebrities fantasising about one. Within a short space of time, *Barra Island Discs* had established itself as a gatekeeper of the lifestories of the island community, albeit accidentally, in the sense that the radio show began as an informal means of finding out about the island and of encouraging the community to use the radio equipment – 'it was a laugh' (Ross, 2014:9). By the time the show completed its final interview in March 2014, over thirteen percent of the island's 1,100 population had shared their lifestories. Essentially, I will argue that *Barra Island Discs* reflected the culture of that community. It worked as an 'acoustical mirror' (Denzin, 1997:35).

2.4.2 Learning the Ropes – Equipment

Once the idea of creating a new radio show for the station had taken root, I sought inspiration from radio shows to create a humorous chat show style. This involved one-to-one interviewing styles, particularly the ones used on *Desert Island Discs* and *Women's Hour* on BBC Radio Four.¹⁷ I adopted different approaches and made-up others from silly chat using horoscopes

¹⁷ BBC Radio Four was the only megahertz signal which my house received because it sat directly beneath Ben Cleit on the west side of the island.

and pretend phone-in characters. I also sought to add a voice of serious commentary about local politics and the world at large. Within a few months, my approach became that of a facilitator listening to island stories. In other words, the islanders themselves soon let me know how they wanted their stories to be told.

To open the show, I searched for a quirky jingle and, for a few weeks, I worked with Murdo MacNeil, the station manager, and Seumus MacKinnon, the IT worker, to find a catchy theme tune that would encompass the idea of the sea. After discussion, I opted for *Under The Sea*.¹⁸ Next, I found a catchphrase which I would consistently apply – ‘Hi and Welcome to *Barra Island Discs...*’ – for the next five years, every interview began with the same words. As a beginner in radio, I did not feel as if I could speak for an hour without a script of topics so for the first few weeks, I used a carefully prepared script. Once my radio persona developed, I dispensed with the script and learned to respond to the shape of the guest’s responses.

Designing a new radio show was creatively demanding but learning to use the equipment required a new set of technical skills. The process involved learning how to position seats so that each guest was level with the microphone, and then setting the sound levels so the presenter and guest’s voices were aurally equal. This is a hard task because equal suggests setting the same amplitude, but different voice pitches meant the actual settings were unequal. In addition, I had to master the computer applications Audacity and Spotify so I could record and edit. Recording and editing are processes which require lots of stops and starts and were very important because after periods of dialogue, I had to insert musical choices. Cutting, clipping and pasting audio from Spotify was tricky because it had to be done while maintaining the dialogue of the interview. In addition, editing the whole show required a further two hours. I had to learn to cut out background sounds like giggling or outside noises like the klaxon from the ferry embarkation. *Barra Island Discs* had been allocated one hour of the 12-hour internet licence and often the recorded conversation went beyond that, so snippets of dialogue disappeared. Some guests also brought their own recorded music and I had to learn how to insert this into the Audacity recording and editing suite. This process had to be done with a flair of confidence to maintain my radio host persona. I worked out that most people had never entered a radio studio before, and I used my new skills to make them feel at ease by encouraging

¹⁸ A three-minute introductory jingle extracted from an Academy award-winning Original Song, *Under The Sea*, by Menken and Ashman (1989) was composed for Walt Disney’s *Little Mermaid* film provided a popular jingle for *Barra Island Discs*.

them to laugh at my own clumsiness. Initially Murdo, the station manager participated in this preliminary humorous chat, which resulted in a warm ambience of friendship and fun.

In a way, I became a chronicler of local events, which meant that my radio host persona was used to good effect, and I recorded lots of interesting people who had come to visit the island. This is exemplified in the interviews with Celtic legend Billy McNeill, the Welsh Churchill Fellows, and Bob Crow,¹⁹ the national leader of the Rail Maritime Transport workers, who had come to meet the Caledonian Mac Brayne ferry workers, whose jobs were threatened by privatisation. To become a confident radio host, it took a year to be free of the necessity to request help from the station manager. Duna makes an interesting point about the power differential between the role of women as community radio presenters and men as technology managers (2015:184). She points out that although women engage more with community radio, at the helm of most stations on Nigerian student campuses, men control the technology of the output.

2.4.3 Murdo's Letter

Duna's point is exemplified by the following. To establish myself as a volunteer radio host, I sent out a letter composed by me but signed on behalf of the station manager, Murdo, to 40 people, who represented organisations that made up the infrastructure of the community. The content of the letter was along the lines of suggesting they were 'unsung heroes' of the community because they provided a service to the community which was more than just a job, and this was a unique opportunity for them to come along and tell 'their story' about life on the island. Those targeted included the religious representatives, medical and hospital staff (nearly all participated), community representatives, lifeboat volunteers, police (all officers participated) and political representatives in the form of elected members of both parliaments and the local councillor (all participated). I followed up the letters with telephone calls. On reflection, it is interesting to note that I felt I needed to include Murdo's name because I lacked confidence in the world of the radio, even if it was community radio. Close analysis of the word choice of this letter reflects the grip the web of economic value had in my thought process, and

¹⁹ This interview was played on the day of Bob Crow's funeral and a review of the *Barra Island Discs* show appeared in national media.

ultimately language and behaviour are gossamer threads strung together because I assumed that a person's value was intrinsically linked to their professional status. The letter stated:

Here at Barra and Watersay Community Radio we're introducing a new radio show called *Barra Island Discs*. The idea of the programme is to give island people a chance to chat about themselves on radio describing what they do in their daily lives and their hopes for the future. We would like to use this programme to mark the contribution people make to their local community and hope to give the island community a voice which will be enjoyed by those on the island and anybody else who listens in.

From the opening sentence, even though my own professional role was in limbo, I established my role within the community hierarchy by including myself as part of the organisation of Barra and Watersay Community Radio. The informal use of the abbreviated collective personal pronoun 'we're' in the first line of the letter identifies me as part of the radio group, and I reinforced this by opening the third sentence with the unabbreviated, plosive sounding and capitalised, 'We', followed by 'would' before signing the letter using the station manager's name, 'Murdo'. Interestingly, in the second and third sentences of the letter, I claim to be looking for '*island people*' and then '*people*' generally, establishing at the outset that the show was completely inclusive of everyone on the island irrespective of whether they were indigenous or not, but at the same time, my thought process was imposing my definition of the community as those who were inside the hierarchy of my economic value system. Hence, the letters were sent to those who 'headed up' or were employed by various organisations, who were invited to 'mark the contribution people make to their local community', 'the contribution' being their economic value. Subsequently, by way of reinforcing this economic relationship, my own records list the name of the interviewees along with their occupation, and the date and reads as a description of all the occupations on the island. Although the response to the letters was very disappointing – only a few people responded – the letters put down a marker in the community, informing people of *Barra Island Discs*. The same letter appeared in the local paper, the *Guth Bharraigh*.

It is only by reflecting autoethnographically that I understand now how I imposed my cultural framework on each of my guests. The occupation of each guest was a springboard for opening the interview. From my first interview with Dr. David Bickle, where his status as the island's medic was used and employed throughout to elicit a response, to my final interview five years

later with the island's dentist, Robert McIntosh, I consistently used employment as a differentiating factor. Effectively this framework ensured that I had every island job catalogued in some form or other. One of the first interviews I recorded was 'the dream' interview in terms of gaining information because Willie Douglas²⁰ had done so many jobs on the island. He referred to them 'plenty chapters in my book' and then went on to describe how he had worked as 'a fisherman', 'a watch manager' (OIC – officer in charge of Castlebay fire station), 'a fire fighter', 'a retail assistant', 'a pier operative', 'an able-bodied seaman (AB)' and 'a community activist' (Douglas 2016:57). There were many other aspects of Willie's experience on the island which were culturally significant, but I failed to look beyond my own construction because, as previously mentioned, my interviews were a form of local light entertainment rather than research topics.²¹ This aspect of my *Barra Island Discs* interviews is indicative of how subtle, pervasive, and encompassing the structures of economic value are.²² I could have asked Willie how important it is for islanders to have a flexible approach in employment choices. I could have asked how he felt talking about his various roles, asking about his identity, but I did not because my questioning was focused on what I considered to be the dominant forces shaping the culture of the community, our relationships with the labour market and its resultant power.

2.4.4 Serendipitous Nature of Interviews

Despite Murdo's letter appearing in the local weekly paper, most of my guests came from serendipitous chats which took place in Castlebay, either in the queue outside 'Uilliem butchers',²³ outside of which the islanders would wait for the delivery of the daily newspapers brought on the plane from Glasgow or my everyday chat with other shoppers in the local Coop store. Sometimes I met people at Castlebay Hotel bar or walking on Cleit beach, close to my home. The degree of spontaneity in the selection process became intrinsic to the entertainment

²⁰ Willie's nickname on the island was 'Waggett' after the character Captain Waggett from the novel *Whisky Galore*. I know that he did not like his nickname because Waggett's character represented someone who loved the power associated with wearing a uniform. Willie's first concern was about the island community.

²¹ I am referring to his comments on 'empowerment within the community' (Douglas, 2016:60).

²² This is based on Althusser's idea of interpellation, where people are made agents or carriers of social structure (in Hall, 1992: 341).

²³ The shop owned by MacLean family consists of the only petrol garage, newsagent, and food store on the main street of Castlebay.

value of the programme because how the interview materialised was used at the beginning of each interview to create a mutual trust. However, as Bauman notes, ‘language strives to sustain a sense of order and to deny or suppress randomised contingency’ (1991:1), and retrospectively, on reflection, my daily chit-chat in the community was always guided by the purpose of securing an interview. Very rarely did I interview ‘blind’ that is, without some prior knowledge of who the person was. In most cases, I knew at least one thing about them – their employment, family connections, indigenous status, politics, community involvement, musical abilities, and, most important of all, if they liked me and the show. Sometimes only one piece of information would act as a catalyst for the story of their life. Personal information on an island where everyone knows everyone else is readily available if you know whom to ask.

2.4.5 Power and the Process of Transformation

The learning processes of my community radio experience were transformative, and I became a good listener of the lifestories of others. Guests accepted this transformation and helped embed my new persona within the community by participating in *Barra Island Discs* and encouraging others to do so. As a result, I developed a new identity and a sense of purpose. As Denzin notes: ‘There is no essential self or private, real self. There are only different selves, different performances...’ (1997:61). As my personal power grew, filtering the islanders’ lifestories for a local and global audience developed creatively into an art form. Simultaneously, my relationship with the island community changed, and I forged lasting friendships from those relationships. Such was the local rapport surrounding *Barra Island Discs* that other people would act as my ‘agents’,²⁴ suggesting potential guests and citing the reasons why ‘they’ thought they would make entertaining interviews. During the recordings, especially when the microphones were switched off and music filled the aural space, many humorous anecdotes were told about other islanders, which as an ‘outsider’²⁵ were thrilling to hear. I was trusted with ‘insider’ local knowledge, and I used this cultural knowledge to break down any perceived insider/outsider barriers between me and potential guests. It was a knowledge that opened my eyes to the ‘canniness’ of the island people and which brought to

²⁴ I am using the word ‘agent’ in a loose show business sense. I am specifically referring to Jessie MacNeil of Bruenish, Maggie Dewar of Ardmhor and Curstie Peggy MacLeod of Cleit, who suggested lots of people’s names and notes of interest but who never came forward themselves to be interviewed.

²⁵ I will always consider Barra my adopted homeland.

me a somewhat grudging respect from the community itself, grudging in the sense that I was from ‘outside’ the island but was participating in the cultural development of the community. Remembering the prophetic words of the schoolmaster in Compton Mackenzie’s *Whisky Galore*, when he tells Captain Waggett, ‘You’ll never make the people of the Islands do anything they think is a waste of time’ (Mackenzie, 1947:78), I felt as if I was being given a role within the community as a gatekeeper of sorts. Somehow *Barra Island Discs* created trust within the community. It was rhizome-like (Deleuze, 1980:9) and continued for five years. The more voices I recorded of the island, the more *Barra Island Discs* embedded itself into its culture. The process of establishing the show as a form of island entertainment took some time. Sustained effort, hard work, and a consistency of approach resulted in the station manager agreeing²⁶ (after a year of recording and broadcasting) to publicise the show in the local newspaper, *Guth Bharraigh*.²⁷ This small but strategically important act was carried out, firstly, to encourage participation – more guests and an increased local listening audience²⁸ – and, secondly, guests would be able to see themselves as well as hear themselves. Once agreed, each show featured in the weekly newsletter, publicised in the form of the guest’s photograph,²⁹ followed by a funny synopsis, written by me. And for one week, my guest was a ‘star’: their island self, their history sewn into the fabric of the island’s cultural history. The radio experience created tremendous confidence in those who participated, a sense of pride in who they were, and a real sense that they were making a valuable contribution to the community they lived in. Collectively their participation in *Barra Island Discs* contributed to the future well-being of the island’s population. I will argue that this was because it took place in a public space, in a place and at a time belonging solely to them. The uniqueness of *Barra Island Discs* created a rapport and established trust. Friendships were formed and it was not unusual to find

²⁶ As I was regarded as an ‘incomer’, it took over a year before information relating to *Barra Island Discs* appeared in the local paper. However, when a young islander did a few shows, its content was advertised immediately. Arguably, had I been indigenous to the island, *Barra Island Discs* would have appeared sooner.

²⁷ Printed and published in the same building as the radio station, the *Guth Bharraigh* (Barra News), is the weekly newsletter of the island community.

²⁸ We had a listening audience of thousands (2,700), including listeners in Moscow, Canada, and the Appalachian Mountains. I received emails from people who had accidentally found *Barra Island Discs* and sent emails of appreciation.

²⁹ Tannen (1989) notes that photography can capture elements such as settings and the visual properties of oral performances, the personality of individual participants, details of performance like gestures, and facial expressions.

people chatting about being ‘Bidded’ – *Barra Island Discs* (ed)! The programme’s five-year life span continued for those reasons.

2.4.6 Learning To Shape the Data – Selection Processes

I continued as a volunteer radio host, but in 2011 I registered as a full-time postgraduate student working on a master’s research degree in Irish literature. My dissertation focused on a post-colonial reading of the novels of Sebastian Barry. To grasp the subtleties of the academic term ‘post-colonialism’ and to understand the construction of the sophisticated thought processes, I had to submerge myself in the works of cultural thinkers.³⁰ Reflecting back, I now see how the academic process impacted the content of the interviews. The fun chat of earlier interviews disappeared, and the interview began to fit into a value system. Like all value systems, it was connected by patterns that were represented in the discourse about the uniqueness of the transmission of Gaelic culture. Effectively it was connected by themes, and for the first time since the beginning of the show, there was a focus on the significance of gender. Retrospectively, I had always had an idea how important the interviews were, but from this point onwards, their cultural significance grew. Their representative and symbolic value were a product of many processes, which included an increasing significance of the meaning of community, identity, and tradition. In effect, the radio interviews represented a cultural interpretation of life on Barra.

When my doctoral research began, I considered how I could use the interviews as lifestory research data. I searched 20 transcriptions for recurring themes. I followed this by tracing the historical significance of the themes and researched their development. At this stage, I began to analyse the transcripts using conversation analysis. Although time-consuming, the processes highlighted two key aspects, one, an individual analysis of a lifestory and two, a sense of identity. Collectively the transcripts gave me phenomenological information relating to how language constructs community experience individually from lifestories, and, significantly, they suggested that there were differences in how the younger and older generations conveyed their lifestories.

³⁰ This included Spivak (1988), Bhabha (1994), Said (1978), Fanon (1961), Gramsci (1971), Foucault (1980), Geertz (1973), and Hall (1992).

To exemplify the different approaches to my interview methods pre and post-2011, I present two transcripts. In Appendix One, Peggy's transcript represents one of my first interviews, whereas in Appendix Two, Nanag's interview, which took place towards the end of 2011, shows that by making the lifestory form the focus of the interview, the content significantly changed.

2.5 Lifestory Interviews, Transcription and Conversation Analysis

2.5.1 Conversation Analysis

I used conversation analysis, specifically the works of Hutchby (1998), Sacks et al (1974) and Tolson (2006), to learn about two people involved in social solidarity, employing linguistic units and their significance within a conversation. Like all the *Barra Island Discs* interviews, the following transcription is of a mixed genre discourse (Fairclough, 2010:148). I used the full names throughout so as not to lose sight of the human interaction that was taking place.

Although there is very little written about how community radio stations work, 'they are not defined by some collection of categorical structural and economic imperatives' (Fairchild, 2012:204), the discourse they produce is. Therefore, to understand the personal data from the programme, I use conversation analysis to explain how culture is constructed in the dialogue because it provides an analysis of the context and the processes of text production and interpretation. As Fairclough claims, 'it is evident that producing discourse is part of wider processes of producing social life, social relationships and social identities' (2010:265).

The data from each lifestory present a discourse that is socially constructed to meet the needs of a 'real' local audience and an 'imagined' wider audience (Fairclough, 2010:443). Within each transcript discourse, there is intertextuality which is heterogeneous – variations of talking, conversing and interviewing in contexts –which both I and my guest understood from our shared history. What intertextual analysis offers is a textual basis for answering questions about what social resources and experiences are drawn upon in the reception and the interpretation of media and what other domains of life media messages are linked or assimilated to in interpretation (Fairchild, 2012: 195).

Intertextuality is made up of mixed genres. Bakhtin makes the point about what mixed genres are when he says:

genres of salon conversations about every day, social, aesthetic, and other subjects, genres of table conversation, intimate conversations within the family and so on...The majority of these genres are subject to free creative reformulation... (1986:80)

In making sense of the mixed genre discourse, I use an autoethnographic approach to conversational analysis in the sense that within our conversations, we were both in a new form of social solidarity formed between me as a radio host and my guest in a counter public space. Calhoun states: 'we hold in common a world we create in common, in part by the processes through which we imagine it' (Calhoun, 2002: 152).

Conversational Analysis is defined as '...the study of recorded, naturally occurring talk-in-interaction...Principally it is to discover how participants understand and respond to one another in their turns at talk, with a central focus being on how sequences of interaction are generated' (Hutchby, 1998: 14). The context in which the talk takes place is created by adopting the persona of a media talking radio host. Media talk is a form of 'talk', a technique used by presenters to establish their role in the media presentation and to create light-hearted conversations with an imagined radio audience. For me, it is used to elicit responses. Tolson defines it as follows:

...media talk is highly conversational. It routinely makes use of speech genres of ordinary conversation, but these are institutionally transformed and strategically manipulated by participants. Some of these genres include stories, jokes, gossip, chat, witty repartee, banter, teasing and flirting and of course selling and promoting all kinds of 'products' (including oneself as a 'personality'). (2006:52)

Throughout the interviews, it is used to speak on three different levels: to guests in a 'radio host' informal speak, to a local audience who will understand the indicators of Gaelic culture such as the township names and the use of Gaelic words and phrases and choice of music, and to an imagined wider audience who are 'delighted' to have access to the island's culture.

By adopting the use of the above analyses on the programme, the interviews offer an insight into how culture is created in the process of sharing a lifestory.

2.5.2 Background to Peggy's Lifestory Interview

I first met Peggy McCormack when she was my daughter's teacher at Castlebay Primary School. Her storytelling skills brought great enjoyment to all the young children. Peggy had retired a few years earlier and occasionally came in as a supply teacher. Her soft voice and charm delighted everyone. My daughter, although not an indigenous Gaelic speaker, had by Primary Two learned enough to understand and enjoy Peggy's stories. When Peggy agreed to be interviewed on *Barra Island Discs*, I was pleased. She was the fourth female voice to be recorded and by the time of the interview, I understood the deep affection the community had for Peggy.

The interview took place on Tuesday, 3 March 2010, and was broadcast the following Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. That week Scottish Opera and the Screen Machine were visiting Barra so there was a busyness about the island which created an excitement and I think there are contextual references in the dialogue to reflect this. After the interview, I was informed that 46 years previously, Peggy had been interviewed in 1964 by Magnus Magnusson and his BBC team for *The Disappearing Island* (Henson, 1964), a short documentary about the island community, and Peggy, then Peggy Galbraith, features prominently with her parents. Shortly after the broadcast of her *Barra Island Discs* interview, I asked her about the BBC interview and she explained that the BBC director, Lawrence Henson, had assumed Barra would befall the same fate as St. Kilda, and was conscious of recording the processes of island life for historical purposes, he had secured funding to make a short documentary film. She told me the story of how she had participated in the film, and I think it is relevant to note it because Peggy's experience in this film in a way validated her participation in the *Barra Island Discs* interview because locally everyone knew she had starred in the BBC production, so her inclusion as a guest raised the profile of the show. Her experience of the community radio alongside that of the BBC raised interesting parallels. This is how Peggy told me the story. Pat Allan, who was a peripatetic art teacher on the island and whose husband had been a well-known Scottish 'showbiz' photographer, knew Magnus Magnusson would be leading the front of the camera team. Peggy told me that Pat Allan was asked if she knew of any families who were suffering from unemployment and Pat pointed to the Galbraiths of Eoligarry. Peggy, who was the only one of her seven siblings to find employment on the island, was then contacted by telephone by the director, who then appeared with Magnus Magnusson at the door of the family's croft. After interviewing Peggy, the director then asked to interview her family. There were no televisions on Barra at this time so neither Peggy nor her family knew of the

importance of the professional personality of Magnus Magnusson or of the focus of the documentary itself. He was just a man, a nice man, said Peggy, who remembers being given Magnus Magnusson's comb to fix her hair before the cameras started rolling. In 2012, those who had taken part in the original film were shown the film again and their views were recorded for BBC Alba. The film and its contents only came to light three years after Peggy's interview for *Barra Island Discs*.

Between the *Barra Island Discs* radio interview and the BBC films, there are revealing ethnographic similarities, but half a decade later, there are contextual differences highlighting paradigmatic shifts in the transmission of culture. The similarities are that both programmes recognise the importance of recording the voices of the community itself. The differences include the transmission of those voices to an intended audience and the context of the voices. In *The Disappearing Island*, Peggy, then a young teacher, is recorded on expensive recording equipment of the BBC to convey the bleakness of the lack of employment opportunities. The sense of occasion created by the status of the BBC equipment creates a context that shaped, and one could argue, distorted Peggy's view of island life. This context is all-important in trying to convey a sense of the culture of the island. For example, Magnus Magnusson's voice is that of a doomsayer, comparing Barra to the uninhabited St. Kilda, claiming that the same fate would befall Barra. Effectively, the only comparison between St. Kilda and Barra is that they are both islands surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean. Economically, while St. Kilda's population was migrating to other areas, Barra's population was enjoying the success of the herring industry, exporting barrels of herring all over the world. So *The Disappearing Island* was interspersed with a narrative divorced from any real understanding of the entrepreneurial or cultural history of the local Barra community. The voice-over by an outsider representative of the powerful behemoth of the BBC 'others' Peggy and the island community. *Barra Island Discs*, on the other hand, created a local counter public space where people could share their cultural history in a local context. Effectively, the counter public space of the community radio allows that to happen.

2.5.3 Commentary on Peggy's Transcript

The text of Peggy's lifestory (Appendix One) is a discourse that is socially constructed to meet the needs of a real local audience and an imagined wider audience (Fairclough, 1992:443). The text contains a framework used to create the context and the techniques used to elicit a response and the themes which define her life. There is intertextuality throughout, which entails semiotic

hybridity (ibid.:551). Below are some specific examples of how ‘turn taking’ is used to exemplify media talk (green), which is used to establish the format of the interview on radio and to elicit responses from Peggy. In the content of this talk, the focus was on speaking to three different participants: Peggy as the guest, a local audience familiar with the Gaelic township and language references, and an imagined global audience.

1. Janice: Hi welcome to this week’s edition of Barra Island Discs... I am delighted to say I have none other than the fabulous teacher herself, a woman who has taught I think about 90% of the children in Barra and it’s none other than Peggy McCormack from Eoligarry. Hi Peggy, welcome to the show.
2. Peggy: hì Janice.
3. Janice: welcome to the show and thank you for agreeing to be on BID
4. Peggy: you are welcome.
5. Janice: so Peggy I am just going to ask you, you know about your life and what it is like living here in the 21st century [
6. Peggy: [that’s fine.
7. Janice: ... and maybe choose some of your favourite choices of music and you can share them with the listeners and as I said I am absolutely delighted to have you here because you are a kind of strong female voice on the island and that’s what we are looking for here in BID and if you have not done what Peggy McCormack has agreed to do then give me a phone on 01871810401 or email me at bvc.com. So Peggy are you Barraich?

Both the ‘host’ and the ‘guest’ accept the rules of the interaction and analysis of the conversation is an example of the principles and norms of the process of turn-taking, which takes place in everyday conversation. It is accepted that the turn-taking will be a series of questions and answers.

The establishment of the interview as a chatty conversation takes place at the beginning when Peggy is introduced formally to an audience in the third person but is then directly addressed with the use of the colloquial ‘hi’. Emphasis on intonation is placed on the use of the second-person pronoun in turn 3. Conjunctions ‘so’ in turn 5 and ‘and’ in turn 7 reinforce that the show is a continuous narrative, and this is exemplified by the guest and host throughout the interview. Laughter also reinforces the text as an informal chat between two people who are equal participants in ‘the banter’ (e.g., turns 36-52).

2.5.4 Holistic Understanding

To create a holistic understanding of the conversation as a lifestory, I analysed the conversation by following the numerical sequence of turn-taking. The introduction establishes the process of a radio broadcast where both participants agreed on using their knowledge of radio to adopt

the language codes and personas of ‘host’ and ‘guest’. It is a radio show that appeals to a wide audience by using keywords such as ‘this week’s edition’ and establishing who the interview guest is. The past participle ‘delighted’ and the adjective ‘fabulous’ are used in the opening turn to establish an upbeat tone with the audience, suggesting the guest’s elevated position in the Barra community, and this is further reinforced by the phrase ‘none other than’. Using the formal address of Peggy McCormack and her township name localises the audience, which then alters when Peggy herself is addressed with an informal ‘Hi Peggy welcome to the show’. Peggy’s response in turn 2 indicates she accepts the informality of the address when she responds with ‘hi Janice’. Turns 3 and 5 reinforce the guest’s position of Peggy and in turn 7, the mention of the plural ‘listeners’ reinforces the wider audience participation. Peggy’s identity as a ‘Barraich’ is firmly established in turn 8, when she intones with a raised voice ‘Barraich’ and uses the adverb ‘completely’, and this is further reinforced by the emphatic use of the term ‘born’ and ‘bred’ and the word choice of ‘original’ and ‘hometown’. This is further explained and added to in turn 10 when she intones, ‘born and brought up’. Turns 13, 15, and 17 are direct acknowledgements to a wider audience when Peggy is encouraged to define her knowledge of the island because it is obvious that the host shares Peggy’s knowledge whereas the (imagined) audience does not. Turns 16, 18, 95, and 97 are further examples of how she defines her island identity. Turn 23 uses music to talk directly to the audience and turn 26 reinforces Peggy’s choice, and the adjective-noun combination of ‘beautiful choice’ is addressed to an imagined voice of that audience. Repetition in turn 32 of a similar adjective-noun sequence is speaking for the imagined audience, which is repeated in turns 36 and 38, and from there on in the interview, an informal, humorous tone is established, with lots of laughter. In turn 49, the imagined audience is addressed before Peggy’s lifestory continues and there is a reinforcement of the benefit of Peggy’s lifestory in turns 57 and 59. Media talk used by the host is to an imagined audience and turn 61 directly talks about the audience as listeners. Turns 76, 78, 80, 84, 86, 90, and 92 fulfil the role of the community radio to inform the community of what social events are taking place that week and it contextualises Peggy’s interview as having the same standing as these other social events. Turns 110, 112, and 118 are examples of her ‘insider’ cultural knowledge and understanding of the ‘crofting’ way of life. Turns 128, 134, and 168, expressing knowledge of her township and her Gaelic language. Turn 123 addresses the local audience directly. Turns 124 to 140 detail the history of her township of Eoligarry and the origins of its name. At turn 169, Peggy temporally contextualises the time of the interview by offering sympathies for the death of the clan chief, The MacNeil of Barra.

Her words are spoken on behalf of the whole island when she repeats, ‘He has been very good to the island. Very good to the island’.

Three themes weave throughout the conversation and her identity is established by a description of her island location (red), her family (purple), and her employment (blue) on the island. Indicators (signs-semiotics) of the Gaelic island community are used by the host and Peggy to create for the audience a sense of who she is and how her lifestory has been woven together from the culture of the island.

Her family’s identity and history are also closely woven into her description of island life and her map of that life. In turns 122 and 128, it is difficult to separate the themes from each other, which highlights the intertextuality prevalent in the conversation analysis. Peggy’s storytelling skills in turn 58 are explained by reference to her mother. A description of her educational experience is easier to isolate because it mentions contracts with historical dates as she moved through the structures of primary, secondary and tertiary education before joining the teaching profession herself. It is Peggy herself who offers a date in turn 12 and she feels proud of her role as a teacher: note in turn 31 when she says, ‘...but I am not saying I am good one or was a good one...’ then in turn 51 she states, ‘I loved all the schools I taught in’ and in turn 155, ‘...the children don’t forget and they always talk to me...’. Despite her retirement, her persona as a ‘great’ teacher still remains with her and with the local island community.

2.5.5 Differences in Interview and Transcription Style Pre- and Post-2011

After my research journey began in 2011, I noted differences in my interview and transcription style, which had a subtle impact on my initial conceptualisation process. In Nanag’s transcript (Appendix Two), there are fewer interruptions in the flow of the lifestory form and this is the focus of the interview. The interview is a linear telling of her lifestory from when she was born – lines 1-6 establish our expectations of the interview. In the transcription, I break the conversation into parts 1-6. This exemplifies the qualitative change of focus from silly chat to a more serious commentary of recording an actual lifestory rather than random dialogue. In effect, Nanag is allowed to narrate her own story. My expectations of Nanag are clear and she chronologically constructs her lifestory narrative, starting with a description of her birth in Glasgow in 1937 and her mother’s death three weeks later, before describing her journey back to Watersay to be brought up by her aunt and uncle. This information is exchanged within the first two minutes of recording time. Thereafter, Nanag weaves together her autobiographical details with historical events which shaped the collective history of the islands. In lines 27-30,

she tells of how her family, ‘my granny and grandfather’, came to own a croft because of the successful actions of the Vatersay Raiders (2012). She simply refers to them as the ‘raiders’ because, in her world, the ‘raiders’ and their families are known to her. They are part of her community and, in effect, she does not need to describe them as coming from Vatersay. Only someone who was ‘outside’ her community circle would need to do so. When I mentioned ‘Vatersay’ in line 29, she clarified her omission by stating that her people were not from Vatersay but from overcrowded areas on Barra – Kentangavel and Glen – and were given land as part of a government scheme to ease congestion. Nanag’s interpretation of my question suggests that she thinks she has made a mistake and she responds by adding more historical information about the level of ‘over-congestion’ in the townships on Barra, whereas my question was posed to alert listeners who did not know that ‘raiders’ was an insider’s way of describing the historically significant Vatersay Raiders.³¹ This is an intersecting observation about the way the local community regarded their stories. They belonged to the island community and, therefore, everyone would understand the ‘raiders’ story’. The change in the interview process is significant because its focus shifts to lifestories: interviewees are given the auditory space to narrate their personal stories, to give voice to their interpretations of how historical events shaped their lives. Hence, the interview content is representative of their story of life rather than it being shaped by me.

2.5.6 Postscript of Transcription – Moving Towards a Method

I located themes from the transcripts which I then cross-referenced. Themes of the merchant navy, employment, education, Gaelic culture, sport and onomastic processes feature in Part Two of my thesis. But to find a method of analysis to locate culture, I had to move away from individual analysis and focus on the collectivity of the thematic content. To interpret culture, I needed a method that would allow me to marry together the identity of each interview while simultaneously developing and constructing a cultural interpretation of the island community. Conversation analysis helped me to locate themes from the interviews, but it did not place social context as the most important indicator and I subsequently engaged Fairclough’s (1992, 2003, 2010) work to develop a method showing how spoken language produces social context

³¹ An account of the purchase of the land on Vatersay by the Congested Districts Board is given in Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland by J.P. Day, as reported in *The Book of Barra* (Campbell, 1936:213-220). These pages contextualise the economic history through a series of letters written by the islanders and their supporters.

using critical discourse analysis. Conversation analysis highlighted individual differences in the development of the themes. Separated by age, that is, into a younger and older generation, my method suggested thematic differences impacted the tense of the narrative form. Indeed, age became a differential in the narrative. A more detailed close analysis of this difference is developed in Chapter Five.

At this stage, having ended my 'tenure' as a volunteer radio host, I published *Voices Galore* (2016), based on a selection of composite interviews. Effectively, I foregrounded the voices of my guests and removed the transcription form. Similar to Lewis's text, *Children of Sanchez* (1961), I eliminated my voice and questions. I followed his example by selecting and organising the dialogue into cohesive lifestory narratives because their representation makes it easier to disseminate themes across interviews. Choosing this form allowed me as a researcher to develop a critical discourse of the phenomenology of the product of the dialogic process. In other words, I could look at the content of the lifestory narrative and consider how the narrative process differentiates each lifestory. In choosing to do this, I did not diminish the authenticity of the interviews. Rather, it meant many technical processes like transcription could be worked together to construct an academic argument which allowed me to use the content and form to conceptualise the concepts which define culture.

Geertz (1974) is correct when he notes that culture can be found only in the local, in other words, in the performative expressiveness of spontaneous speech patterns. The idiom of the speech patterns is particular to a moment in time and space, and it is difficult to find a written form to confer its contextual meaning. Transcripts are verbatim sources which are useful for linguistic analysis, but I was looking for a method to interpret shared experiences and, therefore, I chose to use a composite form. From dialogue to transcription to composite encompasses many processes, the first of which is time and reflection – synonymous processes which are the differences between speaking and writing. Cooper notes that Aristotle observed that 'each kind of rhetoric has its own appropriate style. The style of written prose is different from that of controversial speaking...' (1953:217). Antiquity highlights processes which modernity's taxonomy tries to define. Blankenship (1962:420) notes the difference in time needed for encoding and decoding spoken language. A transcript attempts to make sense of the dialogical cohesion of the interview, but it fails to capture that particularity of time because the sense of immediacy is gone. Deciphering the spoken language into a written form allowed me to reflect and introduce a formality to processes which construct another interpretative layer of analysis. Even if one takes a functional approach to language and notes the differences between

the number of verbs/adverbs, nouns, and adjectives (Martin, 1962: 123), differentiating the word choice between the spoken and written language, a form of analysis which captures the cohesiveness of the *Barra Island Disc* experience is still not produced. Hence, I chose to conceptualise community, identity, and tradition from a continuous composite lifestory narrative form because it foreshadowed the social relationships of the thematic content of the interviews and allowed the voices themselves to tell their story cohesively in their own words.

The composite interviews which feature are listed in Table One below.

Table One: Data of Barra Island Discs Guests

Name	Age	Indigenous	1 st Language	Employment	Gender
S. Beaton	Over 50	Yes/VG	Gaelic	Rtd mariner, crofter	Male
O. Boyd		Yes/T	English	Fisherman	Male
P. Buchanan T	Over 50	Yes/VG	Gaelic	Rtd nurse	Female
J. Davidson VG		Yes/VG	English	Electrician	Male
W. Douglas T	Over 50	Yes/VG	Gaelic	Pier operative	Male
J. Ferguson VG	Over 50	Yes/VG	Gaelic	Security, crofter	Male
N. Gillies VG	Over 50	Yes/T/VG	Gaelic	Rtd crofter	Female
P.McCormack	Over 50	Yes/T/VG	Gaelic	Rtd teacher, crofter	Female
M.MacKinnon	Over 50	Yes/VG	Gaelic	Rtd nurse, crofter	Female
M.C.MacKinnon	Over 50	Yes/T	Gaelic	Rtd Teacher, crofter	Female
D.MacLeod	Over 50	Yes/T	Gaelic	RNLI vol, crofter	Male
R. MacLeod	Over 50	Yes/T	Gaelic	Rtd fisher, crofter	Male
M.MacNeil	Over 50	Yes/VG	Gaelic	Nurse/crofter	Female
D. Manford	Over 50	Yes/VG	Gaelic	Councillor, crofter	Male
C. Nicholson	Under 50	Yes/VG	English	Adventurer, teacher	Female

T – Transcribed interviews VG – interview as it appears in Voices Galore

Table One lists the composite and transcribed voices whose words provide analysis data. It is a summary of the detailed notes I kept during my time as a radio presenter. For my research, I selected those interviewees who conveyed an aspect of employment. The guests were indigenous to the island and we enjoyed a cordial relationship. Each column represents a cultural signifier which impacted my conceptualisation of the culture of the community and the identity and traditions of the island. My interviews were conducted in English. In chapters four, five, and six, the oral contribution of those listed is included in a critical discourse analysis of their language.

In Table Two (Appendix Three), I include a sample of comments written after the interviews. Those comments exemplify how *Barra Island Discs* became part of the culture of the community.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Presenting an autoethnographic research project about lifestories is fraught with ethical difficulties. In the narrative below, I want to explore my concerns. After I had gained ethical approval from the university in 2015, I felt secure in my ethical knowledge that because my interviews were in the public domain, I could access their content and mine them for information. Unrelated to my university thesis, I published *Voices Galore* (2016) and returned to my radio guests to ask if I could include their stories as part of the text. During these discussions, I realised how important it is to request permission. Although everyone had agreed to take part in an hour's banter in the local studio, it is a different experience to see your name in print, and I made everyone aware of this. I knew at this stage I would be using the composite narrative from *Voice Galore* as my research data so, at the same time, I requested their permission for my thesis. I was verbally granted permission. On reflection, I realise I was asking as a friend and as my research focus changed, ethical issues about this relationship concerned me because, as a researcher, I was no longer handling the lifestories of community members but research data which I was shaping into an academic argument by deconstructing and reconstructing language content. I deliberated over this for some time and wondered if changing the focus from the original purpose of the interview would cause them embarrassment in any way. Would my interpretation and analysis of their lifestories be detrimental to their reputations? The stories were given in trust by community members and intertwined with my own story, so I have endeavoured throughout the development of my argument to acknowledge that the construction and contribution of new knowledge, in particular the impact of the age

differential on narrative linearity, belongs equally to those whose stories feature and to the community that shaped the stories.

Similarities in the importance of the ownership of the cultural landscape and the interpretations of oral recordings can be seen in the case of the YellowMan Tapes (Toelken 1998). The tapes contain stories of the indigenous people of North America told by YellowMan of the Navajo tribe, to teach his children and their descendants the 'Navajo cultural abstract values [needed] to maintain an individual's cultural equilibrium, balance harmony and beauty' (ibid.,382). Toelken, as the researcher, questioned whether the oral recordings were of use to anyone other than YellowMan's family because they were stories about their identity. They were personal observations which contained warnings and messages for his family and their descendants, not 'curious onlookers' who could never understand their powerfully symbolic meanings. After 30 years of collecting the stories, Toelken returned the stories to YellowMan's family, knowing that they would probably destroy them because their power lay in the oral retelling of them at specific times, not in being written examples of Navajo literature. In effect, Toelken argued, the stories did not serve any purpose except as the actual performance carried out for YellowMan, his children and tribal people. The point about this is that oral history as part of the cultural landscape can only be understood in the specific context to which it belongs: its meaning can only be determined by those who identify with it symbolically.

Toelken realised that as a contribution to theory about folklore, YellowMan's stories effectively distorted the meaning of what the oral history had meant to those whom it had belonged to, that is, YellowMan's family. This distortion influenced Toelken's decision to return the tapes to YellowMan's family. At the same time, while Toelken may have been driven by reasons of respect for the indigenous culture of the Navajo, that he did so after using them for 30 years to build a reputation as a folklorist seems disingenuous. However, it does raise interesting ethical questions about positing oral history within a theoretical construct: how can the voices speak for themselves if they are not posited within a researcher's construction? What is of utmost importance is that those approaches and subsequent constructions must always be sensitive to the culture of the research and critically aware.

This chapter explored the processes involved in the production of the community radio show *Barra Island Discs*. In the transformative process of changing from a volunteer radio host to a researcher, the significance of the interviews grew and they metamorphosed. Recurring themes were discernible and by transcribing a series of interviews, I located similarities in thematic

content and generational differences in form. Both affected my interpretation of community and identity, which I discuss in detail in chapters four and five. To develop the significance of my community radio interviews further and substantiate them as research data in Chapter Three, I locate them within an overarching theoretical discipline of oral history.

