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Journalism as research:
Developing radio documentary theory from practice

Mia Lindgren
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Mia Lindgren
Abstract

Journalism academics around the world face the challenge of having their journalism practice recognised as academic research. This dissertation presents a model of how journalism practitioner-academics can present their in-depth journalistic practice in ways that make clear its standing as legitimate academic research.

Informed by Candy’s (2006) framework for practice-led and practice-based research, the thesis defines two research methodologies: research on practice and research through practice. Using the radio documentary as the focus, research on practice is represented by fieldwork studies involving international radio documentary producers to provide new insights into the creative process. To demonstrate research through practice the researcher applies the theory generated in the first part of the study to reflect on her own practice as she produces a one-hour radio documentary, Deadly Dust commissioned by Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s Radio National. Each part of this study would independently contribute new insights and knowledge into the under-researched area of radio studies in general and radio documentary practice specifically. However, taken together, the two parts present a compelling argument for why the practice of radio documentary production can be seen as a legitimate research process with legitimate research outcomes.
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Most people have never been listened to. They live in a lonely silence – no one knowing what they feel, how they live, or what they have done...Because listening can bring about such powerful healing, it is one of the most beautiful gifts that people can give and receive (Faber, 1976, 3).
INTRODUCTION
In the words of Peter Lewis, ‘radio is everybody’s private possession, yet no one recognizes it in public’ (Lewis, 2000, 161). It is easy to access, the technology is cheap, and content is inexpensive to produce. Radio’s nature is as background medium. It is seen as a natural part of everyday existence where mostly the listener is thinking about something else.

The downside to the widespread availability of radio is that it tends to be taken for granted. Because it is a medium that can be used while doing other things - whether driving the car or reading a book - it is widely regarded as a secondary medium which implies it is somehow less important than other media or lacking in some way. (Fleming, 2002, 1)

Radio is no less invisible in academe and as a research field it has been slow to establish itself. Whereas much has been written about film theory, radio theory is often seen as embedded in the production process and therefore not acknowledged. Radio studies academic Eryl Price-Davies and colleagues argue that radio needs to ‘rid itself of the tyranny of the visual’ (Price-Davies et al., 2004, 108) to achieve the same standing as visual media in academe. The ‘invisibility’ of radio and the label of radio as a secondary medium has serious consequences for radio as a research field. It means the impact of radio on our daily lives is under-researched and therefore under-valued as a result (see for example Aroney 2005 and 2009; Hendy 2000 and 2003; Lewis 2000 and Madsen 2005). It is thereby ‘easy to underestimate or in fact ignore altogether the multi-faceted theory that informs this type of communication’ (Lindgren and Phillips, 2005, 593). Or in the words of Tacchi: ‘Radio has become naturalized – so much that it is difficult to establish its significance’ (Tacchi, 2000, 290).

Australian radio producer Tony Barrell has, in an interview with radio producer/academic Eurydice Aroney, commented that radio’s ephemeral nature is its greatest drawback:
You can’t hold up a radio program and look at a bit of it. You can’t freeze a bit of a radio program, and just listen to a bit of it. You can’t stop it in time….People write whole essays, books, articles about three stills from Casablanca and everyone knows what they’re talking about but if you try to do the equivalent in radio you couldn’t do it (Barrell in Aroney, 2009).

Arguably podcasting has allowed radio to be ‘captured’ and timeshifted where listeners now can stop and start programs at times that suit them. But Barrell’s comment about radio’s ephemeral nature is relevant as the non-visual aspect of radio makes written analysis challenging with no stills to be examined or sequences of shots to be analysed. Inserting audio into an essay, book or article is not a realistic approach for most scholars and there are limited opportunities to have works including audio published in mainstream academic journals.

The production of radio is often seen as a practical skill based on experience rather than a process informed by academic methods and rigour. This can be true for short-format productions like news and current affairs stories where tight deadlines effectively militate against in-depth research and reflective practices. However, the production of longer-format stories like 30 or 60-minute documentaries requires that producers follow protocols and apply skills and methodologies very similar to those used by academic researchers.

Journalism, as the parent discipline, has struggled with a similar identity crisis as radio within academe. In 1995 John Hartley wrote a scathing attack on journalism saying ‘there is no essence to journalism’ (quoted in Lamble 2004, 90) and claiming that ‘[j]ournalism is a terra nullius of epistemology’ (ibid, 90). This has contributed to the view that journalism is something of a ‘bastard orphan discipline’ (Lamble, 2004, 85).

Although the relevance of journalism studies is still questioned in some parts of the world, as a research field it is growing steadily and thereby also gaining acceptance
(Löffelholz and Weaver, 2008, 6). One way to rectify the view of journalism as lacking in academic rigour and discipline is to make its methodology and methods visible; to define and document the processes embedded in journalism practice (see for example Bacon, 2006; Duffield, 2009; Lamble, 2004; Meditsch, 2005; and Silverstone, 1985). Similarly Price-Davies et al. suggest the way forward for radio is to ‘develop a shared resource drawing on as many first-hand accounts as possible, so that the radio studies community can learn from each other’ (Price-Davies et al., 2004, 109).

**Aim of thesis**

This PhD study aims to make a contribution to Price-Davies’ ‘shared resource’. There are few writings about radio documentary theory and practice in academic and industry publications alike. The sparse literature that does exist tends to focus on practical tips on collecting the material (research, interviewing and writing skills) and mixing it into a program. Recently one book has been published featuring radio documentary producers reflecting on their craft (Biewen and Dilworth, 2010). Two previous books about radio features and documentaries were in Swedish (Björkman, 2009) and Norwegian (Hedemann, 2006) respectively and there are only a few journal articles dealing specifically with radio documentary and feature analysis.

The aim of the study is to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of theory and practice of radio documentary production. It also explores how to express the embedded production protocols for a long-format documentary in terms of research methodologies. The illustrations here of the way practice can be expressed in research terms provide justification for the inclusion of a journalistic piece such as a documentary as a legitimate academic research output.
**Research questions**

The study addresses two broad research questions:

1. How can radio documentary practice be defined in terms of research and which research paradigms are suitable for this purpose?

2. How does the concept of ‘journalism as research’ assist in analysing and understanding the processes and protocols involved in producing long-form radio documentaries?

The research seeks to discover where the study field of radio documentary theory and practice fits into an academic context. It questions how journalistic practice can be included – and valued – as research outcome. It is timely for this topic to be explored as journalism academics in Australia and internationally are continuing to push for non-traditional outcomes, such as journalism publications, to be fully acknowledged as academic research.\(^1\)

As radio is a medium made up of seamless sounds listeners often comment that they think that everything they hear on radio is live. In a documentary this would only be possible if all the interviewees were lined up to be interviewed giving short and perfect answers with music or other sounds appropriately cued and interspersed between the different audio grabs. The better a radio production is, the more invisible the production process becomes. The radio documentary appears to be a recording of reality rather than an artefact created by a radio producer employing journalistic techniques to select and

\(^1\) In a 2009 trial the Australian government, through the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative, mapped how the research quality of creative outputs can be assessed within Australia’s higher education institutions using a combination of indicators and expert review by committees comprising experienced, internationally-recognised experts. A similar system called the Research Excellence Framework (REF) is used in the UK.
order components to create a storyline. Listeners therefore do not understand or appreciate the preparation and production process involved in creating a radio story; in fact the craft of documentary-making relies on the invisibility of technique. Similarly the few publications available about the production of long-format radio seldom identify the methodology involved nor discuss production issues beyond tips on researching, preparation, interviewing, editing, scripting and mixing.

Documenting this methodology can expand our understanding of radio documentary production for both listeners and practitioners. At every point in the production process there are decisions to be made and issues for the producer to consider. For example the production of a documentary about the personal impact of asbestos exposure raised the following issues: What is the role of the journalist when dealing with trauma interviews? What role does music play in enhancing the emotional impact of the story on the listener? What strategies can be used to balance the need for strong emotional impact without making the content so unbearable that the listeners turn the radio off? The listeners are never made aware of these issues as items of reflection as they listen, and unfortunately many practitioners are too busy themselves meeting their deadlines to have time to reflect on the production values and challenges involved in their daily work.

**Methodology**
The researcher was motivated by a desire to reflect upon, understand and capture her own production practice. She had spent years in the industry producing a range of different genres of radio stories without much chance to think about methodologies and theoretical aspects of those productions. Later, when the researcher started teaching radio production at university, it became clear to her that this lack of reflection by practitioners
was further exacerbated by a lack of writings about long-format radio production. As a result, this study was set up to offer an opportunity for the researcher to reflect on the production process of making a radio documentary. A mixed-method approach seemed most appropriate when exploring and analysing the production of radio documentary in an attempt to draw theory from practice and to position that theory within an academic framework. In this case the researcher took on the role of a bricoleur, performing a diverse range of research tasks from interviewing to self-reflection (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, 9).

The study developed into a three-step investigation which at every point looked at the theory and practice of radio documentary production. This became an analytical model for understanding the richness of journalistic practice. The model is both transparent and replicable, as required in academic research.

- The first step was producing the radio documentary *Deadly Dust* on commission for ABC Radio National while keeping a production diary to capture the process as it happened.

- In the second step of the study the researcher embarked on fieldwork studies where primary data about the theory and practice of documentary production was gathered through interviews with renowned practitioners reflecting on their work. The interviews contributed new knowledge to the under-researched field of radio documentary practice.

- In the third and final step of the study, the researcher revisited the production of the radio documentary, and the theory extracted from the fieldwork was applied to her own production of *Deadly Dust* thereby offering a much-needed analytical framework to use for reflection on the practice of journalism.
The three-step research methodology was then translated and presented as a two-part thesis. The radio documentary production theory extracted through fieldwork interviews became the centrepiece of part I. In part II that theory was applied to the production of *Deadly Dust* with the focus on reflections on that practice (the structure of the thesis is described in more in details below). The result is a study on journalism practice which combines an analytical dissertation with a radio production thereby becoming an exemplar for practice-related research, which can be useful for other practitioner-academics as a framework for their research.

**Definition of practice-related research**

With the growth of the creative industries and their evolution as an area of pedagogy and research within academe, it has become clear that the traditional definitions of research do not always suit these newer practice-based disciplines. Creative PhD theses are becoming more acceptable at universities, most often in the creative arts area where a creative artefact such as a book or a film script is submitted with an accompanying exegesis contextualising the artefact within a theoretical framework. More recently this model has been introduced as an option for students wanting to complete a research higher degree in journalism. There will no doubt be discussions about what constitutes journalistic ‘artefacts’ and also whether journalism should be defined as creative work. Notwithstanding that, the model has great potential for journalism practitioners wanting to deepen their understanding of theory and practice within their genre. The opportunity to reflect on practice, with practice informing the research process, would be welcomed by many. Arnold describes it as a model where ‘your own creative insights, practices,

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2 A range of Australian universities offer PhDs in practice-based research. At Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia, where this research was done, the definition is extended to include a ‘creative or production-based thesis’ (Murdoch University, 2009)
problems and delights are the core data’ (2008, 39). And it opens the way for multi-layered research which, according to Arnold, includes:

- ‘the practitioner’s work

- the practitioner’s insights into that work

- the relevant works of other practitioners and their insights into that practice

- apposite academic writings and theories that enliven and enrich the practice’

(ibid, 58)

To broaden the perspective of what constitutes research in this area the UK-based Arts and Humanities Research Council’s definition offers a useful framework. Its definition of research is based on process rather than outcomes and requires that creative work have some form of documentation of the process which demonstrates critical reflection:

- ‘it must define a series of research questions, issues or problems that will be addressed in the course of the research. It must also define its aims and objectives in terms of seeking to enhance knowledge and understanding relating to the questions, issues or problems to be addressed.

- it must specify a research context for the questions, issues or problems to be addressed. It must specify why it is important that these particular questions, issues or problems should be addressed; what other research is being or has been conducted in this area; and what particular contribution the particular project will make to the advancement of creativity, insights, knowledge and understanding in the area.
it must specify the research methods for addressing these research questions, issues or problems. It must state how, in the course of the research project, it will seek to answer the questions, address the issues or solve the problems. It should also explain the rationale for the chosen research methods and why they provide the most appropriate means by which to answer the research questions, issues or problems.’ (Arts & Humanities Research Council, 2009)

Candy argues that through practice-related research ‘new knowledge is reached through a research process and is made explicit and transferable’ (2006, 2). As well as sharing the outcomes with a wider community, another distinction is that the research follows a structured process as outlined in a university’s examination regulations (ibid, 2).

Candy subdivides practice-related research into two sub-types: practice-led and practice-based research (2006, 1). This allows her to make a clear distinction between research on creative practice and research through creative practice. This was therefore a useful model for the present study which has a natural divide between research about radio documentary practice and research through the practice of doing a radio documentary. The two separate parts also require and demonstrate different kinds of academic writing. The first part dealing with practice-led research is written in a traditional academic style, whereas the second part dealing with practice-based research is a self-reflective text in which the researcher herself is a presence.

Let us look at how the two fields of research on practice (practice-led research) and research through practice (practice-based research) relate to this thesis.

**Practice-led research**
Part I of the written dissertation focuses on the theory of documentary production. It describes the methodology that was developed for the practice-led component of the
research which involved fieldwork interviews with international award-winning radio documentary makers to gather their unique insights into their craft. Chapter 1 provides an overview of qualitative research approaches and describes the qualitative methods used in collecting, analysing and writing up the fieldwork data. The interviews in chapter 2 constitute primary data which in Candy’s terms enhances knowledge about or within practice (2006, 1) adding a new dimension to the limited existing literature in the field. The radio theory extracted in this part of the study becomes the framework for analysis where the researcher reflects on her own practice in the second part of the study.

**Practice-based research**

In part II of the thesis the focus shifts to practice-based research where a radio documentary produced by the researcher becomes the locus for reflection on the complex multifaceted process of journalistic creativity. Here the theory extracted in part I of the study is applied as a framework allowing the researcher to organise her insights into her own practice. The inclusion of a creative component is essential for this study as it highlights the production issues theorised about in the first section. It makes research through creative practice accessible for both the researcher herself and, from a pedagogical perspective, for other teachers, students and interested practitioners. The documentary contributes in its own right to knowledge by its original content, structure, form and impact on listeners. The accompanying written analysis contextualises and explores the significance of that contribution to knowledge (Arts & Humanities Research Council, 2009), however ‘a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the [creative] outcomes’ (Candy, 2006, 1).

3 Artefacts in practice-based research can range from paintings and buildings to software and poems. [http://www.creativityandcognition.com/content/category/10/56/131/](http://www.creativityandcognition.com/content/category/10/56/131/). Creativity and Cognition Studios (CCS) is an internationally recognised multi-disciplinary environment for the advancement and understanding of practice in digital media and the arts.
Chapter 3 presents the literature review and methodologies relevant to the production of *Deadly Dust*. Then chapter 4 isolates one issue in particular, the impact on the journalist of listening to traumatic stories, and here the author combines her own reflections with those from the radio producers interviewed in the fieldwork. Finally in chapter 5 the author uses the theoretical framework of radio documentary production developed from the expert interviews to analyse her own practice as she went about the process of producing the documentary. This self-reflective approach allows the reader to gain a unique insider view of the production process.

In summary the study utilises traditional qualitative research methods to collect and analyse data and to formulate a theory of production around radio documentary. It then provides an illustration of theory in practice through a self-reflective examination of the researcher’s own practice. For this reason the thesis also has a non-traditional format, consisting of both a written dissertation and a creative artefact.

**Thesis structure**
The thesis comprises a written component and an audio component in the form of a radio documentary. The radio documentary *Deadly Dust* is a stand-alone item that can be accessed and assessed on its own, in its own right. However, for the purpose of this study, the documentary becomes an integral part of the reflections on practice. Therefore, instead of dividing the work into one written part and one audio part the thesis is organised according to Candy’s definitions of practice-led and practice-based research (2006, 1), as outlined above.

The two parts of the study would individually create new insights into radio documentary theory and production. However with the written component deriving theory from practice and the production component illustrating theory in practice a research
project is created with both depth and breadth. Therefore the study demonstrates the benefits of this model for academics wanting to complement production outcomes with accompanying reflective and analytical writings, and vice versa (for more discussions on how documentary audio can complement traditional qualitative research studies, see Makagon and Neumann, 2009).

**How to read this thesis**

Being a ‘non-traditional’ academic publication, the reader requires some specific guidance in how to read and listen to the thesis. As the audio and written materials are interlinked and speak to each other, they will need to be engaged with in tandem. The thesis has thus been structured assuming the following reading and listening process:

1. Read chapters 1 and 2 which give the context for production-led research from which a theory for radio documentary production is derived.

2. Read chapter 3 which sets up the methodology for the production of *Deadly Dust*.

3. Listen to the whole radio documentary *Deadly Dust* (54-minutes) on the CD; the presenter’s introduction can be found in Appendix 6.

4. Read chapter 4, which examines in detail the particular journalistic challenge of dealing with traumatic material.

5. Chapter 5 provides a guided listening experience where the reader can follow the production process in more detail by reading the researcher’s reflective analysis.

6. The final conclusion draws out some of the lessons learned from the approach to practice-related research adopted in this project for the benefit of future journalism researchers.
What the thesis is not about

This thesis is not an in-depth analysis of where journalism is situated within academe. Instead it offers a practical model of how one type of journalism can be incorporated and presented as part of a higher degree research study. It highlights the need for further exploration of journalism’s place in academe and encourages other practitioner-academics to experiment with similar models.

It is also not an analysis of radio production in general. Instead it looks specifically at radio documentary production. The following five chapters will explore and expand the theory and practice of radio documentary production.
PART I: PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH – RESEARCH ON PRACTICE

The introduction to the thesis has outlined the two parts of this study. This first part is based on Candy’s practice-led research framework where exploring the nature of practice has operational significance to that practice (Candy, 2006, 1). For doctoral theses such research is often presented in written form only, as stand-alone theory without any creative work being included (ibid, 1). In this thesis the theoretical reflection will later be demonstrated and reflected on through real-life practice.

The aim of Part 1 is twofold:

1. **To develop new theory about the practice of radio documentary production**

This is achieved through applying qualitative research methods in order to capture data about the process of radio documentary production. Existing academic and industry writings about the research field are here enhanced and deepened by the incorporation of in-depth reflections from internationally renowned radio documentary practitioners. This has pedagogical benefits for those learning about radio documentary as there are only limited writings available currently. The insights will also benefit practitioners in industry who might not have the time or the opportunity to reflect around their work practice.