3 Chapter Three: My Analytical Approach, Lifestory Narratives, Age and a Literature Review of Oral History

3.1 Introduction

In considering the significance of oral history (Campbell, 1860; Vansina, 1965; Thomson, 1978; Fairclough, 1992; Finnegan, 1992; Hall, 1997; Clifford, 2001; Wooffitt, 2005; Miller, 2011) and how it substantiates my argument, I aim to show how my autoethnographic research reflects its advantages. The development of my argument is situated in modernity. Oral history provides the communicative action of spoken language and presents culture as a multifaceted construction of the local. For me, spoken language reflects culture. By this, I mean that spoken language is the conduit by which culture transmits its meaning.

The purpose of the first part of this chapter is to consider what oral lifestory narratives are as a form of oral history and the impact age has. I will then provide a critical review of the current literature, which relates to the methodology employed in constructing culture. It is therefore an examination of the processes connecting oral history and lifestory data. The critique considers the seminal texts from which my discourse develops, locating it initially in the theoretical generalities of oral history. This will lead to an understanding of the specificities of the differences between linear and non-linear narratives. In moving from the general to the specific, the construction of my argument is based on the multidisciplinary nature of the social processes inherent in the lifestories that underpin identity.

3.1.1 Oral Lifestory Narratives Challenge the Western Hegemonic Tradition

Barra Island Discs lifestory narratives are an articulation of the island's oral history. They are of the present. Personal narratives in the form of lifestories are a cohesive summation of a personal journey through a life. They contain shared experiences which represent themes common to others living in the community, themes which are developed in the social, economic, geographical, and religious experiences, and are interpreted and presented through an immediate sense of time, place, and identity (Linde 1993:97). Once recorded, lifestories become what Vansina calls oral testimonies (1985:69).

Oral testimonies contextualise interpretations of our relationship to cultural signifiers and are therefore important in monitoring the opinions of previous constructions of society. If one considers the lifestory narrative of Nelson Mandela, once labelled a ‘terrorist’ but now a figurehead of immense fortitude and principle, the trajectory of his life, metaphorically and literally, represents the demise of outdated racist ideologies such as apartheid and its forerunner, colonialism. The thought processes which maintained the injustices of societal constructions are threaded throughout the narrative of his life.

Moreover, I have chosen oral testimonies because it is the most democratic form of language to use. It is inclusive: every life has a representational value (Beverley 1996: 29). Using lifestories enables everyone to participate irrespective of their relationship to language. Cultural barriers imposed via Western hegemonic traditions of the past have until very recently limited the voices to be heard (Bhabha 1994: 30). An example is written autobiographies. Autobiography assumes the possession of certain skills and a degree of ‘artistry’, that is, skills garnered from formal education. There is a difference in content between oral testimony and autobiography. The latter is a celebration of distinguishable achievements selected to present the person in the best possible light within the construct of society’s measurement of success. That is why it is the chosen genre for the elite of society and for the celebrity class who can, if not in possession of the necessary skills, hire a ghost writer to provide the necessary literary skills.

Lifestory narratives, on the other hand, are not individually selective or exclusive in the sense that it is the narrative of the lifestory which is important rather than individual endeavours which present ‘super’ qualities in specially chosen people. But it would be wrong to view the difference between them as dichotomous because there are areas of similarities. Conversely, in the context of the canon of the Western written tradition, there is a view which undermines the intrinsic value of oral lifestories. I think this view extends to the extent that they are considered the research method available only for those who live on the periphery of mainstream society, the voice of the poor, the stories of the underdog, the underprivileged, the disenfranchised, and the dispossessed. Arguably, lifestory narratives collectively represent and distil present-day culture and should be used more as a main methodological research tool because, coupled with sophisticated critical discourse analysis, which further extends the scope of the multi-textuality of oral recordings, lifestories can be analysed to reflect wider power relationships of society because in the language of the spoken word, they are inherently embedded. In addition, lifestory narratives are a mirror for reflecting the style of my reflexively ethnographic research

because they take cognisance of my full and active participation. To be a participant and an interpreter are two key qualities of a reflexive ethnographer.³² There is a degree of selection in the voices I have chosen to use for analysis, but that selection is based on their ability to collectively represent the local voice of the community. It is dissimilar to written autobiographies: the inclusivity of lifestory narratives is antithetical to that form.

Oral history, therefore, is extremely significant for the scope of what it can offer as a research methodology because it challenges the Western canon of the written form and provides alternative ways of interpreting culture through the local (Vansina, 1985:65; Finnegan, 1992:47). The *Barra Island Discs* lifestory narrative provides a form of discourse which challenges the canon of the written form because of the inclusiveness of the stories from within the community. From the interviews, the community speaks its story through its multiple voices and challenges interpretations that are based on the authorship of one person. Firstly, the interviews are a dialogical experience between two people living and working in the community – their oral history allows for the dynamic of the dialogical within the specific local setting as analysed through critical discourse analysis. As an overarching theoretical framework, oral history provides a means of substantiating the validity of the *Barra Island Discs* interviews as lifestory narratives. As they became a form of oral history, they enabled the community of Barra to tell their own stories in their own words about the islands, relate their culture, and describe the lives of those who live there.

Critics have pointed out that during oral recordings, people want to present themselves in the most favourable light by choosing to elaborate on the positive events that have happened in their lives. However, during my five years, I only encountered two men who deliberately constructed their narratives so that they appeared as superhuman. As Habermas and Bluck noted, autobiographical oral narrative construction is ‘socially and culturally mediated’ (2007:82). In my experience, my guests’ experiences were selected to reflect how they wished to be identified by the community around them. If they presented themselves as anything other than what they are, they would quickly feel the wrath of those who had shared their experiences. The listening audience is always a decisive factor and community-based lifestory narratives

³² Denzin notes: ‘The reflexive, epiphanic, messy text redefines the ethnographic project...a person who voices interpretations about the events recorded...and at the same time shapes the poetic narrative representations that are brought to the people studied. Those works are a testing ground on ‘which qualitative social science is being remade’ (1997: 225-6).

are as much about the same story³³ – the shared community identity – as they are about the constructing individual differences in the telling of the story. This is a point which impacts on the chronological telling of the story because memory (as a selection tool) and how it is shared plays an important part in how we construct our identity within a community. In Chapters Five and Six, detailed analyses of the processes of construction are presented.

3.1.2 Community Radio Stories and the Significance of Age as a Narrative Differential

Age difference and how it responds to narrative raises an interesting question about the impact of linear narrative form on the construction of the identity of the older generation. Initially, I observed that an older person has more experiences or choices to choose from, choices which construct meaning. For example, older people have more experience of different constructions of life and, therefore, have more selection available to tell their stories than the younger generation. Logically, it must also be true that the older generation have more experience of the temporal order of discourse. Cohler (1993:108) disputes this, claiming that there ‘are no rules to narrative and ageing’. However, I would contend that the research of lifestory narratives in forming a critical discourse analysis means narratives are generationally responsive. Furthermore, in Chapter Five, it can be seen that the younger generation communicate a lifestory which is nonlinear in the sense that they tell their stories in the present tense. The linear function of a narrative provides an order which reflects how we make sense of our identity from within the processes of the social world. As Labov (1972) argues, it goes back to how we learn the basics of order, which begins with (being born) and follows a system of logic, making sense of the social world. Logically, age impacts on the order, in the sense that lifestories should effectively begin in the past and work towards the present and aspire to the future rather than follow the nonlinear narrative structure of the younger generation who tell their stories in the present tense because their life experience lacks the transformative power of comparative reflection. They have not yet reached a stage where their life experience is retrospective; they do not yet have the power of age which allows them to transform their experiences into memories. Therefore, the construction of their personal identity is immediate and looked at by their peer groups. The point I am making is that there is a different narrative

³³ Rhoades’s (1981) ‘The Rashomon Effect’ is based on a Japanese film directed by Akira Kurosawa (1950) that explores four different characters’ accounts of the same incident. Arguably, the effect is a discourse on identity because each interpretation is based on the life choices of those involved.

form between generations. This concurs with Ochberg's (1992:113) claim that the younger generation has yet to 'fashion identity' because it is still in the process of being made.

In my fieldnotes on ageing I did not ask for a chronological age because I thought this was disrespectful. I noted that people were either over or under 50. This raises interesting questions about why I used 50 - did I think that was the age when people take cognisance of their lives, when they reflect on their achievements? The older islanders notably were past retirement age but each of them had a resilient age effectively they possessed energy and made valuable contributions to the island community. I wish to exemplify this point with noting the following. Peggy Mc Cormack was working as a supply teacher even though she had retired ten years previously. Her enthusiasm for life and for communicating her pedagogical skills so that younger generations could learn her stories of the island was exhilarating. The late Seonaidh Beaton had learned to play the chanter and subsequent to that the bag pipes at the age of 50. Thereafter after he retired he became a piping tutor to the young people and often demonstrated his skills the island ceilidhs. He displayed 'successful' ageing and his energy and determination was further exemplified in running a small business catering for visiting tourists. Likewise, the late Patsy Buchanan was taking driving lessons and busy collecting songs from the older generation to pass onto the younger generation. Mairi' a Welder too was actively involved in the local infrastructure of the community as a writer of drama scripts performed every year and history displays seen in the cultural and heritage centre. Mairi Mhol was a keen participant in the island ceilidhs and at the time of the interview had recently returned from a community organised trip to Canada. She too was keen to pass on her songs to the younger generations. Equally Nanag Gillies was a keen participant in the cultural activities and although I did not know Nanag to be a solo singer she was a keen dancer and actively supported the Vatersay ceilidhs. Calum MacLean like the late Seonaidh Beaton was noted for his exuberance and optimism. His Real Estate business was very successful and when he returned to the island from his home in Vancouver he was sought after to tell anecdotes of his life in the Merchant Navy.

What is important is that everyone was actively involved in the community and felt they had a positive role to play in expressing their cultural knowledge to the younger generation and with each other. Accordingly, this is a form of resilient ageing, and this is important to note as a research variable in a society with an ageing demographic. Although I didn't actively seek chronological ages I knew of the activities they were involved in and perhaps knowledge of this successful ageing lead to target them for interview because energy is an attractive

personality trait. Lifestories as a form of oral history are multifarious in what they can contribute to our cultural understanding of society because they take centre stage in autoethnography methodology. They can provide reflections of how one estimates their life in the eyes of others. Kaufman's key theoretical insight that that identity is performed through the formation, revision and linking narratives of narratives to life events and contexts, constructs a self that is independent of chronological age. What this means is that it is events in life's journey that are important rather than an actual age.

3.2 Older Generation: Lifestories of Memory

I have chosen to define the lifestory narratives of the older generation as those of memory because it is how their narratives are differentiated from those of the younger generation. Their experiences are presented linearly and in the past tense, using memory. Differentiating the narratives this way means that I recognise the significance of age on language and how it transforms its phenomenological meaning both by its word choice and how it constructs through inter-connecting processes. This is important because it impacts how identity is constructed during the life cycle of the story. For example, at which stage in life do we stop speaking of experience in the present tense and begin to project backwards as a process of reminiscing, a process of memory construction from the past? Many different research approaches give meaning to the concept of memory. However, it is not within the scope of this project to engage discursively with the varying theoretical definitions because my study is based on the practice of showing how the content of lifestory narratives in a specific context can be methodologically significant for defining the conceptual process that is culture and not defining a theoretical generalisation of memory. Vansina (1985:2) argues that social processes begin with reminiscences of past events and, as such, they are essential to the notion of personality and identity (*ibid.*,13). Accordingly, human memory provides a life 'history' that is based on selection. People select what information to communicate and, in this process, the individual's identity is shaped, meaning that they choose how to present themselves to the groups and community they live in. But an individual's reminiscence can only exist as part of the wider corpus of information known to the whole community. This is Halbwach's point, eloquently argued by Halfdarason:

Halbwach's key concept is collective memory, his basic premise is that individual memory is always shaped by social context; therefore, he maintains that memory

is a social phenomenon rather than an individual process – our perceptions depend on the evaluation and experiences of the group. (2006:87)

This supports the idea of resilient and successful ageing because it is the remembering of life events in a collective cultural context that is important for considering the effects of an ageing population. Memory is apparent in the lifestory narratives of the older generation primarily because they have more experience of life. Interestingly, Berstein and Bohn (2009) argue that 40 is the important age for memory, the ‘reminiscence bump’ (Rubin 1986). People over the age of 40 produce a ‘culturally coherent lifestory’. Wider research of Scherman et al. (2017) involved four different countries and assumed that culture is static, expressed in a ‘life script’, which is only significant for those aged 40 and over who communicate their lives in a sequence of chronological events. There are similarities in this research which overlap with my own in terms of the linear qualities of chronology. But to suggest that people under 40 do not have a lifestory of consequence is incorrect because, as I have shown in the narratives of the younger generation, their lifestory narratives can be interpreted to convey a sense of identity and contribute to a cultural interpretation of a community. Furthermore, to suggest that anyone under the age of 40 has no cultural representative value is to miss that point that culture is synchronically and generationally responsive. Culture is relational, the opposite of static. The above-mentioned large-scale research makes pertinent points about age and how it chronologically presents a ‘lifestory’ and, indeed, the point at which experience transforms into a memory but arguably my research, as a critical discourse of the relational processes which construct lifestory narratives, is complementary to Scherman’s work in that both of us recognise the differential of age in the construction of lifestory narratives.

3.3 Literature Review of Oral History

Vansina (1985:2) argues that social processes begin in reminiscences of past events, and thus they provide the underlying principle of oral history. As such, they are essential to the notion of personality and identity (ibid., 13). Accordingly, human memory provides a life ‘history’ that is based on selection. People select what information they wish to communicate and in this

process (of selection), the individuals' identities are hallmarked, meaning they chose how to present themselves from the society they live in. But an individual's reminiscence can only exist as part of the wider corpus of information known to the whole community.

By way of illustrating this point, in Barra, everyone knows the importance of the 'discharge paper', a document that determined whether young men from the island had reached a degree of nautical proficiency to allow them to join the pool of able-bodied seamen further afield. This is described by Seonaidh Beaton and Calum McNeil in different ways. But that they both select it for inclusion in their life 'history' supports Vansina's point that reminiscences are part of the collective history of the whole community: they are the social and economic factors that are important to the past and present social environment (Vansina, 1985:167). It is the form and structure of this shared experience that creates culture, of which identity is a part.

Vansina's work provides a systematic approach to oral history, including how to interpret the content of data and how to separate it into components which unearth patterns that have an impact on the meaning of identity. It is a social-scientific approach based on the theory of using generalisations and comparisons and provides a means of organising data.

Finnegan's work *Oral Traditions and Verbal Arts* develops Vansina's approach further and questions the theory of generalisation and comparison. According to her, people do not take into cognisance the dynamics of particular situations – she argues that it is in the specific moment that identity is constructed (2001: 26). Clifford (2000) and Geertz (1973) use similar arguments to suggest that it is in the specificity of the interconnectedness of processes that culture is found. In differentiating her work from Vansina's, Finnegan concentrates more on trying to construct a theoretical perspective of oral history by examining different approaches and perspectives and highlighting their usefulness. What Finnegan's work shows is the important observations of the various approaches one can take to oral history.

In the development of her work from Finnegan explains what she considers to be the theoretical differences of each approach, including psychological analysis, which looks at oral history by linking psychological and human development as expressed through the generalities of myths and archetypes. This approach can be found in *The Stories We Live: Personal Myths and The Making of the Self* (McAdams: 1993). McAdams places his life experience data into a generic model that uses the archetypal characters from Greek mythology to categorise them. This approach fails to take into account the importance of the social processes which construct a life experience. It means, as Lawler argues, that identity is 'something foundational and essential'

(2016:30). By ignoring the importance of the social processes in creating identity, the psychological approach adopted by McAdams is limited in its scope because it cannot gauge the impact that power relations have on establishing how one's life experience is constructed by the social and economic conditions of the society in which one lives.

To illustrate, if this approach was used to examine my own data, then the story of Patsy Buchanan's life and the choices she made would centre on the archetypal characteristics of 'the mother'. Her story, using McAdams's approach, would define it, essentially, more as the story of a mother and less about her impoverished circumstances that prevented her performing as a singer in the Royal National Mod (Mòd Rìoghail) and likewise prevented her extending her secondary schooling as a boarder in Inverness in the way some of her other contemporaries could.³⁴ By interpreting his work on life experiences from a psychological approach, McAdams selects and chooses to construct the life experience to fit in with an approach that does not take cognisance of the social element. Nonetheless, it does consider the personal identity of a life experience by looking at how personal decisions construct the essentials found in the archetypal model.

This is the opposite of a Marxist approach, which collectively groups life experiences into injustices caused by inequality in the social and economic systems and, accordingly, Finnegan argues that this approach to life experience reflects the class system. Subsequently, all oral history collections reflect this approach, which gave birth to the expression 'history from below'. Oral history is regarded as the voice of 'the people' in that it reflects the voices of those who are denied access to the culture capital of the powerful superstructure owned and imposed by a capitalist society (1992:47). Finnegan's description of oral history as a Marxist approach echo that of Vansina (1985:61) because oral accounts are testimonies of a particular specific time. As testimonies, they 'provide new forms of cultural and literary expression that embody a more or less thematically explicit and formally articulated ways of the social forces contending for power in the world today' (Beverley, 2004: 25). But by grouping the life experiences into social and economically determined groups, this approach ignores the psychological input of human development, which, although presented as essential by

³⁴Mairi a' Welder's description of her boarding experience at Inverness along with the other girls from the Castlebay school who wanted to continue with their education. Parents made a financial contribution towards their children's upkeep while they boarded off the island. Furthering one's education was determined by the amount of money the family could afford (2016: 51)

McAdams, has some validity in finding a meaning in identity. In excluding this psychological analysis there is a real danger that people's experiences may be grouped as a singular class experience.

To give an example, Miller in *Oral History On Trial* (2011) argues that there is a legal precedent in a court case regarding the ownership of land rights of the indigenous people of Canada, claiming that their testimonies,³⁵ their oral history, has as much validity, if not more, as a written published map to define the territories stolen by the colonial powers. As such, he subsumes their identity into a political construct so that the voices of 'the people' and their identities become a collective representation of their culture. He then uses this to argue that it creates a legal precedent. Miller's case describes how oral history must be acceptable in a court of law to define physical land boundaries. He further argues that they have the right, and no one else, to determine what the meaning of oral testimony is. Effectively the voices become a culturally constructed product that is used by the researcher, or in Miller's own case as a legal representative for political ends to create social change. Miller's approach is powerful because he uses it to create social change for the indigenous people of Canada. His argument is that testimonies have a 'free form' which differs from Vansina's because, according to Miller, Vansina considers testimonies to be 'fixed forms', whereas Miller claims that 'it isn't just about language and its meaning of words but about context'. This means that understanding the power relations and processes which shape the context are equally as important as linguistic interpretation. Context means that those who live through those processes have the right to construct meaning out of their interpretation of what it is like to live in that particular moment. If oral history is anything, it is, as Miller states, a 'multiversal understanding of the past that operates at different levels' (Miller, 2011: 197).³⁶ Oral history then becomes a powerful tool in determining ownership of the social relations as well as the cultural landscape.³⁷

³⁵ This case refers to the 1997 Supreme Court of Canada decision which declared that oral tradition evidence should no longer be considered inferior to written sources (Neuenschwander, 2013:210).

³⁶ Miller compares it to academic knowledge, which, he claims, is subtly situated as a higher form of knowledge and by implication, the culture of the academic is situated higher than that of the Aboriginal informant. This is to point out that academic work is situated in hierarchy.

³⁷ Cultural landscape is defined as 'the environment modified by the human being in the course of time, the long-term combination between anthropic action on this environment and the physical constraints limiting or conditioning human activity. It is a geographical area – including natural and cultural resources – associated to

Finnegan makes the point that in adopting a certain approach to oral history, one is effectively constructing what oral history means rather than allowing the oral history to speak for itself from within its own historical specificity (Finnegan, 1998: 26). Even if one follows a structural approach to oral history, that is, taking the position that nothing has a fixed value and meaning is determined by those who interpret it (Finnegan, 1998:42), it is paradoxically comparable to Toelken's dilemma in that the rich symbolism of language finds meaning only in our own cultural experience and through our interpretation and usage of it.

Oral history then creates different meanings depending on the knowledge of the interaction in question. This raises important questions, for example, how can one understand the cultural context of the specific historical time if one did not experience it? Can oral history be understood only by those who lived in that particular time? Effectively, oral history can only be understood by those who are immersed in the specificities of a particular cultural landscape. Hence, a self-reflexive ethnographic approach is needed if one is to give meaning to culture. The question then raised is whether oral history can be used as a research tool to understand cultures other than our own.

Finnegan (2001:49) points out how adaptable oral history is and how it can be used in different ways. At the same time, there is a need to be critically aware that each approach brings its own constructed cultural viewpoint and that such constructions need to be turned inside out to free them from their attendant preconceived ideologies, thereby applying critiques. McAdams, Miller, and Toelken illustrate different approaches described by Finnegan and, in looking at them, critically expose the different meanings of oral history and the need to be ever vigilant about power and cultural supremacy of those who seek to interpret oral history outside the context of the recordings. Finnegan argues that analysis must be critical at all times because cultural ideologies are always present. Without critical awareness, they can become dominant. As such, she argues that oral sources are not neutral (1991:47) – we have to ask what the researchers have contributed to the recordings and they have different meanings constructed for different approaches. As well as the need for critical awareness, Finnegan (ibid.,49) argues that to be effective is to adopt a pluralistic analysis, where knowledge of the different

historical evolution, which gives way to a recognisable landscape for a particular human group, up to the point of being identifiable as such by others' (UNESCO 2012).

approaches coupled with ethnographic specifics and comparative historical perspectives construct meaning.

The most significant aspect of Finnegan's work in this context is the development of ideas on ethnography of speaking and the importance of the spoken word in locating identity. She comments on the importance of using discourse analysis as a means of finding cultural meaning and, by extension, a conceptual meaning of identity. The spoken voice and its performance are very important as is their analysis, in its context, as contributing factors in determining identity. She explores a set of frameworks to guide one through analysing oral history. She has developed ideas first mooted by Mead et al. (1930) of the Chicago school³⁸ and later developed by Cohen (1985). That is that through the interconnectedness of the social and personal, oral history becomes a set of processes of symbolic interaction that can define culture and identity as a conceptualisation of it. Finnegan brings together the analytical steps to construct a meaning of oral history in general, whereas the work of Linde considers how lifestories as a specific form of oral history explore the processes inherent in the definition and expression of self. And self by extension is how we define our sense of identity.

For Linde (1993:3), lifestories express our sense of self: who we are and how we have become the way we make sense of the social processes in our lives. They are open units in that their focus is to describe the journey of a lifestory rather than to describe a specific component of it. As such they have an infinite amount of possibilities, and this is a point she shares with Finnegan. Furthermore, she adds that the coherence of narratives can be considered from reference points, which are not dissimilar to Finnegan's perspectives. She includes Catholic confessional, astrological, and feminist views, as well as the psychological and behaviourist perspectives to construct meaning from lifestories. Linde extends this further however by illustrating how lifestories create a sense of coherence of the social processes through personal narratives. As narratives of the self, she argues, they follow the flow, the same set of rules of narratives in general. This builds on Ricoeur's foundational idea (1991:32):

...that we never cease to interpret the narrative identity that constitutes us, in light of the narratives proposed by our culture. In this sense, our self-understanding

³⁸ This is a term given to those sociologists and anthropologists who were the forerunners of the term 'symbolic interaction' and who used the city of Chicago to apply their research. They included Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, W.I. Thomas, and George Mead.

presents the same features of traditionality as the understanding of literary work. It is in this that we learn to become the narrator and the hero of our own story without actually being the author of our own life.

Ricoeur's point here is that social processes and their interconnectedness construct the symbolic interaction of the story. This echoes Finnegan's point that the concept of narration highlights the process, not the product. A lifestory is a series of processes. Coherency, Linde claims, is a product of it.

According to Linde, lifestories have two parts. The former, 'life', is a construction of the interconnectedness of the social processes and symbolic interaction of personal identity. The latter, 'story', is how it becomes coherent through its narrative; its own form of narrative tells how each lifestory interprets and reflects the social processes of the culture because it concerns itself with language and language, in terms of using oral history as methodology, is a conduit of those processes (Ricoeur, 1990: Cohen, 1985). Coherence within the narrative of the lifestory mirrors that of all the stories which we learn from infancy. It contains the basic properties of order as defined by Labov (1972:359), beginning with the action (when we are born), which causes something to happen, which leads to a denouement (in the case of lifestories, the end of the interview). Story, like life, then produces a shared understanding of the order in which actions happen, from the plot through a process of sense-making, which is then interpreted by the reader as making common sense. In understanding this process, we then reproduce it through our thought processes. In concurring with Linde (1993:97), my understanding is that those properties of stories are taught from the first fairy stories we learn as children. So the basic linguistic units of statements in sentences which flow from one into the other create a coherence, a system of logic which makes sense of our world. That system of coherence provides a way of shaping and making sense out of lives. The structural properties of the coherence are held together in the narratives.

The similarities continue. Barat claims that narrative construction is a 'process of articulating different narrated events together into a temporarily fixed coherence providing a sufficient sense of identity' (2000:167). Every lifestory then is a kaleidoscopic reflection of those processes. It is marrying the social processes of life with the processes of the narrative technique of story-telling. Performing the ritual of bringing the processes together is the context, in that all stories have contexts told through a continuous narrative. Linde (1993:48) acknowledges Geertz as the 'patron saint of this approach', stating that narrative analysis is a

‘continuous dialectical tacking between the most local detail and the most global structure in such a way as to bring them into simultaneous view’ (Geertz, 1983:68). This is echoed in Finnegan’s work.

In analysing the lifestory narrative, Linde suggests differences between the techniques of conversational analysis and discourse analysis. In the former, the narrative is divided into linguistic units defined by turn-taking – this is based on the theoretical coherency of order, defined by Linde as ‘the American structural linguists’ approach. They analyse each linguistic unit hierarchically so that the sentence is the ‘highest unit’ and the morpheme the ‘lowest unit’, morphology being the study of the smallest component of language. Of the latter discourse, the analysis focuses more on the meaning that is communicated by the content contained in the linguistic unit, and context is key to an understanding of how it makes sense. The major difference inherent in the analyses is that conversationalists³⁹ such as Goffman (1959) look specifically at the conversation language use of a particular group over a period of time whereas discourse analysts focus on understanding the social contexts in which language is used in a specific milieu to extract meaning. Fairclough (2010:3) adds to this by critically examining social contexts to expose a layer that uncovers the ideological and power relationships held within the processes of language use. As such, discourse analysis becomes more about the complex relations of social life contained in the narrative of the conversation rather than focusing primarily on the empirical evidence which the linguistic unit can claim about a group of people. Discourse analysis looks at the connections between the contextual processes of the narrative and, as such, is more reflective of how one constructs meaning in language as it used in a particular historical moment, in other words, when language reflects social processes.

³⁹ Conversationalists include Harvey Sacks and Emanuel A. Schegloff (1974).

3.4 Secondary Oral Sources of Barra and the Significance of Gender as a Differential of Oral History

Table Two: Complementary Oral Sources of Stories

Name	Date/ Language	Genre	Gender of Recorder	Academic Style
J.F. Campbell <i>Tales of the West Highlands</i> ⁴⁰	1869 English	Oral popular tales in written form	Male	1. Literary
J.L. Campbell/* M Fay Shaw School of Scottish Studies	1930-60s English/ Gaelic	Oral accounts of aspects of life in Barra, including songs	Male/Female	2. Social Science
BBC/IFA <i>The Disappearing Island</i>	1965 English	Film – visual and oral	Male	3. Documentary

*The stories of Nan MacKinnon⁴¹ are used from this collection.

3.4.1 Historiographic approach

J.F.Campbell's *Tales of The West Highlands* is a unique collection of orally told stories. Numbering almost 400 in total, the tales were mostly communicated in Gaelic and were then translated before being published. Each story is a taxonomic classification based on the title,

⁴¹ Nan MacKinnon (1902-1982) recorded over 600 songs and a thousand stories. School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University.

narrator, date, place, and collector. The consistency of a systematic approach makes Campbell's work one of the first scholarly examples of written oral collections. Of those tales, 20 come from Barra and include Hector Boyd, fisherman; Alexander MacDonald, crofter; Alexander MacNeil, fisherman; Donald MacPhie, blacksmith; Roderick MacNeil, labourer; and Roderick MacLean, a tailor. The dominant motif, not surprisingly for the period, draws on the superstitions of birds and fairies, common stories of the island community.⁴² Interestingly, 154 years later, Peggy McCormack's told the *Barra Island Discs* audience:

Well, my mother was a storyteller, she used to tell us a lot of stories when we were children. Barra stories or otherwise and I used to enjoy telling the children stories of fairies⁴³...how they lived in the hillside, that sort of thing. (McCormack, 2016:134)

In the community, the long dark evenings are often filled with ceilidhs,⁴⁴ visiting neighbours, and sharing stories. The recurring themes of superstition and fantastical feats are a common way to explain shadowy movements and eerie sounds, common occurrences as a result of inclement weather. The fantastical stories told by the Barra men can be found in the mythology surrounding *Ossian*, *Munchausen's Narrative of Marvellous Travels and Campaigns in Russia*, *Grimm's Fairytales* and the *Arabian Nights*. J.L. Campbell notes the similarities in content⁴⁵ and symbolism to explain how superstition existed prior to any publication.⁴⁶ J.F. Campbell makes the point in his introduction in 1860 to Volume One that: 'I was told that the words were "sharper" and "deeper" than those of the printed book' (Campbell, 1860:xxv). This raises an interesting point, in translating Gaelic into English, the meaning of idiomatic speech patterns is lost (Chapter Two).

⁴² In *Tales from Barra told by the Cuddy*, there is a chapter dedicated to fairies, second sight and ghost stories (MacPherson & Campbell, 1992:119).

⁴³ The Fairy Flag sits in Dunvegan Castle and belongs to the MacLeods, as Lords of the Isles.

⁴⁴ Ceilidhs in the traditional sense of visiting neighbours and sharing stories of your day, small gatherings usually as opposed to the 'tourist' ceilidhs describing big events.

⁴⁵ '...you will find the creed of the people, as shown in their stories, to be that of wisdom and courage...that small beginnings lead to great results' (J.F. Campbell, 1860:i).

⁴⁶ J.L. Campbell describing the tales of the Barra men says: 'These stories have been current in the Highlands and Islands for at least four centuries...It is likely up till 1700 and even later such tales circulated widely in manuscript in the Highlands...'

Approaching this part of my research using a historiographic approach, I now aim to consider the epistemological relevance of J.F. Campbell's tales because his methodology in collecting oral data illuminates similarities and differences between the *Barra Island Discs* lifestories data. Spanning three centuries, Table Two shows how the passage of time has shaped not only the different methodologies of collection but also the content.

3.5 Important Similarities and Differences

3.5.1 Similarities in the Sources and the Significance of Gender as a Differential of Oral History

The similarities in the sources begin with their form – they have entertainment value: J.F. Campbell's stories are 'a museum of curious rubbish about to perish, given as it was gathered in the rough...' (1860:iii), while *A Disappearing Island*,⁴⁷ a documentary film, is an early form of 'reality' television. The three sources present Barra as if it is about to 'perish', to 'disappear', a recurring motif. It is as if the recorders are standing at the abyss of a 'great' moment in history. In effect, J.F. Campbell voices his concern about losing the 'orality' (Finnegan, 1992:6) of the storytellers. In the other two sources, there is cognisance of the need to preserve something of the culture in case the fate of the villagers of Mingulay and St. Kilda befalls the Barraich.⁴⁸ J.L. Campbell is driven by the need 'to record the heritage which he feared might not last much longer...' (Perman, 2010:131). Arguably, without the oral collections of the past, our knowledge of the culture of the islands would be limited to written texts only. The subsequent development and evolution of the functions and structures of language (Bauman, 1991; Bhabha, 1994; Clifford, 1992; Eagleton, 1991; Foucault, 1980; Hall, 1992) provide protection for it within its historical context. As Fairclough contests, language is multitextual and can be analysed through 'a three dimensional framework...each discursive event has three dimensions: it is spoken or written language text, it is an instance of discourse practice

⁴⁷ The documentary film was made by a radical new film company – Independent Film Association (IFA) – and presented to mainstream society. It depicts an island community on the verge of extinction using stereotypical and clichéd imagery, along with a sweeping grand narrative, but also a form of entertainment similar to reality television (Henson: 1964).

⁴⁸ Mingulay was deserted in 1912 and St Kilda in 1930 (Maclean, 1977:157).

involving the production and interpretation of text and it is a piece of social practice' (Fairclough, 2010:94).

Similarities in the sources extend to gender. It is not my intention to provide a feminist critique of the content of the sources but to give an overview within a historiographic approach to explain how the gender specifics of the methodologies are reflective of the historical context in which they were collected. The Barra stories of J.F. Campbell were not only collected by men but told by men because one can assume that there was a degree of 'authority' given to the collectors of the stories who would have had to consult the priest for permission, and the island men would have collectively agreed who to appoint to represent Barra. A humorous example of this type of behaviour is to be found in *Whisky Galore* when Father Macalister raises his voice to the Sergeant-Major and orders him as follows: 'You're in my parish now and you'll sit where the parish priest tells you to sit...' (Mackenzie, 1947:39). One of the Barra men gives credit to his great grandmother for passing the tales onto them; however, I am not sure if this is not a rhetorical device of exposition to add value and authenticate the story by adding the gravitas of 'age', in a sense, wisdom. There is a ring of truth about the 'great grandmother' passing on stories. As Meek observes in his essay, '*Gaelic Granny Syndrome*', 'there is tendency to suggest the stories have lasted through the mists of time' (2000:3). My experience suggests that women told stories along with the men. This is something which Peggy McCormack talks about when she says: 'well my mother was a storyteller...' (McCormack, 2016:133). The recordings of the stories of Nan MacKinnon by Campbell et al are testimony to that. Both of these examples postdate the work of J.F. Campbell. His collection (over 5%⁴⁹ attributed to women), derived from the Highlands and Islands, is reflective of the gender divisions in the Victorian era. His book depicts oral performances, predominantly of men, created to show off the scholarly work of men, including the translations from the Ghàidhlig to English by men, and it is ultimately presented to a man 'so you {he} may go on acquiring knowledge' (Campbell, 1860:viii).

⁴⁹ Out of a total of 390 stories, only 21 women contributed. Two women, Mrs McTavish of Bowmore, Islay, and Janet Currie of Stoneybridge, South Uist, are listed as having recorded 4 and 3 respectively. No Barra women are listed.

The sweeping grand narrative⁵⁰ of *The Disappearing Island* is also presented by a man as well as being filmed and recorded by men. The men effectively construct to the outside world their perception of ‘perishable’ Barra and then impose that narrative interpretation on to the experience of Peggy (Galbraith) McCormack and her family, right down to the instruction of giving her for a comb so that she can comb her hair for the cameras (Mc Cormack, 2011).

J.L. Campbell’s collection legitimates a patriarchal perspective. He differentiates the two previous collections of stories of the island by Carmichael⁵¹ and J.F. Campbell, both collected by men, whereas the work of the female recorder, Marjory Kennedy-Fraser, is dismissed:

They are collectors in the objective sense of the word, with considerable ability, and a first hand knowledge of colloquial Gaelic. Travelling in the Highlands as Highlanders themselves they collected word-for-word versions of songs and stories often heard quite informally, which they later published...Mrs. Kennedy-Fraser’s attitude to her subject was quite a different one. Gaelic she did not know and never came near to mastering. She depended on a collaborator to take down and interpret the words of the songs which she heard, and the methods of her collecting involved formal recitations of a kind that must have been prejudicial to the spontaneity of the singer...and it has created a curiously false impression of the Hebrides based on the author’s own romanticised attitude. (2006:223)

J.L. Campbell is dismissive of the work of a woman who employed the skills she had to capture the musical voices of the islands as they were given to her. Reinterpreted for musical arrangements, J.L. Campbell assumes that Fraser’s work may not be as realistic as the other collections but his ‘measurement’ of methodological differences appears to be based on her lack of knowledge of Ghàidhlig and musicianship. Her enterprising skills in employing someone to translate are negatively portrayed. If J.L. Campbell had applied the same rigour to methodologically analysing J.F. Campbell’s collection, he would have found that J.F. Campbell relied too on collaborators, not only to collect the stories but also to translate them from Ghàidhlig into English. There are areas of contention, based on J.L. Campbell’s work, but the scope of my research does not extend to comparisons and contrasts in the collections

⁵⁰ This term is used as it is in critical theory to suggest it legitimates the gender power disparity of society in the 1960s.

⁵¹ Alexander Carmichael, author of *Carmina Gadelica* (two volumes) of Hebridean folklore.

of Carmichael, Campbell, and Fraser. But it is noticeable that J.L. Campbell's perspective undermines the methodological research chosen by a woman by unfavourably comparing it to the work done by men. Interestingly, I note that although J.L. Campbell recorded the oral content of Nan MacKinnon's stories, he did not set about publishing a book of her stories. Yet he supported the publication of *Tales from Barra, told by The Cuddy* (MacPherson & Campbell, 1992). The value given to the publishing work of men to bring about their oral collection of stories reflects a world where women's contribution exists on the periphery of the mainstream world; it is acknowledged but marginalised within a patriarchy which reinforces its own supremacy without awareness that it is even doing so.

Notably, there are similarities in the cataloguing and classifying of both J.F. and J.L. Campbell's work. Their collections are meticulously labelled and recorded, suggesting their intended audience is a (male) scholarly audience who can study the etymology of the stories, adopting anthropological skills to form an elitist insight into the culture of Barra and Vatersay community of that time. Within a few decades, the intended audience of 'The Disappearing Island' sees a combination of the use of oral, visual, and aural methodology presenting Barra and Vatersay to the outside world in a classic example of 'othering'. The newly honed documentary skills take the island's culture into the living rooms of millions of people watching reality television for the first time. However, that methodology, similar to the other sources, in attempting to capture and preserve a way of life, is somewhat tempered in its democratic illusions of offering access to 'other' worlds because that 'other' is then crystallised in an image of the island as a place of poverty, misery, and religious obsequiousness, which belies the island's resilience and fortitude.

3.5.2 Differences in the sources

Table Two highlights the differences in terms of time periods and genre. In a way, the collections of J.F. Campbell and J.L. Campbell are summed up and used in *The Disappearing Island* to tell the story of an island from an outsider's perspective to an audience other than the local community. The institutional distributive resources of the BBC, coupled with the advancements of electronic developments, collate early collections into stereotypical clichéd imagery to present Barra to the world. The stories of the people, a rich treasure trove of cultural significance of the milieu, are used rather as an alarm call to the rest of the world – to save this

poor little island from falling into the abyss. The shot list⁵² is very dark and includes a 17th-century prophecy which says that the island would one day be home only to birds, reinforcing the negative view that it is about to ‘perish’. Men are bent over collecting cockles, bemoaning the lack of employment opportunities which Peggy Galbraith (McCormack) adds to and explains it. The programme concludes with a funeral procession and women singing Ghàidhlig hymns – a dark pessimistic tone for the wider world.

One of the most important differences is the ‘seductive’ use of the moving image in the BBC’s source and the inclusion of the aurality of the voices of the islanders themselves attempting to tell their story, to share their experience of fishing and its decline. It is very persuasive in a way that reading and listening to the stories of the other collections is not, and that is why the moving image has continued to enthral audiences. Shortly after *The Disappearing Island*, investment in a fish processing factory created much-needed employment. The power of television as it was then, with its grand narrative, presented Barra to the world as people who had a ‘unique’ culture needing protecting, which is antithetical to ‘a kind of bland and homogeneous culture which entertains individuals without challenging them’ (Thomson, 1999:14).

The similarities and differences of a historiographic approach allow the sources to be hermeneutically linked to their epoch. Likewise, the oral performances of the voices of *Barra Island Discs* reflect the development of the processes of recording oral history. The community decided how they wanted their lifestories to be told; their response to my interview technique meant I applied new skills based on what I heard. This democratisation of the oral history process in Barra reflects generally the move towards communities controlling their own sense of self, their identity, and their traditions. This is echoed in the work of Miller et al. Recording lifestories in the local means the community controls their own interpretations of interactions and relationships. In other words, they are not ‘othered’ but control how they want their culture to be portrayed. Those voices in effect provide the basis for my analyses. They are the culmination of inclusive contextual processes. Nanag’s *Barra Island Discs* interview (Chapter Two) represents the first time she had been asked to record her lifestory. As the sources above indicate, Barra has always attracted ‘social recorders’ such as J.F. Campbell (1860) and J.L.

⁵² Accessed via www.movingimage.nls.uk

Campbell (Perman, 2010:63).⁵³ Their selection processes were exclusive whereas my show was inclusive of everyone. Everyone has a lifestory. The value put on a person's story of life is a construction which masks power; hence, the lifestories of someone such as J.L. Campbell⁵⁴ are presented as quite remarkable, whereas the lifestories of Nanag's family remain untold. Power like a weed is invasive; its roots spread everywhere.