2. **To document the process of radio documentary practice.**

The exercise of highlighting and documenting from real life the methodology of radio documentary production contributes to the increasing body of academic work dedicated to exploring journalism as research. It responds to Lamble’s call for journalists and journalism academics to document the methodology and methods of journalism (in this case long-format radio documentary) – ‘a methodology that although unrecognised and multi-faceted must logically exist’ (Lamble, 2004, 103).
Chapter 1 – Fieldwork methodology

This chapter begins by presenting the overarching research paradigm for the industry-based part of this project and the research strategy that is used. The chapter then goes on to discuss the methodology of data collection through interviewing, and the subsequent data analysis. It addresses the ethical concerns of selecting a small cohort of participants and issues around identification of those interviewed for this study.

This is an exploration study (Yin, 2003, 6) which includes both data collected by trawling through libraries and other places holding primary sources as well as research interviews with practitioners in the field of radio documentary. As such it is necessary to begin by discussing qualitative research methodologies to contextualise and describe the approach that has been adopted.

Qualitative research methods

There are numerous texts dealing with qualitative research methods. Denzin and Lincoln (2003), Seale (2004) and Silverman (1997) offer good overviews of qualitative research methods from a variety of perspectives. Other useful texts are Creswell (2007) and Weerakkody specifically for media and communication research projects (2009).

Makagon and Neumann (2009) offer an interesting and relevant approach to qualitative research methods which includes the use of audio both as a way of collecting fieldwork data and for publishing research findings in social science studies. They argue for the inclusion of documentary production practices as an important method for social scientists.

*Audio reporting has largely been a province of radio journalists, but in their work we find considerable commonality with the interests of ethnographers, sociologists, anthropologists, and anyone else interested in the study of culture (Makagon and Neumann, 2009, 21).*
They also highlight the tyranny of text over non-text based formats such as audio which in their minds explains why so few social science researchers utilise audio as a research method (ibid). In doing so, they address the relationship between social science research methods and long-format journalistic production methods setting the two methodologies side-by-side and thereby highlighting the similarities between the two approaches (this idea is developed further in chapter 3).

**The research paradigm**
To fulfil the aim of this part of research project, that of deriving theory from practice, it was important to develop a conceptual framework grounded in real-life industry experience. As such, the project could be described as falling within the constructivist/interpretative paradigm as the aim is to understand how the producers constructed their own professional reality and consequently how they produced their radio documentaries.

Qualitative researchers work hard to ‘capture’ and explain other people’s lives and experiences. Qualitative research methods are sometimes questioned for lack of hard data as the information collected can be based on small numbers of participants thereby creating issues around representation and validation. Nevertheless in-depth interviews with a small cohort will offer useful insights into a topic to ‘understand human action or experiences’ (Weerakkody, 2009, 28) within a group of people, from the perspectives of the people studied. In so far as this study is concerned with how people experience the world, i.e. how radio documentary producers understand and reflect on their practice, the study follows the paradigm of phenomenology (ibid, 28).

**The research strategy**
For this part of the study it was important to ask a group of practitioners to reflect on their practice as radio documentary producers. While their reflections were essential for the purpose of this study, there were also potential benefits for them personally as they had a
rare opportunity to pause to analyse and reflect on what they do in their work. While radio producers want their interviewees to share their thoughts and experiences in a reflexive way, there is not always a culture of reflective practise amongst the radio producers themselves. 4

Critical reflection is now seen as a crucial skill for anyone wanting to develop a career (Preskill and Brookfield, 2009, 41). Having said that, the real-life deadline-driven journalistic routine limits the opportunity for journalists to stop and think about what they do. That may be why practitioners often take their practical knowledge for granted and fail to appreciate the complex knowledge systems that are brought into play when they produce a creative artefact. Not understanding how elements are related can hinder immediate understanding and growth (Ryan, 2005). According to Schön reflection is one way practitioners can bridge the theory-practice gap to uncover knowledge embedded in practice (Schön, 1983, 68). Taylor agrees with Schön that reflective practice can be a useful technique for practitioners wanting to make sense of their work and by doing so, allow for potential changes in their practice (2006, 8). In Taylor’s definition reflection is ‘the throwing back of thoughts and memories, in cognitive consideration’ (ibid. 8). While Taylor is speaking specifically about the work of nurses and midwives in a medical setting the more general techniques of reflective practice that she articulates were helpful for this study. In the interviews with radio documentary producers about their work, they were asked to reflect on processes they employ when developing a radio documentary; what sort of ideas they select to develop; what is the most effective way to tell a story about that idea; how they choose the ingredients of the documentary, i.e. interviews, dramatisation, sounds,

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4 This author follows Ryan’s definitions of reflexivity and reflectivity: ‘To be reflexive, participants (teachers) investigate their interactions via introspection as they occur and in the reflective mode participants reflect on various elements (verbal, nonverbal, feelings, and thoughts) following the action’ (Ryan, 2005) (added emphasis).
music etc. Asking these questions encouraged reflections that complied with Schön’s idea of reflection-in-practice that practitioners such as journalists might do (Schön, 1983, 62).

**Method of data collection**

Asking questions to elicit answers that can create an understanding about a person, event or issue is a methodology used in a variety of professions and disciplines. Police and lawyers ask questions of suspects and victims of crime; therapists, psychologists and medical staff ask patients about their illnesses; and employers use interviewing as a method of deciding whom to employ. The resulting interviews all differ in accordance with their distinct aims and objectives. However there are many similarities.

There is a large amount of material available on interviewing in general but the focus here is on social science research where interviewing is used as a method for collecting personal stories as data (e.g. during fieldwork and oral history recordings). Interviewing is the bread-and-butter method of collecting data for many social science researchers. This is reflected in the plethora of texts covering research interviewing (see for example Fontana and Frey, 2003; Gillham, 2005; Holstein and Gubrium, 1997; Ingham, Vanwesenbeeck and Kirkland, 1999; Jones, 2004; Kvale, 1996; Memon and Bull, 1999; Merton, Fiske and Kendall, 1990; Miller and Glassner, 1997; Minichiello et al, 1995; Oakley, 2004; Silverman, 1997 just to mention some of the many texts on qualitative research interviewing).

Merton et al state that the main reason to choose an interview over a questionnaire is to uncover a ‘diversity of relevant responses’ (Merton, Fiske, and Kendall, 1990, 12-13). To uncover this diversity the interviewer employs a range of skills and techniques relevant to the type of interview in question. A qualitative research interview can have many different purposes, forms and foci. Research interviews can be structured,
semi-structured or unstructured; they can be short interchanges over the telephone or can
take place in multiple face-to-face sessions spanning several days, as with life history
interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2003, 62). For Kvale a qualitative research interview is an
attempt to understand ‘the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning
of people’s experiences, to uncover their lived worlds prior to scientific explanations’ (Kvale,
1996, 1). The interviewees telling a researcher what it is like to be elderly and living alone,
or how they feel after being made redundant offer more than illustrations of life
experience: ‘they appeal to us because of their human character’ (Gillham, 2005, 8). The
recorded interviews, often in situ, allow the audience to ‘hear culture in practice’ (Makagon
and Neumann, 2009, 26).

Interviewing was chosen as a means of collecting data for this study because of the
flexibility offered by semi-structured interviews. The aim of the fieldwork was to record
reflections and opinions of radio producers talking about their practice. A questionnaire
would have been too prescriptive as the researcher wanted to encourage the participants
to think about and describe their work experiences. Since the participants were themselves
journalists and therefore used to interviewing as a method of collecting people’s ideas,
opinions and emotions, it was decided that recorded semi-structured interviews would be
the most effective approach.

**Interviews with radio producers**
The International Features Conference was selected as the perfect opportunity for this
researcher to meet and interview some of the world’s best documentary producers. The
IFC is a yearly event where documentary and feature producers and editors from mainly
European broadcasters come together to listen and critique each other’s programs to
‘stimulate[s] the development of the radio documentary/radio feature by the international
The conference is a way for radio practitioners to workshop ideas, to network and to share expertise. During five days approximately 100 delegates listen to and analyse excerpts from broadcast programs. They deconstruct documentaries and their analytical lens focuses on issues such as impact, soundscape, role of narrator, interviews, use of music etc. There are also master classes on production aspects and skills during the conference.

Six interviews were conducted during the 35th International Features Conference in Dublin, Ireland 9 – 14 May 2009. A seventh interview was conducted later, in 2010, with an Australian radio documentary producer.

**Selecting interviewees**

Qualitative interviews use a small purposive sample drawn from a specific population (Weerakkody, 2009, 173) and the six interviewees were selected to represent different language groups and documentary traditions, i.e. Canadian, British, Irish, German, Danish and Norwegian. Having such a small sample group is not a problem for this study as the interviewees were selected for their status in the profession and their ability to share qualitative reflections and information, which were intended to complement other forms of data collected (see part II of this study). Some interviews had been confirmed prior to the meeting in Dublin; others were selected at the event itself based on the significance of their contribution.

All interviewees have had long and active careers in the industry and have won awards for their documentary work:

- Peter Leonhard Braun, widely esteemed radio producer, writer, teacher and mentor. President and Founder of International Features Conference; 2007 Audio
Luminary Award Winner, former Head of the Features Department at Radio Free Berlin; Head of the radio department of the prestigious Prix Europa.

- Chris Brookes, Independent Producer Canada, former staff producer CBC. Winner of numerous international awards, including 2008 Audio Luminary Award Winner, New York Festival awards, a Peabody and a Prix Italia and three Third Coast Festival Awards.

- Simon Elmes, Creative Director of the BBC's Radio Documentary Unit. Executive Producer of the long-running magazine Word of Mouth, awarded the Premio Ondas broadcasting prize; Producer of award-winning 26-part series on the history of the English language with four accompanying books.


- Lorelei Harris, Head of IFC Features Deptment; Editor of Features, Arts and Drama at RTC, Irish radio. Winner of multiple national and international radio awards.

- Torben Paaske, Features and Documentary Producer, Danmark Radio (Danish public radio), winner of Prix Italia and Kryger prisen.

To complete the selection of practitioners in order to represent different language groups and documentary cultures, the aim was also to include an interview with an Australian documentary producer. As the schedule was tight during the IFC, it was decided that this interview would be done later when the researcher returned to Australia. After researching possible candidates and seeking recommendations from a number of industry practitioners, Kirsti Melville was selected as the Australian producer.
Semi-structured interviews

The interviews were semi-structured whereby an interview protocol based on a set of broad basic questions (see examples of questions in Appendix 1) was devised to encourage interviewees to reflect on their work. Weerakkody suggests using this method when the researcher is interested in a limited topic area and has some idea of what he or she is looking for (Weerakkody, 2009, 167). This format allowed the researcher to follow up on answers and to add new questions based on those responses. Descriptive questions (ibid, 167) such as ‘Describe what you think happens between interviewer and interviewee during a successful interview?’ encouraged interviewees to share their opinions using their own words. They were asked to reflect on radio documentary and feature production, focusing in particular on the role of the interviewer, the techniques of creating narratives with strong emotional impact, and the issues arising out of the responsibilities of the interviewer towards the interviewee. All the participants were enthusiastic about taking part in the study as they too acknowledged that there was a lack of writings in the area and they were therefore happy to contribute.

All interviews, ranging in duration from 30 to 80 minutes, were recorded in MP3 format using a digital audio hard-drive recorder. The Dublin interviews were conducted in the breaks between conference sessions which imposed a time limitation on the maximum duration of each interview. Kirsti Melville was interviewed in the researcher’s home with less of a time constraint. In all cases the interviewees were briefed about the aims and process of the interview and how it related to this study. They all received an information
letter about the study prior to the interview and they signed the consent form (see below, Ethical considerations).

**Data analysis**
The interviews were transcribed and analysed by sorting the answers into themes. These themes were based on the documentary production process and would later be discussed under the headings which are used in describing documentary practice in both chapter 2 and chapter 5. Whereas the topics were determined prior to the interview by the researcher seeking comments on the many production steps involved in the production, i.e. research, interviewing, scripting, editing, the interviewees themselves determined how much time was spent on each topic and how deeply it was explored. For some interviewing became a major focus of the interview. For others the challenges of recording and using sounds in the documentary narrative took centre stage. The semi-structured interview format allowed the interviewees to expand on the many areas investigated. Rather than simply describing the processes, the interviewees also analysed and reflected on their roles as interviewers, as well as more abstract areas such as the essence of the radio documentary and role of sound in the production. As chapter 2 shows, the practitioners’ reflections and shared wisdom have truly enhanced the field of radio documentary study, extending our knowledge of an under-researched area through the depth and breadth of their professional insights.

**Ethical considerations**
An interview is a moral endeavour and being involved in an interview affects the interviewee (Kvale, 1996, 109). The fieldwork interviews were covered by the rules of the revised Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007) which is the official policy of Murdoch University’s Human Research Ethics
Committee (HREC; permit number 2009/016). ‘[R]esearchers are guests in the private spaces of the world’ (Stake, 1995, 459) and therefore ethical issues such as harm, consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality of data were anticipated in the application to the HREC. One issue that had to be dealt with concerned the identification of the international radio producers that are part of this study.

**Identification of interviewees**

It was made clear to the interviewees that the interviews were part of an academic study. Being expert interviewers themselves they were relaxed and positively disposed to talking about radio documentary practice. Even though journalists were the subjects and journalism the topic, the interviews were not journalistic as such, instead adhering to requirements of research interviews with a methodological awareness (Kvale, 1996, 20).

Before any interviews were conducted the interviewees were informed about their rights to anonymity, but with a request that they consent to being identified. They all agreed to be identified in the study and signed the consent form. When the ethics approval was first assessed by the HREC at Murdoch University the committee had questioned the researcher’s request to identify interviewees in the study. The researcher’s argument was that as journalists themselves the interviewees would understand the impact of identification and how ‘knowing who said what’ would give more weight to their knowledge in the quotes included in the dissertation. This was accepted by the Human Research Ethics Committee in their final approval.

Another reason for identification was that the radio documentary community is so small it would make it difficult to protect the interviewees’ identities. As they were reflecting on their work roles and practice rather than personal life experiences, it was
expected that they would be happy to be identified. All interviewees when asked about this issue felt comfortable with being identified with name and workplace in the dissertation.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the approach and the methodology for the fieldwork research interviews with radio producers which constitute the ‘practice-led research’ component of this thesis. Through the fieldwork interviews we are given the opportunity to learn about the field under study from some of the most accomplished radio documentary producers in the world. In the next chapter, the data derived from this exercise is used to extend the scope of existing theory surrounding the radio documentary, thereby providing new insights into practice.
Chapter 2 – Radio Documentary Theory

This chapter will describe the theory of radio documentary production using the observations of industry professionals to add a new dimension to existing literature in this field. Before looking at the process of radio production itself a review of the literature will examine the few writings focusing on radio documentary and will also extend the range by reviewing relevant literature from other disciplines closely related to journalism, such as social sciences in general and oral history specifically.

Radio documentary production values

While there are shelves of books on video and television documentaries, the radio documentary is commonly confined to chapters in radio skills texts and only rarely are whole books devoted to the topic.

Three recent books are dedicated to the craft of the radio documentary, the most current being *Reality Radio* (Biewen and Dilworth, 2010) where mostly North American and a couple of Australian radio practitioners reflect in essays on their work. Twenty world-class documentary producers demonstrate through selected stories how and why they make radio the way they do. Two other radio books are written by experienced producers from Norway (Hedemann, 2006) and Sweden (Björkman, 2009). Both producers have won international awards and between them have worked in the field for over 30 years. Their books include analyses of the processes involved in producing long-format, in-depth radio documentaries with the interviewer as listener. The texts consist of case studies where the authors deconstruct award-winning documentaries so readers can understand and appreciate the complexity of the process. Unfortunately both books are written in their native languages which limits the readership to speakers of Norwegian and Swedish. As for English texts, Hesse’s classic textbook from 1987 *Radio Documentary Handbook* is now
outdated. The book covers the different steps, from initial idea to final broadcast, from a hands-on practitioner’s point of view. He offers no analysis or reflection on the process involved.

Virginia Madsen gives an authoritative account of the history of the radio feature focusing on the European experience. Her essay in the *Radio Journal* (Madsen, 2005) outlines the development of the radiophonic genre in Europe, starting in the late 1960s, made possible by the portable recorder. The essay includes interviews with prominent European radio feature producers and gives an overview of the establishment of the International Features Conference. Scannell (1986) describes the development of radio features and documentaries in the UK before the second world war. Crook (1999) takes up the baton and continues the history of British radio documentary and feature as one section of his book on Radio Drama. Chignell (2009) takes this further with the inclusion of some other European countries. Both Madsen and Chignell highlight the lack of studies in the field and identify radio documentary and features as a growing research area within radio studies. Madsen is also co-editor of an issue of the online media arts and culture journal *SCAN* which devotes a 2009 issue to the topic of authorship and documentary (Delofski and Madsen, 2009). Madsen and her fellow Australian radio producer and academic colleague Eurydice Aroney have looked at the work of Australian iconic radio producers Kaye Mortley (Madsen, 2009) and Tony Barrell (Aroney, 2009).

In the Neiman Reports Smith together with other American producers asks just what is a radio documentary (2001). The answer has nothing to do with either duration or audience but instead relates to the depth of research and the engagement with the topic (ibid). Hendy (2003) examines issues of reality and the process of discovery in radio documentary work. Citing Coles (1997) he discusses the tension between the objective and subjective by describing the gap that exists between the raw recordings of reality and the
manipulation of those recordings done by the producer in editing, linking and narrating the audio segments in a quest for creating general truths about the world (Hendy, 2003, 172).

McLeish’s book on radio production has a chapter dedicated to radio documentary and feature programmes (2005). He too uses a documentary as a case study which he deconstructs to illuminate the different components thereby making the production process explicit. Other texts dedicate a chapter to radio documentary production as one set of radio skill sets (see for example Barrell, 2006; Chapman, 2009; Herbert, 1976; Kern, 2008). The generic radio production skills, i.e. researching, interviewing, recording audio, writing, finding music and editing, are shared between many different radio formats, hence for example some elements of current affairs reporting can apply to documentary work as well. However, there are production issues specific to radio documentary production (as further discussed in chapters 3 to 5) that will not be adequately addressed in generic textbooks on radio production.