3.6 Summary

This brief presentation and discourse on key studies raise a question regarding how value is placed on different interpretations. To give an example: would the written descriptions of Barra by J.L. Campbell (1936), Haswell-Smith (1996), and Robert Miller (1999) have, if Bruce G. Miller's argument is correct, more value as interpretations of the community of Barra than the lifestory interviews collected on the community radio? This line of argument supports Miller's (2010:181) view that the oral history [of the island] is not as valued as the Western hegemonic tradition of the written word. What my research sets out to do, by examination and analysis of processes, is to show how the recorded life-story voices of the islanders currently living in Barra communicate culture which can be conceptualised as a representation of the community, their identity, and their traditions. It does not claim to be a better interpretation; rather, it is one which uses the voices of the islanders to define their interpretation of their island culture.

3.7 Conclusion to Part One

In Part One, I presented the processes which produced *Barra Island Discs* and contextualised the lifestory narratives within an overarching theoretical discussion of oral history. By comparing it to other oral sources of the island, I have shown that my data is validated as representative of the community it describes and is, therefore, of its epoch, which strives for

⁵³ The recordings of both men focus exclusively on tales and songs. J.F. Campbell's imaginative stories are told by men and J.L. Campbell recorded songs and stories by people selected and chosen by the local school teacher, Annie Johnston. Any selection process is marred by choice: if you cannot tell a good tale or sing a song, your voice and the life of that voice is silenced.

⁵⁴ J.L. Campbell is remembered as the man who gave away his island of Canna to the National Trust of Scotland for the benefit of the public. His lifestory is heralded as a unique example of someone who, despite his upbringing of wealth and privilege, provides an example of egalitarian principles in practice. The point here is not to diminish J.L. Campbell but to point out the differences afforded to his lifestory compared to those given to Nanag and her family.

inclusivity and equality. Part Two of my thesis, 'Stepping into the Local', effectively embraces this by conceptualising the theory and practice of culture by defining community, identity, and traditions as a critical discourse analysis of the language of the community.

Part Two: Stepping Into the Local

4 Chapter Four: Finding a Theoretical Framework to Conceptualise Community from Barra's Big Story

4.1 Introduction

First, this chapter explores the sociological and anthropological theoretical approaches as an abstract discourse and then presents a discourse on the processes of theory in practice from Barra's Big Story, a socially cohesive grand narrative filtered through its main industry of fishing, which contextualises the *Barra Island Discs* lifestory narratives. It concludes with an autoethnographic interpretation of how relational community is as it shifts from an outsider to an insider perspective.

Community is a discourse that highlights what we have in common. Derived from the Latin *communitatis* (Hawkins, 1991:296), it is the social sphere where our shared experiences are meaningfully expressed. There are many definitions of community. Indeed, Amit makes the point that defining community has created a 'cacophony of analyses' (2002:2), which has swamped social thinking. He notes:

Social analysts (Durkheim, Weber, Anderson, Cohen) have repeatedly used the concept of community as a vehicle for interrogating the dialectic between historical social transformations and social cohesion. Capitalist evolution, state formation, urbanisation, industrialisation and inter globalisation for their principles; conceptualisations of logistics of social affiliation. Community has been a longstanding, although by no means an exclusive, conceptual medium for interrogation of the interaction between modernity and social solidarity. (ibid., 2)

4.2 Sociological and Anthropological Theoretical Approaches of Community

4.2.1 The Collective Approaches of Structural Functionalism

Sociology is about understanding society according to how its groups are organised and classified by its foundations. Durkheim stated that it was how 'the totality of bonds that bind

us to one another and to society, shape the mass of individuals into a cohesive aggregate' (1982:18). The following discourse of social processes is a summary of my research. The sociological perspective of structural functionalism analyses the ties that bound me to a framework of contractual social organisation as determined by societal constraints. It is a perspective which has shaped my thinking and indeed reflects the thought process at the beginning of my story. Structural functionalism is about how the mechanics of the institutional framework work from a societal perspective and, as such, it does not allow for the nitty gritty relationships from the smaller sphere which is found in Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft*.

Tönnies's community as a dichotomous model of the larger society concerns itself with the how of social organisation. In that way, it is another form of structural functionalism because it is about how relationships function within the nitty-gritty of smaller organisational structures. His dichotomous theoretical ideal positioning laid the foundation stones which others used to build their own structures on. Cooley's 'Primary Group' could easily be a description of the island of my research because it describes the relative intimacy of face-to-face association. It provides a structural analysis which explains the 'we' in community (Cooley et al., 1933:55). Redfield's dichotomous polarised model is between the folk and urban continuum, once more a small collectivity wherein there is a strong sense of solidarity. This provides an ideal model for closely examining how community is organised and how it functions along those lines. Becker's (1950) discussion between the sacred and the secular as part of the typology of the other theorists introduces the differences and importance of the insider/outsider positionings. Throughout the description of the journey of my story, they are integral to what drives my need to belong (see section 4.3). Sorokins's contractual, as opposed to the familistic, readily sums up the position I found myself in when unemployment was foisted upon me. There are processes of my story which can be described by early theoretical models of sociological functionalism as I moved from one ideal positioning to the other, shifting from the mechanical solidarity of professional worker to unemployed volunteer and submerging myself in the organic solidarity of the primary group of the predominantly Catholic island community where everyone knows one another as the ritualistic sacred weaves its way into every facet of life. Fluctuating between the ideal templates explains the 'what happened' aspect of my story from outside of my journey. To explain the 'how' of the process of transformation, I need to consider other sociological approaches.

4.2.2 How Community Finds Meaning in Symbolic Interactionism

The how of my story, or the micro-level orientation of it, might be explained from the sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism, which grew from the works of Weber, Cooley, Mead and Blumer (Charon, 2009). Briefly, their theoretical premise moved towards understanding how individuals' perspectives shape their world based on their interpretation of the objects surrounding them. Mead's (ibid.,31) premise that people interact with each other and interpret each other's actions to find meaning makes them social persons. Key to symbolic interactionism is interpreting the significance of what symbols mean and the process of defining it through interaction (ibid.,3). The transformation process of how I constructed community from my unemployed situation is best described in the theoretical framework of this sociological perspective because unlike the structural functionalism of Durkheim and others, at the heart of symbolic interactionism is temporality: I am the object, the person, who is interpreting processes and symbols and finding a role for 'me' in that situation as it happened, that is, in the synchronic. This perspective takes account of the active determination I engaged with to find a replacement for the institutional framework of my professional life. It provides a focus on how processes take on particular meanings in 'peculiar situations', for example, how using language to find a voice for a 'peculiar situation' established a communication channel where the cultural life of the island found expression. Symbolic interactionism is a perspective from which I can analyse my story in an academic discourse because it has the ability to beg, borrow, and steal strands from lots of different theories; the framework is a means to exploring the themes of my data as it is based on talk interaction in a new media format.⁵⁵

4.2.3 Linguistic Anthropology

Like their sociological cousins, the consanguinity of anthropological perspectives has a varied lineage in studying human differences. This discourse then is about descriptions and reflections, and, as such, is less about processes of transformation and more about processing the heterogeneity of expression in my interviews. My story lies between the perspectives of linguistic anthropology, with the pragmatics and sociolinguistics of Mead, and cultural anthropology. It is in the 'thick descriptions' of cultural symbols that the concept of community

⁵⁵'New media are defined as products and services that provide information or entertainment using computers or the internet' (Cambridge English Dictionary). Siar FM, the community radio on Barra, is an internet-based radio station that is accessible to a global online community.

finds meaning. It is in the writing of those descriptions in a self-reflexive ethnographic style that the nexus of the difference between the micro and the macro is incorporated. In the dichotomous polarisation of the insider and outsider, the integration of the life comes together or, as Denzin puts it, 'ethnography is that form of inquiry and writing that produces description and accounts about the ways of life of the writer and those written about... Theory, writing and autoethnography are inseparable material practices. Together they create the conditions that locate the social inside the text' (Denzin, 1997:xi-xii).

My textual discourse then becomes a description of how my lifestory narratives fit into the anthropological life histories of participant observation strategies because the lived experience of those helped me construct a feeling of community. The record-keeping and clumsy classification of my interviews are my research data. Anthropological perspectives place particular importance on the oral history of a community because of its ability to transmit culture, and Barra could not be better placed because it prides itself on its own orality: the uniqueness of the Gaelic language on the island differs from that of other Gaelic communities (this is exemplified in Chapter Five). Although partially submerged in the language of the island, I remain a novice speaker and, therefore, the subtleness of understanding the significance of the meaning of spoken Gaelic was learned during the conversations of my interviews. Oral history for the anthropologist comes from submerging oneself in the community of study.

4.2.4 Impact of theoretical approaches on my data

The interconnections between sociological and anthropological approaches can be seen in how it impacts on both my autoethnographic methodology and my data. Autoethnographically, it brings together the collective sociological theoretical position and the anthropological to enable me to build a conceptual framework to combine the telling of my lifestory experience in the ordinary with the lifestories of others in the same time space moment. My story of the collective community experience reflects how I came to interpret the 'social' from its theoretical base. From this, I learned to compare how the stories of others had defined their sense of community. From analysing the difference, I could develop my argument of a creative conceptual construction, defining the 'social' in the language of the present. Autoethnographic writing is about the social, as it appears in the language in the experientiality of the present becoming a cultural expression.

The theoretical insight impacted on my data because it taught me how to value the expression of language in the ordinary. From the structural functionalism of the sociologists to the symbolic interaction of the anthropologists, I was able to theorise the cultural expressions of the community radio lifestories, and analyse them to explore the meaning of community, identity and tradition in their own words. In other words, the theoretical base gave me the understanding to engage in the interpretative processes of deconstruction and reconstruction to create an argument from data collected at a grassroots level.

4.3 Emic and Etic

This final point is about viewing things from the anthropological perspective of the emic and the etic. Malinowski acknowledged the significance of the difference. At the end of listing the three avenues of ethnographic work, he stated: ‘the goal is, briefly, to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realise *his* vision of *his* world’ (Malinowski, 1922:25). Despite his descriptions of the Argonauts of the Western Pacific, his scholarly inferences of objectivity place him firmly outside the realms of understanding their vision of their world. While the textual analyses described in Chapters Five and Six show that I am treading along the emic pathway, I am saying something of something (Geertz, 1973:448), gathering together themes which are bound by an interconnecting network, which can only be appreciated and analysed by knowing what it feels to be a part of the interconnection. Rather than reducing the description of processes to static, taxonomic formulas, anthropological perspectives provide an open window through which one can join in the activities.

4.4 Conceptualising the Community from Barra’s Big Story - The Fishing Industry

Barra’s big story is a discourse filtered through the main island industry of fishing. The industry of fishing provides the island with its main source of employment. There is a fierce pride in maintaining their language and religious traditions. They are celebrated throughout the community. Indeed, Dorian argues that once the fishing industry disappeared from the east coast of Sutherland, the language of the community, East Sutherland Gaelic, also vanished

because of the dispersal of people to find employment elsewhere (1980:86). Barra's celebration of their habitus maintains their traditions and culture. Its grand narrative form marries together the sociological and anthropological theoretical approaches discussed above. Simultaneously, it contextualises the oral lifestory narratives, which follow in Chapters Five and Six.

In 2012, two important events took place in the community and as both events occurred during my volunteer 'tenure' as a volunteer radio host, it made me realise for the first time the impact of fishing on religious and language traditions. The events were, one, a history of the industry presented as the annual display in the Barra and Vatersay Cultural and Heritage Centre.⁵⁶ Secondly, a petition containing thousands of local signatures was presented by the campaign group, Southern Hebrides Against Marine Environmental Designs (SHAMED),⁵⁷ to the Scottish Parliament. This petition was against the perceived threat to the livelihoods of the fishermen arising from proposals instigated by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to create a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in the Sound of Barra.

Fishing is the biggest employer on the island and has always provided for it, a fact that is recorded from the 15th century onwards.⁵⁸ The industry is therefore an anthropological prism that shines a light on the temporally diachronic culture, its skills, ideas and values, shared in effect through its traditions. A local historian has described fishing as a ring of gold around Barra.⁵⁹ The Gaelic language and the voices of the island community survive because of it.

⁵⁶ Known locally by its Gaelic name, 'Dualchas'.

⁵⁷ SHAMED is chaired by crofter-fisher Angus MacLeod from Eoligarry, a township which sits between Barra and Eriskay. Eoligarry as it stands today is a small township which developed as a result of the land raids of the 1920s: islanders were promised croft land as payment for fighting in the World War One but this promise was reneged on and people raided the land, setting up their own homes. One Eoligarry resident made the comment prior to the government buying the land and distributing it into allotted crofts: 'Why is it that our husbands and sons who are serving their country, some killed and some wounded, cannot obtain a place to build a decent house upon? Why is it that the government asks us to cultivate the land, yet will not give us the land to cultivate? Why is it that two old bachelors [tenants of the farm that had been raided] are allowed to have all Eoligarry lands for themselves, while we, who are risking our sons' lives to defend that land can by no means obtain any of it?' Memo, Scottish Office, 1917, as quoted in Hunter (2010).

⁵⁸ Donald Munro, High Dean of the Islands in 1549, claims: 'There is na fairer and more profitable sands for cokills in all the world' (Campbell, 2006:28).

⁵⁹ Translated from Gaelic, 'Cearcal oir mun cuairt Bharraidh'. Mary Ceit Mackinnon is a local historian and Barra and Vatersay Cultural Heritage Centre committee member. A Gaelic speaking Catholic genealogist, she has a knowledge of the island's traditions which is sought by both the National Trust of Scotland and the army of

Every lifestory narrative has been shaped by its relationship to the fishing industry. An industry of inshore fishing boats demonstrates how the community has survived, and indeed how it has resisted the challenges imposed by the changing epochs from the decline of feudalism and the rise in capitalism.⁶⁰ Ultimately, the island traditions and their social and symbolic value of difference have prevailed, providing a sense of security from within which it thrives. Tönnies notes that tradition, ‘...with its language, its customs and its creed as well as with its land... represents something enduring which outlasts the sequence of generations and forever reproduces the same intellectual attitude’ (1957:136).

Catholicism has always been the main religion practised on the island, which was named after St. Barr, a 6th-century follower of St. Columba. In 1675, it became home to the second Catholic school in the whole of Scotland. Despite the religious changes in the rest of Scotland,⁶¹ its religious faith has remained resolute (Branigan, 2010:18). Relationships historically with the clan chief (formally addressed as ‘the MacNeil of Barra’) are best defined as those between master and servant, and notably it was the Gaelic speaking local priests who offered outspoken support against the evictions of people from their homelands (Hunter 2000:154). The local priest always maintained great power and issued ‘edicts’ of where and when certain families could fish the different areas of the shoreline (MacKinnon, 2013). In effect, they had the say of who, where, and when fishing was done: ‘It was known in Barra for there to be run-rig at sea, whereby different boats took it in turns to fish particular banks on different days. These are examples of local administrative practice which was very likely to feature widely’ (Coull, 1996:83). This refers to the practice of the local Catholic priest of allocating the sea area to be fished by pointing out to sea from Craigston Church on the island’s west side on the feast day of St. Brigid’s Day (Macleod, 2013). That paternalistic relationship exists to this day.⁶²

diasporic tourists who visit the shores of the island seeking to find their homeland. Mary Ceit is the National Trust’s official key holder for the schoolhouse in Mingulay.

⁶⁰ In this context, ‘modernity’ is classified as the social and economic processes which have shaped the lives of the islanders.

⁶¹ Documents quoted by Compton Mackenzie in ‘Catholic Barra’, Chapter One of *The Book of Barra* (Campbell, 1936:19).

⁶² As an acknowledgement and perhaps a thank you to the Catholic clergy on the island. there is a celebration at Castlebay pier in the form of a Fisherman’s Mass. The ‘Blessing of the Boats’ has been maintained yearly through the local Catholic community. One or two individuals organise it through a channel of volunteers under the umbrella of the Catholic clergy. It involves lifeboats, churches, and shops, and Barratlantic supplies herring. It is

4.5 Fishing and Catholicism

Although alternative administrative infrastructures may have altered how the Barra fishermen engage with their industry, one aspect of their life as fishermen, which remains steadfastly the same, is its celebration of the traditions that have grown up around the Catholic religion. Names for fishing boats are an obvious example: ‘St. Brendan’, ‘Our Lady’, ‘St. Anthony’, and ‘Litany to Our Lady’. Less obvious ones like ‘Mystical Rose’ and the ‘Reul na Maidne’ (Morning Star)’ all fall into this category (Mackinnon,2013). Similar to other customs in Barra, it reflects the strength of religious feeling (Miller, 1999:36.)

Catholic churches have also benefitted from the affluence brought from the proceeds of fishing. Both Catholic churches, Star of the Sea in Castlebay and St. Barr’s, were built as a result of this. It is interesting to note how the economic benefits are so closely intertwined with cultural traditions. Of the huge profits made by the merchant class, some were used to build a hotel and a Church, Star of the Sea, next door to each other. This action was not purely philanthropic because thereafter the Craigard Hotel soaked up revenues emanating from the seasonal trade of fishing. Above the church on the highest hill, Heaval, local seamen carried a statue of Our Lady on 15 August, 1954, where it stands, a symbol of hope and safety to fishermen and sailors alike (Haswell-Smith, 1996:222).

Similarities are found in the history of St. Barr’s Church at Northbay, which opened in 1906, providing a place of prayer for the people of the north end of the island and for fishermen who sheltered there. It was paid for by donations from the local people. One family is said to have contributed a large amount to the building and the continued running of the church. One such story is recounted and displayed by local gatekeeper, Mary Ceit (MacKinnon, 2013), who told me the story of the altar being brought over from the island of Mull by a group of fishermen. Mary Ceit’s story mentions the Gaelic spelling of the men’s names alongside their nicknames,

a family day of celebrating the bounty the sea brings. It involves a Catholic mass, which culminates with a blessing of the boats with holy water, then a race to Vatersay by the herring trawlers. Interestingly, health and safety legislation has stopped the race, and now the local fishermen provide ‘a trip’ to the neighbouring island. Local musicians – The Vatersay Boys – play after the mass and throughout the day while slices of herring and mackerel are supplied free of charge, along with drinks, on Castlebay pier. The day culminates with a stream of awards for a range of titles, from Best Dressed Boat to Best Maintained Boat ,chosen by the coxswain of Barra Lifeboat. Although this traditionally has been a day celebrated along religious lines, everyone is welcome, and participants come from all over the world to attend (MacLeod, 2013).

Dot, Beastie, Nighty, and Poll (Chapter Six explores this onomastic tradition in detail), and their discussions with the priest, Father Gillies, and the landowning family of Mull, who agree for the altar to be taken to Barra. The inclement weather encountered during the transport of the altar testifies to the seafaring skills of the local men. The boat's name is also significantly mentioned because its role was part of a hegemonic war narrative which also appeared in the display. Names of boats generally follow a religious or family pattern. Donald, the son of Roddy Macleod,⁶³ Donald has a boat called 'Spray', a name used for generations and which can be dated back to a granduncle (Macleod, 2013)⁶⁴ who brought the altar from Mull. The local nitty gritty details of this story marry together the sociological and anthropological.

Running and purchasing boats have always been expensive, and the local fishermen who did not lease from the merchants or shopkeepers bought their boats through a system of shared ownership. Sir Robert Sibbald noted in his 'Discourses' document of 1701 the share ownership system, where 'the share system of dividing up the proceeds from the fishery proceeds were divided into 20 shares, two shares were allotted to each teind [church], each crew member got one share, and a share was allotted to each of the nine nets, while the boat owners got the remainder, i.e., two or three shares'. It may seem as if the owners of the boat got little return, but on the smaller boats of the west coast, the boat owners were the fishermen themselves (Coull, 1996:60). In many ways, it was an early form of a cooperative. This means that a boat could be owned by a few families and then the gear, an essential part of the fishing industry, could also be owned by a shared ownership scheme by either the same or different families. One boat and its gear were known to have 64 shares (Macleod, 2013). Of course, the rewards raised would be shared among many families on the island and could bring relative prosperity to the small community. Sharing was not only encapsulated in the physical properties of the industry but in the real knowledge of where to fish. Roddy MacLeod explained how a fisherman

⁶³ Roddy MacLeod is a retired fisherman whose oral recording was not aired but provided insight into the inshore fishing practices of the Barra fishermen.

⁶⁴ Some of the boats owned by the same family include CY94 Reul na Maidne – Morning Star, a motorboat of 17.5 tonnes, CY349 Reul na Maidne – Morning Star. The second boat to bear this name. It was the first motored powered Zulu⁶⁴ to be owned by a Barra family. It was taken away during the Second World War for use as a minesweeper. After the war, it was again used for fishing purposes for many years until its working life came to an end. It was finally beached at the Bagh Beag where its weathered wooden remains were visible until recently. CY140 - First Trial - Trial Mhor – owned by DWMacleod1903, CY275-Second Trial-Trial Bheag-owned by DWMacleod1903, CY34-Spray-owned by Beasty. This son is the subject of the song, Oran nan Spray. CY335 - Our Lady-small boat owned by Dot, CY79-Grianan OIR - Golden Sun owned by Dot. (MacKinnon, 2013)

knows which area to fish: ‘It is a “free for all” but you don’t cross other fishers’ creels and the floats and buoys locate the areas being fished’ (2013).

When asked, it was noticeable that he failed to suggest where exactly these places could be found on the map. He merely tapped his nose. This physical gesture suggested that while he was prepared to speak generally about fishing and the island community, when it came to intimate information about the best fishing grounds, his lips were sealed. It is part of his maritime tradition to closely hold secrets. They are a valued part of his identity, to be passed on to family members or the local shareholders (Macleod, 2013). Trust is paramount and there is a camaraderie among the locals. Generally, no fisherman would see another in peril of the sea without helping out, but all the local fishermen know the dangers of inclement weather (Macleod, 2013). At the heart of the fishing industry is an intricately threaded web of traditions, families, and religious observations.

Their fundamental respect for the sea and the life it offers them has created a respect which will never diminish. Fishing is an industry that still enthuses the young people of Barra. They seek to work as fishermen, to work at sea learning navigational and maritime skills (Boyd, 2013). Fishing is the most important source of wealth for the community and includes individual fish gutters working a routine ‘9 to 5’ at the processing factory, Barratlantic, at Ardveenish. The *Fishing News*, in its celebratory centenary edition, comments that ‘fishing next [to] agriculture is the widest and most important source of wealth in the country’ (2013:4).

Having conducted a sociological and anthropological exploration of Barra’s Big Story, the theoretical is seen in practice as a community maintaining its traditions despite attempts to eradicate it.

4.6 Autoethnographic Journey of Community

Bhabha claims we need to look at the interstices (1994:36), in other words, to consider the space between the component parts of theory and practice to locate culture and the community which defines it. In the discourse which follows, I present one of the interstices, a space in which community and its meaning changed.

4.6.1 Outsider’s Perspective

From the moment of the first radio interview, I wanted to be part of the Barra community. To belong is fundamental to life. Prior to taking up a post as an English teacher on Barra, I had

spent six months teaching on Benbecula, another of the small islands that make up the archipelago of the Outer Hebrides. When a teaching vacancy became available on the island of Barra, I embraced the opportunity. At this stage, my knowledge of the island community was moulded by my professional status and, in effect, I was wedded to the economic superstructure of the islands and defined by it. Below, in the description and the discussion following it, I aim to show that community is shaped by our relationship to that economic and institutional framework and that that relationship impacted the new radio presenter space that I constructed.

I arrived as an ‘outsider’. On the day of my interview, I explored the island so that when it came time to be interviewed, I used the toilet facilities of the pier building at Castlebay to change into a formal dress suit. By the time I arrived at the school, this insignificant detail had been observed, and word had gone around the community that the ‘new English teacher’ had arrived and changed her clothes in the Caledonian Mac Brayne pier toilets. This information came to light during an off-record comment on Barra Islands Discs. The adjectives ‘insignificant’ contains a spectrum of difference that distinguishes the ‘insider/outsider’ relationship. I was a stranger who had come ashore. Perception is about difference and marks the dichotomy between insider/outsider relationships.

As with my relationship with the community of Benbecula, I was defined as being a paid employee. However, during my time at the school, I invested my professional future and the personal future of my family in its educational framework. I did this by sending two of my daughters to the local school. My middle daughter joined the S5 cohort and my youngest enrolled in the Gaelic medium unit. This act, above all others, acknowledged that I respected the culture of the indigenous people, and I understood how important it is to encourage the use of fragile languages like Gaelic. To me, the island community was about its language and its culture. I promoted the use of Gaelic education and began learning the Barra Gaelic.⁶⁵ My husband worked as a physics teacher and took on responsibility for the school’s boys’ football team. We were both submerged in the activities of the community and despite being outsiders, there was a feeling of integration. However, my lack of ability to converse fluently in Gaelic⁶⁶ meant that there were many conversations I did not understand. I will return to the significance of this later. In 2009, after a management restructuring which introduced another community,

⁶⁵ This was achieved by attending Ulpan classes taught by Betty McAteer at the Barra Learning Centre.

⁶⁶ I could understand snippets of conversations but could not understand the full meaning.

I was no longer ‘employed’ by the council. I lost my economic power and I became part of a different community.

Losing my economic power did not make me powerless; it produced a different reality and in a new cultural space, community transformed and I learned the importance of island traditions. Event analysis can be used as an effective and efficient method for delineating the interrelationships of a community (Kimball & Pearsall, 1955:56). When I first came to Barra, I was an economic migrant and an alien to the island community. As Cohen states:

...island communities are not imagined (imagined communities are rhetorical) they are entities, a web of kinship, friendship, neighbouring, rivalry, familiarity, jealousy and they inform the social processes every day. The consciousness of community is then encapsulated in the perception of its boundaries, boundaries which are themselves largely constituted by the people in interaction. (1985:12)

Barra was my ‘other’, and as an agent of the economic superstructure, I was held in the structural confines of it, and its boundaries were clearly marked. Social processes, however, mask many historical tensions and those tensions were played out in the school. Unfortunately, it was only when I became embedded⁶⁷ in its confines that I began to understand many of the processes. My argument is that as an economic migrant community is represented through the structural frameworks of modernity, the structures and processes which maintain the mechanical solidarity that reproduces the institutional control in modern society. As such, it masks the personal. The personal relationships Cohen describes are outside the confines of the structural formulation framework because it is through the face-to-face relationships one creates within a community that meaning is derived (Delaney, 2003:136). In my case, those new relationships developed because I returned to my Catholic faith and the local congregation at the Star of the Sea Church in Castlebay.⁶⁸ Through this religious network, I was introduced to people I knew only by sight. Those people began to address me by my first name. Names are important because they identify who we are, and on the island, the name change gifted me

⁶⁷ Although I had committed myself to living there by buying a house on the island, the title of the ‘new English teacher’ stayed with me for the first couple of years.

⁶⁸ Religion helped me gain access to a circle of the community. As part of the ministry of Sunday readers, I was introduced to other members of the local community. The ubiquitous bonds of religion, closely tied to our emotional being, evoke a shared experience.

a form of respect and enveloped me in a different community. This ‘insignificant’ act is best reflected by Gramsci’s thinking when he states that the Catholic doctrine exists to bring unity; hence, there is no distinction between intellectuals and others (Gramsci, 1971:328). I was no longer defined by the economic structures of modernity but encapsulated in the religious components of it.

Despite this sub-group inclusion, the community at the beginning of this stage was polarised. It was a large circle, I was on the outside looking in at the traditions and culture. There was a knowledge I could not grasp; finding meaning escaped me. I was stuck in an economic web and as my employment defined me, so too did I define others in the community. I came to know people by their occupation, cementing a hierarchical system within my thinking. As there was a value placed on me, I, in return, imposed the same value system on others, and community was represented as the collective structures of modernity. My actions were reflective of a persuasive thinking pattern. I did what Foucault describes and produced reality by acknowledging a person’s worth as defined by their economic value.

Retrospectively, I imposed my conceptualisation of the community onto each of my interview guests. From my first interview in 2009 with Dr. David Bickle, where his status as the island’s medic was used to elicit a response to my radio chat, to my final interview five years later with ‘Robert the dentist’, that community was defined by a framework of economic value. My questioning was focused on what I considered to be the dominant forces shaping the community: our relationships with the labour market and the resultant forces of it. In tracing this thought process, I can see that in accepting a monetary transaction for selling my skills in the marketplace, I had accepted a contractual framework which underpinned my relationship with the community. When I became unemployed, the social cohesiveness of the organic solidarity of the community that had become the driving force in how my life was organised changed. Crow and Allan (1994:18) comment on C. Wright Mills’ claim in *The Sociological Imagination* that one of the tasks of sociology is ‘to highlight the connections between the “personal troubles” of people’s private lives and the wider “public issues” of the day’ (1994:18).

4.6.2 Insider's Perspective

At this point, my life was transitional. The 'warm-up' interaction of my interviews began with me answering questions about the perceived injustices of what had happened in the school.⁶⁹ In the process of the dialogic interaction of the lifestory interviews, I found a new cultural space that changed my perception of community.

The successful engagement of *Barra Island Discs* with the islanders created its own momentum.⁷⁰ I had created a structure around me to fill the deep hole of loss and emptiness. I had always revelled in wonderful teacher-pupil interaction and for the first time in 17 years, I was suffering from an acute identity crisis. I think this may have been the catalyst for the community's support⁷¹ and the main reason for *Barra Island Discs*' five-year life span. In effect, I became known to a much wider community from the many stories I learned about island families. And so the symbolic construction (Cohen, 1985:38) of community replaced the 'postivistic niceties of analytical taxonomies'.

Generally, community will always be the ancient desire to belong. For me, that meant finding meaning from a new set of values, voices, and language, a sense of sharing in the interconnections of the networks of the community of Barra. What was it about the performance of talking and listening on the community radio which constructed a sense of belonging in the community? Did I capture a particular interpretation of community that is unique to that moment? And what was in the processes which inadvertently created a new cultural discourse on the island, a filter through which those shared meanings could be reflected through a local and global internet radio community?

⁶⁹ When there are crisis situations on an island, particularly in relation to official bodies, the scapegoats are always the incomers, probably because they are the ones who have been vocal. Island communities put up a 'wall of silence', which is impenetrable by outside agencies. The problems are never to be found within the structures of an institution and are thus perceived to be the problem of an individual. Sharon MacDonald makes this point in her book about the island of Skye, *Reimagining Culture* (MacDonald, 1997:96). It is, of course, cheaper to dismiss one person than to create more effective management structures.

⁷⁰ Twice weekly at the same time, Tuesday and Thursday, I turned up to record a show between two and four o'clock and this consistency during the five years also embedded the presence of the recordings as something that happened on the island at that time and on those days.

⁷¹ Peter College, a colleague at the school told me that the island loved an underdog, and I was perceived as one. Historically Barra as a collective has always imagined itself as an underdog and the centuries of struggle against officialdom is testimony to this.

Despite considering myself as an outsider, the lifestory interviews became a collective voice of the community. In fact, it challenges Cohen's perceived notion that 'the claim of any one group to speak for the community as a whole... is ill-regarded' (1987:289). Cohen's island community is similar to Barra,⁷² yet there is a difference⁷³. That difference could be accounted for in the sense that the radio lifestory narratives meant nothing of any consequence to the economy of the island, but I think it means more than that. It suggests I was a member of the community, and my programme reflected a positive cultural space to express a collective voice. The following two incidences shed light on the precariousness of the insider/outsider category. During a rehearsal for the Barrafest (a local music festival where my youngest daughter was playing the fiddle in the afternoon session), Donnie MacNeil of the Vatersay Boys, who was setting up his sound equipment, overheard my conversation with a few women from London who were visiting cousins of their late father in the township of Northbay. I was explaining my lack of island accent, stating that although I didn't come from the island, I lived there and had done so for eleven years. Donnie interrupted and corrected me and told the women that I did come from the island and was very much a part of the community, and drawing attention to my height, joked by saying, 'A big part of it!' The second instance was during 'the round table' Sunday music session held in the Craighard Hotel. The mainstay of the session consisted of a few of the 'ancient' mariners of the island who played the accordion and Donald Campbell,⁷⁴ father of the musicians Michael and Andy Campbell of the Vatersay Boys. Donald (nicknamed DD) is a fabulous player and as I was keen to interpret their local style of playing, I tried to join in on fiddle. Looking back I can see I was ingratiating myself into a core of the community because others would come along and buy 'us' players drinks. Donald MacLeod, the coxswain of the lifeboat, told a visitor who had asked about me, that I was 'from the island, close to his mum's house on the west side and that's it'⁷⁵; she's from here on the island.'

Malinowski's advice is as relevant today as it was in his time:

⁷² Many of the Barra fishermen fish in the Shetland waters. See also a description of the decline of the herring fishing in Barra in the 'Introductory' chapter which touches on the relationship between the two areas.

⁷³ I think Cohen is describing the political arena but he does not make that clear.

⁷⁴ Donald Campbell's father came from Mingulay and was imprisoned in Edinburgh as part of the group described in Ben Buxton's *The Vatersay Raiders* (Buxton, 2012).

⁷⁵ 'That's it' is an expression used by island people when they conclude their spoken statements.

...it is good for the Ethnographer sometimes to put aside camera, note book and pencil and to join in himself in what is going on. (1922:22).

His words describe the actual process which introduced me to the community I was living in. It changed my perspective. The question is whether there exists a theoretical perspective that can communicate a sense of community. Had my journey begun with a theoretical compass, would my data have been produced? In the chapters which follow, I aim to present the data as the voices of a community that describe what their community means to them, a local interpretation of its own culture from its sense of identity and knowledge of its traditions.

5 Chapter Five: Conceptualising Identity from a Cross Generational Selection of Lifestories and the Significance of Memory

Islands are paradoxical places which lend themselves to smug subordination via different discourses... (Baldacchino, 2006:3)

5.1 Introduction

If community reflects how society organises itself and how it manifests itself from the webs of anthropological, psychological, and sociological perspectives, identity is a deeper exploration of it. Like an algebraic equation, identity equals that reflection plus the processes of interaction. Identity posits itself in social organisations and by sharing experiences with others. Or, as Lawler succinctly puts it, ‘...identity needs to be understood not as belonging “within” the individual person, but as produced between personas and social relations’ (2018:8). Indeed, the concept finds meaning through the processes of interaction in different contexts. This means that it is grounded in the language of interaction and is reflective of the multi-disciplinary nature of the processes that create meaning from language. Identity is a process. It is a process about how people construct themselves from the world around them, from the social conditions of that world. It is a process which develops from sharing similarities, such as those of locality, gender, and occupation, with other members of a group.

Using the inductive research technique of orally collected lifestories, my search to locate culture continues by exploring how spoken language gives meaning to the concept of identity. Emic in its approach, the data, based on the spoken discourse between radio host and guest in a counter public space, are analysed using a critical and reflexive critique of the texts which have shaped the concept, including my research, which discusses the specificities of the differences between linear and non-linear narratives. In moving from the general to the specific, the construction of my argument, a paradox of interpretation, adopts Fairclough’s methods of critical discourse analysis, cementing it within a multidisciplinary methodology whose focus is on the web-like nature of the social processes from which lifestory narratives can be researched to explore the conceptualisation of identity. My aim is to build a discourse using seven lifestory narratives in continuous and composite form. Indeed, Erikson makes the point

that ‘the sense of identity...means to see one’s own life in continuous perspective’ (1994:72). The composite form is the product of the following processes, which interconnect three distinctive voices: the identity of those voices is a result of three different interactions: me as the radio presenter inviting the guest to share their lifestory from a description of their experiences or memories; me as the radio presenter prompting responses; and me as the researcher interpreting the lifestory narratives. There is, effectively, a triangulation of creative and interpretative processes which resonate in the work of Narayan (1993). Though the processes are fluid, there is a hierarchy of voices, which paradoxically places the guests’ voices at the bottom, constructing culture, giving meaning to the expression of ‘from the bottom up’: the setting of the show, the guest’s role and their responses, my relationship with the guest, my role as host and instigator of responses, and the interview itself.

Constructing identity contextually from the spoken voices of a small island community whose members share the same historical, social, and economic experiences specifically highlights how effective critical discourse analysis is because, as Van Dijk (1997:374) points out, it can be used to analyse the multiple layers of language.

5.2 Theoretical Approaches

Situated epistemologically in the theoretical approach of hermeneutics, identity is interpreted as our perception of the context of the world around us. Hall defines identity as:

the point of suture between, on the one hand, the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate⁷⁶’; to speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and, on the other hand, the processes which produces subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be spoken. (1996: 5)

Identity is therefore determined by how spoken language makes sense of the processes which reflect that context. Identity reflects temporality and is of its time. In effect, it is context in time. Because we do not exist as isolated units but as communities, group membership represents and reflects our contextualised identity within those communities. However, as a concept, identity is much more fluid than the concept of community because it is more about

⁷⁶ Interpellation, taken from Althusser’s definition, is recognition that ideology is embedded in the culture which is intrinsic to our sense of self (Lewis 2017:304).

how the self is represented as it weaves in and out of the societal structures of community.

Fairclough comments:

in developed capitalist countries, identities are taught and learned' (1992:95) which echoes Locke's Enlightenment idea on identity, ' [t]o find wherein personal identity consists, we must consider what person stands for...which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being; that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as its self, as the same thinking thing, in different times and places... (2016:6).

Significantly, those differences in the identity of a person can be viewed from various perspectives: the sociological, whose focus is on social class and themes relating to the social processes which underpin it (Hall 1996, Lawler 2018, Giddens 1990); the anthropological, which places identity within cultural, symbolic interaction (Ricouer 1991, Cohen 1984, Duranti 1997); and the psychological, whose focus is on selfhood, multiple selves, and memory (McAdams 1993). In effect, the methodological boundaries of research topics determine the frameworks within which the conceptualisation of identity takes place. My data, the spoken word captured on the radio, become culturally reflective in the symbolic interactionism of anthropology. However, the data flow in and out of the processes of the other perspectives because the fluidity of the data of a lifestory is an everchanging narrative, culturally and contextually determined temporally by a particular moment in time.

Barat in combining the different perspectives finds Hall's theory developed in the critical discourse analysis of Fairclough, stating:

'Identity is discursive in nature: narration entails the search for a closure and a self-narration is the process of plotting a meaningful trajectory out of and for one's life' (2000:165).

5.3 Identity Conceptualised through Lifestory Narratives

A lifestory narrative is a symbolic interaction between our inherited world and the choices we make in it. In effect, it is the intricate web of the sociological, which I define as public because it is what we take from our group membership to shape our sense of self, and the psychological, which I have defined as personal because it is this aspect which separates and individualises one from the group. The over-lapping position of those two spheres, the matrix-like web, is

identity. This web, reflected as it is in the narrative construction of a lifestory, produces culture from spoken language. Meaning is constructed from the processes of language in a specific local context. My main objective is to deconstruct those processes while at the same time constructing a lens with a local aptitude to expose how it is that identity, as a concept, is a conduit of culture. Effectively, on the one hand, I am breaking down and examining processes that create meaning from a critical discourse analysis of spoken language while, on the other hand, constructing an academic argument, a paradox of interpretation.

Vansina (1985:14) argues that there is ‘an internal consistency’ in each lifestory that leads to the principle of selection. Adopting this principle in practice, I have selected age as a differentiating factor because it highlights significant differences in the construction of the narrative. By grouping the narratives by age, I can focus on two themes which featured consistently in my interviews, the importance of the sport of football in constructing a sense of identity in the narratives of young islanders and employment, particularly in the Merchant Navy. These will be used to illustrate how the older generation construct their sense of identity.

Following Geertz’s epistemological perspective of using the significance of local knowledge, I want to show how this will be done by constructing the discourse in which each process impacts on the next in the sense that the data from the analysis of the first narrative are used to help construct a discourse of the second. Each lifestory adds a new ingredient, creating a multi-layered discourse. Its analysis will reveal the richness of comparative similarities and contrasting differences. They will show how the voices of the stories construct identity from within globally resonating themes of sport and employment.

Additionally, the discursivity of this multi-layered process constructs meaning which can be explored to highlight how themes expose gender differences and unequal power relationships. Therefore, I aim to look at those gendered differences to show how the construction of language exposes inequality within its structures. Inequality is a reflection of the power relations of wider society and, indeed, the shared lived experience of the culture of that society. Although a project on the lifestory narratives of an island community, at the most basic level, is a description and analysis of their shared experience, when I analyse those same stories through a conceptualisation of identity, the shared experiences, such as the ‘women’s stories’, expose how language ‘is power, life, and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation’ (Carter, 1983:77).