Radio features and documentaries
Before we embark on exploring radio documentary theory, it is useful to define the words ‘documentary’ and ‘feature’ as both words are used when describing long-format in-depth radio stories. Some academics and professionals use the terms interchangeably. For others, the documentary and the feature are distinguished in terms of the level of ‘truth’. The documentary is then described as being wholly factual – based on interviews and written records which tell the story of ‘real life’ and where facts and fiction are clearly separated. Radio features do not have the same formal constraints of having to tell the truth. Instead they can combine the ‘many forms of radio: poetry, music, voices, sounds’ (McLeish, 2005, 274). Another way to distinguish the two forms is to place documentaries closer to journalism whereas features are often seen as more creative, more closely linked to art. Biewen and Dilworth point out that the word ‘features’ is used in Canada, Australia and
Europe to describe a ‘radio genre more boldly artistic than anything regularly heard in this country [the USA]’ (Biewen and Dilworth, 2010, 10). Madsen uses words such as montage and ‘radio filme’ to describe the feature as the new form of radio emerging in Europe from in the late 1960s (Madsen 2005, 190). Following Chignell, this study acknowledges that the two forms can be described as two different radio genres, but because of the many similarities it makes sense to consider them as one (Chignell, 2009, 22). So whereas this study focuses specifically on radio documentary, aspects of theory and practice relevant to radio feature production will be incorporated under the documentary heading. The radio documentary *Deadly Dust* included in this study is a journalistic piece where facts are presented applying creative production techniques. Hence the term ‘radio documentary’ will be used throughout this thesis.

**Significance of radio documentary**

Australian academic and broadcaster Virginia Madsen highlights the lack of critical and academic enquiry into the field of radio documentary-making and argues for it as an important field of study as ‘this movement in radio has contributed in a significant way to the broader history of ideas’ (2005, 190). This is echoed by Samuel Freedman, journalism professor at Columbia University, who said in 2003 that public radio documentary is ‘one of the most significant cultural developments of ... the past decade’ (quoted in Biewen and Dilworth, 2010, 3).

Berit Hedemann, a Norwegian award-winning producer and editor, describes the documentary as having an important democratic function as it presents ordinary people as superstars; ordinary lives become important. Producers use reality as raw material and storytelling as the format. Hedemann argues that radio producers can tell important stories about people and society as effectively as reality television but with different messages. Because of the strong emotional impact of radio and the medium’s ability to get listeners
to identify with interviewees, the radio documentary can be seen as a way to increase empathy and tolerance in the world (Hedemann, 2006, 15). And the online availability of podcasting suits niche programs such as radio documentaries where listeners can download a story of interest at a convenient time. Podcasting is growing in popularity every year with a recent study predicting the number of podcast users worldwide to be 65 million by 2012, an increase from 18.5 million in 2007 (Verna quoted in McClung and Johnson, 2010, 84). In enabling us to capture audio to listen to in our own time podcasting has given radio documentaries a new lease of life.

Radio – the perfect medium for documentary

Radio documentary is about sharing human stories and experiences. For the 30 year celebration in 2004 of the International Features Conference (IFC) the Belgium radio producer Edwin Brys compiled six CDs with examples of international radio features and documentaries. In the accompanying booklet he writes:

> Often it is this human shortcoming, this divide between drama and deed, that is the basis for the best documentaries I have ever heard. They speak of something unfulfilled, incomplete, unfinished. But they are also about the enjoyment and the pleasure of every step in the right direction, or of challenging or flirting with what we call fate. The good documentary balances on the knife-edge of life. The best documentaries let us hear the deep, albeit subdued, basso continuo of melancholy. Not just nostalgia for what could have been and never was, but also the perception that something could be, but may never happen (Brys, 2004).

Unlike television which involves pointing a camera in the face of interviewees - often with accompanying lights, microphones and multiple staff to operate all the equipment - radio recordings can be done with minimal distraction and impact on people. New portable flash card recorders such as the Edirol and Zoom recorders are so small that interviewees can easily forget they are being recorded. Because of this relatively cheap and unobtrusive portable equipment radio producers can collect records of the everyday lives of people
without much intrusion and distortion (Chignell 2009, 24). Tim Crook uses the term ‘radio
documentary feature’ and describes it as a means to ‘provide the background and human
spirit or colour to what has gone on and what is going on in the world’ (1999, 213). Former
Head of BBC Features Department Laurence Gilliam describes what he calls feature
programs as:

\[ A \] combination of the authenticity of the talk with the dramatic
force of a play, but unlike the play, whose business is to create
dramatic illusions for its own sake, the business of the feature is to
convince the listener of the truth of what it is saying, even though it
is saying it in dramatic form (Gilliam quoted in McLeish, 2005, 274).

Peter Leonhard Braun uses a striking metaphor when describing the ‘radio feature’, which
he sees as a form of incarnation of radio that can suit multiple radio needs:

\[ Feature; let me say, it’s the prostitute of radio. You can use it for
religious broadcast, you can use it for beautiful music...you can use it
for economic issues \] (Braun, 2009).

Radio documentaries frequently deal with contemporary and social issues such as refugees,
global warming and lifestyle. They might explore broad issues and in so doing can provide
background to what is going on in the world or examine how society copes with change
(Crook, 1999, 213). Or they can deal with a ‘single person, activity or event’ (McLeish, 2005,
265). As such radio is a perfect medium for documenting reality and creating pictures of life
in the mind’s eye of the listeners.

**Radio pictures**

These pictures that are conjured in the mind of the listeners while listening to radio has
lead to the coining of the term ‘radio filme’ to describe how listeners visualise a scene.

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5 The quotes from interviews with the documentary/feature producers are in bold and black
throughout the dissertation to differentiate original fieldwork data from other source materials.
Transcripts of the interviews are available on request from author.
Beyond the image radio can also ‘create in the mind’s eye the owner of the voice’ (McLeish, 2005, 1). This makes it a perfect medium for telling personal and intimate stories about the human condition which are all built around human emotions such as love, anger, grief. This mental imagery combined with radio’s intimate and close relationship with the audience lead the listener to judge the experience to be ‘authentic, trustworthy and to give insight’ (this author’s translation, Hedemann, 2006, 17).

But as Barrell points out, the osmotic process listeners experience when absorbing radio words, music and sounds is ‘impossible to articulate in literal terms’ which makes devising methods of production challenging for a radio producer (Barrell, 2006, 182). These pictures listeners create are informed by their personal memories and experiences. As successful radio producers are aware, the listener also creates his or her own meaning by filling the ‘gaps’ between the radio images supplied by the producer.

\[ \text{Nå lytteren hører radio, derimot, er bara noen av bildene valgt av programskaparen, de fleste er skapt av lyttaren selv.} \]

\textit{THIS AUTHOR’S TRANSLATION: When the listener listens to radio, only a few of the [inner] pictures are created by the program maker. Most of them are produced by the listener herself (Hedemann, 2006, 21).}

Shingler and Wieringa go a step further by saying that this notion of the listener colluding with the broadcaster creates ‘radio’s illusion of spontaneity and intimacy’ (1998, 37). This is illustrated in the way listeners are willing to assume a radio voice is speaking to them alone, even though they know radio is addressing a mass audience. Hedemann argues this process of co-creation is the reason why radio is a suitable medium for telling stories about things we can’t see. Much of people’s lives can’t be seen; day-dreaming, love, thoughts and understanding can’t be seen (Hedemann, 2009). By presenting stories that illustrate these inner lives the listener can add his or her own pictures and create insights as part of the
process. In the words of academic Anne Dunn: ‘Radio allows us to see in the dark’ (Dunn, 2005, 194). Married to this is the direct link between sound and human emotions through its appeal to the imagination.

*Documentary features are radiophonic landmarks of our existence and human heritage. They record and inform the world of how we live and think. Their strength as a storytelling form is being rooted in the reality of life and human existence and exploring with great depth the beauty of human feeling (Crook, 1999, 231).*

We cannot protect ourselves emotionally from the impact of a close voice-recording of someone sharing their story of love or suffering (more on listening to traumatic stories in chapter 4.)

**Methodology of radio documentary production**

Having looked at what makes radio a suitable medium for long-format explorations of a person or a topic let us now explore the many steps involved in actually producing a radio documentary. Lamble and others (see for example Bacon, 2006 and Duffield, 2009), argue there is a methodology to journalism practice, even though this often goes unrecorded and hence unrecognised. This next section can be seen as a response to Lamble’s call for the need for journalism academics to ‘start recording that methodology in precise detail’ (Lamble, 2004, 103)

*It’s a beautiful trade we are working in because we are like medieval handicrafts. We are going into the forest and select our wood ourselves, then we judge the wood, then we process the wood, then we make a cupboard, a chair or whatever out of it, and then we even sell our product (Braun, 2009).*

Braun’s description of the methodology of radio documentary production is a beautiful image of the creative process involved. The radio producers interviewed for this study all describe this process using slightly different images, but they agree on the basic approach
of getting the material, analysing it and crafting a story from the material. There might be differences in how they see the mix of ingredients or the role of the narrator, but the production methodology is similar. Here it is important to note that there is a risk of restricting the understanding of what a documentary is by providing schematic and almost clinical step-by-step methods of production. That is not the intent of this study. Instead the aim is to make visible a process which is invisible for most listeners. It is also relevant to remember that the final ‘sound’ of the documentary is dependent on a range of things, e.g. the style of the individual producer, the requirements of the broadcasting network (duration, audience), and the culturally determined ‘radio sound’ of the country where the documentary will be broadcast. Australian documentaries are generally fast paced and include more music, sound effects and interviewees, while many European stories are slower in pace with the focus on the experiences of one person with fewer sound effects (Melville, 2010 and Hedemann, 2009). Braun makes the points that if 12 producers are asked to do the same story ‘you will get 12 different documentaries’ (Braun, 2009).

**The Story Idea**

The obvious starting point when analysing the process involved in producing a radio documentary is the story idea. For a format that has the potential to give such profound insights into the human condition, the story idea has to be strong. In the words of producer Peter Leonhard Braun: ‘The subject has to be so strong that if I am a mediocre producer it is already outstanding, but if I have talent then something really extraordinary might happen’ (Braun, 2009). It is a matter of finding a topic or an issue that will attract and engage the listeners. Canadian producer Chris Brookes describes it as tempting the listeners to come out of their hole and join him ‘it is like swimming in this whole other reality together’ (Brookes, 2009).
Journalists and producers live by their ideas and are constantly on the look-out for potential stories: in conversations with friends, in items in local newspapers or in tips from people contacting them. Australian producer Kirsti Melville describes it as always ‘being on’:

*I am quite nosy and I am quite voyeuristic. I don't really have an 'off' switch in that I just want to know people's stories. If I'm in a cab I'll want to know the man’s story. If I'm sitting next to someone or I start talking to someone at a sporting game or at the kids' football game … I like to know people's place in the world or what makes them tick. I am always thinking and analysing who they are and if they've got something to tell* (Melville, 2010).

Success lies in the extent to which curiosity is stimulated in the listeners. Some simple yet important preliminary questions help to hone the topic or theme: Is it interesting? Is it relevant to the audience? Is it timely? Will the story be sustained? Does it suit the program format? (Phillips and Lindgren, 2006, 90).

Hedemann goes further and outlines eleven questions that should be considered when working up the documentary idea.

1. What is the theme? Is it important enough to make a documentary about?

2. Is there a generic human aspect of the story for an audience to identify with? Is it about love, regret, grief, about the relationship between parents and children, about loneliness, about loss or success?

3. Who is the main character? Is the person sympathetic enough for the listener to identify with?

4. Does the main character have a history to tell? What difficulties has he or she faced?

5. Will the main character do something in relation to the theme that will provide some ‘scenes’ to record? (e.g. a cancer patient beginning chemotherapy)
6. Has the main character set a goal to achieve? The listeners will continue to follow the story to see if those goals are reached.

7. Who or what can hinder or help the main character from achieving those goals? Can they be interviewed?

8. Is there an inner conflict within the main character? An inner conflict and thereby an inner journey will create a personal development for the listeners to identify with.

9. What sounds are linked to the main character, the scenes or the theme, that can be recorded for the documentary?

10. Is there relevant music to help build the emotional impact?

11. What is the role of the narrator? Is it as an invisible voice to give instructions between scenes or as someone personally involved in the story?

Translated and adapted from Hedemann (2006, 62-63)

Radio documentaries start with people’s stories and it will be the producers themselves – their interest in the subject, their commitment, creativity and their skills – who will determine how the story is developed. Producer Torben Paaske feels compelled to tell stories about marginalised people in Danish society. He has done documentaries about the love-life of elderly people in residential care; about people with dementia; about transsexual people; about criminals. He is fascinated by the personalities and attitudes of people on the edge of society (Paaske, 2009). His Australian colleague Kirsti Melville also looks for stories that are socially relevant:
I’m very much a people person so therefore I gravitate to people-based stories. And I guess I’m just fascinated by the human experience and how people feel and think and behave in certain situations. So for me I’m drawn to the human experience, but always in a more socio-political context as well (Melville, 2010).

By choosing topics that interest them and that they feel passionate about, telling stories becomes a way for producers to develop as human beings, according to Peter Leonhard Braun:

They want to become better program makers. They want to become dancers on the rope. They want to become flyers in the air. And [during] this personal trip from time to time, you find the subject you can dance with, and if this happens, if the subject is meant for you and you are meant for it, then you get that beautiful harmony of movements, approaches, distances, and you might even get a miracle (Braun, 2009).

A brilliant idea will always get people listening because it is a curiosity, says British documentary producer Simon Elmes, ‘God, fancy that, I never knew’ (Elmes, 2009). He suggests developing the idea in such a way as to keep the audience slightly wondering and not too comfortable. ‘You should not be afraid of shocking the listener but at the same time you don’t want to shock them so much that they actually go for the off switch’ (ibid, 2009).

**Background research and planning**

Now clearly before the idea gets sold you have to do a certain amount of investigation...It’s always a corpse, a skeleton, before you start (Elmes, 2009).

As part of the process of putting flesh on the bones the storyline is likely to change; research might show that the idea does not stand up or there might be something even more interesting buried in the material. Producer Simon Elmes and his BBC colleagues have to go through a strict commissioning process when proposing a documentary (ibid). That
process is mandatory for most freelance producers wanting to sell a story idea, but it is also common for many broadcasters within the organisation to have some form of internal process where producers have to pitch, or sell, their idea before getting the green light. In those instances the background research will be included in the proposal or pitching document.

The background research done by radio documentary producers is similar to the literature review required by academic disciplines. By finding out what has been written about the topic before, the documentary can be positioned in the context of previous knowledge. Some material will be used as background information while other material will become ingredients of the production. By scoping the territory the producer will find material that potentially could be included in the story, such as archival material, previous radio stories on the topic, music, readings and videos. Background research will also unearth interviewees and other talents useful for the production. During his 32 years of radio production producer Simon Elmes has devised a ratio whereby a 28-minute documentary will accommodate seven or eight interviewees:

*I know it sounds absolutely ridiculous but I've made so many programs where I have recorded 15 people, 20 people and I've ended up broadcasting seven of them (Elmes, 2009).*

Background research involves not only looking for available information on a topic; it also includes planning the sounds for the documentary. In a workshop on *The Power of Sound* presented at the 35th International Features Conference in Dublin in 2009, producer Torben Paaske outlined to an audience of international features and documentary producers how painstakingly he researches possible soundscapes for his productions. Before doing any recordings, he visits the location of the interview to take detailed sound notes which he uses to create a sound storyboard. For example, if one location is an apartment he will scan
the space and even move things around to create the sound he wants (author’s notes from workshop, IFC 2009)⁶.

Doing background research is the first step of the planning process. By understanding the topic and knowing what material is available, the producer can start sketching a draft story structure. It means the fieldwork will not be ‘a random fishing expedition but a clear-headed exercise to collect quite specific material’ (Phillips and Lindgren, 2006, 93). The second stage of planning involves the actual collection of material while the third stage involves the creative editing process itself. Peter Leonhard Braun describes the process of producing a documentary as akin to giving birth. Once the research and recordings have been done ‘[i]t’s an intellectual process of digestion…when they [producers] have understood it, then they have to bring it out’ (Braun, 2009). Issues around the creative process in developing the structure of the documentary are further discussed under the heading Dramaturgy below.

**Motif**

A documentary topic is a type of hypothesis – a tentative explanation for a particular phenomenon; a theory in need of investigation. Where and when the central motif becomes clear depends on the story and the producer’s approach. In news journalism the word ‘angle’ is more commonly used to describe the central focal point of a story. Irish documentary-maker Lorelei Harris calls this revelation the ‘point of breakthrough… at which that central motif of the program, whatever it was going to be or however I was going to do it, would become apparent to me’ (Harris, 2009). This is the thread that holds the program together. Harris argues that when documentaries don’t work it is because the producers have not got this central point; instead all they have is a collection of interviews

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⁶ Notes from the IFC in Dublin are available from author on request.
Melville looks for strong emotion as the centre of the story: ‘they are the stories that people connect with because it’s something that everyone can relate to, that range of human emotion’ (Melville, 2010).

Before continuing to explore the many issues and steps embedded within the production process such as collecting materials, developing narrative and editing and mixing, we need to take a detour from the methodology to examine the different components of a radio documentary – the ‘building blocks’ that are manipulated by the producer in the attempt to create compelling programs.

**Radio documentary ingredients**

The aim of a successful radio documentary is to create connectedness with the listeners. As this chapter shows there is a production methodology involved in making that kind of documentary, however there are no set rules for how the different components are used, or even what components are included.

There are these building blocks - interviews, archives, dramatised readings, narration – which are the big obvious building blocks which are set against these abstractions of conception, deepening thought-processes, shaping, dramaturgy and so on and so forth. You use these building blocks to orchestrate and illustrate (Elmes, 2009).

I really don’t think of radio features as being kind of like soup which normally is supposed to have meat and potatoes and cabbage and turnips and carrots... I start from nothing with a sort of desperate search for trying to find a way to express this program idea in a program (Brookes, 2009).