Furthermore, as well as exposing structural inequalities in word choice meaning, I aim to show that age impacts narrative by comparing the differences in narrative construction between generations so that I can question if the non-linear construction spoken by the young and the linear construction of the older generation have any impact on the concept of identity. Subsequently, I chose to differentiate my critical discourse analyses by grouping their narratives by age, as follows:

- Younger generation, lifestories of experience
- Older generation, lifestories of memory

In making such a distinction, I acknowledge the significance of the concept of memory defined in a detailed discussion ‘Older Generation’ – both collective and personal – on the narratives of lifestories. What this means is that older people reminisce, and their narratives are a reflection of memory whereas young people tell their stories in the present tense as they experience life. Thus, the lifestories of the older people reflect the past. Their lives exemplify both Ricoeur’s storytelling process (1991:31), and Linde’s point about coherency (1993:97). Their stories are presented chronologically from the past into the present, meaning that, effectively, memory’s construction begins in the past, but paradoxically is a synchronic construct in the present. This reinforces the earlier suggestion in Chapter Three of the difference between the backward projection of a linear narrative form and a non-linear forward projection.

5.4 The Younger Generation: Lifestories of Experience and the Theme of Sport

Geertz advises:

try to keep the analysis of symbolic forms as closely tied to concrete social events and occasions, the public world of common life, and organise it in such a way that the connections between theoretical formulations and descriptive interpretations are unobscured by appeals to dark sciences’ (1973:30).

Following Geertz’s example, I aim to apply the theoretical base to the narratives of the younger people on the island who expressed themselves through the theme of the sport of football.

Gibson in the early 1930s had already recognised the need for amenities to be made on the islands, particularly to stem the flow of people leaving. He called for ‘[o]pen air recreation

and sports – derelict croft land could furnish the ground needed. Each village or group would develop a football club probably both senior and junior...in some cases hockey, separate women's clubs would be more suitable. Inter-village matches would be arranged; indeed, this friendly rivalry would be a powerful stimulus...' (1932: 58).

Seventy years later, while living on the island, I was heavily involved 'in'⁷⁷ participating in Gibson's social engineering. The following description is important for my thesis because it illustrates Geertz's point (see footnote 71). Although there are differences in my analysis because I was not there as an outsider researcher looking 'in' but as an insider helping to construct the success story of Barra F.C., the local football team,⁷⁸ and my interpretation was formed retrospectively. My involvement was two-fold: firstly, I was involved 'behind the scenes', washing and drying football strips and writing articles for the local newspaper celebrating the team's successes and making local heroes of the young talented boys, and supporting my husband, who spent a considerable amount of his free time training and coaching. Secondly, I was 'on the terraces': I attended all the matches and became a vocal supporter, chanting support from the side lines of the playing field in Castlebay, and I travelled to other islands as part of the team's support. I identified with the team, wearing its colours and its success became very important to me because I was sharing an experience with the community.

What follows below is an illustration of a spectacular moment in the history of the Barra team, of football in general, and of the community, when to be there is not only to understand the sense of belonging of the shared experience, but to feel it. In the 89th minute of the Billy McNeill Cup Final on Barra against Iochdar Saints (league champions), the Barra FC goalie, Neillie Boy (Neil Ferguson), launched the football on the volley. It travelled the full length of the pitch and ended up in the back of the opponents' net. In football, there is no technical term to describe this extremely rare type of goal, but it could be described in the vernacular as 'route

⁷⁷ Geertz's makes the point when he is discussing the importance of the 'thick descriptions of culture' that, 'Anthropologists don't study villages (tribes, towns, neighbourhoods...); they study *in* villages...The important thing about the anthropologist's findings is their complex specificness, their circumstantiality. It is with the material produced by long-term, mainly...qualitative, highly participative...field study that...meaning -can be given the sort of sensible actuality that makes it possible to think not only realistically and concretely *about* them, but, what is more important, creatively and imaginatively *with* them' (1973:22).

⁷⁸ It was formed in 1946.

zero'.⁷⁹ In effect, it resulted in extra time being played and Barra FC winning their first major trophy⁸⁰ in over 40 years. Barra won the penalty shoot-out 5-4 and when the above-mentioned goalkeeper saved an opponent's shot, the tension was so high that when centre-forward James Davidson stepped up and scored the final penalty, there was a pitch invasion. Around two hundred⁸¹ or so people celebrated, dancing in rhythm to the high-pitched sounds emanating from the horns of assembled cars in the makeshift car-park outside the local Coop store. Sharing the experience of that day with the team and other islanders is to know the community, identify with it, and understand that culture is, indeed, in the local.

5.5 An Island Discourse of Football

I invited James Davidson who had captained the winning team to be my guest on the radio show shortly after the game. An interview with Donald John (Deege) Wilson, the youngest player of Barra FC, playing left midfielder, took place two years later, just as the same team were preparing for another cup final. I deliberately sought an interview with Deege to acknowledge how well the team had done in the two years since and to use his interview and the published synopsis as a way of posting encouragement to all the players before the 2013 Billy McNeill cup final match in Benbecula. Catriona Nicholson's interview took place two months later because I felt there was a need to have a female voice commenting on football. Catriona was a star player in women's football.⁸² The three lifestory narratives belong to young people⁸³ who excelled in football. In the following narratives, I locate the theme of sport linking three youths on the island who choose to construct their identities using its framework, and through a textual analysis present how their public and personal identities are woven intricately

⁷⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2010/sep/17/joy-of-six-route-one-goals>

⁸⁰ Uist and Barra Amateur Football League

⁸¹ This number represents 15% of the island's population. To put this attendance in proportion, the Scottish international football team would have to attract a stadium attendance of 750,000.

⁸² She had excelled playing in the girls' football team and the narrative of her interview acknowledges the role of women's football on the island.

⁸³ The three narratives are from ex-pupils of mine. As the only full-time English teacher on the island, it would be difficult to find young people who had not been my pupils.

together from the available sporting opportunities available on the island. If sporting activities⁸⁴ are chosen as a pastime, then identity is represented from within the frameworks of it and so begins an association with the language and the symbolic world it represents. It has a language that speaks to the younger generation via media and which provides, as Tomlison notes in critiquing Bourdieu's theory on the 'social capital' sporting opportunities, a 'social capital' that provides cultural paths to identity within a global community (2004:164). Campbell, Grey, Kelly & McIsaac (2018: 224) argue a similar case when commenting on the development of masculinities within sporting opportunities in Scottish schools when they acknowledged that participating in sport fulfils a deep desire to be part of a cohesive group and to belong to a team⁸⁵.

The thematic linkage showed similarities in their public identities but also vast differences in their personal identities. Lifestory narratives produce interpretations and explanations of what Fairclough refers to as 'areas of social life which both identify the causes of social wrongs and produce knowledge which could (in the right conditions) be righting them or mitigating them' (2010:8). Therefore, while the three narratives of young people used the sport of football as a theme to construct both their personal and public identities, the product of those constructions informs the researcher of the potential of language as a device in transmitting social power structures and inequality hidden within abstract concepts such as identity. This is the point Finnegan makes when she claims that analysis of oral recordings must always be critical because cultural ideologies are always present (2001:47). Examining a recurring theme in lifestory narratives allows me to observe how sports on the island and, more importantly, the availability of sporting opportunities for both male and females of the younger generations can expose gender differences in identity: those opportunities express how social capital is gendered. However, I would argue that the narrative constructions of the lifestories extend further in that they not only provide expositions of the social processes which create the concept of identity, but they enable the researcher to make interpretations of those social processes, which then become part of a critical discourse of the dialectical tensions that are ever present

⁸⁴ There are other sporting activities on the island such as various water sports but the biggest and most important sport for the community is football.

⁸⁵ Water sports and badminton are individual sports and success is determined by endeavour. So football is the only sport which is organised around a team, and which carries with it the support of the whole community.

in the language we use. They are narrative interpretations, which unmask how power uses knowledge to cement ideological inequalities in society.

Interestingly, the form of their narrative constructions is similar, in that they are nonlinear: their stories begin in the here and now, in the present tense. The linear function of a narrative provides an order which reflects how we make sense of our identity from within the processes of the social world. As Labov (1972:356) argues, it goes back to how we learn the basics of order, which begins with being born and then follows a system of logic, making sense of our world. Accordingly, following the logic of the narrative suggests that age impacts its order in the sense that lifestories should effectively begin in the past and work towards the present and aspire to the future rather than follow the nonlinear narrative structure of Deege, James, and Catriona, who tell their stories in the present tense because their life experience lacks the transformative power of comparative reflection. Essentially, I argue they have not yet reached a stage where their life experience is retrospective. They do not yet have the power of age, which would allow them to transform their experiences into memories. Therefore, the construction of their identity is immediate and looked at through the lens of peer groups. The point I am arguing here is that there is a different narrative order between the generations. This concurs with Ochberg's claim that the younger generation has yet to 'fashion{ed} identity' (1992:113) because it is still in the process of being made. Although their stories may not have the gravitas of the older generation, they communicate information about the island community they identify with and what it is like to live on a Hebridean island at the turn of the 21st Century, in other words, to experience the culture of the island.

5.5.1 Deege's Story

Donald John Wilson (Deege) was interviewed on 24.09.13. He is a Barraich and his family is indigenous to the island. I enjoyed a positive friendly experience with Deege and his family. Deege's dad worked as a fireman at Barra airport, his mother worked part-time at Barratlantic, and his sister, Lisanne was starting a sports degree course at Stirling University at the time of the interview. He is the grand-nephew of Seonaidh Beaton, who features in the stories of the older generation. He was one of the youngest players in Barra FC. At the time of the interview, he was still a pupil at Castlebay School.

To illustrate the above point, Deege Wilson's lifestory (Wilson, 2016:163) centres on his experience as a young footballer, who, at the age of 17, had recently been included in Barra's

winning team. His entire narrative, apart from the opening sentence, is about his relationship to it. He defines his present psychological state in these terms:

‘(1) I am still on a high that we reached the final. (2) I am massively excited because this will be the first one I have been able to play in because during the last one I was abroad, and the one before I was injured, so I can’t wait for this one. (3) The final is Barra versus Iodchar Saints⁸⁶ for the Billy McNeill Cup. (4) Barra won it last year too because the goalie scored in the final minute, so it makes it a bit special this year. (5) People have been shaking my hand after last week. (6) I think it is because I played well. (7) The score last weekend was 4-0, we were playing against North Uist. (8) I set up the first goal and then scored the third goal. (9) I am loving it now; my confidence is quite high which is good for going into a final. (10) It will be in Benbecula and we will take a forty-five-minute ferry journey from Ardmhor to Eriskay and then another forty-five-minute bus trip up to the Dark Island pitch in Benbecula and then we get ready to play. (11) You can’t sleep the night before, then the minute you wake up you are ‘adrenalised’ and the hassle of travelling doesn’t come into it.’ (Wilson, 2016: 163)

Deege’s life is shaped by his involvement in the island’s football. The football park, metaphorically, is his stage, one where his character thrives and where he acts out his emotions. Sports infiltrate every aspect of his narrative. A close reading or a micro-analysis of the narrative conveys two things: firstly, Deege’s personal identity, and, secondly, his public identity, and how both simultaneously develop out of the sporting opportunities, that is, the organisation of football, which is deeply embedded in the culture of the island. His identity is apparent in the enthusiasm which begins his first sentence: ‘I am on a high.’ This is reinforced in the second sentence with the unusual style of the word choice of the adjectival phrasing, ‘massively excited’. The adjective of size, ‘massively’, adds to the feeling of excitement

⁸⁶ The name of this team reflects the predominantly Catholic religion of the township. The final refers to ‘The Billy McNeill Cup, named after the legendary Celtic captain who led the Glasgow team to European victory in 1967 in Lisbon. The cup was created in honour of him and the team. Billy McNeill presented the cup in person on this day and gave up his time to be interviewed for *Barra Island Discs*. It was one of his last outings as an ambassador for Celtic FC. He died in April 2019. That he took time to shake the hands of all the Barraich who had accompanied the team is testimony of his greatness. Although Barra FC lost, the excitement and celebration of meeting Billy McNeill has not been forgotten.

communicated by the adjective ‘excited’, which contains the idea of exuberance. The sentence continues to list the reasons for that excitement by describing how he had missed the previous two finals because he was ‘abroad’ and ‘injured’ and then further reinforces his enthusiasm, punctuated by the exclamation, ‘I can’t wait for this one’. The word choice carries his identity. He is an enthusiastic young man, filled with hope about the forthcoming game. Deege’s chosen words exemplify the construction of identity. They are those of a youth. He is ‘on a high’, which places him firmly within an age group whose understanding of the word ‘high’ means excitement rather than a drug ‘high’, which would have had currency and meaning in the seventies or in other social groups. The change in the meaning of the word choice reflects the age difference between the speaker and the interpreter. This raises interesting questions about the relationship between age and language because language is generationally responsive. The excitement communicated by Deege’s emotions is presented through the technique of hyperbole, and he would appear to be in a period of his life where his role as a footballer is of primary importance to him, to me, and to the community. In sentences five, six and eight, his identity of enthusiastic youth is presented through his explanation: ‘People have been shaking my hand’, ‘I think it was because I played well’, ‘I set up the first goal and then scored the third’, ‘I am loving it now, and my confidence is quite high’. Deege’s identity, exemplified by the first-person pronoun, is firmly established by the symbolic interaction of his word choice, chosen as it is from the global world of football. This interconnects with his public identity in the sense that his public persona of being a star player is reinforced by the island community, which recognises his skills: his hand has been shaken by the older members of the island community and the formality of this action communicates a tremendous sense of belonging.⁸⁷ Deege uses the word universal ‘people’ but he means men and, arguably, this hints at the absence of women in the football world. This is a point I will return to later. The weaving together of his public and private identity through symbolic interaction of the sporting opportunities also communicates meaning about the youth culture of the island. The second-last sentence reinforces the notion that culture is indeed a shared experience. The narrative constructs the importance of the theme of travel for the island community, and Deege describes in sentence eight what will be involved for all the players and their supporters in the forthcoming cup final.

⁸⁷ ‘Handshaking has historically been viewed as a male activity...that a good handshake communicates sociability, friendliness, and dominance’ (Chaplin et al., 2000:111).

If culture is local, this is represented by Deege naming the three islands, Barra, Eriskay, and Benbecula. The extent of the travel involved to maintain the competitive sporting structures is suggested: after a car or bus trip, a sailing trip of an hour's ferry journey across the Sound of Barra – an inlet of the Atlantic Ocean – followed by an hour's bus trip on a largely single-track road. This description has a dual purpose. Firstly, it represents the importance of football as a sporting competition to the islanders in that they are prepared to commit their time to it and, secondly, it further explores the meaning of the concept of 'shared experience'.

Deege continues to use the theme of sport to describe his familial relationships and in doing so reveals how his identity as a sportsman has developed because of gifts he has inherited from his other family members. He adds:

'... my Uncle Andy and my dad are great at football. Both could have made it professional but had difficult choices to make. My cousin Reece is playing professionally in Costa Rica right now, so there are a lot of us in the family who can play' (Wilson, 2016: 164,165).

Deege's personal and public identity are intricately woven together through the framework of the sport, and the familial link explains the reasons why his identity is communicated by it. He describes its importance to both the male and female members of his family. The pride he feels in his talents and abilities is linked to his family, and he claims to have inherited them from the 'really great' skills of both his dad and uncle. Not just 'great' but "'really' great'. Once more the hyperbolic adjectival phrase is emphasised by the heroic admiration his younger brother has for him. Despite this use of youthful hyperbole to describe those who have shaped his talents and skills, there is a genuine modesty in Deege because his skills have been inherited or learned from his science teachers, Mr. Ross and Mr Mutambera⁸⁸ (Wilson, 2016:165).

The theme of sport threads itself between the public and private through other interviews with the younger generations on the island, thereby reinforcing its importance as a cultural signifier and its role in creating the identity of the young people who live there. There are similarities to be found in the description of James Davidson's identity (Davidson, 2016: 175). His lifestory

⁸⁸ These were physics and chemistry teachers at Castlebay school who spent their spare time training the youth wing of Barra FC. Most of the players of today went through the programme of football strategies taught by them.

is also marked by his involvement with football. His narrative is constructed using the same framework and symbolic interaction.

5.5.2 James's story

James Davidson was interviewed on 19 May 2011. He is a Barraich and his family is indigenous to the community. I had a positive relationship with him and his family. His parents worked at the fish processing factory of Barratlantic. He is captain of Barra FC and his identity is closely tied together with that of his family. He is one of five brothers who play for the team.

(1) At first, I was really chuffed being asked to be captain because there are older people in the team than me... (2) If the management think I have good leadership skills, then that is great. (3) Wee Deege who is only fifteen and in third year, he gave their defence a lot of problems...everyone played really well... (4) My whole family has always been interested in sports, not just my brothers and the five of us who play, but my cousins as well. (5) I am probably related to seven in the team. (6) There is Michael first, then me, then Steven, then the twins, Sander and Liam... (Davidson, 2016:176)

In the second sentence, the past participle of the verb 'chuffed' defines James's emotions of pleasure of becoming captain of the team and the word choice is significant because the plosive sounding 'ch' coupled with the sound of 'f' emphasises this sense of pride in his achievements. In the following sentence, he explains why the team's management chose him despite not being the oldest on the team: it was because of his 'leadership skills'. His pride causes him to reflect on the importance of his role in the eyes of the wider community and, although he does not say this, there is the implication that he is a leader with responsibilities. This role differentiates him from the rest of the team and he has every reason to be 'chuffed'.⁸⁹

Similar to Deege, James describes his family involvement with the football team. He lists the names of his five brothers who play for Barra FC and proudly states that 'his cousins' also play. He celebrates his family's involvement and there is something unique in what he is

⁸⁹ I found this use of plosive sound words very common in Barra, and coupled with the lilting Gaelic accent, it adds emphasis to words. Compton Mackenzie's ear must also have picked this up because in his novel, *Whiskey Galore*, penned and famously filmed on Barra by Alexander Mc Kendrick, the male island characters like Captain Mackenzie and Roderick MacRurie are given a 'plosive lisp' so that their dialogue is full of words such as James's 'chuffed' like 'chust', 'Sarchant'. (Mackenzie 1947:10).

describing. In researching other football teams, I could find none where five brothers and two cousins play together in a competitive sport. Alex O' Henley, a UEFA reporter, who is from South Uist, comments that because of the way families are organised – predominantly large and Catholic – township football teams often have siblings playing together, but he acknowledges the uniqueness of the James family (O'Henley, 2017). O' Henley's comments can be seen to exemplify the interconnection between the world of sport and religious history, which was discussed earlier in Chapter Four. In addition, it also shows the practical development of Gibson's suggestions of constructing teams in the township to create a sporting culture on the islands (1932:55). James, by using the themes of sports and family, constructs a vivid picture of how sport and football permeate both the personal and public identity of the young people who live on the island and how both forms of identity are intricately woven together.

James and Deege's chosen symbolic word-choice from the world of sport, the world of football, could resonate with any young players actively involved anywhere in the world and this is further evidence of Tomlison's interpretation of Bourdieu. The framework is global. However, it is in the local interaction between the public and the personal that the shared experience of the island community becomes culturally significant. The importance of sport to the island community is further developed in James's narrative when he describes in sentence 5 how his 'whole' family is involved in sport, not just his brothers and cousins, and he alludes to the fact that his parents and aunts play.⁹⁰ There are familial similarities in how James and Deege use football to reference their identities although both highlight the importance of sport to all the family.

Additionally, they use sport to construct their identity narratives, which symbolise the significance of sport, and, in the creative process of development, they forge their public identity from the established shared experience of the island community. Thus, identity manifests itself motivated by a desire to be part of a local and global group, and the shared experience of belonging is a depiction of both.

In searching the constructs of Deege Wilson and James Davidson to find personal and public identity, it is not surprising to find their narratives full of references to the world of sport because they are both young males who chose to find themselves within the globally

⁹⁰ His mother, father, aunts, and cousins play competitive badminton tournaments.

represented and media-saturated world of male professional football with its attendant stereotypes. Despite the stereotype in their narratives, which I will discuss later, what is clear is their perception of how the island community regards them. Geographically, the island may be limited in the sporting choices it can offer but the competitive island rivalry of football allows the younger generation to construct a sense of identity from a local interpretation of a global representation.⁹¹

Its importance is a theme that runs through the narrative construct of Catriona Nicholson's lifestory (Ross, 2016: 174), so that football in its gendered stereotypical form is complemented by the female island perspective. Catriona is a contemporary of James and her identity is described through the same sporting framework.

5.5.3 Catriona's story

Catriona Nicholson was interviewed on 22 July, 2013. She is a Barraich and her family is indigenous to the island. A gifted dancer she was also one of the star players of the female football team. I enjoyed a positive relationship with Catriona and her family. Her dad, nicknamed 'Big Lou', carried out building repairs to my home and her brother Donald, an ex-pupil, was also a very skilled player⁹².

(1) There are a lot of talented players on Barra. (2) The girls played too. I don't know if I was that great a player. (3) I think we were very lucky at coming to secondary [school] at the time of having a female football team. (4) Hella Bickle and Geraldine Circus helped us train every Tuesday and Thursday after school to help us enter the Coca-Cola cup in Inverness. (5) We got to play against 'under-sixteen' teams that were around Scotland, so what an experience, you know. (6) Without them it would never have happened. (7) I think there was a history of

⁹¹ The Billy McNeill cup final, alluded to in the narratives, despite involving cumbersome travel arrangements, saw a fair proportion of the island community travelling to support the local team in minibuses, cars and boats. This cup final was subject to a feature length *Barra Island Discs* special programme, which involved interviews with the islanders on the ferry prior to and after the match. The voices of both male and female members of the community indicate the importance of football to the identity of the whole community. The interview ends with music by the Vatersay Boys (Ross, 2013).

⁹² I had written to the then team manager of Celtic FC, Tommy Burns, asking if Donald could have a trial with their junior team. Catriona's family was involved in football. Both Catriona's dad and brother came to support Barra FC.

women playing on the island, but not for a while, but some of the older women played, like Mairi Tinnan and Florag MacLeod, they all played football. (8) After I left school, I played in Glasgow for a while. (9) I had a trial for the Glasgow Ladies. (10) I didn't get in...A couple of summers ago we started women's football which was great. (11) A couple of the older women came along, it was for fitness and for fun. (12) It is good because it challenges that stereotypical view. (13) Football is not a man's game. (Nicholson, 2016:171)

Like Deege and James, the importance of the experience of 'playing' and being part of the collective 'team' is important for Catriona, and her choice of words and attendant symbolic interactions define her personal identity, exemplifying sport as a conduit for the identity of both males and females on the island. The similarities end here because she begins her narrative with a collective reference to all the players on the island and addresses both male and female players by claiming in the first sentence that 'there are a lot of talented players on Barra'. The gender-neutral description of the pool of players is reinforced by the inclusivity suggested by the adverb 'too' at the end of the second sentence. Here there is a noted difference in her language because neither Deege nor James mentions any female players. Thereafter her personal identity is developed in a way that mirrors Deege and James by her word choice of 'player', 'team', 'train', 'final' and 'cup'. In the third sentence, she is unsure of whether she was 'that great' a 'player' but the adjectival phrasing of the description would suggest that she is indeed happy to be considered as such, but only in so far as her playing reflected the training discipline imposed by teachers. Describing herself in this way differs from the confident manner Deege and James employ when acknowledging their football talents and skills. They portray their achievements on the football field more because of individual endeavour, whereas Catriona's abilities are presented as a collective achievement, hence her use of the personal plural collective pronouns of 'we' and 'us'. This difference raises interesting questions about gendered language, which contributes to a larger discourse on stereotyping, specifically the language of football, which is male dominated, as indeed is sport in general. Towards the end of Catriona's narrative in sentence twelve she describes how women on the island regard football, it is 'for fitness and for fun' and the repetitive plosive sound of the consonant 'f' builds up to her final point so that in the closing sentence, after the brief description of the involvement of females in the sport on the island, she emphatically states that 'football is not a man's game'. Her preceding word choice adds to the assertive nature of her final statement in which she debunks the stereotype. It is indicative of how she feels about the differences in

the ways the island has supported both genders playing football. Her emphasis reflects a general trend to organise and make female football more visible on the national sporting stage,⁹³ but I would argue that her language masks an injustice in that her experience of football has been something less than that experienced by Deege and James. She is hopeful, but the gendered name of the team (Catriona had a trial with ‘Glasgow ‘Ladies’’) suggests that there is still a long way to go before women’s football has a similar status to that of the universality afforded to the men’s game. Likewise, Catriona’s description of her football story is mainly retrospective because the verb tenses shift from present tense to past and ‘playing’ because there is a lack of organised football for women. There is no present tense descriptor for Catriona or the other women on the island. Once again Catriona’s identity narrative reflects a bigger discourse about the greater need for organised local and national women’s football.

In describing her personal identity through her experience of football, Catriona is always ready to reference the experience much more as a collective experience than Deege or James (see the earlier paragraph regarding the use of the collective personal pronouns) and this is an interesting point about how their identities are represented because both Deege and James describe their football as an island-wide experience, yet neither of them mentions any females who play on the island as if their listening audience understands that their football experience is a men-only experience. Their words contain an acknowledgement that football is universally male, their words masking the stereotype and arguably the meaning of the patriarchy. It is a local interpretation of a global phenomenon. Recent research (McCuiag 1997:2; cf. Macbeth 2004:3), acknowledges that while improvements have been made, ‘[w]omen’s football in Scotland is neglected at several levels and is absent from research on football’. The male dominance of the sport is apparent from Catriona’s word choice because it represents an inequality; she celebrates how female football at the school-girl level has been supported by those ‘in power’ on the island, that is, teaching staff, but her experience appears to be a result of happenstance. She acknowledges this difference in the use of the word ‘lucky’. The ‘girls’ football was developed because of the ‘luck’ of the gendered awareness of personnel involved in it, whereas Barra FC exists as a permanent fixture outside of school and irrespective of the

⁹³ Maureen McGonigle in a personal communication during the Scottish Women in Sport (SWIS) Conference, University of Stirling 2014. This is also communicated by reports in Women’s Development in Football (UEFA).

personnel involved. Female involvement in the world of football on the island is haphazard.⁹⁴ Even the use of the word ‘lucky’ hides the ‘social and historical reality in and through which we have been assigned our social and personal identities’ (Mulford, 1983:34), but it is a word which also configures connotations of the world of magic as an explanation for supporting an ideological framework which diminishes the value of the contribution women can and do make.⁹⁵ Catriona’s story echoes the worldview of women’s football in that the island is a reflection of the patriarchal governance of the sport of football. In sentence (12), she states that football is good because it challenges the stereotypical view and that it is not a man’s game. Seven years later, in the worldwide reporting of the 2019 Women’s World Cup, Catriona’s words echo in Malidowi’s commentary, which challenges the male dominance. She notes:

the US World Cup team is proudly claiming the applause women deserve, celebrating yourself in a world which tells you are worth less than men...it is an active resistance because women are supposed to keep quiet about their achievements...Megan Rapinoe⁹⁶’s power pose unapologetically takes up space...it is an expression of defiance. It says: I deserve to be here, I deserve admiration, I deserve applause. (2019)

In Catriona’s localised vision, football is inclusive of everyone. This is noticeable on a global stage a few years after her lifestory later. Perceptions have changed. For example, 30,000 Swedish people publicly greeted the women’s team for coming third place. Swedish star player and Kosovan immigrant Aslari, similar to Catriona, recognises the collective responsibility of

⁹⁴ Pfister (2015) claims that football was invented by men and for men at the beginning of the 19th century and since then the football ground has been the space where the serious games of competition are played by men. The historical facts speak for themselves: the ban on women’s football in 1921 was not rescinded until the 1970s. In a recent documentary for BBC Alba, Richard Mc Breaty, curator of Scottish Football Museum says. ‘The idea of women playing was simply incredulous...It’s a men-only club’ (2013).

⁹⁵ ‘Luck’ is a word used to describe things that happen in a person’s life outwith their control. The subsequent lack of control for women harks back to days when they were burned as witches for seeking to control their own lives and the lives of other through their knowledge of the reproductive system. Unable to use scientific language, due to their lack of access to the corridors of power, language was culturally transmitted by the women they learned from. Mary Anne Warren explores this in *The Nature of Women: An Encyclopaedia and Guide to the Literature* (1980). Malinowski develops his understanding of magic being used as a controlling force when he states, ‘The power of “the leader”, and his clique is impressed on the people by an endless array of spells, ritual performances, and symbols’ (quoted in *Scottish Folklore and Folk-Belief*, Volume One (1957:98)). For a discussion on ‘luck’ and its meaning, see Barry (1991), Hamerman and Morevedge (2015) and Stevens (2016).

⁹⁶ Megan Rapinoe was the captain of the winning American team of the Women’s World Cup, who used her platform to complain about the inequality between the disparity between men and women.

women to provide a positive role model to younger generations. Catriona, similarly to Megan Rapinoe, used her experience of the *Barra Island Discs* interview to narrate the women's story of football on the island and to emphasise how it should develop. Pauline Hamill, who played 141 games for Scotland, referenced Rapinoe as a role model,

I think she has done a fantastic job on the pitch and everything, she's fighting off the pitch for equality and things everyone should be fighting for, she has a voice and she's got a forum and a platform, and she can utilise that to the best she can. I think she's doing a brilliant job she's taking a real responsibility not just as a player but as a person. (2019)

Football is for all communities, and in Catriona's narrative, she adds her voice to the future progression of the women's game. It is this responsibility for the future development of greater equality that all women share. Their successful involvement carries a social message: their experience is collectively responsible. For Catriona, like the other women playing, football is not just a few hours of sporting fitness, it is about constructing social change. Catriona's sporting narrative has exposed a structural difference between men and women playing football.

Although Catriona used the same sporting framework and word choice, she expresses it differently because within her, she subverts the stereotype. She is trying, so to speak, to 'find her feet' in the male-dominated world, finding her way through the language of the game to confidently express her personal identity from the confines of it, unaware that she is paradoxically constructing her narrative using language which serves to contain her within its dominant ideological position of patriarchy. Spender makes an interesting observation about this paradox when she comments about the function of language: 'It is both a creative and an inhibiting vehicle. On the one hand, it offers immense freedom for it allows us to 'create' the world we live in...But on the other hand, we are restricted by that creation, limited to its confines...' (1980: 141-2). Catriona is limited by the island's assumption that the discourse on football is universally male and that organised female football is something lesser than the male game. Hence, her experience is retrospective because, after the school games there is no female

equivalent to Barra FC. The women's game exists at the school level only. In a way, Catriona's tense shift evokes a sense of loss, a whole world that is closed to her.⁹⁷

5.5.4 Ethical Considerations of Interviews with Younger Generation

I have reflected on my motivations for interviewing the younger generation who were ex pupils. I have wondered if they felt compelled and pressurised into appearing on the radio show because of this powerful past relationship. I wondered if I was abusing my position even though they knew I was no longer their teacher. It was a very strange dynamic and one which I think raises interesting ethical and ethnographic questions about relationships. The main question was about vulnerability – did they feel vulnerable in this new environment? Gone was the positive teacher/pupil relationship where I had successfully prepared them for national exams replaced by a new safe community place where I had found a new voice for myself, and I wondered if this impacted on them? I was very cognisant of this and made sure that my questions and comments did not relate to the school. During the interviews I noted that I felt very ashamed of the circumstances leading to the demise of my teaching career, and I wondered if they felt embarrassed for me. My focus though was not on my low self-esteem but to make sure that I could find out about their role in the sports in the community. It is an interesting dynamic and trying to write about the complex relational context of the interview raises ethical considerations about addressing one's vulnerability and the vulnerability of others and how in the writing of it the dynamic manifests itself.

5.5.5 Narrative Differences

The gender differences show how a small snapshot of the island's oral history reflects the patriarchal supremacy of wider society, which is an interpretative difference. However, this sample of the younger generation's lifestory narratives includes similarities of shared experiences that bind them together. The spoken language of all three is of the present and nonlinear; it is a synchronic interpretation of culture. Their identity is constructed from the social processes of a localised interpretation of a global sport. They are moving towards a future that will create new interpretations for the island community.

⁹⁷ 'Catriona O'Carroll, a young Barra, is the first girl ever to be selected for U13's Western Isles Football Squad and Scotland's national team' (Guth Bharraidh 03.05.19/07.06.19).

5.5.6 Theme of Employment and the Merchant Navy

Prior to my research project, my recorded interviews listed the employment of those being interviewed (see Table One). The reasons for this are twofold: I regard employment as the ‘vehicle’ which drives people’s lives and creates a sense of worth and identity, and I used it as a means of encouraging my guests’ responses at the beginning of the interviews. Employment was a theme which was part of my semi-structured questioning. Also, as I transitioned to adopt the persona of volunteer radio host⁹⁸ my attention focused on what employment meant and the value that we derive for ourselves by our ability to buy and sell our skills in the marketplace. The four lifestories representing the older generation are linked by employment. They are Seonaidh Beaton, Calum MacNeil, Peggy McCormack and Nanag Gillies. The composite narrative form is used rather than the transcript form because I am foreshadowing the themes.

I chose the theme of the Merchant Navy because it is the employment link that affects the older generation in different ways. It is sewn into the fabric of the island’s culture, connecting and representing the island’s story because it is an industry which utilises the seafarer’s abundant skills to navigate ships around the world. During my time on the island, the head teacher, David Bowman, made a concerted effort annually to get acknowledgement of the men who sacrificed their lives working for the Merchant Navy. In a BBC Scotland interview marking the island’s sea farers contribution, he stated:

This undertaking started as a modest 20-minute assembly. It was really to acknowledge two Benbecula Merchant Navy Association members and although both in their seventies they struggled to get to Barra’s Remembrance Service in November but got stuck in Eriskay. Barra’s population has been just over 1000 for the past 100 years and the total one would be expected to have lost in the war would be three to six lives but in actual fact, there are 125 names on the Vatersay war monument – 95% of them are men, 75% of them were in the Merchant. (2007)

The school subsequently expressed this relationship with the island’s seafarers’ past and present in a series of cultural events ranging from a theatre production to essay and poetry writing competitions. The Merchant Navy experience was constructed by the headteacher from a discourse reflective of an imperialist narrative of war that ‘justified’ losses. Notably, when

⁹⁸ Ian Stephen in a review of ‘Voices Galore’ in *Northwords Now* (2017:34).

the Barra and Vatersay war monument was unveiled in 1993, the island's sacrifice was obvious, and it was this immense loss to the island community that was the focus of the headteacher. Richardson (1993), writing in the British Press, notes that on Remembrance Sunday of that year, a retired local mariner, Neil MacNeil said:

I know most of the men whose names are recorded, I can still picture them. We would at school together and then we all went to sea. That was how it was when we were young. The sea was your life, your whole livelihood, from the Butt of Lewis to Barra Head. You grew up in boats and fishing and sailing and when you left school you joined the Merchant Navy. When war broke out everyone joined the Royal Navy. Many of the men found their ships to be torpedoed but if they were rescued, they kept taking supplies across the ocean. (1993)

MacNeil's narrative is part of a hegemonic narrative construction of war because he does not challenge. The Merchant Navy, created at the beginning of the 20th century by the Royal Navy as an organisational structure for a supply of men who could be mobilised to bring lifesaving resources to naval ships, is a discourse which feeds into an imperialist view of the idea of fighting for control of the seas. King George V named the supply fleet the Merchant Navy following its service in the First World War, when approximately 14,661 merchant seafarers were killed. In 1920, Prince Edward, Prince of Wales, was named 'Master of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets', a title he relinquished on abducting the throne in December 1936. Currently Queen Elizabeth holds the title. By the Second World War, the Merchant Navy was the largest in the world, but it lost 27% of all its seafarers, numbering 36,749. The Merchant Navy fleet today consists of 1,504 ships and is still one of the largest in the world. Interestingly, although it works alongside the Royal Navy at times of war, and indeed was hegemonically constructed from that narrative, the Merchant Navy was not given a British national memorial until recently. Captain Richard Woodman a maritime historian, who was a Merchant Navy seafarer, has commented: 'it's a national disgrace our contribution hasn't been better recognised' and attributes the neglect to class. The Merchant Navy's great virtue, he argues, is:

'that it is one of the only meritocracies this country has produced in peacetime, which the hierarchical Armed Services have always found difficult to come to terms with. It wasn't until 2000 that seafarers who flew the 'red duster', the British Royal Navy ensign, were granted the right to march as an official body in the cenotaph commemorations' (1993).

The discourse of the Merchant Navy narrative contains layers of contradictions compared to the dominant imperialist war narrative. This is picked up by Neil MacNeil, in providing the island's contribution to it. There is the other inclusivity discourse, which points to the unfair injustice of the lack of recognition of the seafarers. Additionally, there are other discourses relating to the island community and the Merchant Navy. For example, when herring fishing was at its peak, barrels of Barra herring stamped in the Castlebay pier office were sent to feed the slave plantations of the New World and across the sea to alleviate the Great Famine in Ireland (Coull, 1996). Both discourses are relevant to providing a greater understanding of how the hegemonic powers controlled the food source to feed its enslaved and starved populations. This research would celebrate the island's role in harvesting the produce of the sea and in sailing with the Merchant Navy across the world.

However, Neil MacNeil's spoken words reverberate with the *Barra Island Discs* lifestory narratives of Seonaidh Beaton and Calum MacNeil. In each lifestory, their sense of identity is constructed by the sea. In MacNeil's words, this is exemplified by the change in use from the first-person personal pronoun of 'I' to the second person inclusive 'you' and the collective 'we'. In effect, MacNeil's voice emphasises the voice of the island community. Likewise, Seonaidh and Calum, in their lifestories, construct their generation's interpretation of the collective experience of the community while simultaneously constructing their sense of identity from a backward projection of their lives.

On an island surrounded by the sea, there is no escaping its power. In many ways, this is the islanders' first 'shared experience'. Looking at the physical life of the island, as Tönnies notes, 'Gemeinschaft of locality may be conceived as a community of physical life...' (1955: 48). The sea is a determining factor in the lives of the islanders and it provides many of the threads which make up the social fabric of the island because it provides the community with sustainable employment.⁹⁹ Although having provided much-needed sustenance in the past,

⁹⁹ However, fishing is susceptible to political changes. A recent article in the local paper notes: '[t]he fishing community was nearly devastated last summer when the fishing grounds looked as if they would be closed as early as August due to the fishing effort time, measured in kilowatt days, being swallowed up by vessels well over the 500hp (horse power) in engine size, arriving on the fishing grounds and fishing round the clock day after day. A practice alien to the more sustainable and balanced fishery of the West Coast of Scotland. Since then fishermen have worked to emergency measures enabling them to fish for 16 days a month....Fishing communities are all too aware of the damage of opening fishery again to unsustainable fishing...in Barra where the problem may be most

nowadays the sea produce is much more likely to be processed in the Barratlantic¹⁰⁰ fish processing plant in Ardveenish and shipped to markets throughout Europe. As previously noted, Donald Manford's comments resonate:

The management of the sea is very important to this community since we are surrounded by it. More and more with the coasts and the sea, the sea is expanding further beyond fishing including fish farming and aquaculture and it is becoming increasingly important to us as communities. (Manford, 2016:137)

There are two pertinent points here. The first is that when Seonaidh and Calum were young men seeking employment, the once successful fishing herring industry in Barra had collapsed and Castlebay was no longer the thriving mecca of boats and merchants,¹⁰¹ so they joined the Merchant Navy. The second point is that their experience of the sea and knowing how to navigate it was in demand by the shipping fleet in Glasgow and further afield. Their nautical skills were endorsed by a recognised 'skipper' who signed the 'discharge paper':

'Barra was the land of the bosuns, it was told that the fishermen from Barra sailed the world's biggest fishing boats...a couple of companies come to mind, Ben Line and Bay Waters. The fishermen from Barra were excellent seamen regardless of their paper qualifications' (Horton, 2019).

At this time being a mariner was not a career option for Peggy and Nanag, but their fathers had to work in the Merchant Navy, so it is a theme that is threaded throughout their lifestories. But their relationship and the sense of identity they construct from it is one of loss. This experientiality of the theme establishes a shared legacy in the stories of Calum, Seonaidh, Nanag, and Peggy, and communicating it makes individuals into a community where they can unite (Tannen, 1989: 29). I analyse them using the same method employed earlier, showing

acute, the largest employer in the island, which is in the private sector (Barratlantic) could be wiped out and this would be socially devastating...' (Guth Bharraidh, 2013:1).

¹⁰⁰ Barratlantic, based in Ardhor, currently employs 47 people.

¹⁰¹ For 60 years, from the creation of the Barra district in 1893 until 1953, the pattern of offices and districts was unchanged. This represented the peak of the island's importance as a fishing nation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Coull, 1996:287).

how identity, both personal and public, is interwoven from the world we inherit when we are born from our aspirations and from our memories, all of which are socially constructed.