The two quotes above illustrate how two producers might take quite different approaches to the decision of choosing what building blocks to include in a production.

Norwegian radio documentaries are some of the world’s best, based on the many international awards they have garnered. Producer and editor Berit Hedemann has been
one of the driving forces behind this achievement and her radio documentary book *Hør og Se* (translated to *Listen and See*) charts the production methodologies employed by the documentary department at the Norwegian public broadcaster (NRK) as recipes for success. Hedemann has identified five main radio documentary ingredients:

1. Monologue interview with main character (where the interviewer’s questions are edited out)
2. Scenes where the interviewee is engaging with others (without any interviews)
3. Sounds that are not a natural part of the scenes
4. Narrator
5. Music

Translated from Hedemann (2006, 61)

These five ingredients can be arranged in an unlimited number of ways. Some documentaries might contain just some of the five ingredients, but according to Hedemann most documentaries contain at least two of them (ibid, 61). Interviewing is covered below under its own heading so here we will examine the other four elements identified by Hedemann.

**Scenes**

Scenes in a radio documentary are used in the same way as in a Hollywood movie. The idea is for the audience to ‘see’ and to follow the story’s main character in a situation where he or she is engaging with other people without the interviewer being involved. This is a space where the main character can develop in front of the listeners’ ears, can be placed in context, and where authenticity is created. There are no formal interviews performed in the scenes. Instead the producer uses the microphone to record reality as it happens.
Having said that, it is also possible for the interviewer to participate in a scene but as a secondary character, e.g. looking through the family photo album together with the interviewee. Where an interview is a story told by the producer in past tense a scene gives us an event or a happening in ‘real’ time (Hedemann, 2006, 84). For shorter format radio productions scenes are often snippets of ‘actuality’ (atmospheric location sound) faded in under an interview or a recorded voice link. In a longer documentary story of 28- or 54-minute duration, the scenes can become important autonomous segments. A scene can be a fight between a married couple, the sounds from a bustling maternity ward, or an audience at the football finals. Hedemann points out how seldom producers let reality play out in front of the microphone. Using the example of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, she describes the lack of sound recordings of people breaking down the wall. Instead the dramatic event was recorded mostly via a reporter interviewing someone in front of the wall, hence ‘standing in the way so the listener couldn’t see what was happening behind them’ (this author’s translation, Hedemann, 2006, 84).

Similarly to social science researchers using ethnographic approaches, radio academics and radio practitioners need to be concerned about issues of ‘truth’ when recording scenes. They need to ask themselves: are scenes spontaneous ‘real-life’ events and what are the ethical ramifications if a producer intervenes in the development of scenarios by directing people as actors? Coles (1997) discusses the tension between the objective and subjective by describing the gap that exists between the raw recordings of ‘reality’ and the manipulation of those recordings done by producer editing, linking and narrating the audio segments in a quest for creating ‘general truths’ about the world. According to Coles, producers need to understand that ‘[w]hat we offer in the way of our documentary reports, then, is our mix of what we have observed and experienced’ (Coles, 1997, 91). There is no doubt that the presence of a producer recording the interaction of
two or more people in a room will have an impact on the people. It is likely that the people recorded will modify their behaviour for the microphone. But that is not necessarily unethical. It is possible to argue that in our media-saturated world most listeners would know and understand that in every recorded event there is someone holding the microphone to capture ‘reality’.

**Sounds**

When talking about radio documentary the ‘sound’ component is typically defined as all sound other than speech even though the spoken word on radio becomes, when recorded, a form of sound. Even silence can be defined as a sonic aspect of radio.

Sound in documentary production can be separated into two categories: wild sound and special effects. Wild sound (often called actuality) is a recording of ‘real life’ (this is a broad definition as actuality can be a staged recording, i.e. where a producer asks the interviewee to sing along with the radio); it can be used as a sound carpet under an interview creating ambience or setting a scene, e.g. the sounds of police sirens approaching a crime scene. Special effects (SFX) sounds are created in a studio or can be taken from commercially available sound libraries or CDs. These are often ‘spot sounds’ such as someone knocking on a door or footsteps.

> ...words are like ribs, bones and whatever. Sound is more like flesh...It’s like elements on the stage, you have several actors and words are always the main actor...but now sound maybe has to become the main actor, and the word has to step back and becoming the supporting one (Braun, 2009).

Peter Leonhard Braun is credited with developing the European radio feature ‘as a distinct form, and by doing so influenced generations of radio producers around the globe’ (Third Coast International Audio Festival, 2007). His groundbreaking work *The Bells of Europe* (in German *Glocken in Europa*) from 1973 is translated into more than a dozen languages. And
his work with stereophonic sound opened up the radio world to stereo recordings in feature production. Madsen tells of how Braun during mid-1960s left the confines of the radio studio and took listeners into a new sound world recorded in the wild, creating ‘acoustic film-making’. Madsen also recounts how Peter Leonhard Braun told the International Features Conference in 2001 about coming to Prix Italia in 1966 with the first sound experiment recorded on location in a London pub with multiple microphones, only to find that he had been beaten by the Polish television and radio producer Witold Zadrowski who had produced *Death of an Elephant* on location in Africa; what Braun described as ‘the first real breakthrough in acoustic film’ (cited in Madsen, 2005, 195).

Producer Torben Paaske at Danish Radio is well-known within the industry for his use of sounds in his productions. His pre-production research includes detailed notes on the potential sounds for his story. When producing a documentary about paramedics in Copenhagen, Denmark, he tested the ambulance siren at different speeds to hear what it sounded like when driving 30 km/h or 120 km/h. He also predicted that the paramedics would sooner or later need to pick someone up from a specific nightclub in Copenhagen so he took detailed technical sound notes from the nightclub such as the different sounds of the room and where the jukebox was located in relation with the front door. Paaske’s prediction came true so when the paramedics were eventually sent to the nightclub to take care of a drunken man, Paaske knew where and how to do the recordings on location. He even went as far as to ask the paramedics to move the drunken man closer to the jukebox to achieve the soundscape Paaske wanted for his documentary (author’s notes from workshops, IFC, 2009)\(^7\).

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\(^7\) This caused a debate at the IFC workshop about the ethics of moving someone in need of medical help for the benefit of documentary recording. Torben Paaske replied that a medical assessment was made by the paramedics whose final decision it was to accept Paaske’s request to move the man.
Chignell argues that no other media form has such an ‘eclectic mix of sound’. He continues by describing the radio feature as exploiting ‘the sonic qualities and diversity of radio; speech (spontaneous and scripted including prose and poetry), music and varieties of other sounds (both artificial and actuality)’ (Chignell, 2009, 23). Crook suggests that we ‘think of the microphone as a television camera for the blind’ (1999, 214). The sounds themselves are more than just a backdrop to an interview – they carry meaning. Sound can take us to different places and move us as listeners between past, present and future.

Sounds can be used as a kind of shorthand where the hooting of an owl means night; police sirens indicate drama and trauma; and the ticking of a clock means the passing of time. The flexibility in handling time and space through sounds is distinctive for radio drama (Dunn, 2005, 195) but is also shared with radio documentary. This unique capacity to mix different sounds to create meaning, to conjure up a sense of place and to make listeners respond emotionally is fundamental to the art of radio documentary-making.

Canadian producer Chris Brookes has been described as a ‘choreographer of sound, poet [and] composer’ (Third Coast International Audio Festival, 2008). He has won numerous international awards for his productions where sounds and music are essential components. He describes the process of incorporating sounds into a program about a diminishing community in Newfoundland. When editing a song recorded in his studio, he heard a foghorn in the background that had been accidently recorded behind the singer’s voice:

You can’t see the fog, it’s something that you can’t see on radio but you can hear it if you give people the sound of a foghorn. So that’s the radio version of fog… her song was sort of the voice of the fish that are gone, she was singing about fish that aren’t there anymore. You can’t see them on radio; you can’t see them in reality (Brookes, 2009).
Even silence can be described as ‘atmospheric or ambient noise’ (Shingler and Wieringa, 1998, 55). Silence is treated with caution on radio for the fear of listeners thinking it is dead air and therefore changing the station. Because radio exists in time and not space as visual media does, silence can become a threat to radio producers ‘because silence portends non-existence’ (Dunn, 2005, 193-194). But silence, or pauses, can carry as much information as words, if not more: think of the hesitation of a politician before answering a controversial question. These segments of silence on radio build expectations, suspense and emotional responses with the listeners. According to Shingler and Wieringa silence may not even be silence: silence is often in fact barely noticeable atmospheric sounds lying underneath a more prominent noise - the silence in a church is different to the silence in a forest (Shingler and Wieringa, 1998, 55).