5.5.7 Seonaidh's story

Seonaidh Beaton was interviewed on January 17, 2012. He is a Barraich and indigenous to the island. He is a retired mariner and, until recently, one of the island's taxi drivers. Often on the road walking to Castlebay, I would meet Seonaidh and had asked him a few times to come in for a 'blether', but he refused until he needed a speaker for a 'Burns Supper' and, after agreeing to perform, he came to the radio station to be interviewed. At the time of the interview, Seonaidh had just celebrated his eightieth birthday. This is how he begins to construct his identity:

(1) I spent 49 years at sea. (2) Well in my young days all the young lads headed to sea especially the people from Barra, Eriskay [and] Stornoway. (3) The Uist ones preferred to go to the army although quite a lot of them went to sea, but the Barraich headed for the sea, and the girls went to the mainland nursing and what have you because there was nothing else for it, there was no other work on the island. (4) There was a bit of fishing but for me coming from the west side of the island it wasn't a choice we went for, so we went to the sea. (5) I got a fishing discharge from an old bodach (man), in Borve who had a wee fishing boat and he wrote a discharge to say I had served with him for a year or something on his fishing boat. (6) You needed that to go away and go to the pool in Glasgow, where you registered as a seaman. (7) You produced this bit of paper...there were plenty of my type there from Barra, we were all in the same boat... (8) There were ten of us from Barra on that ship and there are only two of us alive today, me and Iain Sinclair up in Glen. (Beaton, 2016:34)

The linear form of his story is chronological because in the first and second sentences, he talks about his 'young days' and qualifies his choice of career by alerting the listeners to the length of time he spent sailing the oceans, '49 years'. Seonaidh's narrative is retrospective and his identity construction is viewed more from an island perspective than the narratives of the younger generation, whose choice of symbolic interaction from the sporting framework could easily resonate with any other youngsters involved in the sport, irrespective of their island community, although travelling to sporting fixtures by ferries differentiates the experience. The island context is key to Seonaidh's choice of career, which at the time of his youth was very

limited: he had to go to sea because there were no other employment opportunities on the island.¹⁰² It is not only his own identity he is describing, but that of the other men of his time on Barra and the surrounding islands. There is a sense of unhappiness in Seonaidh's career choice because in sentences three and four he remembers 'there was nothing else for it', 'there was no other work on the island'. 'It wasn't a choice...' Thus, there is a negative portrayal of life on the island for young people then, which is similar to Neil MacNeil's narrative, and the lack of career opportunities impacted on the chosen career path of Seonaidh. His identity as a seaman is constructed from one of the only avenues available and he acknowledges the shared experience with the others on the island. Indeed, on one of the first ships he worked on, 'there were ten of us young men from Barra on that ship...' Seonaidh's identity is also part of the collective, and the use of the personal collective pronoun 'us' in the final sentence reinforces that his identity has been created from an experience shared with others on Barra. Whilst there is a negative tone to Seonaidh's description of the social and economic hardship endured by the youngsters on the island, it contrasts with the tone he uses to express his feeling of belonging to the shared experience of the rest of the Barra boys. He is proud to identify with them, and although the Merchant Navy may not have been his first choice (he never actually mentions an alternative career throughout the rest of his narrative), he communicates a real sense of the richness of that shared experience and is proud of it. And he selects it as a means of constructing both his personal and public identity (Beaton, 2016: 36).

Shortly afterwards, he uses this same sense of camaraderie to describe a particular experience he shared with the 'Barra boys' on board a ship. This experience is told in the context of insisting on the importance of a good cook on board a ship:

(9) The food was awful, and I remember there were three or four of us from Barra and we were that hungry. (10) The officers got a different menu. (11) I remember one time I was passing the galley and I saw a chicken and the smell was so good I stole the chicken and took it into the cabin. (12) There were a couple of us from Barra in the room, so we locked the door and it was the best feed we had had in ages...we threw the bones out of a porthole... (Beaton, 2016:35)

Again, the repetitive use of the collective personal pronouns of 'us', and 'we' in sentence nine communicates his pride in the shared experience, and thus his identity is closely linked to the

¹⁰² See the reference to *The Disappearing Island* in Chapter Two.

rest of the group from the island. Despite the theft of the chicken being covered up by the other island boys, in that they ate it and disposed of its carcass, the repetition of the personal pronoun ‘I’ indicates that it was Seonaidh’s initiative. This initiative, I would suggest, helps to formulate a construct of his identity. He takes pride in the collective shared experience, but he separates himself as the person who is responsible for creating it. This initiative is evidenced later when he describes how his time in the Merchant Navy developed:

(13) I was determined I wasn’t going to be an AB [Able Bodied Seaman] all my life so I started studying and getting books and eventually I got all my certificates right up to Master. (ibid.,36)

Seonaidh’s choice may have been hewn from the inherited social and economic opportunities available on the island which begin his lifestory narrative, but it then becomes a description of his personal desire. He presents how he made his choice from what he has inherited and decides to learn to become a ship’s master. This choice then constructs his personal identity and the rest of his lifestory narrative describes the experiences he had as captain of his own ship.

5.5.8 Calum’s story

Calum Mac Neil was interviewed on 7 July, 2013. He is indigenous to the island, a Barraich who spent most of his working life as a mariner. He ‘stopped over in Canada’ but maintains a home on the island, on the croft where he was born. I was formally introduced to Calum by Uilliem, the butcher, in his shop one busy sunny afternoon just after the plane had landed delivering the island’s newspapers. Ten minutes later, after a firm handshake and a laugh, the deal was sealed for an interview. Calum’s lifestory narrative, like Seonaidh’s, shares the same inherited island identity. Yet comparing the description of his story telling provides an effective way of looking at how two people cut from the same cloth wear their threads differently. Calum, at the time of the interview, was visiting the island from his home in Canada, where he stays during the winter months, spending the other months in his home in Florida:

(1) I am from Eoligarry and I went to Castlebay University! (2) I stayed in lodgings in Nasg during the week. (3)I always remember putting a pair of rabbits across my fence outside my room, and everyone who went to school with me would know that, and that shows you how much education I had. (4) It was the rabbits that were important and, at midday, I would go down to Horve and sell them. (MacNeil, 2016:61)

(5) I left Barra when I was sixteen-and-a-half with my uncle Ruiraidh a' Phosta and Dòmhnall Mac A' Phosta, my other first cousin. (6) We have a picture in the heritage centre of him. I arrived in Glasgow and talk about refugees! (7) Màiri a' Diac gave me a coat, Iain a' Noon gave me the pants, and when my mate from Stornoway first seen us, he laughed non-stop. (8) There was no thrift shop then, it was just hand-me-downs. (9) Relations who were skippers and mates and my mother thought they would have a bit of clothes for me because Ruraidh gave his nephew a coat... (10) Of course I had the famous fishing discharges signed by the Cuddy or the priest. (11) That was very important. (12) I can't mind who signed mine. (13) I didn't care. (14) It was my fishing discharge and it was about your navigational skills and we could sail anywhere in the world. (15) So, people just went to sea...we were ahead of the city people...we had two years under our belts as fishermen, and that gave us our EDH [Efficient Deck Hand] or an SOS [Senior Ordinary Seaman], which put you two notches above the poor bugger that was born and brought up in Glasgow. (16) That was how the big ball bounced in those days... (16) (ibid., 2016:61)

Calum, a contemporary of Seonaidh, remembers the social and economic hardship of living on the island, and his earliest memory is catching and selling rabbits. He tells his lifestory less through the collective story of other people and in the opening sentence, he focuses on describing his initiative both at catching and selling rabbits in the township of Horve, which is situated across from his school, which he refers to as a university. In the first five sentences of the narrative, Calum's story is constructed with the use of the singular personal pronoun, 'I', and Calum is speaking of his experience and only his. This is different from Seonaidh's, whose story is told more through the collective experience he shared with others on the island; therefore, their perspective is different. Calum's personal identity is constructed through his initiative. He may be poor but selling his catch means that he will survive. So, there is a clear sense that this is someone whose collective experience was important, but not as important as it was for Seonaidh. Indeed, it is not until the sixth sentence that he adopts the use of the collective personal pronoun 'we' and even then, it is to emphatically declare his pride in the fact that there is a photo of 'his' cousin on show in the heritage centre on the island, once again focusing on his own experience.

Calum's experience of the social and economic hardship on the island is described by his lack of clothes, whereas for Seonaidh, it was about the lack of employment opportunities. That he

describes himself in sentence six using hyperbole, as a ‘refugee’¹⁰³ is done to poke fun at how ‘he’ must have looked then rather than to make a serious point about the impoverished conditions young people endured because of the lack of employment. This contributes to Calum’s construction of personal identity because he chooses to create a hilarious image which he then qualifies by claiming in sentence eight that the islanders now have a ‘thrift shop’ from which they can obtain second-hand clothes. His image is made all the funnier because he did not receive a coat from ‘Ruaridh, who gave his nephew, [Calum’s cousin], a coat’ although he expected one. Calum’s representation of his poverty is comically narrated, yet it conceals the harsh realities which are sombrely described in Seonaidh’s narrative. This is an interesting comparison, which raises thought-provoking questions about how humour conceals and masks ideological inequalities.¹⁰⁴ Calum’s personal identity is constructed using humour; he communicates his life experiences by laughing at his own misfortune. Davies and Ilott (2018:1) make an interesting point when they comment on the ‘dynamic role that humour plays in making and remaking identity, and in negotiating power in culture and society’. Whether Calum’s humorous description is because of how successful he became later in life (real estate owner), that is, a reflection of how the deep thirst to escape poverty created his personal identity and/or part of the rich retrospective texture that is created in the chronological telling of his lifestory.

From sentence ten onwards, Calum describes his experience of the discharge paper and what it meant to him, and there are differences in their narratives. Seonaidh has a clear memory that his was signed by a ‘fisherman’, whereas for Calum, ‘it didn’t matter who signed it’. It was a means to an end for him. Interestingly, what is apparent in their descriptions is that Calum’s was either signed by the Cuddy¹⁰⁵ or by a priest¹⁰⁶ because Calum was a Catholic whereas Seonaidh was not, and this is perhaps an impact of how religious difference was embedded into

¹⁰³ In using this word, Calum does not do so in a discriminatory or disparaging way. He is comparing his lack of worldly goods with others who have left their homeland with nothing. Calum sailed on many boats which carried refugees throughout the world. Interpreting his word choice in this way means I am constructing its meaning from the context in which he used it.

¹⁰⁴ ‘A verbal weapon in the social arsenal constructed to maintain caste, class, race and sex inequalities’ (Wiesstein, 1973:400). See also Lockyer and Pickering (2008), who provide a sociological critique of humour.

¹⁰⁵ See earlier references in the introduction chapter to Tales from Barra told by John MacPherson, who, nicknamed the Cuddy, was an influential figure in deciding what happened on Barra.

¹⁰⁶ See Chapter One for a commentary on the paternalistic authoritative role played by the priest on Barra.

the working opportunities. Seonaidh's family was part of the Protestant settlement which came to Barra during the mid-eighteenth century and therefore his discharge paper would not have had the island's authoritative seal of approval from the priest. I was intrigued about if this was an actual difference or if the perceived difference was constructed from my west-of-Scotland sectarianism¹⁰⁷ so I contacted Seonaidh recently (2019) to find out if there was any difference. He categorically denied this and laughed at the suggestion. He remembered his had been signed by the priest and a fisherman because two signatures were needed. He claims he was reticent in acknowledging who signed his papers because as youngsters leaving the island, they would have received the island seal of approval irrespective of whether they had proved their seamanship to any official standard. This informal way of dealing with the 'discharge paper' was also confirmed during an interview with Matt Horton.¹⁰⁸ This approval may have impacted the choices they were given when they arrived in Glasgow because Calum compares how the discharge paper enabled him to be placed higher up the grading scale 'than the poor buggers born and brought up in Glasgow', who, by implication, did not have the same 'advantages'. Calum's identity is constructed from the fact that he, like Seonaidh, had to go to sea, but the rest of his lifestory is narrated like that of a 'shaggy dog' tale, full of exciting episodes in which Calum is always the eponymous hero, congratulating himself on his ingenuity. Anyone outside of the island listening to Calum's story would think his adventures were fictitious but they are authenticated by another Barraich who sailed the seven seas and shared his experiences.

In their narratives, Calum and Seonaidh share the experience of poverty and lack of opportunities which sent them to sea, where they established their careers. They were merchant seamen, proud of their achievements. What is clear from their lifestory narratives is the historical information of the life experience of young males who had no other choice but to leave the island to secure a career at sea. In addition to the explanations of how they began their career, there are also differences in the presentation of their narratives, which means that lifestories offer limitless possibilities for interpreting what personal identity is and how we

¹⁰⁷ Growing up with sectarianism in the west of Scotland creates a knowledge framework which processes most thoughts. It is sometimes difficult to 'free' thoughts from this process.

¹⁰⁸ Matt chatted about the how the discharge papers were handled in the main offices in Glasgow and as everything was written in longhand before being filed, there did not seem to be any need to question the skills approved by those in authority on the island. Indeed, he claims that being from Barra put the men at the front of the queue (Horton, 2019). This conversation took place during a lifestory interview for Celtic Music Radio's *ScotsSpeak* – a programme I designed and hosted from 2018 to 2019.

choose to construct it. One of the key differences between the men is their choice of expression – from Seonaidh’s collective sense of self to Calum’s more individual form of expression. Noticeably, this is because Calum, as a visitor, is no longer an immediate member of the Barra community. He is removed from the island, living elsewhere whereas Seonaidh steadfastly remains at home in the community of Barra. Arguably, this introduces yet another layer of analysis because Calum’s expression of his island identity is rooted in his past experiences of the community whereas Seonaidh’s community experiences are firmly in the (modern) present day. Thus, there is a comparative historical difference in how they construct their identities, which may provide the reason for the differences between their use of the collective and personal pronoun. Calum’s island identity construction is filtered through a memory of the community he once lived in but from which he is now removed whereas Seonaidh is a permanent member of the community. Hence, island identity for him is ‘we were all in the same boat...’ (Beaton, 2016:35). This is but one example of how analysis of the data of lifestory narrative can contribute to an understanding and meaning of the concept of identity. The suggestion that the use of a collective or singular pronoun can impact the construction of knowledge of identity shows that even the smallest word when contextualised can produce meaning, which then contributes to understanding the differences between the dichotomy of the two: ‘I’, unitary, individual, and personal and ‘we’ collective, shared and public. Disclosure of this difference from within the same thematic discourse means that identity at a conceptual level is as Lawler (2016) states, the self in context; a sense of belonging will be expressed differently. Consequently, it is why lifestory narratives offer such limitless possibilities. Rich seams provide endless ways of analysing how identity is constructed. Identity can never be a definition because it will always be a process constructed from its contextual meaning.

5.5.9 Nanag’s story

Nanag Gillies was interviewed on 8 November 2011. She is a retired childminder and a Barraich who lives in Vatersay. I met Nanag on numerous occasions at ceilidhs. I asked her at the Feast of St. Bride in the Castlebay Cultural and Heritage Centre in February if she wanted to tell her story. Nine months later she came to the studio.

(1) Well I was born in Glasgow in August 1937. (2) But I was only a fortnight old when my mother died. (3) And I was then brought up in Ceolas on the island of Vatersay by my mother’s sister and her brother – none of them were married. (4)

They brought me up as their own so to speak. (5) That was the only mother I knew was her... (6) My father was in the Merchant Navy until he came home to look after his parents. (7) He was just next door to me...I went to school in Vatersay (8) There was no road then. (9) It was just a track road. (10) Nothing but puddles! (11) You would have to jump on stepping stones going across the puddles...we had no English when we went to school. (12) The teacher was English speaking. (13) She was Irish. (14) I don't know if she had her own Irish Gaelic. I don't know how we were communicating but we got there and learned English. (15) All my children can read and write Gaelic apart from me... (16) I left school at fifteen and I started working in the priest's house in Castlebay. (17) I was there for six months. (18) It was very hard work! (19) I have never worked so hard in my life as I worked when I was in the priest's house! (20) I stayed there but I used to get the odd weekend home. (21) I used to be crying, 'I'm not going to go back there!' 'Oh, you'll have to go back! You'll have to go back' so I did because I needed a reference. (22) I stayed the six months then I went to Oban. (23) I was working in a Bed and Breakfast in Dunollie Road with Mrs Henderson. (24) She was very nice. (25) I stayed with her for three or four seasons... (26) Then we used to go to Glasgow in the winter months. (27) I worked in the big houses in Giffnock... (Gillies, 2016:184)

Nanag's lifestory is chronological and linear, stretching back to her birth, and the loss of her mother had a huge impact on the rest of her life. She endured the hardship of being sent back to Vatersay to be looked after by an aunt and an uncle on her mother's side who, she knew, were not her parents. There is a slight ambiguity in how she constructs this memory: she is maybe harbouring regrets and masking emotional pain when she states in sentence five that 'the only mother I knew was her', creating a feeling of sympathy which does not dissipate throughout the rest of the interview. Within the first two sentences, her narrative is constructed around this loss. She does not refer to her aunt by name but by the possessive pronoun 'her' as if to imply that her early life was one of hardship, especially as her father was in the Merchant Navy and he did not leave his job until he had to 'look after his parents' (sentence six), but not his daughter. In such circumstances, I think it would be common practice to leave a child with other female family members. It has already been established that the Merchant Navy was one of the few career opportunities for the young men on the island, but Nanag's representation of it offers a different way of seeing what that opportunity was, because, in her eyes, it meant that

she had lost both her parents, one to illness, the other to the sea. Nanag's narrative offers the researcher an insight into what the human cost was for those left behind when the men left the island. Her feeling of loss and hardship is even more acute because she had lost her mother too. Her identity, constructed around her father's employment, tells a different tale to that of Seonaidh and Calum. That hardship is communicated in the journey she took to school in sentence nine, on the 'track road', splashing in and out of puddles. Normally, this is an image that conveys a sense of freedom and wild abandonment, but in this context, it is one of enduring hardship. Her daily hill climb to attend school is arduous (eight hundred feet high), but, interestingly, it is the description of learning English at the cost of losing her ability to read and write Gaelic which she focuses on. Within the construction of this memory, Nanag's loss of her native language is huge and made even more poignant for the researcher, when she says in sentence fifteen: '[all] my own children can read and write it apart from me.' This acute sense of loss resonates with many of the older generation on the island. Many of the informal conversations in the radio studio focused on Gaelic and how they were sometimes embarrassed to speak it, particularly when English speakers were around. There seemed to be a lack of confidence in using it as if to suggest it was somehow inferior.¹⁰⁹ Mairi a' Welder, a younger generation member from Nanag, commented in her interview of 2012:

We were always too polite, and we always spoke in English if a non-Gaelic speaker was there, but now we continue to speak in Gaelic. You see, we were taught in English but before my generation, I think they were discouraged to speak it.' (MacLean, 2016: 55)

Listening to Nanag's lifestory, there is incredulity at the loss because of the significance and importance of retaining the Gaelic language generally in Scotland, and specifically within the indigenous communities.¹¹⁰

Similar to Seonaidh and Calum, for Nanag to leave the island, she requires a 'reference'. This effectively is the female equivalent of the 'discharge paper' so that she can gain employment

¹¹⁰ "Gaelic is a living language and part of the rich cultural tradition which belongs to the whole of Scotland. 'This Government has made its position very clear on this matter – we want to increase the number of people learning, speaking, and using Gaelic. By working towards these aims, together we can ensure that Gaelic has a secure future in Scotland,' John Swinney, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (2015).

in her chosen career. Nanag's description of how she had to work in the priest's house for six months in Castlebay to obtain it is indicative of the differences in the socialisation of young men and women of school leaving age. The extent of the 'hard work' in sentences eighteen and nineteen can only be imagined and her emphatic use of 'never' and 'so' in the construction reinforce this sense of hardship. There is consistency during her lifestory narrative which is part of the construction of her identity. Nanag's narrative is multi-layered and reveals information about gender oppression. Her role as a young woman working for the local priest, who had absolute control in Barra, is an area worthy of further research. Ultimately, this is the richness of a lifestory, in that it is a tapestry sewn together with many threads. Nanag's island working experience contrasts with the kindness she is shown when she leaves the island to work in Oban and then Glasgow.

Nanag's narrative of her life constructs a personal identity which makes her a woman who has suffered great loss and endured tremendous hardship, and, like Catriona's experience, it is a reminder that the shared experience of the island community masks the power relations, the injustices and inequalities inherent in the social processes. As Frye notes, oppression involves, 'a system of interrelated barriers and forces which reduce, immobilize and mould people who belong to a certain group, and effect their subordination to another group (individually to individuals of the other group, and as a group, to that group)' (1983: 33).

5.5.10 Peggy's story

Peggy McCormack was interviewed on 3 March, 2010. She is a Barraich and a retired primary school teacher. As my daughter's teacher, I met her professionally as well as informally and easily understand why her stories of the island's fairies bewitched generations of the island community. Resonating with the others' stories, Peggy's story is shaped by her family's experience when her father had to leave the island to work in the Merchant Navy because there was no other work on the island. The collective economic hardship was shown in the documentary, *The Disappearing Island* (see Chapter Two). Both Peggy's representation of island life for the BBC and the interview for *Barra Island Discs* are about her identity. Despite the hardship experienced by the family – her brothers couldn't find work – her father was able to provide money, which allowed Peggy to leave the island to develop her education¹¹¹:

¹¹¹ 'Most academic pupils in the Highlands and Islands already go away from home for the education... Selection of pupils takes place at the beginning of secondary education and those selected for "certificate" courses are

(1) I went to Castlebay School for three years then we went to Inverness Academy. (2) I liked it there. (3) We lived in Hedgefield hostel. (4) I made many friends. (5) There were girls from Harris and North Uist. (5) And from there we went to Glasgow, Notre Dame, and spent three years there and the people there were lovely as well. (6) Well, I started teaching in Brevig and spent six years there. (7) I left and went down to England for about four years but came back again when my son was born. (8) I have lived in Barra ever since... (9) After Brevig I taught in Craigston. (10) I already had two children by then, and I taught there for twenty-three years ... (11) it was such a Gaelic community, there were many Gaelic speakers there, and I used to get patted on the back because there was a bilingual policy,¹¹² but it wasn't my teaching, it was because they were speaking Gaelic at home so it wasn't difficult to have Gaelic spoken in the school. (McCormack, 2016:131)

Peggy liked her experience and in many ways is shielded from the hardships Nanag endured. Peggy's construction of her identity is shared with a certain group on the island, those females who were fortunate enough to gain access to a boarding school place in Inverness.¹¹³ In sentences one to four, she adopts the collective personal pronoun 'we', as well as the singular personal pronoun so as to weave herself into the social fabric of the shared island experience while reinforcing her own experience by her positive comments of 'liking' the hostel and

required to leave the island while those who remain on Barra only had the option of following non-certificate courses' (Sewell et al. 1975:12) .

Hebridean poet and writer Donald S. Murray comments on the experience from a male perspective: 'For us boys, it was quite a traumatic time because we left home at twelve...I think there was a fair number of Barra boys there...It was very trying....' (Voices Galore, 2016:93).

¹¹² Shifts in language policy can be seen in the 1960s because of the need to invest in the island/rural communities. Dunbar traces the reasons for the change: 'A clear linguistic hierarchy was established with the claimant language increasingly used for most higher linguistic domains and the minority language increasingly restricted to lower linguistic domains, such as home, with neighbours in the immediate community and in other similar informal settings, but not formal and prestigious settings particularly those involving agencies and actors with significant social standing and authority (such as school). Peggy had had enough foresight to realise the importance of encouraging the language of the indigenous Barra community. It would take another 20 years before the first Gaelic medium school was fully funded by the education authorities', (2013: 209).

¹¹³ Parents had to cover 'some' of the cost of the accommodation, and the education board – Inverness County Council – met the rest (Sewell et al., 1975).

making ‘many friends’. She trained in the Catholic teacher training college, Notre Dame, before returning to Barra as a teacher, and she rejoices that apart from four years in England, she has remained on Barra, teaching generations of children. There is a humility in how Peggy constructs her narrative. Her word choice is matter of fact and simply put: the first six short sentences present a succinct chain-like list of events devoid of any emotional attachment. When she tries to capture her teenage self, normally a time fraught with ‘angst’, she expresses it with a brevity that belies a tremendous sense of loss. In sentence nine, the words, ‘I have lived in Barra ever since...’ suggest that she will never leave again. These words echo the sense of pride she has in her island home – at the beginning of the interview, she alerts the listener to her identity, ‘I am completely a Barraich’. The adverbial use of ‘completely’ adds to the emphatic sense of expression – she is communicating her love of her heritage, and this contrast, especially in relation to the earlier succinctness of her teenage self, in many ways, suggests she doesn’t want to spend any time reminiscing about when she was ‘forced’ as a ‘girl’ to leave behind her beloved island home.

However, the focus of Peggy’s identity is her language: her Gaelic. In this, her construction of identity is like Nanag’s. I think this aspect of their narratives is interesting in that their identity is expressed through their language. They both refer to its importance but in different ways. Nanag’s definition is of loss: she was denied an opportunity to learn to read and write it, so it is something taken from her whereas Peggy is congratulated for encouraging and maintaining its use within the school. There is a slight age difference between the two women, and if you add in the time Peggy was training to be a teacher, a shift in educational thinking has come about: in sentence twelve, Peggy talks about ‘there being a bilingual policy’ at the time. The success of a policy is determined by its consistent application, and on a small island like Watersay, inhabited by only eighty residents, staffing difficulties may have prevented Nanag learning how to read and write her own language. The susceptibility of the indigenous language to such changes is perhaps an indication of its fragility and indeed an argument for its preservation.

Neither Calum nor Seonaidh, although fluent speakers, refers to their language in this way. Perhaps there is a gender differential which needs to be explored, suggesting the responsibility for the maintenance of the Gaelic language in the indigenous setting is a female one. I think this would be an area worthy of further research.

Comparatively, there are differences in how Peggy, Nanag, Calum, and Seonaidh choose to express their narratives and those differences affect how identity is conceptualised. Personal identities are threads intricately woven through the social fabric of the island community. What they share, their public identities, reflects how their lifestory narratives are shaped by the collective experiences – their lifestory narratives are memories of the community. Identity arguably is age-related because unlike the non-linear constructions of the younger generation, the older generation's ones are chronological, and this impacts what is meant by identity. It means that identity is relational to age and to the social processes which shape their context. Deege, James, and Catriona's identities are similarly constructed using themes from their shared island experiences, but unlike those of the older generation, they are less cohesive because their narratives are of the present day, expressed in the present tense, and do not carry the weight of time which changes everything.

5.6 Conclusion

My argument from the outset has been that a lifestory narrative can be presented as a discourse, which, in turn, allows the language of spoken dialogue to be considered from new epistemological perspectives and approaches. As Aristotle observed, there are many differences between language intended for the ear and that of the written prose. While at home in anthropology, lifestory narratives weave through sociological and psychological perspectives, contextualising meaning for processes which are representative of late modernity.

There are differences in the narratives which I have not presented, for example, my engagements with James, Catriona, and Deege were chirpy, fun-filled hours of happy banter, which lacked the gravitas afforded to those who have the life experience of age. The questions asked of the younger generation were filtered through a sporting lens. What was exposed was that young people, in fashioning a lifestory narrative, that is, their identity from sport, embrace global language signifiers that help them form a sense of self. Conversely, when interviewing the older generation, I expected their contributions to be culturally significant. Researching the lifestory narratives of the younger generation was illuminating because their content shows that they too are culturally significant. Their lives reflect identities in the making, nonlinear but also culturally responsive. Consequently, this raises interesting questions about my assumptions regarding how I differentiated lifestories. I expected more from the older generation because they had 'lived a life' whereas the younger generation had not. What the research has highlighted is that there are clear differences in how identity is constructed, but it is

generationally responsive because young people have lifestory narratives too. Their narratives equally show how conceptualising the processes we use to construct identity and culture are significant because they are based on language that is contextualised in the community in which they live. 'Age' is the most significant factor in differentiating the generational responses. My aim was to consider how identity is constructed. I have shown, by comparing different generations, how each presents their identity differently.

As a project, the lifestory narratives from an island community at the most basic level provide a description of their shared experience. When those same stories are analysed through the conceptualisation of identity, those shared experiences, like the 'women's stories', expose how language unmasks hegemony in hidden language constructions. The ability of the method of the lifestory narrative to uncover levels of oppression is unique. In the forthcoming chapter, which explores the concept of tradition from narratives of the older generation, the synchronic relational aspect of identity is challenged.

6 Chapter Six: Tradition, The Resilience of Ageing and The Naming Process

6.1 Introduction

Culture...that which has been sanctioned by tradition and custom has an authority that is nameless, and our finite historical being is marked by the fact the authority of what has been handed down to us – and not just what is clearly grounded - always has power over our attitude and behaviour. (Gadamer, 1989:289)

In selecting this complex and temporally paradoxical concept for locate culture, I aim to illustrate the importance of tradition in academic discourse, exemplifying its ability to look beyond the official written and hegemonic presentation of a small Hebridean community and focusing on the significance of the social practice of the experience of spoken language. Similar to other concepts, namely community and identity, tradition's objective is to define difference. Tradition transmits a subjective and unique understanding of the networking power of the symbolic value between generations. It travails like an intangible glue between the collective habitus of Bourdieu's community (1990:90), and McAdams's personality traits of personal recollections (1993), and clasps together the temporal subjectivity of the present with the objectivity of the historical past. As such, it presents a dynamic concept which communicates a vibrant culture of a radicalised community embedded in the process of a symbolic system, a product of Finnegan's 'living practice' (1991:121), which represents a specific milieu of space and time. Or as Giddens notes, 'Tradition orders time in a manner which restricts the openness of counter factual futures'(1991:48).

6.1.1 Data Source

As 'living practice', *Barra Island Discs* data, transcribed and composite (Chapter Two), is a linear narrative source, which, when interpreted according to Fairclough's 'multi-textual' 3-dimensional framework (2010:94), highlights the ordinary spoken language of the older generation to represent social practice. It is a heterogeneous product of discourse, involving interpretations of lives that have been lived, and arguably is a radical example of the dynamic weaving of the synchronicity of the present threaded with traditions of the past. In other words, it encapsulates the beauty of oral transmission from a community at ease with its own orality.

From the interpretations of the Ossian myths of J.F. Campbell's *West Highland Stories* (1862) to my own *Barra Island Discs* recordings, lifestories remembered by the older generation possess a coherence and confidence borne out of its determination to maintain its culture despite hegemonic attempts to crush it.

This chapter presents a discourse on the differences between tradition's theoretical conceptualisation and its localised application, exemplified by analyses of the oral traditions of the island community. The difference between theory and practice acknowledges how the collective present, identity, and the individual present intersect and emerge synchronically in words and meaning to define culture. Undoubtedly, a paradox of temporality, tradition's contradictory relationship is a construction of how each successive generation interprets its past values, which they performatively shape, phenomenologically, in the present. Therefore, tradition's meaning is found in the subjectivity of linear experientiality which is represented by the logical relationship of narratives of the past, in other words, in memories. Ageing provides reflections, and in the linear narratives of lifestories, an introspection of life's journey, an exposition of habitus flourishes. From this perspective, culture can be found in the social and symbolic values of the contextualisation of their collective lives.

Critical discourse analysis develops from research, as summed up by van Dijk:

the toughest challenge in the discipline because it requires true multidisciplinary, and an account of the intricate relationships between texts, talk, social cognition, power, society, and culture. Obviously, its success is measured by its effectiveness and relevance that is by its contribution to change... (1997:374)

My project conceptualises culture by 'stepping into the local' from an analysis of the shared experiences of the local voices by critically assessing how meaning impacts on social processes. Discourse analysis is 'of its time' because context is the key to unravelling meaning. The interconnectedness of the social processes as they subtly weave their way through the symbolic interaction of life's experiences and memories means that tradition is a combination of our individual expression of shared experiences in a local context.

Linde (1993:48) acknowledges that context is important, citing Geertz as the 'patron saint of this approach', when he states that narrative analysis is a 'continuous dialectical tacking between the most local detail and the most global structure in such a way as to bring them into simultaneous view' Geertz (1983:68). This is echoed in Finnegan's work when she claims that

discourse is used ‘as a metaphor for the hegemonic, disputed and ideological nature of society’ (2001:14) and similarly in Fairclough’s (1992:95) when he notes that there is:

‘an enhanced role for language in the exercise of power: it is mainly in discourse that consent is achieved, ideologies are transmitted, and practices, meanings, values and identities are taught and learned.’

I would argue that the differences between tradition and identity are temporal in so far as identity is always non-linear and of the moment, whereas tradition as a backward projection is linear. Traditions ‘flesh out’ someone’s identity but their difference is summed up by the direction they represent – identity is synchronic, a historically specific reflection looking forward whereas tradition, diachronic, emerges from behind. Culture is expressed at the point of their intersection.

Simultaneously, the discursivity of this multi-layered process constructs meaning which, when explored, unmask the power relationships of gender inequality, an inequality reflected in the power relations of wider society and the shared lived experience of the culture of that society. At the most basic level, this innovative project of linear lifestory narratives is an anthropological and sociological discourse of the differences which hallmark its culture. But on another level, it is a discourse which exposes how language ‘is power, life, and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation’ (Carter, 1983).

6.2 Theoretical Considerations

6.2.1 Bourdieu’s Habitus and Giddens’ Tradition

‘Habitus’, Bourdieu’s theory of ‘a system of predispositions’ (1990:90), seeks to capture the complexities of tradition by defining how ‘the past’ is part of the present in a systematic way by relating it ‘to history’. In other words, it is historical specificity. Theoretically, this makes sense because he is acknowledging how the social is reproduced. However, when defining tradition in the local, it does not, because it fails to differentiate the impact between ‘the past’ and ‘history’ on the conceptualisation of tradition. Unlike the written representation of history, which is an hegemonically powerful construction, tradition belongs to communities. It is not measured by timeline dates, the spoils of victory, or even the hegemonic power to define itself because it passes orally. Habitus, as Osborne notes, is the implicit realisation of the explicitness of tradition (2008:284). It is to Giddens that one looks because he argues that to understand

tradition from other forms of social reproduction is to separate it into ‘time-space’ (1991:35) which is only possible by writing. Writing he continues creates a perspective which delineates between the past, present and the future and from which reflexive knowledge can construct a tradition. This is the purpose of the autoethnographic interpretation of the community radio lifestories of the older generation, to express their traditions in their own words.

To engage critically with the intangibility of tradition, in other words to contextualise the past in the present, I will substantiate my research from a historical perspective. Ironically, historical specificity contextualises how a community maintained its own ‘unofficial’ systems of meaning and cultural processes of symbolic social capital. Effectively tradition recognises the symbiotic relationship between the past and history, and, as such, it is a collective concept which reflects community. It is expressed in the older memories of the older generation. Arguably as Halfderson notes ‘memory is a social phenomenon rather than an individual process – our perceptions depend on the evaluation and experiences of the group’ (2006:87).

6.2.2 The Relationship Between Tradition and Memory

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation... (Nora,1989:8)

Logically the linear narrative stories of the older generation have a closer link with the past and, therefore, have a greater cognition of the island traditions and the importance of conserving them. Categorising the traditions of the Trobriands, Malinowski claimed that ‘the past is more important than the present’ and it is ‘to the behaviour of the past generations that the Trobriander instinctively looks for guidance’ (1984:327). As a researcher, I recognise the importance that memory plays in reproducing the community traditions of Barra and, therefore, the *Barra Island Discs* lifestories are an excellent resource. Reminiscences and memories are coherent; they are shared experiences of the social processes that celebrate the difference which defines culture. Vansina (1985:2) argues that social processes begin in reminiscences of past events and, as such, they are essential to the notion of personality and identity. Identity reflects community; it is a collective expression celebrated through tradition. As such, memories contain knowledge, a subjective understanding of the social and symbolic value of how people have become the way they are. Linear narratives are memories shared by the older generation of a community; they phenomenologically make sense of a backward projection of life using

tradition. Ricoeur's story-telling processes discuss how lifestory narratives achieve this (1991:31) and can be juxtaposed alongside Linde's arguments about coherence (1993:97). Memory, a chronological retelling, brings forth into the present, paradoxically, the traditions of the past. Tradition, according to Grabum, is:

...a reservoir... a strength to draw upon, a source of safety, specialness and difference. It grows through activity and attention to its maintenance (2001:109).

The older generation makes waves from this metaphorical pool, which teaches the younger generation how to swim in the sea of life.

As a process, tradition reflects the evolution of language. It moves forward in time and creates a new identity, an interpretation of the past in present time. Tradition reflects how spoken language, the speech patterns of a community, celebrates a sense of identity from the experience of previous generations. Universally, tradition reflects the ongoing dynamics of language. It flows forward in a never-ending stream of life.

6.2.3 Finnegan's 'Living Practice': the Significance of Temporality

The focus of this discourse is to argue how the language of the ordinary, the experiential, can conceptualise tradition and make a defining contribution to what we understand as culture. Among cultural thinkers who have considered this, Finnegan's (1991:121) methodological approach is relevant. Finnegan accepts that tradition 'has many different meanings', including sometimes substituting for culture. But she draws attention to tradition as a process, which, arguably, it is, and comments that 'the process of handing down practices, ideas or values; the products so handed down, sometimes with the connotations of being 'old' or having arisen in some 'natural' and non-polemic way' (ibid.,122).

By understanding tradition's role as 'living practice', in other words, both as a process and a product, Finnegan argues that the dynamic between the activity of 'living practice,' recognises the temporal paradox in that tradition is a concept of the past that can only be interpreted in the present. Finnegan's approach, based on Millman Parry's (Foley, 1988:32) work, provides the researcher with a method to highlight the cultural significance of the generational differences between the content of my recorded lifestory data and the linear narrative storytelling processes of them. In effect, I will suggest that the general assumption that tradition is a concept of

conservatism,¹¹⁴ burdened with the belief system promoted by the Conservative political party, is wrong, and show that when contextualised in ‘living practice’, tradition is dynamic and radical (Calhoun, 1983:886), and culturally reflects a vibrant symbolic process.

Following Finnegan’s ‘living practice’, my aim is to present tradition as a concept of radical consequence, indeed, as a dynamic celebration of a community’s culture. I have come to this understanding by interpreting the research of Zheung (2012:107) and Calhoun (1983:912) and related their theoretical positions to the local voices and words of the *Barra Island Discs* interviews.

Finnegan (1991:106) notes that other social theorists, cultural thinkers, sociologists, and anthropologists have interpreted tradition’s meaning from within the boundaries of their respective disciplinary field of study, arguing that this is how the word has come to be associated with antiquity because, for too long, it has been supplementary to the study of things long dead and/or ways of life which are far removed from our own experience. Indeed, Shil defines tradition as ‘what is passed down’ (1981:166), and this relationship with the past constructs a concept of conservatism because tradition is seen as old and outdated. Generally, tradition, because it does not exist as an ‘explicit doctrine’ (Scruton, 1982:468), is presented historically and via imagery of events so far back that no one in living memory can remember them. This substantiates Shil’s comments because tradition has a temporal relationship with the past. He argued that for ‘a society to exist at all it must be incessantly re-enacted, its communications repeatedly resaid’ (ibid.,167). Additionally, Malinowski during his work on the Trobriands, tried to make sense of this temporal conundrum when he stated that the past is more important than the present, recognising the significance of the past in constructing the present. Together, Shils and Malinowsky define tradition as ‘passing down the past’. In other words, there is an awareness that to interpret language in the present, cognisance of its relationship with the past must be taken. Ontologically, because it is the nature of being, of reality to understand tradition synchronically, knowledge of the past is required. In other words, tradition is dialectically unrelated to anything else, unlike culture, which is relational. Finnegan highlights the past’s temporal significance, but only in the context of its impact on ‘living practice’. The present, in effect, takes precedence over the past. Hence, Finnegan’s concern is

¹¹⁴ Based on the conservative writings of Irish scholar Edmund Burke (1982:46), who believed that tradition could be used to withhold the progression of society moving forward. In many ways, Burke’s ideas of tradition and conservatism are the antithesis of the radical ideas of Marx, as interpreted by Calhoun et al.

how the language of the present day contextualises our understanding of the past. Therefore, Finnegan's methodological approach is significant for understanding the corpus of my data: it focuses on the language of the present, which enables me to develop an analytical critical discourse of my lifestory linear narratives as examples of 'living practice'. The conversational talk of linear narratives contains the phenomenological processes which makes meaning of the past in the present. As Finnegan notes, they contextualise the past. Traditions are processes and products from which identity emerges in the present. Hence, the lifestory narratives chosen to exemplify tradition are known gatekeepers, who safeguard the habitus of the community of Barra.

6.2.4 Generational Significance of Tradition

Community and its boundaries are tied together by traditions which are interpreted in a particular way by the older generation. Tradition is generational, and it passes from the older generation to the younger generation. This generational process, determined by age, is what occurs when contextualised knowledge of the past is transmitted to the younger generation. The older generation, in its linear narratives in the past tense, passes on a series of traditions which they have inherited from the previous generation (the phenomenological process). This passing down of knowledge is completed in the form of language and skills. Thus, the younger generation inherits this abundance of cultural gifts, which they may choose to acknowledge. The difference in the generational process is perhaps one of the main reasons why tradition is interpreted as a concept of conservatism. Glenn notes: 'aging persons may become conservative in the sense that their attitudes and values become more resistant to change (1974:176)'.

Malinowsky observed that in 'traditional societies',¹¹⁵ the older generations are treated with greater respect than that found in larger wider society, and on a small island community like Barra, I observed the older generation and their traditions are revered. This is exemplified by James Davidson when he comments on using the Gaelic language, which, for him, is a language tradition spoken by the 'old bodachs (men)' (Davidson, 2016:177), but that he will, when the

¹¹⁵ Malinowski uses tradition as the opposite of modern. Calhoun offers an exploration of this formulation (1995:136).

time comes, he will use it. It is the language of his elders, his forebearers, and one day in the future, it will be his turn to speak it to the younger generation.

6.3 Stepping Into the Local: Traditions Expressed in Island Voices

Traditions are generationally responsive orally transmitted shared experiences of a community's past that are expressed in the present. In the following analytical discourse, I aim to focus on three recurring interview themes which represent island traditions, namely, in the songs and drama of Gaelic language, crofting and nicknames. They are used to explore the conceptual relationship between tradition and culture. They emphasise the importance of my data. I have presented the islander's voices using indented italics. In addition, I have capitalised the nicknames of Mairi 'Mhol'¹¹⁶ and Mairi 'a' Welder' because that is how they are presented in the Barra 'Phoney Book',¹¹⁷ and I assumed on first meeting them that their nicknames were their official names. I have also used the English spelling of Gaelic rather than Gaidhlig because I am writing in English.

Barra remains a place where oral tradition is still very much alive (MacPherson & Campbell, 1992:21). Its geographical separateness and self-containment, along with its higher levels of sociocultural interaction (King, 1997:14), mean that the Barraich have a strong sense of their culture. In the following sections, I aim to exemplify Bourdieu's theory of habitus, 'the dialectic of the internalisation of externality and the externalisation of the internality' (1977:72) and follow Geertz's (1973:22) interpretation of localised culture by stepping into the local, exemplifying the voices of the islanders themselves to show how tradition is a synchronic expression which brings forth, through memory of personal recollections, the past into the present. Their interpretation of why things are the way they are can be used as a microscopic reflection of a bigger academic discourse.

Prior to the interviews, I did not know the people who agreed to share their lifestories because they were outside of my 'cultural and educational sphere', and although I had seen most of

¹¹⁶ Mairi Mhol is officially called Mairi MacNeil; Mairi a' Welder is officially Mairi MacKinnon.

¹¹⁷ The island's phonebook.

them at ceilidhs,¹¹⁸ I did not know them. They ‘of course’¹¹⁹ knew me, I was an incomer, an itinerant worker who had brought her family to the island. As a result of the interviews, we struck up friendships which remain to this day.¹²⁰ The following have been chosen because they represent the older generation,¹²¹ whose interviews were rich in tradition.

6.3.1 The People of Barra

Mairi Mhol was interviewed on her birthday. During the breaks in the recording, Mairi sang all her own interpretations of Barra songs (normally guests would choose tracks from Spotify and I would record their musical choices). Mairi a’ Welder was introduced to me by our mutual friend, Curstaidh Peigi MacLeod. Mairi agreed to be interviewed if I would persuade my husband to participate in the forthcoming island drama production about Eoligarry (he agreed). I met Patsy Buchanan in my Castlebay classroom when she attended with her son, Raymond, who had agreed as a prominent BBC Scotland news reporter to deliver a school assembly. Thereafter we became friends. Donnie MacNeil is one of the island’s refuse collectors and the drummer with the island’s famous band, The Vatersay Boys. Donnie’s band played at all the school dances and I knew of him, but it was not until I asked him to come along for an interview that we became friends. He told me he would not be interviewed until I could fluently interact in Gaelic. Four years later, promising that I had learned ‘some’ Gaelic, he agreed, only to inform me on the evening of the interview that he only spoke Gaelic to his mother. Jimmy Ferguson was the husband of the Ghàidhlig teacher, Mary Ann Ferguson, and worked in Barratlantic, the fish processing factory. Every Friday morning, he sold fish in Castlebay Square and listened to many stories about the community. During one of my interviews, someone noted that what Jimmy did not know about the island was not worth knowing! Retired

¹¹⁸ The ceilidh is a fundamental part of small community organisation – sharing conversation, food and drink, and often song and poetry, and ‘is synonymous with life, warmth, happiness, and friendship. It is a significant means of ensuring the transmission of Gaelic (Sheridan, et al., 2011:177).

¹¹⁹ On a small island community with a population of 1,200, all newcomers are known. Additionally, my daughter Kathleen secured employment in the local Coop store and her friendly disposition endeared the community towards my family.

¹²⁰ In 2019, I met Mairi Mhol, who is now 89 years old, on a specially chartered bus going to Blackpool to see The Vatersay Boys perform in the Blackpool Tower Ballroom. She was the first dancer on the floor.

¹²¹ I did not ask anyone their age because it seemed impolite. Had it been a research project, I would have done so.

raconteur Norman MacLean had been a television comedian and at the time of the *Barra Island Discs* interview, he was enjoying a writing career. Donald Manford, an elected councillor, was the only person who was interviewed twice.

Traditions of the island are proudly presented by the Barraich. Habitus is transmitted through the indigenous Gaelic language. During my interviews, I became acutely aware of how fiercely proud the islanders were of maintaining their language traditions. Desperate to belong to the community, I assumed having linguistic knowledge would take me closer to its nexus and subsequently I took Ulpan (Gaelic lessons) classes at the Barra Learning Centre, a satellite campus for Lews Castle College. Clumsily, I could construct elementary sentences, but no matter how much I learned, their webs of significance and symbolic references evaded me. I was told in my interviews that the Barra Gaelic was the ‘most melodious’ (MacNeil 2016:82), and Betty McAteer, in her role as Ulpan tutor, explained the different ‘dialects’¹²² of the Gaelic-speaking communities, and the ways in which the Barra Gaelic sounds softer because they do not pronounce the harsh sounding consonants. Betty explained it in the way one would address another in Gaelic by saying, ‘Ciamar a tha sibh?’ (pronounced phonetically as ‘Kimmer a ha shiv’), which translates into ‘How are you?’, but in Barra, it is expressed as ‘Jimmer a tha sibh’ with the soft ‘j’ consonant replacing the hard consonant of ‘c’. After this discussion, I altered my own pronunciation and listened out for the different sounds of the ‘true’ Gaelic language.

Throughout my interviews, I was reminded that the Barraich are the gatekeepers to the purest form of Gaelic in the Gaelic-speaking world. My understanding of this is because the Barraich associate their Gaelic as being the closest to the Irish Gaelic.¹²³ J.F. Campbell noted when summarising Celtic language variations on the west coast of Scotland:

one thing is clear, they speak a language which is almost identical to the Irish of the north of Ireland, and they are the same people. (1983:civ)

Sheridan et al. noted the impact of religion on Gaelic with the arrival of St Columba in the 5th^h century (2011:175). Additionally, Barra is the furthest community south of the largest Gaelic speaking community in Lewis and spiritually their language traditions were less ‘diluted’ from

¹²² As there is no standard Gaelic standard language, using the descriptor ‘dialect’ imposes a value system which undervalues the indigenous Barra Gaelic.

¹²³ Second names would be written using only one capital, for example, Macneil instead of MacNeil, which is an Irish tradition.

the rampages and educational reform of the Protestant Reformation. The Barraich's language is reflected in their celebration of Catholicism (see Chapter Four), which they still celebrate despite the hegemonic attempts to erase it. Gaelic was disapproved of because of its identification with Catholicism and when the state took over Scottish education in 1870, Gaelic was excluded and speaking it was punishable (Campbell, 2006:130).

6.3.2 Sites of Memory

6.3.2.1 Singing Gaelic Songs

In the following thematic extracts from the interviews of Mairi Mhol, Patsy Buchanan, and Mairi a' Welder, I want to present how women fiercely maintain their language traditions in different ways. So my conceptualisation of tradition develops from an interpretation of an expressive performance. For Mairi Mhol and Patsy Buchanan, tradition is found in the Gaelic songs and music, whereas for Mairi a' Welder dramatic performance is the key.

Mairi Mhol explained:

The Barra Gaelic is the most melodious. You know the difference – from who can speak Gaelic from learning it and who has always spoken it because you can hear how fluid it is; the Barra Gaelic is lovely (MacNeil, 2016:82).

Mairi Mhol's initial sentence is emphatic and her alliterative claim that her language is the 'most' melodious' expresses her pride. She follows this up by acknowledging how to expose the difference between the indigenous speakers and learners – their language lacks fluidity, a fluidity which is a synchronic expression of tradition's diachronicity. Even if I had been more vociferous in learning the island's Gaelic, the indigenous community would have found me out as an interloper. 'You know the difference', Mairi says, and in addressing the indefinite second person singular and plural pronoun 'you', she is not only speaking for herself but for her community, knowing they would agree with her assertion because collectively they understand the difference, which is as minuscule as between that of a hard and soft sounding consonant used in everyday speech. Tradition is processed in the oral transmission of the indigenous language because the speech patterns contain nuances and subtleties that are only known to those in the community. As a singer of Gaelic songs, Mairi Mhol's knowledge of the traditions of the language is full of subtle rhythmic cadences, which is reflected in her musicality.

MacIntyre et al. argue that ‘music reflects shared traits, preferences and values, the latter which is connected by social bonds...These processes converge to connect music to both self-perception and intergroup processes that help shape identity social contexts and culture’ (2019:538).

The first few minutes of the interview are taken up by the importance of Gaelic songs. She says:

My mum was a singer. Most of the songs were about Barra and the different islands, it all depended on who was making the song and where it was set. Here is one I sing. ‘Thug mo mathair mi Gaidhlig’¹²⁴. The song is about Barra and how your mother taught you the Barra Gaelic. (MacNeil:80)

Mairi Mhol’s musicality,¹²⁵ her ability to sing, was passed matrilineally, and she alerts the listening audience to the composition of Gaelic songs. When I asked her if this was in keeping with tradition, she answered:

Yes, I was upholding the tradition of singing in Gaelic and am a keeper of Gaelic songs. We always try to keep the Gaelic singing in the waulking songs we call *voor*.¹²⁶ These songs are about the olden days and the *voor* was a past-time for them (ibid.,77).

After singing one of the waulking songs, she continues:

Well, it was about who was over on the island and the land, it mentions Barra, Rum, Eigg, and Canna, and it mentions the Isle of Mull and the women who were working the wool. They were trying to stretch the wool. It is called ‘*luadh*’, big shawls and heavy blankets. It is still done on the island – we do the blanket (ibid.,77).

¹²⁴ Available at www.bbc.co.uk/alba/orain/cainnt_mo_mhatain_gaidhlig my mother’s Gaelic.

¹²⁵ I am differentiating here between those who are sweet singers of any song, who include Mairi Mhol and Patsy Buchanan, from those who do not possess skilled musicianship but know the words of Gaelic songs. Immersed in the culture of the island, I noted who were the ‘good’ singers.

¹²⁶ ‘*Voor*’ is a Gaelic word which relates to the women pounding the cloth. It is pronounced phonetically as ‘*lure*’. The rhythm of the song mirrors the action.

Although Mairi Mhol remembers her mother as the main inspiration of her knowledge and understanding of the memory of Gaelic songs, further on in the interview, she shares her experience of learning from elderly men who lived in the same township:

I was about two or three and living in Bruenish at the time, and there was a man next door to us and he was the first man who taught us all to sing. He would have a few of us sitting on a bench in the house and teaching us all to sing. His name was Ruraidh Ian Bhan. He and Sorley Michael, they were always at us for singing. We didn't think anything of it at the time, we were probably glad to get away from them at that time. We didn't pay any attention, we were too young. A lot of children had good voices and we used to have singing a few times a week. We were taught a different song every time we went up to the group and it was all Gaelic songs. We were always lucky and had Gaelic and I went to school in your house (ibid.,78).

This part of Mairi Mhol's commentary is important because it situates the memory in a community space, a site of memory, because local listeners would recognise the names of Ruairaidh Ian Bahn and Sorley Michael, and by naming the men, she is filtering a moment of learning the indigenous language within a particular timeframe, in effect, a tradition of knowledge: only those who grew up in Bruenish would understand this reference. At such moments, when I was given insightful knowledge of the learning processes, I felt I was being treated with the same respect given to a local. In addition, it describes the Gaelic learning process, which predated school learning. By the time Mairi Mhol arrived at school, she along with others were well versed in Gaelic singing. The enthusiasm of the children to escape from the learning process is funny and generationally universal. In effect, how Mairi remembers the action appeals to a wider older audience but the product of it is specific to the locale. Mairi Mhol 'had Gaelic': the Gaelic language is a local product, a key to unlocking processes that submerged her in a tradition. That tradition is the product and process of Finnegan's 'living practice'. When Mairi Mhol comments on being a 'keeper' of the songs both in their content and the singing processes of them, she acknowledges that she is preserving the past by performing it in the present. Sweetly referred to as 'the olden days', which concurs with Finnegan's analysis that traditions are assumed to date back to antiquity, yet Mairi Mhol's songs are present-day interpretations from her mother and others who would have predated Mairi Mhol by only two or three generations. This raises interesting questions about how traditions from the past cannot be dated; rather, they seem to emerge from the mists of time,

whispered through generations of voices. Voices which Mairi Mhol recognises when she changes from the singular personal pronoun of ‘I’ to ‘we,’ , the transmission of the Barra Gaelic tradition belongs to the community of women who sing the songs.

When I asked Mairi Mhol about family and the Gaelic song tradition, she responded:

I went on the Cape Breton¹²⁷ tour about five years ago to see the relations from the island. We had found one, Peter John MacLean. He was ninety-nine. He was a lovely singer...he was my first cousin of my grandfather on my father’s side. They were relations of ours and they fairly welcomed us...their Gaelic was just as good as ours. They had different songs but they were Barra songs and we only knew the chorus not the verses. It went something like this... ‘Tha Duil agam’...the song is about how they were hoping to come back to Barra to stay but then they got married and they have to stay on the mainland (ibid.,81).

There are not only familial similarities – both great Gaelic singers – but language traditions to show how the Barraich maintained their language despite the gap of thousands of miles. Mairi Mhol’s commentary acknowledges how the music of the islands survived emigration and the distance of thousands of miles. She informed the listeners of her kinship, many of whom would have travelled with her, but the focus is the island’s Gaelic. Singing *Tha Duil Agam*, Mairi Mhol comments on the song’s theme of longing, of hoping to return to the shores of the island. As a ‘keeper’, she acknowledges differences between the Barraich interpretations and those of Cape Breton, small, minuscule differences, which in this site of memory, speak volumes about loss, homecoming, and belonging.

6.3.2.2 Social and Economic tensions

As a ‘keeper’, I asked Mairi Mhol if she had ever performed in the Royal National Mod,¹²⁸ which is a show-case for Gaelic singing and songs:

¹²⁷ When Canada was ‘founded’ in 1867, Gaelic was the third most spoken language (after English and French). Although at one time there were approximately 50,000 Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia, there are only 2,000 Gaelic speakers of varying degrees of fluency in Nova Scotia today (2019), most of whom are second language learners (Nova Scotia Gaelic Affairs 2018) in (MacIntyre et al. 2019:537).

¹²⁸ The Royal National Mod was established in 1882 to preserve and develop the Gaelic language.

I sang in choirs in the Mod. I didn't sing on my own because I didn't want to do it. You couldn't afford to enter on your own (ibid.,79).

For the first time in the interview process, the performance of tradition was linked to structural factors. Despite her musicality, financial hardship prevented Mairi Mhol from showcasing her talents. This barrier raises interesting questions about the value of tradition in relation to class because tradition comes from 'below', from the grassroots of a community and continues to weave its powerful residue irrespective of its lack of ability to respond to dominant structural forces. In terms of the local, Mairi Mhol possessed culture capital but that was not reflected in the 'Royal Mod' performances. This introduces layers of research questioning the assumption that the indigenous Gaelic-speaking communities are one community. Mairi Mhol's words suggest they are not. Language may be shared but the ability to perform and receive honours from the royally endorsed institution of the Mod is not. Gaelic communities are reflections of the organisational structure of wider society and, as such, are hallmarked by an unequal distribution of resources. Tradition as a process and traditions as products are reflections of the hegemonic control of society.

6.3.2.3 Songs and their preservation

Similarly, Mairi Mhol's words are echoed in the late Patsy Buchanan's:

I never entered the Mod...The Mod wasn't so big then and there wasn't any financial help or anything...you just plodded along and that was it. (Buchanan, 2016:194)

Like Mairi Mhol, Patsy attributes her singing voice to a female member of her family,

My great auntie, Mary Morrison, was a great singer, so I suppose I got the music through her as well. (ibid.,195)

Earlier in the interview, after singing '*Faillaidh O' Lo*,'¹²⁹ Patsy describes the content of the song and how her singing career developed alongside other singers and musicians who are known in the 'local' Gaelic world,

¹²⁹ This is a local Barra Gaelic song.

Most Gaelic songs are love songs. It is about a young lad who has gone to sea and left his loved one behind him, but, unfortunately, he died and never came back. Most of the Gaelic love songs are about sailors and tragic accidents that happen to them. Chrissie Mary MacDonald from Eoligarry and I sang for years together in Northbay Hall. Many a ceilidh we sang at in Castlebay Hall, and all over the island as well. I wasn't a professional singer, just an ordinary Gaelic singer from Barra. Manys a time I sang over in Vatersay and over in Castlebay School with the Vatersay Boys...I used to sing with Iain McDonald all over Uist, Eriskay, and wherever he played, and that wasn't yesterday. Manys a tune Iain MacLaughlin could play; he was a fantastic accordionist. I have been on the radio and television...I used to sing with Fergie MacDonald and sang with him from Barra to North Uist and the Carinish Hall (ibid.,194).

Patsy's description of the places firmly puts her in the local townships and villages and although she refers to herself as 'just an ordinary Gaelic singer', she is not because she later she adds she has been recorded on television and radio. Patsy's description of the various places of her performances allows the researcher to gain knowledge of her singing and the extent of their popularity in local townships. Her performances were enjoyed throughout the islands as she travelled the island archipelago singing songs of the Gaelic culture. Access to this rich knowledge reinforces Geertz's local interpretation of culture because local voices shape the conceptualisation of tradition. Furthermore, Patsy delights the listeners by telling them:

I can read, write, sing, and speak Gaelic...it is really, important to me. I grew up speaking Gaelic at home and all my children speak it (ibid.,195).

Patsy is proud of her indigenous Gaelic traditions, which she learned at home, and she celebrates all her four children conversing fluently. Her repetitive use of the auxiliary adverb 'really' strongly affirms this ongoing pride and confidence, not only in her own learning abilities but in those of her children. By 'passing on the past', she is involved in the process where, Shils and Malinowski argued, the conceptualisation of tradition is to be found. The twinning of the process and product of Finnegan's 'living practice' is exemplified in Gaelic because it encapsulates both while it simultaneously endorses a sense of identity. Not only does Patsy revel in her own achievements, but like Mairi Mhol she recognised her responsibility to conserve the knowledge of the local island traditions and at the time of the interview, she was visiting the older generation in the Cobhair Bharraigh. This is what she said:

I go to the Cobhair Bharraigh to see the old folk and sing to them. I get their songs off them and I write them down, then Morag Robertson or Maria put them in a folder for the next generation. I just jot them down as they remember them. Being able to write them down is good. They are in their heads, really old, old songs...they sing verses of beautiful Barra tunes and one day I sat there with a man and wrote twenty-six verses of a song, verses that would have been lost. (ibid.,197)

Patsy's contribution to preserving her language for the 'next generation is written down in case it disappears. This acknowledges that she knows she is taking part in history, documenting information which will inform future generations how the present-day generation interpreted the fragility of the oral transmission of the indigenous Barra Gaelic. She passes on the past in the words sounds and speech patterns. Since the interview and writing, Patsy has died, but the book of her songs is still there for the next generation.

6.3.2.4 Gaelic Language and Drama

However, it is incorrect to assume that all islanders are Gaelic singers. Other interviewees described how they maintained their language traditions through other performances. Mairi a Welder is an active member of the island's drama club and one of the main writers. She acknowledges the power of interaction and the responsibility of her generation to pass the tradition on:

Drama, I think, helps the young ones to understand the language because you need to interact to make sense of it (MacKinnon, 2016:54).

Mairi a' Welder's words suggest a sense of generational responsibility. Drama passes a knowledge of how to construct the Gaelic language in everyday, ordinary conversation and Mairi feels its benefits are more far-reaching than learning through songs. At the time of the interview, Castlebay Hall was preparing to perform the history of the Eoligarry Raiders. Eoligarry is in the northeast of the island. She says:

Everyone comes out for a drama. The last one was about Eoligarry and after having the exhibition at the Dualchas about the raids at Eoligarry, we thought it would be good to produce a drama. The play gave the side of the MacGillivrays living there. They didn't treat people very well at all, and that was the truth of it.

It was very hard for the island people. So, after World War I, the people just rose up and demanded some land. (ibid., 55)

The drama told the story of the government, forced to take possession of the land so as to issue island people with crofts. The dominant narrative of the play is presented from the landowner's perspective; thus, the islanders appear as landless underdogs. Donald Manford's interview describes the land allocation process which took place in Eoligarry,

I was born on the north end of the island, in 'Stupid Street', that's the old name for the road where my parents and grandparents lived. My people were expected to be given land when they returned from the First World War. Effectively they were not given the island they were promised so they squatted along the shoreline, building shacks and makeshift houses. At the 'big house', the gentry would discuss this and refer to the islanders as 'stupid' (Manford, 2016:135).

In the production of Mairi a' Welder's drama, a synchronic narrative exposes the structural inequalities of society and cleverly weaves the radical actions of the previous generations into traditions of the island community. Radical tradition is, of course, paradoxical because it is oxymoronic.

In concurring with Calhoun that tradition is radical, I agree it challenges the hegemonic representation of culture by passing on processes and products locally and generationally. Conclusively, it passes on a web of values which transmit culture orally in parallel with dominant written narratives. Its power is far-reaching because it can respond dynamically in a local context. It exemplifies radical action and normalises those actions into 'ways of life', Bourdieu's habitus. The normalising process is positive for any small community because it maintains its own identity underneath the dominant forces of the hegemony. Tradition counter-intuitively masks radicalism, and in the generational process of interpretation and reinterpretation, it passes from the radical generation to the next generation, the real beneficiaries, who normalise it as the habitus and who pass it onto future generations as a tradition, which is a process and a product of the past.

This is further exemplified in Mairi a' Welder's response to my question about the importance of Gaelic because she states that 'all our culture' is based on the language. Therefore, arguably radical social processes have been subsumed into the core of the language. Mairi a' Welder describes her interpretation of the language tradition and how it is different from English,

Gaelic is very important. Well, it was our first language, and it is much more expressive. You can express yourself much better in our language than in English. We feel that anyway. I think there are more adjectives in Gaelic than there are in English. Say, for example, beautiful. Well, there is ‘snog’ and ‘breagtha,’ those sorts of words. And of course, all our culture is based on the Gaelic language (ibid.:51).

Mairi a’ Welder’s love of Gaelic and her identity expressed through her language is ‘very important’. The personal plural pronouns of ‘our’ and ‘we’ suggest she is speaking not only as herself but for the community. Gaelic is like all other traditions community shared. She differentiates between English and Gaelic by providing examples of the number of adjectives used in Gaelic to describe ‘beautiful.’ The wily characters from Compton Mackenzie’s famous text, *Whisky Galore*,¹³⁰ echo this when the character of Captain MacKechnie asks the Sergeant Major if he knows what ‘sonas’ means,

Sonas means happiness. It is a much prettier word for happiness, don’t you think yourself, Sarchant? Sonas! But the Gaelic is a much better lankwitch than Inklisch. Do you know this? There is four hundred ways of saying ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in Gaelic. Look at that now. Think of the convenience of such a lankwich. Have another dram. (MacKenzie, 1959: 169)

Although the written words of Compton Mackenzie have reached a bigger audience (Marxist feminist analysis would highlight patriarchal and class differences) than the women’s voices, it is their oral transmission of the community’s response to the traditions which is useful for the researcher aiming to conceptualise the meaning of tradition. In a way, Mairi a’ welder’s knowledge of the adjectival phrases highlights the expansiveness of the language: ‘all of the culture’ is based on it. Gaelic finds new ways to express complicated ideological and historical changes to their habitus, as noted in their story of the Eoligarry and Vatersay Raiders. It is an acknowledgement of the emancipatory principles which forced the establishment of the Crofters’ Holding Act (Scotland) in 1886.

¹³⁰ The famous fictional account of the looting of the *SS Politician* of 50,000 cases of whisky. The dedication of the novel is as follows: ‘To all my dear friends in Barra in grateful memory of much kindness and much laughter through many happy years’ (1947).

Mairi Mhol, Patsy Buchanan, and Mairi a' Welder are gatekeepers. They carry a responsibility in their performances. The researcher can elicit information about how the past influences the present and how the past interprets the dominant hegemonic processes. The Eoligarry drama production is an example of the island community looking back on its own past from memories which have been shaped by its hegemonic processes. The core products of those processes are in the traditions that language constructs and which the culture maintains. The *Barra Island Discs* interview created a space that allowed the women to 'articulate their cultural differences' (Bhabha, 1994:36) and, in so doing, took 'from below' island voices and presented them to a new global audience connected by the island's community radio.

6.3.3 Crofting Traditions

Coull, in his studies on the sea fisheries of Scotland, makes the point, that 'they maintained an interest in the land' (1996:38). However, the verb 'maintained' is a misnomer because it masks the fact that the croft land exists because of centuries of struggle against exploitative landlordism and forced large-scale emigration: it is a community which has taken what has always been rightfully theirs (Hunter, 2000:20). The relationship of the islanders to their crofts is based on them and their families having worked the land, gathering the means to build the homes and occupying it all their days: 'They have received it from their ancestors who won it from the wilderness, and they cherish the hope that they will transmit it to the generations to come' (ibid.:281).

Like the indigenous Gaelic language, land, and the crofting traditions of it, are fiercely protected by the community and they are threaded through families (and sometimes friends) and generationally passed on. Despite the epochal changes of the rise and fall of capitalism,¹³¹ the islanders' relationship to land and its identity speaks of a language which reaches into Grabum's reservoir of tradition (2001:209). Michael Buchanan of Borve, elected by the

¹³¹ The MacNeill Letters, 1805-1825, provide a chronicle of this (Campbell, 1936:115), as does the rest of the chapter citing documents of evidence into the islanders' suffering during periods of emigration, starvation and disease. The Vatersay Raiders also chronicles the crofting development on the islands of both Barra and Vatersay (2012).

township to present the crofters' voices to The Napier Commission of 1883,¹³² makes the following point:

The people are complaining of the smallness of their holding and its inferior quality...before 1827 (General MacNeil of Barra had gone bankrupt resulting in the first large farm), the island of Barra was almost always occupied by crofters, who lived comfortably and contentedly in possession of reasonably large crofts... (Campbell, 1936:179)

Michael Buchanan's words illuminate the desperate need for land so people can produce food to live. His words are emphatic but also poetic. His word choice in the final line – the vowel repetition of 'almost always' and the consonant 'c' –reinforces the community's need to hold on to the crofting way of life. His language makes the commission listen to his description of a tradition, the way life on the island before the MacNeil of Barra decimated the community to increase profits. This raises an interesting point because crofting traditions already existed and were communicated in the Gaelic language of the community. Hunter makes the point that 'the last bastion of Scottish Gaelic and culture associated with it is to be found the greater part of all the land held under crofting tenure' (1995:3).

Donald Campbell, a crofter from Craigston, claimed:

If I allowed my son or daughter to remain even in the stable, they would deprive me of my holding...They have left us so poor that when the children of the poor man grew up, not one of them could remain assisting the father. They would be required to earn wages and never return. They sent away most to relatives to America, thirty-five years ago. They pulled down the houses over their head and injured them in every possible way. They valued the brutes higher... (Campbell, 1936: 188)

The familial link is the focus of Donald Campbell's words. The traditions of crofting are linked to a bigger discourse of the break-up of the family due to poverty and forced emigration. Lack

¹³² Known as the Napier Commission, the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Conditions of Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands was chaired by Lord Napier. It was formed because of agitation, high rents rent strikes, and the lack of tenure and rights to land. The committee visited the Hebrides first so the Barra men were among the first to be recorded.

of croft land evokes imagery of new lives in new lands. Furthermore, Campbell's words are echoed in Mairi Mhol's songs of the loss of the island's culture.

6.3.3.1 A Feel for Crofting

For Jimmy Ferguson, the experience of those traditions relates to the change of livestock traditions:

Crofting in general means you need to look after the animals, you need to have a feel for it, you need to enjoy it. I had cattle and pigs, but the feed stuff was so expensive they are now gone, and there are no dairy cows on the land, maybe there was years ago but not during my time...all the cattle are for beef and breeding calves... (Ferguson, 2016: 32)

Jimmy's interpretation of the tradition of crofting relates to looking after animals, his livestock. Jimmy was known on the island as an excellent crofter. He spent most of his spare time out in the fresh air tending sheep and pigs. But, similar to Michael Buchanan's problem as stated to the Napier Commission, Jimmy could not sustain a living from crofting alone. He worked part-time in the Barratlantic fish processing factory. There are noted similarities in the narratives of Jimmy and Michael Buchanan because each describes how hard it is to exist as a crofter alone. Jimmy's focus is on livestock and the amount of money required to sustain a living from the tradition. He tells the listeners he just knew how to do crofting: 'You need to have a feel for it, you need to enjoy it'. The repetitive use of the auxiliary verb 'need' suggests that 'it' is indeed heavy work. In the synchronic meaning of Jimmy's words, there is a loud echo of the island's voices reverberating down through the mists of time.

6.3.3.2 Discourse of Crofting as an Artistic Expression

Present-day lifestory narratives carry forward voices of the past and the *Barra Island Discs* interviews reflect a celebration of how crofting traditions have preserved a way of life associated with crofting. Donnie MacNeil, a drummer in the island's famous band, The Watersay Boys, reaches into his past to explain the significance of it. In this one sentence, he temporally bridges the traditions of the past into the present and onto the future,

When I was about twenty my dad got a croft and he gave it to me and when I came to Barra, I saw life on Barra as creating something for future generations... (MacNeil, 2016:71)

Donnie's linear narrative evokes the tradition voiced by Donald Campbell. His recollection brings to the fore the father-son relationship which is part of the crofting tradition. His relocation from Glasgow to Barra cemented a desire to be part of a tradition passed on from 'my dad', who had to leave the island to find employment never to return. In the above sentence, there are five personal pronouns used that personalise his engagement and his sense of self, his identity with the crofting tradition. There is a sense of fortuitousness: he has received a gift of something far greater than a possession, he has been gifted a way of life which will be 'creating' something for the future. The juxtaposition between the tradition of using the land to grow necessary foodstuffs such as 'planting potatoes' foreshadows the creation of setting up the island's most popular band, 'The Vatersay Boys'.

I met Michael Campbell over in Vatersay. It was Hughie Sinclair who introduced us. Michael was out planting potatoes and I was helping Hughie plant his potatoes and he said, 'This is Michael, he is a box player.' That's when Michael came into the band, the day we were planting potatoes...'¹³³ (Ibid.,73)

Repetitive poetic sound techniques in the plosive sounding 'planting potatoes' unearths his awareness of the traditions of crofting and his artistic language encapsulates the process and product of Finnegan's 'living practice'. The tradition of 'planting potatoes' is a rhythmic performance expressed in the earlier songs performed by Mairi Mhol and Patsy Buchanan. He insists that the band, The Vatersay Boys, began on that day because the accordion player Michael Campbell (nicknamed Michael DD, grandson of one of the imprisoned Vatersay Raiders) joined. The band's interpretation of the island's music is closely woven together in Donnie's narrative. In effect, he constructs a culture web which reshapes the crofting traditions of the past into an artistic creative performance in the present. The gift, then, that Donnie receives from his dad is culture, which he capitalises on, Bourdieu's culture capital. The subsequent success of the band is part of the emergence from the 1980s onwards of Gaelic

¹³³ The Barra tradition of planting potatoes is noted in the Old Statistical Account (OSA) 1771-1779 (Sir John Sinclair, ed., Volume XX). The Reverend Edward McQueen describes the unique 'lazy bed' method, 'They lay their potatoes for the most part in lazy beds in the following manner. Ist the mark out a ridge of about four feet wide, then lay the manure and with a spade cover it with earth taken from the furrow, in this state it remains until the beginning of April, when they begin to plant the potatoes by means of a dibble, or pointed stick with which to penetrate the earth thus laid on, (making a whole to receive the feed), then break the earth with a hand rake which serves the purpose of harrowing; this is a more tedious operation than laying the plant upon the manure before it is covered in earth, but it is the only method that can be used on their meadows...' (1936:56)

bands and Celtic supergroups (MacIntyre et al., 2019). The potato¹³⁴ he was busy planting is a metaphor that describes the success of the band both locally and nationally.

6.3.3.3 Women and Crofting

Many women on the island have crofts. Peggy McCormack's narrative, like Donnie's, highlights the familial relationship to crofting:

We have a croft in Earsary. We used to have sheep but we no longer have them...but we do have peat and my son cuts it...there's a croft in Eoligarry and that is the main croft where I was brought up. I inherited it from my brother and I passed it on to my son...Crofting is really important, but you can't sort of live off it. When my parents were living down there, my father had to go to sea and earn his living that way. You couldn't exist on the croft alone; but it is such a wonderful way of life (McCormack, 2016: 132).

For Peggy, crofting tradition is closely associated with family. In the first two sentences of the commentary, the repetitive use of the plural personal pronoun 'we' closely associates crofting with the family. She continues with this theme by exemplifying the inheritance principle passing through the tradition, from her brother to her son. There is a patrilineal suggestion that the performative action earlier described in Donnie and Jimmy's narrative makes crofting seem like 'men's work'. Peggy's croft in Eoligarry, which she remembers being issued to her parents, appears in her narrative as a male domain. Yet it would have been Peggy's mother who looked after the croft while her father worked in the Merchant Navy. Peggy's experience sums up the habitus in the evocative plosive sounding 'a wonderful way of life.'

There is a patrilineal thread running through the crofting narrative which could be further explored to consider the role of women because they are involved in maintaining the traditions but unfortunately the narratives relating to them erase their role. In the recently publicised

¹³⁴ Every year in Castlebay Bar, the island celebrates the potato in an artistic competition, with prizes offered for such entries as the 'Best Dressed Potato'. The Vatersay Boys play music in the background. Donnie MacNeil was one of the founders of the competition.

photographic archives of social photographer Margaret Fay Shaw,¹³⁵Mackenzie (2019) focuses on how Shaw depicted women working the crofts. She includes Fay Shaw's words:

The spring work of the croft began in February, when seaweed, used as a fertiliser, was cut with a saw-toothed sickle...then the year closes with all the harvest work done, the women wash and card the wool and start the spinning wheels. (2019)

Those words are a prose-like representation of the songs of Mairi Mhol. The difference between the written form accompanying the photographs and the song form of Mairi Mhol is social and reflective of the 'othering' of the islanders' traditions by an 'outsider'. Mairi Mhol's songs are used by the women to ease the burden of the hardship of the toil of crofting whereas Fay Shaw, with her bourgeois intentionality, 'others' the process of crofting. There is a layer of structural contradiction which brings into focus the contradictions inherent in the women and the class agenda of Marxism feminism. Fay Shaw's archive makes women crofters visible in a world where there is an absence. Ritchie picks this up in her ongoing blog when she comments on MacPhail's 2002 research and Abrams 2005 research:

Female crofters rarely appear as such in government records or in most history books. Despite women frequently running crofts single-handedly, 'crofter' is equated with 'man'. (2017)

This is exemplified in Hunter's postscript to his work *The Making of the Crofting Community: The Crofting Community Today*, when he repeatedly refers to the crofting community in male terms. Note the repetition of the male possessive pronoun 'his' to define the past crofting tradition and its future (2000:207).

One of the enriching processes of ethnographic writing is that it exposes structural contradictions which require further research. Gender is part of the discourse of difference. It features in the next section on naming.

6.3.4 Tradition of Naming

From the research, I learned that the onomastic process of naming was very important, and I had asked Mairi Mhol and Mairi a' Welder during their hour-long interview to explain the

¹³⁵ Margaret Fay Shaw was an American folklorist and photographer who became the wife of John Lorne Campbell.

significance of their names. Their first names are the Gaelic pronunciation of Mary taken from Our Lady, pronounced ‘Maarry’, stressing and lengthening the soft vowel sound, and this is shared with lots of other cultures who venerate the Virgin Mary. Both women are known by their ‘second’ name, which is a nickname. On the island, nicknames are an established tradition but unless someone explains their meaning, one would have no understanding of who is who and why they are addressed by such names. Nicknames are unofficial names, which sit beneath the official hegemonic process of naming. If one considers the process of naming internationally, there are many areas which use nicknames to differentiate from official names. In Brazil, for example, little regard is paid to official names. N nicknames are given to describe the type of person a mother thinks her child will be, conferred usually if the child survives the birthing process (Scheper-Hughes, 1992:438). Similarly, nicknames are part of the naming process of the Tallensi tribe (Fortes,1987). But in Barra, the process is different. In a small island community, where many people share the same name, people are distinguished by nicknames: it is an unofficial process of naming which spins a community in webs of significance.

Mairi Mhol explains the island processes:

Nicknames are important. It is just a habit of the islands. If someone says I want to speak to Lianne MacNeil (Mairi’s daughter), she is nicknamed ‘Ippa’ and will only answer to that but won’t answer to Lianne MacNeil...Even in the Phoney Book,¹³⁶ you will see all these Macs and a stranger would wonder who all these names are. You need the nicknames to differentiate the people...My father, God rest him, was called Mhol¹³⁷, I heard he was called this because he used to take pebbles and throw them at people...All my brothers were called after my dad; that is a tradition to be called after their dad...(MacNeil. 2016:78)

¹³⁶ Barra Phoney Book is the island’s telephone directory, published by the Third Sector, Voluntary Action Barra, and Vatersay (VABV). Of the names in the 2013 directory, the name MacNeil make up 18% of the names listed and 54% of all the Mac surnames. There are more than twice as many MacNeils as there are MacLeans and MacKinnons.

¹³⁷ In Gaidhlig, the word for pebbles, like shingle, is ‘mol’, but the pronunciation of this would sound very clumsy as in Mairi Mol. By adding the consonant ‘h’ the word is lengthened, and thereafter pronounced as ‘Voll’. Mairi did not comment on this.

Mairi Mhol's explanation develops key points that embrace and offer localised interpretations of the habitus. In the opening sentence, she refers to the 'importance' of the process and informs the listeners that it is a 'habit' and then further exemplifies this by describing how her daughter will only respond to her nickname 'Ippa'. Additionally, the reasons why differentiation occurs is explained because too many people share the same surname. Hence, it is a tradition to nickname people. Her own name is a further example because without the 'Mhol' being added to her name, she would be indistinguishable from many other Mairis who live on the island. In the process of exploring her nickname, she unconsciously unmask a patrilineal line when she lays claim to it: 'it is a tradition for the boys to be called after their dad.' However, everyone in Mairi's family is called Mhol. Furthermore, all members of Mairi's family are known as the 'Mhols', effectively identifying the family forever with the blacksmith of Grean. Mairi Mhol's father's nickname is a way of commemorating Mairi's father's contribution to the culture of the island. It is a tradition that Geertz refers to as changing 'anybodies' into 'somebodies' (1973:363).

Mairi a' Welder comments further exemplify the traditional onomastic process:

On Barra, I am known as Mairi a' Welder because I think my dad had a welding plant when he came back to Barra to live and it was easier then calling us anything else because there were so many MacKinnons. It was a nickname. My brothers are called Doo-da a' Welder, Murdo a' Welder, and Donald a' Welder and that is how we are listed in the Barra Phoney Book. (MacKinnon 2016:50)

The fathers of both women were employed in heavy industries essential to the maintenance of fishing vessels, and I would argue that the tradition of keeping their industrious past alive in their children, as well as differentiating themselves from other families, is due to it conferring a form of respect, acknowledging the contribution the men made to the community. Anthropologists have always regarded the naming process as a means of situating a person within a community and the words spoken by the islanders have explained the relationship of a symbolic structure of naming that situates the identity of a person in a tradition shared by a community. The island name association forever situates both women in a patrilineal process, bound to a name which celebrates a patriarchal division of labour. This is interesting because both women have made quite a significant contribution to the health and wellbeing of the community by nursing and caring in St. Brendan's, the island's hospital. Neither of the women complained to me about their names. In fact, they took great pride in explaining how the

employment history and escapades of their fathers were traditionally a means of differentiating between the different families that shared the same surname, which means that they were embodied in a local system of kinship that classified them as island families wedded to the past experience of the islands.

But in my role as researcher, with an awareness of the discursive space-time created by the emancipatory role of equality and discrimination, I had a responsibility to engage in the dialect of the structural contradictions inherent in the social processes of traditions, particularly, if in doing so, it unmask deeply rooted gender inequalities. Anthropologically, the process of naming is significant because the power of a name plays a critical role in social life. As noted above and in other reading (Mauss, 1985; Levi-Strauss, 1966; Bramwell, 2007; Dorian, 1970; Hewett, 1982), names provide social status, symbolic capital, religious affiliation, kinship, and geographical origins. In addition, they also arguably delineate gender relations within a community. Imposing my knowledge and understanding on emic processes of tradition, processes that Mairi Mhol and Mairi a' Welder are fiercely proud of, in some ways negates the sense of value that culture capital has placed upon them. As a radio interviewer and the person across the sound desk, I feel as if I am faced with an insider/outsider dilemma because I am inside a circle of community trust and I celebrate the origins of their sense of identity, but as an ethnographer, I cannot help but analyse the gender inequalities of the naming process and note that it is a process which devalues Mairi Mhol's and Mairi a' Welder's contributions to the culture of island life.

But gender is an important aspect of culture, and therefore it is a way of looking at discriminatory practice within the language of traditional processes. Interestingly, during my recording of the lifestory of the late Gaelic comedian, Norman MacLean, his story made me think about who has the power to confer nicknames. Is it an extension of the patrilineal or is it patriarchal? And if so, does that mean that by exploring onomastic nicknaming traditions, a subtle gender inequality is prevalent? Norman had come to Barra to gain work as a film extra during the filming of *Rockets Galore*.¹³⁸ Norman, a Uisteach, (Gaelic name to describe someone from Uist) was encouraged by his student friend from Glasgow University, Ruraidh

¹³⁸ *Rockets Galore* is a film sequel to *Whisky Galore* and was filmed on the island in 1959. It starred well-known actors such as Jeanne Carson and the more famous Hollywood actor Donald Sinden, as well as a host of actors who had starred in the original film.

Pheter (who lived in the Glen township in Barra), to come over during the Easter holidays to make some money. Norman says:

I went over with Ruraidh Pheter in 1958, in Easter. What was happening then was an Ealing comedy, *Rockets Galore*, starring Jeannie something or other and Donald Sinden. Now I thought this was ...you know the Barra boys are really keen on nicknames, and for a full week I was under the distinct impression that Donald Sinden came from Cuithir (west side of island) or from Brevig (east side) or something, that he was just another one of the Barra boys, but no, he was a film star. (MacLean, 2016:21)

The interesting aspect of Norman's hilarious retelling of his visit to Barra to make money is beautifully woven together with references to recognising the power of the 'Barra boys' to confer nicknames. He develops his awareness of the tradition by telling of his clumsy attempts to mistakenly ingratiate himself with the film star, Donald Sinden. who he wrongly assumed was a local island boy differentiated by the nickname 'SinDen'. The word choice is clever because Norman is suggesting that this Donald had been nicknamed because of the 'sin' he had committed in his 'den'! Norman's knowledge backfires when he speaks to the film star. Although Norman is a fluent Gaelic speaker, he is not in the webs of the significance of the community of Barra. But he still feels, as a male, that he has the power to engage in the onomastic process of nicknaming.

Nicknaming on the island provides a social context for the process and product of Finnegan's 'living practice'. It is a practice defined by Bourdieu's habitus, a practice which is emic, a codification which connects different families to the island's history and culture. It is so powerful that if one is outside the circle of community, one is perplexed by name references to the 'Flycatcher', 'Screech', 'Glow', 'Squeal', 'Coppertop', 'Skinny', 'Jukebox', 'Toots', and 'Ippa'. Desperate to belong to this island community and share in its tradition, I loved the intimate shared complicity, the secret familiarity of knowing the names because in that moment I too was held in a web of significance which I enjoyed until 2014. Arguably, it was an inclusive sense of kinship, a social matrix of symbolism, a powerful language celebrating difference that those outside the boundaries could not access.

However, as a researcher, the awareness of the gender difference between those of the 'Barra boys' and those of women carries a social responsibility. If one thinks, as I do, that research must contribute to slacking the shackles of female oppression by pushing the boundaries of

knowledge, it is imperative to understand the persuasiveness of the power of the patriarchy in maintaining inequality in the ‘unofficial’ naming processes. Consider the difference: ‘the boys’ being conferred with almost mythical superhero qualities, strengthening their masculinity, whereas the women’s nicknames lessened their sense of self, making them mere adjuncts to male supremacy.

Bramwell’s onomastic research (2007) notes the patronymic and metronymic significance of the naming process in the Gaelic communities. This complements Dorian’s linguistic research a few decades earlier with the Gaelic-speaking fisher folk in East Sutherland (1970). Both employ taxonomic methodologies that select and differentiate the processes. Dorian notes the difficulty she had using nicknames because she did not know whether the nomenclature was offensive. This lack of knowledge, a detachment inherent in their methodological narrative, creates a sense of ‘othering’ that fails to appreciate the interactional personal processes of the onomastic tradition, the significance of the phenomenological processes of meaning and its synchronic impact on the cultural identity of a community. As such, the power of the nickname is lost. Their research outcomes exemplify the categorising of the onomastic process; however, the cultural significance is lost. In addition, Dorian’s research refers to Gaelic speakers as ‘natives’ (1970:306) and the connotations of this imagery are difficult to filter. Research methodologies reflect a temporal difference and, consequently, self-reflexive research highlights the product and processes of the experiential of oral transmission. Its discourse is based on the spoken language and the meaning of the dialogical interaction.

6.4 Conclusion to Part Two

By contextualising traditions from the linear narratives of the older generation, I was able to locate the content of the lifestories with the past and understand their diachronicity across time. Traditions, orally transmitted in lifestory narratives, present a different view than the one afforded in the grand narrative of Barra (Chapter Four). This difference between the objectivity of the dominant power relations meant that the stories told during my interviews reflected a community’s synchronic interpretation of their culture or, indeed, Bourdieu’s ‘systems of predispositions’ (1990:46): they explained why things are the way they are. Because oral lifestory narratives include both collective and personal memory, they are a rich source of data for communicating their own culture in their own words. The experience of ordinary language is a unique source.

Language like life itself surges forward but leaves behind a residue interpreted as a way of life once lived. The process of tradition then is twofold; one is it moves forward to find new meaning in the spaces of the interstices of a historically specific time. But it also leaves behind a detailed record of the way life was. For the researcher, tradition is important because it allows one to look through a contextualised cultural lens and interpret how knowledge has been shaped from past lives in the present day. It is the process of phenomenology: it occupies a unique moment in time and this is the point that Giddens makes. A community finds shared meaning from the language interaction of those who lived before. Language and its interpretation and reinterpretation are a significant part of that process. The temporal metamorphosis of tradition in language influences culture because culture is language.

Language consists of symbolic signs that reflect society at a historically specific time. Social organisation and practice are reflected in the everyday speech patterns of all members of a community. However, to interpret the cultural significance of social organisation, local ordinary voices provide meaning. Culture defines how a community expresses itself; it is then in the expression of its story-telling processes rich in the knowledge of its traditions. This localises the interpretation and places culture firmly within the community. It also makes tradition a process of performative collective action. Focusing on a localised analysis of the language as it interacts to produce meaning gives the researcher an in-depth view of how the ordinary, the voices from below, construct and define their traditions in lifestory form. The beauty of the form is that it can unselfconsciously express culture from the knowledge and identity of the past. In addition, this process became a product because of the space of intersection. Located in a local comfortable space of their own environment, the radical process of the radio interview of *Barra Island Discs* allowed Barra's local voices to share their story of life with a community audience who already knew it. Adopting Finnegan's 'living practice' as a methodological approach, the language of the ordinary yields rich gifts. Individually presented collective memories make the linear lifestory narrative form a multi-layered research source from which thematic extracts can be conceptualised to explore traditions and identity while simultaneously giving meaning to the relational concept of culture. Tradition is a complex, paradoxical concept, which weaves temporally between the past and present. It contributes significantly to culture.

6.5 Future Academic Research Areas and Policy Recommendations

My thesis has highlighted areas of relevance for future research proposals. I have linked them to existing national plans for island communities so as to recommend policy improvements.

Academic Research

1. Research into Community Radio and why it is becoming increasingly popular not only globally but in Scotland and its significance as tool for community empowerment.
2. Consider activities currently operating with the aged population in island communities and conceptualise research culturally to find out why they encourage successful, resilient ageing. What do cross-generational activities reflect for successful and resilient ageing and the lessons that can be learned from them.
3. Women's role in island communities and their contribution to successful crofting.

Above are research proposals which could positively impact on policy recommendations for the future National Islands Plan, based on their 2022 projections. They recognise that investing in research creates change, hence empowering communities to invest in all their populations.¹³⁹

Table 3 below indicates the outcomes of policy recommendations benefitting from future research proposals.

Research Areas	National Islands Plan Route 2022	Policy Recommendations and Outcomes
1	<p>Strategy Objective 2</p> <p>Sustainable Economic Development</p> <p>Strategy Objective 11</p>	<p>Use Digital Productivity Fund to bring expertise to island communities and train young people in new technologies to further employment opportunities and retain youth populations on islands. Use new training to invest in cultural arts development to ensure Scotland's</p>

¹³⁹ Noting that in the national investment plan links investment only to the younger population, it would be more equitable if investment included the ageing population of the older population. This takes cognisance of the cultural gifts the older generation.

		islands have a wide audience, both nationally and abroad.
2	Strategy Objective 1, 7 Health Social Care and Wellbeing	Invest in successful grassroots community projects which promote successful and resilient ageing by employing the talents listed above so there is a greater cross-generational activity. Benefits: It invests in a trained workforce and empowers the older generation, which creates cross generational cultural dialogue and maintains the Gaelic language, stories and songs of the community.
3	Strategic Objective 2 (see above)	In addition to supporting women's participation in agriculture, record their stories of past, present and projected future success at crofting.

6.5.1 My Theoretical and Methodological Contribution to Knowledge

Theoretically, I have contributed by considering the narrative differences of age. I have exemplified the impact age has on the linearity of narrative construction. This is significant because it shows that age is an important variable when looking at cultural interpretations. In effect, age and culture cannot be separated. Applying the differences of linearity between the younger and older generation exposes how they interact differently with culture and how language means different things to different generations.

Methodologically, I have explored in the autoethnographic telling of my story as it interconnects with the lifestories of others how community radio can be used as a vehicle for

exploring culture in the local. The experientiality of the local means that culture is to be found in the language of the ordinary.

7 Conclusion: Interpreting Culture From Lifestory Narratives

In concluding my thesis, I want to consider the ways I achieved my original aims and objectives. Generally, my project argued how lifestory narratives as a form of oral history provided an effective and meaningful way to represent an interpretation of culture.

I have presented a collection of lifestory narratives gathered during my five-year volunteering post as a radio show host on Siar FM, the community radio station on Barra, in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland. From the language of those narratives, I gained an insight into the culture of an island community and constructed an interpretation of that culture. My methods allowed me to conceptualise community, tradition, and identity from an interdisciplinary perspective taken from the disciplines of anthropology, literary criticism, and sociology. The phenomenological journey has been an enlightening exploration of fluid, labyrinthine research processes. What followed was a reflective summary of those processes, coupled with a discourse on how the application of enhanced phenomenological understanding impacted my narratives. In a way, the more I learned, the more meaning I found in my radio show interviews until they had metamorphosed into lifestory narratives, narratives, that when critically analysed presented significant symbolic generational and gender differences. The learning process became a discourse of temporality, where meaning for the lifestory narratives was found from their own historical specificity, a synchronic record of their present life from memories of their past.

I have developed from a volunteer community radio host into a fledging doctoral researcher and learned the significance of the difference in the meaning of etic and emic. This important distinction between outsider and insider impacted every aspect of my analyses. Writing self-reflexively, I tried to overcome 'Malinowski's dilemma'. Similar to Barre Toelken of 'The Yellowman Tapes' and Bruce Miller, who champions the use of oral history in the courts of Canada to protect the land rights of the indigenous peoples, the etic and emic have foreshadowed my cultural interpretations. Throughout the research processes, I grappled with the exploitative aspect of using radio lifestories because I benefitted by gaining insights, an academic understanding of the conceptualising processes of theory and practice, and a greater knowledge and understanding of the world around me. However, I respected the voices by presenting them as stories rather than as functional linguistic units of language, so my guests

were woven into my doctoral journey, their names and voices became part of it. Collectively, they benefitted too because their voices are part of the contribution I have made to the field of narrative analysis of lifestories. By generationally comparing the linear and nonlinear lifestory narrative form, I have shown the significance of the difference in age. This small but important step adds a phenomenological layer of knowledge.

Significantly, my project has shown how a ‘grassroots’ cultural experience can be used as a method for examining and exploring academic concepts in a meaningful way. At its heart is the symbolic use of the language of personal narrative. Like the lifestories, it flows continually throughout the body of the thesis beating the steady rhythm of culture. The democratic nature of oral history, which provides an example of ‘voices from below’, was further complemented because of how the voices were gathered on community radio. It provided a counter public space where islanders could chat hegemonic free about their lives because community radio is free from commercial input and non-market social networks.

7.1 Aims and Objectives Revisited

My initial aim was to show that the community voices could provide an interpretation of culture. Culture is defined by multiple discourses of social life. I investigated the terms of these discourses while simultaneously creating my own critical discourse on the processes which is presented here. I interpreted culture using Fairclough’s method of critical discourse analysis because this allowed me to justify and argue that the content and form of my lifestory narratives from the community radio were qualitative exemplars of culture. As such the voices and space were ‘hegemony free’ because they emerged from a third space free from corporate control.

I designed my thesis into two parts. Part One, aware of the community construction of culture, was about exploring the perspectives I would be using to construct my interpretations. In other words, I developed analytical tools, a method to analyse my lifestory narratives. Sociologically, I considered the organisation of community from the early theories of Tonnies’ *Gemeinschaft* and Durkheim’s cohesive structures to Crow and Allan’s *Community Life* (1994):

The thing which members of a community share in common may be a particular sense of place, but precisely how space structures social relationships is an empirical question which cannot be undertaken without reference to the findings of particular case studies. (xvi)

The works of Weber, Cooley, Mead, and the early symbolic interactionists, alongside that of Cohen's theoretical symbolic constructionist approaches created a theoretical framework to define the island community and used linguistic anthropology as a way of defining Geertz's 'thick descriptions' of cultural symbols of the identity of voices of the interviews. In this process, I developed an ethnographic writing style that foreshadowed the voices of the interviews. Approaching culture from an interdisciplinary approach meant I benefitted from the insights of the sociological and anthropological theories of Bourdieu and Calhoun, whose critical social theories introduced the historical specificity of the habitus of the ordinary experience of the voices. I conceptualised community, tradition and identity from within this framework.

Furthermore, I explored my transformative experience of community radio on the island by looking at the space and time of it. I considered the works of MacBride, Downing, Habermas, Fairchild, Lewis, and Booth, and argued that the voices of *Barra Island Discs* were expressed in an alternative form of radio, representing a hegemonic free dialogic relationship. I exemplified my argument in a discussion of the emancipatory role of community radios internationally. By doing this, I succeeded in developing a significant value for radio voices. I showed how important it is to learn about ordinary community experiences, particularly third-tier experiences, and to access them to locate discursive themes which can be conceptualised abstractedly. From transcribed interviews, I located themes and developed a method of analysing content and form. These differences between content and form – the linear narrative of the older generation and the nonlinear narrative of the younger generation – suggested age made a temporal difference in how lifestories were told, the difference between a backward projection of a life that had been lived and a forward projection of a life that is full of possibilities. This suggested the importance of memory in maintaining our story of life and the identity of that life. Significantly, current research suggests that age makes no impact on narrative form, but my research suggests that it does.

My second aim was to explain the space from which the radio interviews had emerged. To that end, I presented a detailed description of the symbolic significance of the radio station's geographical location and explored the structural reasons why the programme, *Barra Island Discs*, became an important part of the island's cultural tapestry. Having learned earlier the importance of the ethnographic process, I explored the process of the changing form of the interview from its inception onwards. From within that process, another process evolved, one leading to an examination of participation and audience response. The second aim resulted in

finding how important space was for defining culture and, inadvertently, how meaning is constructed through a series of steps. These steps made me realise culture is defined by a framework of web-like processes.

My third aim focused on the interview. This involved the unfolding of three distinct processes. The first, which forms the basis of my argument, is that my interviews were an effective tool for analysing culture. The key question was: how could I describe my interviews? Searching for an answer took me into the world of oral history and the growing cultural significance of using oral accounts for understanding historical processes. Succinctly, oral history, like history itself, has many different interpretations, and crucial to my development was the work of Vansina (1985), Finnegan (1992), Cohen (1985), and Linde (1993). From their research, I categorised, selected, and thematically linked my data, so that my interviews turned into lifestories.

The second process was to find a way of analysing my lifestories. As the lifestory resulted from a conversation, the first part of the process was to find a way of describing the significance of the interaction between two people. I researched psychological theories resting with Goffman's portrayal of the roles we assume – me as a 'radio show host' engaging in banter with my 'guest' and how the flow of information from those roles ended with a lifestory. Conversation analysis initially appealed and I used the works of Hutchby (1996), Calhoun (2002), Sacks et al. (1974) and Tolson (2006) to learn about the significance of the social solidarity formed between two people. Useful as it was in explaining the importance of the hierarchy of the linguistic units and their significance within a conversation, its analytical function did not, however, place social context as the most important indicator for finding culture. Subsequently, the works of Norman Fairclough, whose theoretical work is based on conversation analysis, added another layer of analysis taken from literary textual analysis; his focus is to uncover the significance of spoken language in producing social context using critical discourse analysis.

The third process was the final metamorphic change from transcription to narrative form, a form that became a carefully edited and constructed piece of narrative. I chose to do this because Fairclough's analysis made the most sense in that meaning is constructed from how individual words are used in their social context. Subsequently, I engaged in a process of textual analysis, a close reading of my lifestory narratives. The development of this process involved researching how others had constructed and found cultural meaning from their studies and, on reflection, I realised that I had been gazing at my project from a somewhat illuminating

objective macro level lens in that I thought the nexus of my project was outside of my own experience when, in reality, a micro level analysis placed me at the nexus of it.

My final aim involved two processes: The first was to learn how I could create meaning from the construction of word choice in individual sentences. To do that, I had to research what in effect meaning meant, and how it is that meaning is used to define culture. Meaning is multi-layered, a culmination of a series of processes. Interpreting meaning is interpreting many layers. My interviews could be described in different ways. They were a reflection of my own interpretation because I was using my interpretation of community to interact during the interviews and my questions were based on our shared experience as members of the community. If anything, this process was learning to accept that I was at the nexus of the project and that the learning processes I had so far been involved in were about finding my academic voice through the process of self-reflexivity so that I could present my interpretation of how others, guided by myself, presented their stories about living on Barra. Two interesting questions arose: firstly, how did other oral history researchers interpret their collections and express meaning and, secondly, how different were they from mine?

Subsequently, I examined other oral history collections gathered from the island to consider how they had (re)presented the island. Using a historiographic approach, essentially comparing and contrasting methods and results, I learned that the context of history defines method, which impacts the multifariousness of meaning. What I understand here is that when one looks back in time, there are many interpretations, and their significance is defined by the interpreter. From this process, I concluded that my collection of lifestory narratives could indeed be an effective way of representing the culture of the island.

Presenting my aims and describing the impact of the unfolding processes on my development as a researcher, I have learned that the robustness of the lifestory narratives existentially did not exist, but meaning was created as a result of my ability to engage in a meaningful discourse. My aims had developed methods from the processes and the final process was to show how the island experience was part of a larger societal construction. To argue how effective analysis of the lifestory narratives could be, I had to pass them through a conceptual prism construct.

I contextualised my interviews by exploring the island's main industry of fishing. I began by considering its social and economic impact and by researching its symbolic effects of that impact on three main tenets of late modernity, that is, employment, family, and religion – areas of shared experience – and from this process, I learned that culture is shaped by the past. Hence,

I used the industry to construct Barra's big story in Part Two, a sociological and anthropological presentation. The most significant aspect of the second part of my thesis was that I stepped into the local. In other words, I let the voices construct their community, their identity, and their traditions, and by applying the methods of Part One, theory and practice joined together.

In summing up, community is a social construct, a phenomenological quest that represents our ancient desire to belong; it is a series of ever-changing interconnections, a matrix of Weber's webs of significance. It is the collective social arena where our shared experiences and language construct our identity. It is a space in time where language performs, and in the expression of the performance, culture emerges. In my thesis, community has articulated that culture. It is a product of the islanders' language, their word choice, content, and form. It is an exhibition of many interpretive processes, a tapestry sewn together with generational threads temporally coloured from the past and the present.

7.2 Community, Identity, Tradition and Culture

I explored the significance of identity from the language expressed to communicate a sense of self and considered how the construction of identity from a narrative lifestory reflects processes which are social and personal. Identity is how we personally express the social reality of our lives in the community we live in. I compared and contrasted stories of the older generation and the young generation and in that process, I presented the significance of age difference and how it shapes our lifestory narratives. This difference contributed to an interpretation of culture because identity expresses in the present our sense of self, and how we got the way we are. Culturally, that is significant because it shows how language represents the personal and the social.

From the community setting, I followed themes developed from the voices of the older generation because they represent the past. Culture, as a present-day construct, reflects generationally, so it is a crucible of past and present voices. This process is exemplified in the island's traditions, which Chapter Six explored. Traditions are linear oral expressions, backward projections of language and skills learned from the past, and their cultural significance is in how they are manifested in the language of the present. They explained why things are the way they are. Unlike identity, which projects forward, tradition emerges from behind. The movement of both concepts is directionally opposite and culture is expressed at

the intersection. For my thesis, I presented the importance of tradition as an oral concept. It passes surreptitiously underneath written hegemonic presentations of the past because it is expressed by word of mouth in a community setting. Tradition needs community to express itself – it is the definition of shared expression. As Bourdieu says, it is ‘a system of predispositions’. In many ways, in an island community setting, tradition is a form of ‘cultural capital’ that stretches back through time. Conclusively, tradition was a concept which constructed culture’s relationship with the past.

In summing up, the relationship of culture as interpreted through the conceptualisation of community, tradition and identity has been an exploration of the synchronicity of the social and personal formation of language. Culture is language. From a ‘messy’ autoethnography, I have presented a cultural interpretation of the oral history of an island community from a small ‘insignificant’ community radio show. My contribution has been to present an innovative critical discourse which offers new ways of analysing the processes involved in lifestory narratives, illuminating specifically the effect of differences in their linear and non-linear formation on the meaning of culture. As Geertz notes: ‘where interpretation comes from does not determine where it can be impelled to go. Small facts speak to large issues...societies, like lives, contain their own interpretations (1973:453).’

My autoethnographic finishes with my research questions answered in a roundabout messy fashion. I have explored the creativity of conceptualising meaning from my data and placed myself at the heart of it. In doing so, autoethnographic writing has plunged me into vulnerable spaces where I have been challenged by the processes of developing cultural awareness from the interpretation of the stories of others interconnected with my own. I have had to accept responsibility of the methodology to ensure that the stories of others were presented in ways which gave them control of their culture. Ethically, I have taken great care to interconnect their voices to construct a cultural landscape of their community. I hope this thesis leads to personal empowerment and that they take ownership of its contents.

8 Bibliography

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Appendix One: Peggy's Transcript

Transcription Key to Lifestory Interviews

Punctuation marks are used to indicate intonation, not syntax

- [Indicates the point at which overlap with another speaker begins.
- WORD Uppercase indicates increased volume
- BID Barra Island Discs
- ... Ellipsis indicates the break in sentence but to be continued
- () Parentheses indicate Gàidhlig terms used.
- . Terminal falling intonation
- , Brief pause
- ? Rising intonation
- ! Excited intonation
- hhhhh Laughter indicated by the number of h

I have numbered the commentary of each turn-taking in the conversation to aid analysis.

Colours are used to indicate the themes of the interview

- Red Identity with island community
- Purple Family
- Blue Employment
- Green Media speak (Tolson 2006), text used by the interviewer to create a radio show
- Orange Music choice¹⁴⁰ and is used to break the show into component parts.

¹⁴⁰ Peggy's choice of music is in keeping with her Gaelic identity: Peggy's niece Cathy Anne MacPhee widely heard on Gaelic television and radio; Donnie Munro of Runrig the first 'super' Gaelic, celtic-rock band; Donnie Murdo, features frequently on Gaelic radio; Highland Cathedral played by the Scottish Pipe Band.

Peggy's Transcription

8. Peggy: I am completely a BARRAICH. I was born and bred in Eoligarry. I live in Earsary now but Eoligarry was my original hometown.
9. Janice: and your mum and dad were they Barraichs?
10. Peggy: they were they were...They went down to Eoligarry in 1920 as a load of other people went down at time as sort of pioneers at that time and that is where I was born and brought up.
11. Janice: and you have worked all your days on the island I do believe?
12. Peggy: well I did I started teaching in Brevig away back I won't say when in the year dot...h h h h h...and that was my very first post actually it was 1960 I started teaching in Brevig and spent 6years there and I left then and went down to England for about 4years but came back again and when my son was born I came back, and I have lived in Barra ever since, and that's it.
13. Janice: Well it goes without saying that you absolutely love the island.
14. Peggy: I do, I do,h h h
15. Janice: What is it about the island that you love Peggy? Do you think you could maybe put it into words?
16. Peggy: It is very difficult but I just felt that when you are child and when you are growing up you want to go away you want to go away to the mainland but the strange thing is as once I went away than I wanted to come back again and eh came back for a while, then left for another little while but I still wanted to come back, there's just something about being an islander, you feel there is a call and you want to come and that's it you know.
17. Janice: yes of course plus there is the very strong community and the affinity you feel with other Barraichs.
18. Peggy: yes that's true...you know everybody...you know, most people on the island and you all have a similar, a similar way of life that sort of thing
19. Janice: shared experiences?
20. Peggy: absolutely
21. Janice: I think that is one of the obvious things to an outsider...is the wonderful shared experience that the Barraichs actually have. Now your family Peigi, your children and I think you have some very well-known nieces is that right?
22. Peggy: hh, yes I think you are referring to Cathy Ann, hh she is my niece but also my goddaughter and I was in college, in my last year in college when she was born and eh I just remember it very well. Yes she has sort of made a name for herself with singing my mother was a great singer but I don't think any of the family inherited my mother's voice but Cathy Ann did... hh and she sings.
23. Janice: well would you like to introduce Cathy Anne's song yourself Peggy?
24. Peggy: the one I would like to hear Cathy Ann sing is composed by Runrig which is called Sheaves of Corn...it bring back memories of Eoligarry fields of corn and a great big field of corn and going down there to make the (Gàidhlig term) which is the sheaves of corn and I have wonderful memories of that.
25. Music 520- 837 Cathy Ann MacPhee
26. Janice: that was a beautiful choice em of music and Cathy Ann is just such a beautiful singer

27. Peggy: she's a great character she has a great personality as well as having a lovely voice
28. Janice: well that obviously comes from being in the family because you yourself have a wonderful personality[
29. Peggy: [hhhhhh thank you thank you
30. Janice: and can I just ask you Peigi you have been a teacher here on the island forever did you always want to be a teacher Peigi?
31. Peggy: yes I always wanted to be a teacher ever since I was a young child I used to stick cans on posts and pretend they were pupils... hhhhhhhh... and the embarrassment when I noticed someone watching me... hhhhhhhh... but yes I have always wanted to be a teacher but I am not saying that I am a good one or that I was a good one but I did always want to be one. And when you talk about the number of children I have taught I have actually taught they talk about teaching someone's children but I have taught someone's grandchild... hhhhhhhh... the granny when I was teaching at first then the grandchild when I was teaching on supply her grandchild was in the class
32. Janice: that's a wonderful legacy a wonderful legacy Peggy so you obviously went to Eoligarry did you then go to Castlebay School.
33. Peggy: I went to Castlebay School for three years then we went to Inverness Academy. I liked it there. We lived in Hedgefield hostel and I liked there. I made many friends there were girls from Harris and North Uist but from there we went to Glasgow, Notre Dame and spent three years there and the people there were lovely as well.
34. Janice: and then you came back to Barra?
35. Peggy: yes I came back to Barra.
36. Janice: well that is just a wonderful journey, it's a wonderful journey and when you are teaching as you know you meet so many people and everyone em I am trying to put this right any person I have spoke to that has been taught by yourself sings your praises... hhh[
37. Peggy: [hhhhhhhhhh
38. Janice: and talks about what a wonderful story teller you are... hhhhhhhh... your favourite stories... hhhhhhhh... and I even know that from my own daughter... hhhhhhhh... who will say I LOVE IT WHEN MRSMACCORMACK TELLS US A STORY I ALWAYS PUT MY HAND UP AND GET HER TO TELL ME A STORY... hhhhh... She has a favourite story and what a wonderful legacy you have left to the people of Barra Peggy.
39. Peggy: thank you thank you Janice
40. Janice: so your next choice of music then is by another Gaelic singer, is it by Donnie Munro?
41. Peggy: Donnie Munro I like his... singing, he has a wonderful voice he was with a wonderful group Runrig, he has left them but I like them too but I really like Donnie very much.
42. Janice: Am I allowed to say that you found him really good looking? hhhhhhhh
43. Peggy: hhhhhh oh absolutely hhhhhh I always associate him with Heathcliff... the dark looks[
44. Janice: [brooding good looks hhhh
45. Peggy: that's right hhhhh
46. Music 1220 -1724 Donnie Munro
47. Janice: what a wonderful choice and I am going to say here and I know you are going to blush but listeners can I just tell you that Peigi fancies Donnie

61. Janice: is there any stories in particular that you associate with certain areas round about Craigston that you think maybe the listeners will be able to say oh I know that I remember that one!
62. Peggy: well...hhhhh...I can't think of any at the moment except maybe of the fairies, the dùin(Gàidhlig term) over there that the fairies lived in the hillside that sort of thing, you could get the children to believe in these things...hhhhhhhhhh
63. Janice: Peggy I think you could get anyone to believe anything...hhhhhhhhhh
64. Peggy: perhaps...hhhhhhh
65. Janice: okay well then your next choice of music is the wonderful Andrea Bocelli and we are going to hear one of his tunes next. Why did you choose him Peigi?
66. Peggy: well I like his voice he has a beautiful voice and it is an opportunity to listen to him because my husband doesn't like him he is into the pipes and that sort of thing and I actually like listening to this sort of music as well usually only get to hear him in the car, it just gives me a lift if that is word hhhhhhhh
67. Janice: it just fills you doesn't it?
68. Peggy: absolutely_hhhhhhh
69. Janice: so have you bought tickets then for the Scottish Opera in the Castlebay hall?
70. Peggy: I haven't got tickets yet but I hope to get along.
71. Music: 2343-2649 Andrea Bocelli Dalmani
72. Janice: That was a wonderful choice of music Peigi
73. Peggy: thank you
74. Janice: and as you say when you driving about in your car you are singing at the top of your voice
75. Peggy: Well I don't know if I am singing hhhh I am listening anyway
76. Janice: it has an interesting name of this track...is it Dalmani? Beautiful choice...and I just know because of your choice of music you will be going to Scottish Opera in Castlebay Hall... Just give a shout out for the Scottish Opera in Castlebay Hall 2nd of March you can get tickets at Willie butchers...wonderful evening and of course Peggy what I hate about Barra is sometimes you can go for a couple of months and there is no Screen Machine there are no concerts ...
77. Peggy: that's true.
78. Janice: The Screen Machine is coming at the same time.
79. Peggy: everything happens at once.
80. Janice: Scottish Opera or Sherlock Holmes?hhhh
81. Peggy: I know what I would choose hhhhhhh
82. Janice: Do you go to the Screen Machine when it comes?
83. Peggy: I have only been once actually and that is when I was at school and that was we took the children in and it was very enjoyable but I don't usually go in, I don't bother. I just don't think about it, I don't bother now, I used to go when I was on the mainland but not now...
84. Janice: I am an avid Screen Machiner...[
85. Peggy: [really?
86. Janice: I will go and see whatever film is on even if I don't particularly like it. It is just the idea of sitting in a lorry watching a film, you are just transcended.
87. Peggy: It is very comfortable. It is good.
88. Janice: I remember during the showing of Mama Mia and of course it was packed, every seat had been taken, the Screen MACHINE at the end, the projectionist dressed up as a character and danced up and down the aisle of the auditorium, it was fantastic[hhhh

89. Peggy: [absolutely fantastic hhhhh
90. Janice: there is nowhere else you would see that, it was such a wonderful moment and I think the Screen Machine is really special to the island
91. Peggy: the children certainly seem to look forward to it coming anyway... hhhhh
92. Janice: a wonderful resource but it is coming at the same time as Scottish Opera so who[hhhh
93. Peggy: [hhhhh who plans these things?
94. Janice: so Peggy what is it about the island that you really love?
95. Peggy: it is very difficult, it is just that there is just something special about the islands. I just can't explain it but I know that we don't always get good weather here and that sort of thing but there is just...to be quite honest I just like living on the islands and that's it.
96. Janice: if you are going on holiday where do you go to?
97. Peggy: well I would rather go to the town and shop! hhhhhh I went to the hairdressers once somewhere, probably down in England, and they asked me where are you going for your holidays this year and I said, well I am on holiday now, and they were quite surprised because to come to a city for your holiday, but then we have the beaches and all the rest of it all year round, but I really like going away and going through the shops and that sort of thing.
98. Janice: ye well I can share that with you now that I live on Barra, it's lovely to float about the city and go to the theatre, do you go to the theatre?
99. Peggy: occasionally but not a lot.
100. Janice: you just hit the shops, and splash your cash... hhhhhhhh... buying things you don't need hhhhhh
101. Peggy: hhhhhhhh oh absolutely and then sending them to the thrift shop or skip hhhhhhhh
102. Janice: I often think that when Strachan's comes to the hall it is like a market and that I will go in [and hhhhh
103. Peggy: [buy things you don't need hhhhhhhhhhhhh
104. Janice: you go into your cupboard and find you have four potato peelers, three ice-cream scoops but it is just the idea of going out and shopping hhhhh Peggy what is the next choice of music?
105. Peggy: my next choice is Elvis Presley I have always been a fan and being the age I am now it was wonderful listening to him hhhhhhh
106. Janice: and of course those dark looks... hhhhhhhh... you are consistent with your men!
107. Peggy: hhhhhhhhhhhhhhh
108. Music3307- 3711 Elvis Presley Bridge Over Troubled Water
109. Janice: Peggy are you a crofter?
110. Peggy: I don't know if I would call myself a crofter; we have a croft in Earsary ...we used to have sheep but we no longer have them as we are getting on in years... hhhhhhh ...but we do have peat, mind you, and my son cuts the peat and we use that and that's about all and someone uses the land for cattle grazing and that sort of thing, but there is a croft in Eoligarry and that is the main croft where I was brought up, and I inherited that croft from my brother and I have passed it on to my son. It is a nice croft there and it has been used; we plant potatoes that sort of thing down there...
111. Janice: what, do you have a market stall?
112. Peggy: hhhhhh not really hhhhh I wish, no it's just for our own use like everyone else we just...plant the potatoes, pick them and eat them and that for ourselves

- just like everyone, you get beautiful potatoes down there because it is nice machair land down there and that.
113. Janice: what do you plant, are they Arran banners or?
114. Peggy: I have no idea, they were Arran something but I have no idea but they were beautiful anyway they were very nice
115. Janice: is it rich sandy soil?
116. Peggy: it is rich sandy soil down there.
117. Janice: do you grow carrots as well?
118. Peggy: well we haven't got we have just renovated the house recently a few years ago and we are just getting into the throes of hhhh or least my son is developing the land a bit, but hopefully this year we will have carrots and various things in the next croft to us, Victor's, Victor over there, he had strawberries and carrots and everything beautiful strawberries just in the field next to us so I was quite envious of the things growing there so that's it.
119. Janice: well once you are sorted, we will be coming round [
120. Peggy: [for strawberries hhhhhhhhh
121. Janice: [hhhhh and filling our fruit baskets and vegetable baskets so do you think crofting is quite an important way of life I have spoken to other people who have come in to be interviewed and everyone says how important it is to maintain it as a way of life?
122. Peggy: oh absolutely, it is really very important, but you can't sort of live when my parents were living down there, my father had to go away to sea and earn his living that way because you couldn't exist on the croft alone; but it is such, a wonderful way of life. We had our own milk when I was a child and various things like that; it is just a wonderful way of life. I think it is very important to maintain the crofting way of life, the crofting existence.
123. Janice: well I think lots of the listeners in Barra and Vatersay will agree with that and I am sure some people who come to the island want to know about crofting and you would probably give the same advice that I would and that is ask someone, ask someone what is crofting all about? How[
124. Peggy: [that's right
125. Janice: you can best make use of the land
126. Peggy: that's true
127. Janice: so you were saying earlier on just at the beginning of the interview Peggy that you had moved to Eoligarry where did you move from?
128. Peggy: no I was born in Eoligarry but my parents moved. Eoligarry was actually...something like the same idea as you know the raiders in Vatersay the people went to Eoligarry because they had been promised land and various young men of that era had been promised land by the government or whatever, and it was actually a pioneering thing and the department bought the land from the MacGillivray's who owned it and it was divided into 40 crofts and it was something like I think and you picked a number and you got that croft. My father picked number 25, 25 Eoligarry hhhhh and that was our croft, so that was how Eoligarry became originally I believe Eoligarry was called Flogarry Flois meat because it was a name that meant that it was good for breeding cattle for meat and that sort of thing, that's how the name became. I used to think it was a Norse name or something like that but it wasn't; it was a Gaelic name, Flodigarry, and it became Eoligarry.
129. Janice: well that's a really wonderful story there just the history, just the history of Eoligarry, and where would you be able to read that? where would someone

- like myself who is so obviously not a Barrach where would I be able to go and find that kind of history there?
130. Peggy: well I know that my brother has actually written a story about it you know about Eoligarry and the people going down and it is in a book it is written in Gaelic of course hhh and also I think there might be something in the Heritage, you know about Eoligarry. I have a feeling I handed in something that he had written and it should be available in the Heritage, at something or other
131. Janice: yeah, that sounds really fascinating I think I would like to try to find out about that maybe give Mary Ceit a phone and get into the Heritage and find out you know I love this idea of it being broken into 40 crofts and you had to pick a number, that's basically what it came down to[
132. Peggy: [that's right that's right.
133. Janice: [obviously it sounds like a kinda really fair way of kinda dividing land but you know when you are saying it was owned by the MacGillivarays, is that the MacGillivarays that own the fancy goods shop in Benbecula?
134. Peggy: no no no ,well they may be related I don't know but there was a big house in Eoligarry, a great big house, and I don't obviously remember the people living there, the MacGillivarays, but actually it was built originally by MacNeill of Barra, but eh it ended up with the MacGillivarays. they had it at that time they had it at the time and eh...what happened after that? It was, that house was knocked down, oh I cant remember exactly. Would it be in the 1960s when the council houses were built there...there was a room that used to be used as a church before the church was built, the church in Eoligarry was built in the 1960s, I hope I have got that date right hhhh, yes, it would have been 1960s hhhh so eh because before then I used to go to church in that house
135. Janice: so it must have been a grand building then?
136. Peggy: oh yes it was, I think there is a similar one in Vatersay, I think there is one there, it had buildings out at the back, you know, like dairies, you know obviously Eoligarry was one big croft at one time, you know one big farm, I should say
137. Janice: uhuh but they are no connection between the MacGillivarays in Benbecula?
138. Peggy: as far as I am aware, I don't think so.
139. Janice: and where did the MacGillivarays go? to Canada or something?
140. Peggy: well hhh I honestly don't know, I think old Mr Mac Gillivaray William MacGillivarays died or something like that I honestly don't know very much about the rest of the family or whatever
141. Janice: well it certainly sounds like a really interesting history there Peggy and with that then we will hear your next choice of music then, which is by the really wonderful Donnie Murdo
142. Peggy: yeah Donnie Murdo is a really lovely singer and I really enjoy his tapes or cds.
143. Music:4627-4926 Donnie Murdo
144. Janice: so Peigi why did you choose Donnie Murdo?
145. Peggy: well I heard Donnie Murdo the first time, well he was a traditional gold medal winner at the Mod a few years ago and I just thought his voice was wonderful, recently I think he had a new cd out and it was more spiritual and I just think his voice is wonderful there is just something beautiful about his voice and that is why I have chosen him.

146. Janice: and he is a very lovely person
147. Peggy: I have never met him but I think Cathy Ann has and she says he is a very lovely person
148. Janice: he appears or certainly he goes along and contributes to Ceòlas festival up in South Uist em I think em I met him there my friend Barbara if I can just give a wee shout out for you Barbara Drummond who came with me and went to his class absolutely loved him to death she is a singer and she worshipped at his altar because she thought he was a beautiful singer, he's not like just a singer em I don't mean just a singer but she was really taken by him but he has quite a full life I think he is an academic at Aberdeen University?
149. Peggy: oh yes he is he is a lecturer at Aberdeen University, I think he has done a lot of good work and does a lot of good works I watched his programme with Mary Ann Kennedy and em I think he does a lot of good work
150. Janice: right and what was that programme? what was that programme about was it about some sort of academic thing about going to Africa and[
151. Peggy: [em yes
152. Janice: [it was about sharing educational experiences. a big shout out for you then Donnie Murdo if you are listening on Barra and Vatersay community radio then give us a phone on 01871810401 or email me jross@bvc radio.com and when you come down to Uist and coming to Ceòlas you can come over and meet Peggy MacCormick a big fan and I will interview you on the radio and no doubt you will get even more fans. Anyway a big hi there to Donnie so Peggy you yourself have lots of fans on the island
153. Peggy: do I hhhhhhhh
154. Janice: yes indeed you do hhhhhhhh and I can't imagine anybody allowing you to walk to the car with your shopping I imagine all the children you have taught clambering over themselves to help hhh PLEASE MISS CAN I TAKE YOUR SHOPPING TO THE CAR hhhhh does that happen?
155. Peggy: hhhhhhhh well not really hhhh well I am sure it does on occasion hhhh they are all lovely anyway when I meet the children they don't forget and they always talk to me, and that's it and I am quite happy with that
156. Janice: and how long ago did you retire if you don't mind me?
157. Peggy: I retired in 1998 but hhh I mean I was working last week hhh I haven't I sort of I just keep going hhh but I am officially retired
158. Janice: and what was the thing that was in your mind when you were coming to the end of your fulltime career did you think WHEN I RETIRE I AM GOING TO JUMP INTO THE BAY and swim to Vatersay?
159. Peggy: when I retired I said I was going to get rid of everything in my house hhhh I am going to have a real tidy up hhhhhhhhhh and clean my house and do all sorts of things I am afraid it hasn't happened hhhhhhhh well maybe I have got about three bags ready for the skip that's about it you know I haven't, it has been a nice feeling you know not to have any responsibility for planning or anything or to have to wait or anything waiting for the holidays to plan to go away or anything you know
160. Janice: yes and you were saying your brother had written a story about Eoligaray, do you see yourself sitting down and writing these stories you have passed onto the children of the island?
161. Peggy: No. hhhhhhhh to be honest no hhhhhhhh people say to me that I should but to be honest, well you never know, maybe one day so I don't honestly see

- myself doing that but my brother is always getting on to me about that sort of thing but you never know, maybe one day.
162. Janice: and is your brother a scholar, is he a Gaelic writer or?
163. Peggy: well he was but he is getting on in years now and his wife died a couple of years ago, she actually taught in the school that I was in the primary at that was how she met my brother they met in Eoligarry when I was in primary school em well yes he does a bit of writing or he did he wrote in Gaelic and in English.
164. Janice: and so I think he is right and get these fabulous stories written down but I mean if you don't want to write them yourself you can record them into a tape recorder, god how old does that sound you can speak into these Dictaphones I am not sure is that right hhhh
165. Peggy: I would rather write. hhhhhhhhhh I don't enjoy talking to things at all hhhhhh
166. Janice: of course. hhhh you know em someone else, someone else could could then type it up for you hhhhhhhh[
167. Peggy: [that's true that's true hhhh
168. Janice: well Peggy I am sad to say, because I could just have sat and chatted to you all day that we are really coming to the end of our interview, can I ask you this question is there anything you would like to say to the people of Barra and Vatersay?
169. Peggy: em... well just apart from the fact that I really enjoy living among the people, em perhaps I should also mention that we are all very sorry for the passing of the chief of the clan MacNeil, who was a very, very well-liked person by everyone as far as I know and he was a lovely man. I am very sorry that he has passed away, and I am sure the people will miss him very much. He has been very good to the island. Very good to the island.
170. Janice: Indeed...indeed Peggy so with that I will play your last choice of music which is?
171. Peggy: Highland Cathedral
172. Music 5640-0100 Scottish Pipe band

Appendix Two Nanag's Transcript

Part One

1. Janice: Hi and welcome to this week's edition of *Barra Island Discs* and I'm delighted that my guest today is the wonderful Nanag Gillies from Vatersay. Hi Nanag!
2. Nanag: Hi there!
3. Janice: How are you?
4. Nanag: Very well indeed!
5. Janice: Well thank you for agreeing to come and be interviewed ehm on Barra Island Discs and I hope you are going to have an enjoyable time telling the listeners about your life here on the island.
6. Nanag: Well I hope that they'll enjoy it as well!
7. Janice: So Nanag have you always come from Vatersay?
8. Nanag: Well I was born in Glasgow in, in August 1937.
9. Janice: Right!
10. Nanag: ...but I was only a fortnight when my mother died.
11. Janice: Right, right
12. Nanag: And I was brought up then in Caolas on the Island of Vatersay by my mother's sister and her brother – they none of them were married. And they brought me up as their own so to speak. That was the only mother I knew ...
13. Janice: Right, right
14. Nanag: ...was her but I knew she wasn't my mother you know.
15. Janice: So that's quite a tragic thing to happen!
16. Nanag: My father was in the Merchant Navy.
17. Janice: Right
18. Nanag: ...so he was in the Merchant Navy until he came home to look after his own parents.
19. Janice: Right
20. Nanag: ...he was just next door to me. So!
21. Janice: So were you originally from Vatersay or?
22. Nanag: Well my father and mother were from Caolas!
23. Janice: Right
24. Nanag: Yes
25. Janice: And did they have a croft there?
26. Nanag: They had a croft there!
27. Janice: And how long was that croft in your family?
28. Nanag: Well it's been there since my granny and grandfather when they left Kentangaval and went over there at the time of the 'raiders'.
29. Janice: Oh right the Vatersay 'Raiders'?
30. Nanag: The Vatersay Raiders – although they weren't from Vatersay! They left Kentangaval to go there to Caolas as so's did my father's people came from Glen and they moved over there as well at the time of the Vatersay Raiders. It was 1910 ...
31. Janice: Right
32. Nanag: ...they were there
33. Janice: And who, who gave them, who well, how did, who gave them the croft? Was that the Department of Agriculture or?

34. Nanag: The Department of Agriculture took over the land when the raiders first came from Mingulay. They raided the place. They built eh houses for themselves on the land. And they were imprisoned for it. And after that the, the land was divided into crofts. So!
35. Janice: ...and people were allocated their croft then?
36. Nanag: Yes. So they had they could have their own potatoes and vegetables. And they could have a cow or two. And they had their milk when the cow was at milk during the summer. And they made their own butter and crowdie and that was it.
37. Janice: ...quite a hard life though is it wasn't it?
38. Nanag: It was...It was a hard life! They done their own hay and no hay came in from the mainland then, their own corn for the cows for the winter feeding and all that.
39. Janice: So you would have gone to school then in Vatersay?
40. Nanag: I went to school in Vatersay. And there was no road then. It was just a track road. Nothing but puddles! You've have to jump on stepping stones (Ach!) going across the puddles but we used to but most the days we went across the hill straight up as the crow flies down to the school on the other side and the same coming back home.
41. Janice: And so were you fluent Gaelic before you went to school? And were you taught in Gaelic?
42. Nanag: We were taught in Gaelic. We had no English when we went to school and the teacher we had schoo..she was eh English speaking. She was Irish. And I don't know whether she had her own Irish Gaelic. But I don't know how we were communicating with her. But anyway we got there and we learned English.
43. Janice: And eh, eh were you so could you only learn in English you wouldn't be able to...
44. Nanag: No we had no Gaelic! We were...when we went to...her husband was the teacher in the other room. He was the Headmaster. When we went to him and started learning the Gaelic then we were too old! Whereas nowadays the children start learning the Gaelic when they're wee! All of my own children can read and write it apart from me.
45. Janice: Right, right that's a shame isn't it!?
46. Nanag: Yes
47. Janice: ...because you have such beautiful Gaelic!
48. Nanag: Yes
49. Janice: So and it's a shame that the way... it's eh totally changed now isn't it now cause we all want to be able to speak Gaelic...
50. Nanag: That's right! Yes, rather than English you know
51. Janice: and its funny how the tables have turned isn't it
52. Nanag: I know yes
53. Janice: So did you leave Vaters... you must...did you leave Vatersay to get a job or did you just spend your life?
54. Nanag: Well we left, well we came to Castlebay School – the Secondary School
55. Janice: Oh Right, right right
56. Nanag: ...when we were twelve.
57. Janice: Right
58. Nanag: And we had to stay in lodgings.

59. Janice: You didn't! Really?
60. Nanag: ...uh – huh we only got home at the weekends...
61. Janice: Right! Why was that? Oh, of course there were no causeway then!
62. Nanag: There was no ferry... There was no regular ferry nor nothing! But everybody practically had their own boat.
63. Janice: Right
64. Nanag: You know they could take us over in Castlebay. And if it was a stormy weekend, we would be stormbound for the weekend. We wouldn't get home
65. Janice: That must have been really quite hard?
66. Nanag: It was hard! You were in other peoples! You felt you know that you were in the way especially when they had visitors coming in at doing Ceilidh at night you know. You felt that you were pushed out 'go out and play!' You know, whether you wanted to go out or not, you had to go when you were told to go out and play.
67. Janice: So who did you stay with then? Did you stay in lodgings in Castlebay?
68. Nanag: I stayed in lodgings in Nask. Over in Nask! I had three lodgings. Two in Nask and one in Horve!
69. Janice: And did you, did the family have to pay for these lodgings or was that
70. Nanag: No that was paid, paid for the Education? Yeah! The Education paid for that yes!
71. Janice: That's, that in itself's a wonderful story. That's an amazing story...
72. Nanag: Ah yes, yeah ehm
73. Janice: ...because you don't imagine someone who lives just such a short a distance from Castlebay would have to find lodgings here because we just assume that the ehm the causeway and all that's there. We just drive to and fro
74. Nanag: That's right
75. Janice: but you know just a few years ago I mean you're only talking about like what five decades, five, six decades ago (mmh hum) it was completely different you know?
76. Nanag: Yes! Never thought I'd see the day when there would be a causeway there going over. That made a whole lot of difference to the island. It's no longer an island so to speak.
77. Janice: Well Indeed! Ehm but are people less, ehm less self-sufficient if you like? Do they rely more now on being able to just come to and fro to Castlebay to get their shopping and stuff like that? I mean the quality of your life must have changed incredibly?
78. Nanag: Oh yes, you had to go over to Castlebay in a boat to get your shopping from the shops and cart it up from the shore home which wasn't easy either. You know there was hardly any landing stages there, jetties, proper things, but eh, we managed. But the shopkeepers were really very nice to us. (Mm, mm huh) You would phone – there was a kiosk – and you could phone with your list of messages and give them what you wanted and they would send them over on the ferry. When there was a ferry! A ferry did start eventually. (Mm, mm huh) But first of all there was no ferry. And if you ran short through bad weather, you could go across the sound. We used to. I've went a few times across the sound. To the Nask road – and I would get a lift from there to the shops and I would do my shopping and I would get a lift over to the eh end of Nask Road and start climbing the hill with all, all your messages on your

- back in a piggy bag on your back full of messages carted over to the other side and they could come over and pick you up (Mm, mm huh) on the other side because it would be too stormy to go right round the point to Castlebay.
79. Janice: So quite a lengthy, quite a, a length of time then just eh to get your shopping...
80. Nanag: Yes
81. Janice: you know?
82. Nanag: Yes, yes, yes it was ...it was quite a struggle!
83. Janice: But everything would have been appreciated a lot more I think than what it is today because of the trial to get it yeah?
84. Nanag: Mmm huh! **We got our meat from Oban. A parcel used to come every Saturday. There would be steak and mince, and sausages, and black pudding, and white pudding. And feast day! There was no fridge nor anything then! We just kept it in the coolest part of the house which was the porch near the door. There was cupboards there! And, we, there was no eh 'sell by date' nor anything on it, we just ate it and it didn't do us any harm...hhhhhhhhh It done us the whole week!**
85. Janice: hhhhhhhhhhhh ...changed days indeed! Changed days!
86. Nanag: **Yes, but we had our own hens and our own eggs which was a hoot, big help too you know and, where there was a clucking hen, she would we would put eggs under her and she would take them up and there would be chickens and there would be loads of them and we used to keep the hens and the cockerels. The weekend cockerels, we, they used to, kill them and put them in the pot and make soup.**
87. Janice: Yeah, Yeah! But yes eh it is such a... I mean you must think now 'My goodness you know what a difference in the lifestyle'?
88. Nanag: **Well you couldn't, you couldn't buy eggs in a shop then. Some people would take a box in from their own you know if they had too much eggs in the house and they would leave them on the counter in the butcher's or somewhere in one of the shops. And, and if you asked for six eggs, you would get six eggs in a poke and take them home carefully you know and that was it.**
89. Janice: So have you still got hens and all that?
90. Nanag: No I haven't got any hens. I haven't had hens for years!
91. Janice: And do you have a cow out the back and all that?
92. Nanag: No! No!
93. Janice: hhhhhhhhhhhh ...you just go to the Co-op for your shopping?
94. Nanag: Yes that's right for my milk! Nobody, nobody milks cows now! They just let the calf go with the mother but **at that time, the calves were kept on a on a rope at the house tied on the croft and you milked the cows and you kept half the milk for yourself and the other half went to the calf (Uh huh! Uh huh!) – bucket fed! – but not with, not, not running with the mother. Yeah, yeah yeah! Uh huh!**
95. Janice: Oh it's, it's a completely different lifestyle though isn't it?
96. Nanag: Yes it is yes it is yeah
97. Janice: But you obviously had a really happy time growing up on Watersay?
98. Nanag: Oh yes it was very happy times yes. **We were never away from the shore fishing for crabs. Hhhhhhhhhhhh**
99. Janice: So did you do a lot a... eat a lot of kind o...well there would have been a lot of fresh ehm fish.

100. Nanag: Fresh fish yes! Fresh fish was so plentiful then. You could get fish just from down from where my house is there just now. That is more or less where I was brought up in the old house. And you would go down just at the shore there and cast the rod out and you would get fish, fresh fish right away but not today you can't get that.
101. Janice: No indeed you can't! And eh fish is so expensive to buy
102. Nanag: And it's so scarce round the shores here anyway. It's very scarce!
103. Janice: But you've still got a lot of ehm you've still got a lot of the men fish from... they use where you live as their kind of starting point don't they for their creels Nanag: ...Their creels, yes and all that? That's it! Yes when they when they started at the creels here after the war, they eh only had boats and oars and sail and no engine. When they started getting engines in the boat! And they were just going out just a wee bit out with their creels and they would only have about thirty to forty creels. And they would be full everyday! Lobsters were so plentiful. But then they had to pack them into boxes and put seaweed on them or something to keep them. And they were going on the boat all the way down to Billingsgate in London. Sometimes in summer time, they, by the time they would reach, they would be dead.
104. Janice: Well that's the great, ehm Sandray Shellfish and ehm Barratlantic and all that. It's been.... it's a great thing for the island isn't it?
105. Nanag: Yes it is!
106. Janice: Cause eh I mean it helps keeps them fresh so by the time...some of the shellfish goes to... somebody said to me that it goes all the way to Spain ...
107. Nanag: Yes
108. Janice: ... and I'm like 'Oh my god' from the waters here.
109. Nanag: That's right! Yes! Uh-huh!
110. Janice: The journey is incredible.
111. Nanag: It's incredible y es...
112. Janice: Well ehm Nanag, I'm going to play ehm your first ehm choice of music then ehm and it's by ehm the wonderful ehm the wonderful ehm Chrissie, ehm Chrissie MacDonald.
113. Nanag: Oh MacDonald!

First Track – Chrissie MacDonald

Part Two

114. Janice: So what age were you then ehm when you left school Nanag?
115. Nanag: I left school at fifteen and I started working in the Priest's house. And...
116. Janice: In Castlebay?
117. Nanag: ...in Castlebay yes! I was there for six months. Very hard work! I have never worked so hard in all my life as I worked when I was in the Priests' house! And... eh... I... stayed there I used to get the odd weekend home and I used to be crying 'I'm not going to go back there!' 'Oh you'll have to go back! You'll have to go back' so that you would get a reference So I stayed the six month. And then I went to Oban. I was working in a 'B&B' in Dunollie Road, a Mrs Henderson she was very nice. I stayed with her for three or four seasons. And worked with her! And she was good! I liked her. I got on well with her.
118. Janice: And what was your duties, Nanag?

119. Nanag: I was doing waitresses ... I quite enjoyed it... we used to go to Glasgow then during the winter months.
120. Janice: To work in Glasgow?
121. Nanag: To work in Glasgow! I worked in... I worked in... the big houses down in Giffnock and Pollockshields. They were (Uh –huh) Jews and they were very nice both of them! Especially the Taylors (Uh –huh!) that I worked with in Giffnock. They were ...It was just being like one of their own.
122. Janice: Yeah, yeah – you wouldn't have been very old then
123. Nanag: I wasn't kept...
124. Janice: you would only have been 16, 17?...together?
125. Nanag: Yes and they didn't keep me apart from the family. I stayed with them in the sitting room and watched television, television was so new then hhhhhhhh to them although they were well ehm eh off they only had got their first washing machine when I was there. hhhhhhhh And Fay Taylor... she was only twenty-eight. They were a very young couple. They weren't like the old fashioned Jews you know but they always had the Friday... the special... special Friday. That was the... the, the, the... done...they set the table hhhh an extra place at the table on a Friday (Uh –huh) for the Lord coming. He never came!! So... hhhhhhhhhhhhhh
126. Janice: Would that be the Tay?... that must be the Taylors that had 'City Cash Taylor' in at the Glasgow Cross they'd... it was a... yeah...that that must have been the same people.
127. Nanag: They were tailors... hhhhhhhhhhhhhh ...you know as well, you know a Jewish family! They were a Jewish family well I know that eh that Mrs...eh Fay Taylor the wife. Eh she..., her people were... were a clothing factory they had. So they were probably amalgamated together.
128. Janice: So did you have nice clothes yourself then?
129. Nanag: Oh I had beautiful clothes! Eh...every month Mrs Taylor Fay Taylor she used to have to put all her clothes to the jumble sale. But I had my pick of everything first of all before it would go. And oh I had loads of lovely clothes! And the same every month! I would get my pick. And they were really very nice. They had two children. A seven year old in school and the boy was four. And he was so small and so wee. And he was... I used to take him out in the pram on wet days in a big, big pram an old fashioned pram in the garage and he would say 'after all Nan sure I'm only a wee baby!' hhhhhhhhhhhh And then on... when I taked them out, when I take him out during the day on nice days he was a big boy that day!! He was lovely! I was really sorry when I had to leave to go to the season again back to Oban.
130. Janice: And why..and why, why did you leave?
131. Nanag: To go back to the season... because you got more money in the hotels and you got a lot of tips which made.... you got more in tips than what you got in a wage. You know! They were very good at leaving tips! Och yeah and you've got to go where the money is you know! Well that was it... we were never short of money!
132. Janice: Uh-huh and you being dressed like a toff as well eh
133. Nanag: Yes hhhhhhhhhhh
134. Janice: an Oban toff? Hhhhhhhhhhh
135. Nanag: Oh yes it was really good! Ah...well we liked it in Glasgow during the winter months. (Uh-huh!) Because eh...it was better you...you didn't feel the winter in Glasgow. You know you were going to all the shops and all that.

And it was quite sheltered. But when it came summertime it was too hot and too clammy. It...I didn't like it when the fog was there. That smog which was terrible! Eh...(Especially when you're used to) it was so dark you know it was so dark the traffic was slowing down and sometimes the traffic would have to stop all together!

136. Janice: Well listen I'll play your next choice of music then for you Nanag hhhhhhhhhhhh while I talk about all the nice clothes that you managed to get you know. Ehm... and I'll just... I'll just play that...I'll just play that for you!

Second Track – Tom Jones' 'Green, Green Grass of Home' (23:41 – 26:35)

Part Three

137. Janice: That was just ehm...lovely that tune there ehm... Nanag and ehm I'm just... Nanag...I'm just I'm just wondering ehm about... so... you would be working in Oban ehm and eh when did you go back to Vatersay?
138. Nanag: Well I went back to Vatersay after I married in 1960, I got married in Glasgow.
139. Janice: Right and did you meet your husband in Glasgow?
140. Nanag: No he was from... he was from Caolas
141. Janice: Oh Right, right, right! Uh-huh!
142. Nanag: And eh we got married in Glasgow. I got married in Saint Mungo's. That's where I was baptized as well
143. Janice: Right, right!
144. Nanag: in Townhead and that was where I was born in Southern Kennedy Street in Townhead. I came back to Vatersay in 1960 and I stayed with my auntie and uncle that brought me up...for three years. By that time family had come along. I had a girl and a boy and there was another one on the way and the house was getting too small and children and an older people weren't suitable. And so I...we got a caravan and we were in the caravan till the last of the family was born which was the youngest was Tony. I had eleven of a family. And Morag... she died of leukaemia. I lost her at six and a half years of age with leukaemia. So they were all in the caravan and then we managed to build a house.
145. Janice: How did you manage in the caravan though with washing and children...it must have been quite a big caravan was it?
146. Nanag: It was and there was another we got another one and they were joined together there was
147. Janice: Right, right
148. Nanag: two then joined together. And we had we got our own generator so we had electricity. And I managed to get a second-hand washing machine which was perfect! And we took the water home from the well ourselves with a pipe...so I had the water in. And....it wasn't so it wasn't so bad then.
149. Janice: Would that be like a kind of twin tub?
150. Nanag: It was a twin tub! Yes, yes! And...of course there was no throw-away nappies then. No disposable nappies. It was terry nappies and they had to be boiled or they would be stained and horrible looking on the rope so you boiled them in a big...eh bucket a galvanised big tub on the eh cooker on the gas until they were boiling hot and then you rinsed them out and
151. Janice: Your 'Nappy-saning' them?
152. Nanag: You're 'Nappy-san...yes, yes! So I got...the children grew and they all they're all over now! Eh... the youngest Tony he made his home over in

- Ireland. He's in Donegal... And Neil he works down in Great Yarmouth. He was the second oldest Ealasaid was the oldest and she's just in the council houses just past my house there. And Frances is just married over there beside Ealasaid at the council houses. So...Neil's down in Great Yarmouth. He's been over down there for over twenty years. He just gets home on holiday. And he likes it down there... he's made lots of friends down there...and he's got a good job down there. He looks after...eh children...that are that are not...you know what do you call them?
153. Janice: Ehm, kind a behavioural problems?
154. Nanag: Yes and eh...some are deaf and dumb he looks
155. Nanag: Right, right, right after them and he's got the deaf and dumb language he can speak to them
156. Janice: Oh Right, right
157. Nanag: which is a chance?
158. Janice: That's...Oh excellent, very good
159. Nanag: ... So...my...and I've got a daughter down in Eoligarry. She's married down there. And Iain he stays down in...in Ho...Horve. He's got a house of his own there. And Joe he's in Northbay and he works in the airport...in... not in the airport in Barra. Is that them all?
160. Janice: So they're kind of round about aren't they I mean...they're round about...
161. ...they're round about?
162. Nanag: Well Donald's in my father's house which he renovated and Donald is just next door to me ...
163. Janice: Right, right
164. Nanag: ...at the back of the house.
165. Janice: So that's quite good you know you'll never... you'll never want for anything. They'll be making your dinner and all that there'll be no need for you (Flora...) to cook or anything...
166. Nanag: Flora...she's in Calendar...
167. Janice: Right, right
168. Nanag: ...she works in the...eh Edinburgh 'Woolen Mill', she's a manageress there in Calendar and she's got one boy. He's twelve year's of age. She didn't marry. Not yet anyway! But she's got a boyfriend now!
169. Janice: Uh-huh! Is she a runner?
170. Nanag: She is...Flora's the runner...you know Flora!
171. Janice: Yes! She always looks that fit and healthy you know!?
172. Nanag: Yes, yes, yes...well she's got this boyfriend from Linlithgow and I think there's wedding bells on the...
173. Janice: Oh right the smell of marzipan! Hhhhhhhhhhh Well Nannag, I'm going to play your next choice of music and it's by ehm the very handsome ehm Slim Whitman (Mmm-huh!) I'll just play that for you then

Third Track – Slim Whitman's 'Rose Marie' (32:00 – 34:06)

Part Four

174. Janice: Well we were just up dancing there hhhhhhh to the ehm wonderful Slim Whitman and why did you choose him Nannag? Is it... wa... is it because he was like... tall dark and handsome hhhhhhh?
175. Nanag: hhhhhhhhhhh Well he was that anyway but apart from that we used to go when I was working in Inverary in the Argyll Arms we used to go to the

café there and eh play it on the jukebox. Girls then didn't go pubbing or anything like that ...there you went to the café and had a cup of tea and you put your money in and...you could play whatever you wanted and that was one of our favourite ones. Slim Whitman...

176. Janice: So was there any...any Slim Whitman lookalikes in your life then hhhhhhhh?
177. Nanag: I don't think so! hhhhhhhhhh
178. Janice: So I mean you've really...did you work in Vatersay or was your...your life your family?
179. Nanag: My life was just with my family I never worked. I was just at home in the land of the wee people hhhhhhhhhh
180. Janice: hhhhhhhh Well that's quite a luxurious position to be in isn't it?
181. Nanag: Yes, yes
182. Janice: I think a lot of modern women I know envy that you know.
183. Nanag: After we went to the...when we...we built the house and got out of the caravan...we had more space and more room. And I had four children under school age.
184. Janice: Just to keep you on your toes!
185. Nanag: They were...they were at home with me...and I had the teacher's two children as well from Vatersay! She...they were...she was teaching in Vatersay and she was going over on the ferry and then coming back in the evening and my husband was doing the children's school run and take her up to the...to the school and take her children back down to me and...
186. Janice: So you had six?
187. Nanag: I had six and and they were the happiest days hhhhhhhhhh of my life... Many's a laugh... hhhhhh You know it was one big laughter! Uh-huh it was one big laughter with the children...I loved them!
188. Janice: Indeed...and I think...I think that sometimes...it's sometimes ehm forgotten about just how wonderful just being with children can be you know everyone's too busy nowadays they're all wanting to do everything working and...
189. Nanag: I used to read them stories and things like that and they used to sing songs... 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star!' hhhhhhhh and all these wee ones...the children they loved that!
190. Janice: And it's such a lovely time isn't...isn't it nurturing your family?
191. Nanag: Ye...it is..it is..it was good...Well it went past too quickly
192. Janice: Indeed! And people...older women would say to you 'This is the best time of your life!' and you'd be like 'Oh for goodness sake!' cause you're always rushing about and all the rest of it and it's only when you're older isn't it that you realise that that is actually true?
193. Nanag: That was the best time yes, yeah indeed...it is
194. Janice: Well I'm going to ehm play your next choice of music which is by the wonderful Vatersay Boys ehm ... and it's 'The Sound of Vatersay' for your happy memories there Nanag
195. Fourth Track – The Vatersay Boys' 'The Sound of Vatersay' (37:20 – 40:00)

Part Five

196. Janice: You can certainly hear the boys laughing... ehm... in that recording pretty much ehm... the same as what you're talking about and the laughter

- that you had ehm with your family. So have you always just then lived in the same...lived in the same... house and....?
197. Nanag: Yes we're still in the same house!
198. Janice: Just where... and you've never really moved from there and you've always been quite settled there haven't you and quite happy?
199. Nanag: Quite happy yes...I'm quite happy...I've been...I've been to...I've been over to Ireland to...when...Tony...I left with...I went over with Tony after he got married. They were staying in...in Killibegs in County Donegal. They're still in County Donegal but they've moved to Ballybuffey but ish...it's nearer to the hospital where she works ...
200. Janice: Right, right
201. Nanag: that was the reason for their moving. **But Tony's at sea...**
202. Janice: Right
203. Nanag:**and he does a month on and a month off at home so...**
204. Janice: So was your own husband at sea then?
205. Nanag: **He was at sea. He was in the Merchant Navy since from the time he left the school...until...well he was still in the Merchant Navy for three years after we married and then he came home and he got the job as school janitor and...doing the conveyance for the school children. That kept us along with cows and sheep and ...we were all right! We managed to build the house anyway.**
206. Janice: Well you make do don't you? Ehm and I suppose that you baked a lot and that... that? Did you? Did you?
207. Nanag: **It was baking every day... we baked scones every day. Instead of going to Castlebay...you would only get loaves every second day in Castlebay anyway...it (uh-huh, uh-huh!) was more or less what it is now you can get loaves every day but you get the fresh ones every second day. But it was easier to bake...**
208. Janice: **Uh-huh! So do laugh when you watch the great 'British Bake-off' on the TV and you think we were doing this because we had to do it That's it! it wasn't a kind a...? They make it ah seem as though it's all so pleas...yeh...women did it... you baked because it was your way of feeding your family.**
209. Nanag: That was it...yes!
210. Janice: So where would you get your flour and all that would be... what in Castlebay?
211. Nanag: **You got that in Castlebay? You bought it in a bulk! You know a b...big bag of it it wasn't just the wee things that you can get in the shops now...you got bought it in bulk!!**
212. Janice: So was there a shop in Vatersay?
213. Nanag: There was a few shops when I... when I was growing up. There was one in Caolas and there...was a few down in ...a few in Vatersay there was about three I think in Vatersay.
214. Janice: And so what happened? There no shops there now...or is there a shop?
215. Nanag: **No! There's no shops there, no the Co-Chomann was the last one until it went on fire and...then we moved up to the Vatersay Hall what was salvaged out of it and...eh working it from there out of the Hall...and that's... I don't know that stopped it...eventually stopped...stopped probably because of the causeway because eh people can get back... backwards and forwards,**

- but sometimes I think it would be nice to have just a wee village shop there, but people would need to go to it.
216. Janice: I suppose people want to get out and about I mean you come into Vat...you come into Castlebay is it every second day? Or do you come in every day?
217. Nanag: Well I...well I come in every morning but now the Eriskay co-chomann over there they thought they would lose the shop once they got their causeway but it didn't. It's a nice shop and they've got loads of stuff in it.
218. Janice: Aw the one in Eriskay you can eh go...buy bed linen in and everything in it.
219. Nanag: Yes, you can buy anything there. Yes, it's lovely... it's a lovely shop between groceries, you can get your papers and cards and all kinds of things there.
220. Janice: So do you think it would be quite a good idea to... ehm have a wee shop in Vatersay?
221. Nanag: Well I don't know who would bother with it you know, who would want... who would want to but I'm sure it could be done as a business.
222. Janice: So how would you like you're saying you would come to Castlebay and all that for like your eh kind of food shopping and everything so what about things like ehm clothing and everything? How...how'd...what did you do for clothing...shopping?
223. Nanag: Just the Catalogue...
224. Janice: Right, right, right...
225. Nanag: ...sending out...sending away to the Catalogue for it that was all! But eh...clothing shop we could be...we could be doing with one here in Barra which is not here
226. Janice: Yeah and a shoe shop
227. Nanag: ...you can't get shoe shop nor nothing like that you can't get anything like that here but it would be good if there was.
228. Janice: Indeed it would! So are you a good knitter? Are you...do you knit?
229. Nanag: I...I was knitting for a...yes I was knitting and knitting and knitting... and eh I don't do much now with my hands are so bad with the Arthritis!
230. Janice: So you would have kni...knitted all the children's...?
231. Nanag: I knitted all the children's cardigans and socks and everything even my husband would knit the socks for the children ...
232. Janice: Right, right, right
233. Nanag: ...and he could knit as well!
234. Janice: Oh well...very good! That's great yeah
235. Nanag: Uh-huh! They...they when they were young in school the boys there they got knitting as well as cookery.
236. Janice: Right, right!
237. Nanag: I don't know what happens nowadays...the boys here I don't think get cookery or knitting or anything like that
238. Janice: They certainly don't get any knitting!
239. Nanag: No...(Ehm!) I don't even know whether the girls do...
240. Janice: No...I don't thi... no... no they don't do anything like... eh... none of the...ehm you have to go to an evening class. I think it's Karen MacLean isn't it that do the textiles classes ehm but my mother used to knit all the time ehm and she said when she was at school... she said they were...they had...they had no money...she said if you w...needed wool for your class...ehm what

you had to do ...what I had to do was she said I had go buy a jumper ...not buy a new jumper she said I had to get an old jumper and un... unravel the wool and I rolled it up into a ball and I took it in and the teacher showed us...ehm how to knit socks and stuff like that. And she said I was absolutely hopeless! She said but when I got married and I had my family i.e. like my brothers and sisters she said I had to learn to do it I couldn't make a mistake because you needed to have nice wee jackets on and that she said so I had to learn to knit. And she became an absolutely beautiful knitter you know what I mean? And I just think that a lot of those skills Nannag that you took for granted when you were a young mother and all that they've just kind a...you know they've kind of disappeared haven't they?

241. Nanag: They have yes! **Oh I knitted an awful lot!**
242. Janice: It's a shame isn't it? hhhhhhhh
243. Nanag: Yes, yes!! **Some of my knitting is still on the pins!** hhhhhhhhhh
244. Janice: hhhhhhhh I'm sure a lot of people can say that can't they you know! But of course it would pass ehm pass the time...wouldn't it in the evening you know in the dark evenings during the winter and all that?
245. Nanag: Oh yes, yes!
246. Janice: So do you go up to the thrift shop?
247. Nanag: Very Seldom
248. Janice: I always say that's the busiest shop in Barra you know
249. Nanag: Yes it is! ehm on a Saturday Yes it is! **I like to go there on a Tuesday...but they don't open on a Tuesday any more. It wasn't so busy on the Tuesday as it is on the Saturday.**
250. Janice: It's a great idea though for the island isn't it?
251. Nanag: Yes it is
252. Janice: you know...ehm and when I just moved up into Benbecula I think there was a ...ehm there was a shop I...I don't know if it was called the thrift shop round at the airport and it was great. I...I used to go there quite often you know just to get...to furnish the house I was in and stuff like that. It was a really excellent resource you know. Because you don't need to buy everything new!
253. Nanag: No, no you don't!
254. Janice: Do you think people's values have changed? From making do with what was there and knitting, everyone wants everything brand new now don't they?
255. Nanag: Oh yes, yes, yes...No casts of!
256. Janice: Why do you think that is?
257. Nanag: I don't really know why...they've got loads of money hhhhhhhhhh
258. Janice: Oh I don't think that's the case hhhhhhhh h well Nannag I'm going to play ehm your next ehm choice of music by again another handsome singer and it's the wonderful Cliff Richard. Ehm was he eh...were you a big fan of Cliff Richard?
259. Nanag: I was a big fan...he was a big fan of mine!
260. **Fifth Track – Cliff Richard's 'Living Doll' (48:49 – 51:24)**
261. Janice: Oh...Oh God you are some dancer! So have you always been a really good dancer?
262. Nanag: Well I used to love dancing at one time but I'm not very good now. I'm too old to dance! I get very dizzy.

287. Nanag: Yes, yes...well...well there was a nice dance hall in Sauchiehall Street we used to go there a crowd of us.
288. Janice: What was that? The Locarno?
289. Nanag: The Locarno ...they had a mixture of Highland Dancing and Modern Dancing there.
290. Janice: Right! And of course there would be lots of...because everybody did it there would be lots of like dance partners and all that there.
291. Nanag: Yes well it was so handy for us! We were working...I was working up in... Park Circus Place which was on the West End and you could walk home and you could walk there...so you didn't need to take a bus... it was handy for us!
292. Janice: Uh-huh, uh-huh! It just sounds absolutely wonderful and with that Nanag I'm going to play your last ehm choice of music... which is by...the wonderful ehm Bill Haley and the Comets and its 'Rock Around the Clock'! But before I ehm before I play that I just want to say ehm thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed ehm on Barra and Vatersay Community Radio... and if you're out there listener and you would like to do what Nanag's doing right now then give us a call on 01871 810 401 ehm and if you would like to make a comment or you would like to talk to Nanag then you can ehm give us a call or E-mail me at Janice at Siar.FM... and Nanag can I just say it's been an absolute pleasure ehm for you to give up your valuable time and ehm tell us a wee bit about your life? And is there anything you would like to say to the people of Barra and Vatersay before you go?
293. Nanag: What can I say?
294. Janice: hhhhhh Open a shop or something! I don't know...a clothes shop.
295. Nanag: A clothes shop, hhhhhhh Well thank you! Okay thank you very much!
296. Janice: Thank you... thank you very much!

Sixth Track – Bill Haley's 'Rock Around the Clock' (56:33 – 58:33)

Appendix Three: Table Two

- Sample comments made by those interviewed for *Barra Island Discs*
- V-Visitor/R-Resident/B-Barra Family

Helen McClymont Shop Manager R	‘It is a very good idea, helps everyone learn a little about who is on the island, great way of being involved in the community and knowing what is going on; helps people know who you are and will help me meet other people!’
Harris Bari Restaurateur R	‘Great idea!’
Sean Newall Cyclist B	‘Very funny show!’
Florag Campbell Home help/School Assistant B	‘Will certainly encourage others to take part; it is a great idea, especially to bring the community together; just keep it going Janice!’
Roger Ackroyd Rtd Restaurateur R	‘Wonderful experience; Janice is a joy to behold; a potted version of my life was suitable!’
Sarah MacLean Local entrepreneur B	‘Really good idea!’
Donald J. Maclean Mariner B	‘Will keep me in touch with the Community!’
Paul Daly Cooperative Assistant R	‘A superb idea!’
Iain English Bird watcher V	‘Excellent for the community!’

Claire Brett Psychoanalyst V	'Great stuff! Glad it happens!'
Amy MacPhee Pharmacist B	'Excellent and enjoyed the experience!'
Robert McIntosh Barra's dentist R	'Increasingly relevant! I very much enjoyed the experience!'
Cindy Stevens T	'Wonderful idea!'
Donald S. Murray Writer and Poet V	'An excellent idea. Janice is very easy to talk to!'
Eoin MacNeil Manager VABV B	'Excellent idea!'
Donald John Wilson Joiner/Footballer B	'Quite relevant; definitely loved it!'
Donald Manford Barra Councillor Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar B	'Very valuable for community!' I do of course recall taking part in your <i>Barra Island Discs</i> programme and remember the positive response it received from constituents at the time. The format certainly has a contribution to make to community engagement and, for my part I would welcome its development and proliferation to wider communities.'
Dame Anne McGuire Rtd Labour MP for Cumbernauld R	'Very appropriate questions; excellent initiative; community radio is important and allows local people to speak for themselves about themselves; it is part of the glue that can hold a community together; a good relaxing way to have a blether!'

Gerry Lambert Wall Street Economist T	‘Wonderful experience!’
Heather Pruett Quilter T	‘From an ‘outsider’ it seems a very good Idea!’
Mick the Skip Recyclist R	‘Excellent idea! You seem to have a good cross-section of young and old!’
John MacKinnon Engineer R	‘Good way to reach some older community residents!’
Catriona MacKinnon Hotel Assistant R	‘Fantastic experience! Very good questions – Janice is really great and I think it is good for the community; quite relevant; opened my eyes to island radio!’
Jules Akel Graphic Designer. V	I have not had any media experience. I have not been on the radio or television, so I was quite nervous but the interview was conducted really nicely...’
Professor Sir William Stewart DSc, FRS Rtd Chief Scientific Officer British Government R	‘...she, (Janice) delivered a programme which in my opinion was much better and to a higher standard than many that I have heard and been involved with.’
Angus B MacNeil MP Western Isles R	‘It provides a historic record of people’s life experiences and an insight into the lives of the youth element within our community. It provides a unique service which brings the whole community together...’