**Narrator**

The narrator in a radio documentary is the glue holding together the many different components that make up the storyline. Some stories lend themselves to a montage format, where the components drive the narrative forward all by themselves without the need for a voice explaining what is going on. Otherwise it is the narrator who by signposting ensures that the listeners do not get confused or lost. The narrator’s role can be assumed by anyone, but most commonly it is the documentary producer who fills this role reading his or her own script. The main objective of the narration is link items and to describe people and places and to give facts and information such as time, place, interviewees’ names and profession. The narrator can also build up listener’s expectations by moving the program along in the script. Crook suggests writing the script to ensure the listeners are allowed to “‘learn’ with you’ where experts, authorities and victims unfold the story (Crook, 1999, 216).
Doing the narration, which consists of the script as well as the voice presenting the script, can be challenging for novice producers as it can take many attempts to find the 'right' voice. For example news journalists when moving into the documentary format can find it hard to leave the authoritative voice of the news report behind and look for a more natural narrator voice inside them. As this is not intended to be a production manual, tips and instructions on how to write the scripts and develop the 'right' voice will not be covered here (for more on this topic see, for example, Mills (2004) and chapter 4 in Phillips and Lindgren, 2006). Rather the focus is on the different kinds of narrator voices, and here we can draw on the work of Norwegian documentary-maker Berit Hedemann. She describes the variety of roles at her disposal in order to create a space for herself and the listener:

Fortelleren kan være stor og ligne på en allmektig gud som kan se alle steder i programmet samtidig og in i alle de medvirkendes hoder, eller hun kan være liten og innsmigrende og ligne på en indre stemme som hvisker innsikter til dig. Fortelleren kan være saklig, usaklig, humoristisk, alvorlig, kritisk eller vennlig alt etter hvilken rolle hun velger seg, og hvilken rolle som passer programmet. Fortelleren kan være nesten osynlig og nøytral, eller svært synlig og dominerande og subjektiv.

THIS AUTHOR’S TRANSLATION: The narrator can be big like an almighty God that can see all parts of the program and into the heads of all the participants simultaneously, or she can be small and cunning like an inner voice who whispers insights to you. The narrator can be formal or informal, full of humour or humourless, serious, critical or friendly; depending on which role she has selected for herself and which role suits the program. The narrator can be almost invisible and objective, or very noticeable, dominant and subjective (Hedemann, 2009).

In her book Hedemann gives examples of 11 different styles and personalities of the narrator by including transcripts from Norwegian radio documentaries (many of them award-winning). The narrator roles range from a neutral voice describing interviewees’
ages and life circumstances; to a narrator who engages directly with the interviewees as ‘you’; and finally to a narrator as main character who talks about herself as ‘me’.

Hedemann points out that whatever narrator style (and accompanying perspective) a producer chooses it has to serve the program. It also has to give the listeners their best and finest experience of reality (translated from Hedemann, 2006, 127-149).

**Music**

Music is an intrinsic part of a radio documentary. Including music as one component is in no way obligatory, however many producers do use it as music works as background setting, as pauses to invite time for reflection or as enhancement to heighten the emotional impact or evoke emotions. Just like sounds, music can create a sense of time and place. Shingler and Wieringa give examples of music associated with ‘particular states of mind, conditions and events: Rachmaninov’s Piano Concerto No. 2 for romance, Purcell’s “Dido’s Lament” ... for death, Wagner’s “Ride of the Valkyries” ... for war’ (Shingler and Wieringa, 1998, 65).

Music can be a powerful helper in creating atmosphere and mood; it can highlight and emphasise, accelerate or slow down a radio story.

*Music [is there] to give a transition out of one mood to another...In a feature the music should be used very artfully and it should grow, if possible, organically out of the material. So it isn’t just plastered on like a chunk of mortar on a wall, it should be integrated with the material (Elmes, 2009).*

Most listeners would have experienced the frustration of hearing a strong interview followed by some music they thought was unsuitable. As music taste is highly subjective, radio producers have to be very careful when deciding what music to include in a documentary. The impact of music on content was illustrated as part of a music workshop held by producer Alfred Koch at the 35th International Features Conference in Dublin 2009.
There the audience was played an edited interview and then presented with a variety of songs from different music genres and asked the question: “Does this music work here?”

The aim of the session was to collaborate as a group to create the beginning of a radio documentary about New Orleans, three years after hurricane Katrina. The first option was a jazz piece by Fats Domino but the audience of radio producers felt that the music was too strong and competed with the voice of one victim talking about how she lost her home in the hurricane. The second song was considered too sad; the third too happy; the fourth was the theme from the film Apocalypse Now which was too dramatic and somewhat clichéd because of its overuse in documentaries (author’s notes from workshop, IFC 2009).

It is particularly difficult to discuss the use and impact of music in purely theoretical terms without hearing it. The most effective way to analyse and discuss what type of music goes where in a radio program is to use a real example. Hence instead of dealing with it any further here, see the discussion about the choice and usage of music in the production of the documentary *Deadly Dust* (see chapter 5).

Having discussed four of the five radio documentary ingredients, as identified by Hedemann, the next one to explore is the interview. The interview is both one of the building blocks of documentary and a method of collecting content for the story. Both aspects of the interview will be explored below.

**Interview**

One of the challenges of analysing journalist practice is that many of the production steps are often taken for granted by both the practitioners themselves and their audience. Nowhere is this more the case than with the interview. This ‘bread-and-butter’ aspect of journalists’ daily work can have huge consequences for all involved in the process, as Adams points out:
As a result of what you write, based on what you learn during an interview, people may lose their jobs, companies may close, lives may be ruined. Or you may be intrigued enough to try out a new sport, meet someone you later marry, win an award (Adams, 2001, 6).

Interviewing is used by a variety of disciplines for collection of data and interviews can be done in a multitude of different ways. The aim of this thesis is both to illustrate the interviewing theory in practice as well as to derive new theory from practice — or, in the words of Kvale, to demonstrate the ‘interconnectedness of practical issues of interview methods with theoretical issues of [the] nature of interview knowledge’ (Kvale, 1996, 14).

There are an increasing number of publications specifically describing and analysing journalistic interviewing from a variety of perspectives, e.g. interviewing for radio and more niche techniques such as guerrilla interviewing (see for example Adams, 2001; Beaman, 2000; Bell and van Leeuwen, 1994; Brady, 2004; Buck and Gray, n.d.; Sedorkin and McGregor, 2002; Wilson, 2000). With interviewing being one of the fundamentals of reporting, all journalism textbooks dealing with craft skills have sections on interviewing giving ideas and tips on how to get a good interview (see for example Ahern, 2006; Alysen et al., 2003; Alysen, 2006; Boyd, Stewart and Alexander, 2008; Conley and Lamble, 2005; Hendy, 2000; Hudson and Rowlands, 2007; McLeish, 2005; Phillips and Lindgren, 2006).

The journalism online training centre Poynter Institute website has multiple pages dedicated to interviewing ranging back to 2001 (Shedden, 2002). It offers a useful interviewing bibliography with online resources and books.

**Types of interviews**

Before we look more closely at the process of interviewing it is necessary to discuss the different types of interviews. These derive from the purpose of the interview and its intended audience.
Interviews can be categorised in many different ways depending on the media format, length and intensity of the interview. Borrowing terminology from qualitative researchers, an interview can be unstructured, semi-structured or focussed based on the types of interviews and interviewer’s involvement; it can be a short print news interview or an in-depth feature portrait; it can be broadcast live on air or recorded for editing later. Because this thesis focuses on radio features and documentaries, only long-format audio interviews will be addressed here.

Buck and Gray group radio interviews into three broad categories: accountability, discovery and information (Buck and Gray, n.d., 9). Their categories are based on the role of the interviewee. Most accountability interviews are with politicians and lobbyists etc where the interviewer needs to hold the interviewee accountable. A discovery interview is where the interviewee reveals something of themselves. McLeish calls this an emotional interview which provides an insight into the interviewee’s inner world so listeners can better understand the human condition (McLeish, 2005, 81). An information interview searches out answers that describe a specific event or situation where the interviewee can answer questions like Who? What? When? Where? How? and Why? It might be an eyewitness account or a scientist describing a new discovery (Buck and Gray, n.d., 15). Intensely personal and emotional interviews are the most challenging of interviews. They involve the interviewer to a level not required for a shorter more informational interview. Instead they require the interviewer to engage with the personal dreams, sorrows and joys of the interviewee. And this personal closeness is too demanding for many journalists, according to Buck and Gray:

*Some very experienced interviewers, who are unfazed by politicians attempting to shout them down, or by uncooperative heads of companies, or by angry union officials, become very uncomfortable when an interviewee starts to touch on distressing experiences or*
show emotions. If at this point interviewers start to run from their own discomfort, they generally find shelter in process – facts, figures, times, places (n.d., 12).

Issues around reporter involvement, and the specific challenge involved in interviews dealing with personal trauma are further explored below.

Creating rapport
Maybe because interviewing looks uncannily similar to the basic human interaction of conversation, it is tempting to take the skills of doing an interview for granted. It could be that skilful journalists make the process look easy (Adams, 2001, 5). Or it could also be that the abilities required to conduct a successful interview are attributed by some to the innate personal qualities of the interviewer rather than to specific skills. According to Adams, the most useful characteristic of any interviewer is to be likable (ibid, 5). In The ABC of Interviewing, a radio training book produced by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, it is claimed that good interviewers have a mix of both natural skills, such as curiosity and empathy, and learned craft skills which can be practised to achieve best results (Buck and Gray, n.d., 7).

An interview resembles a conversation between two people and many of us talk with friends, colleagues, neighbours and children every day; a question is followed by an answer and a conversation is born (Kvale 1996, 20). However the similarities of the question-and-answer format of the interview can disguise the complexity of what is a staged rather than a natural interaction. Hedemann describes the challenge during a very short time span of getting an interviewee to talk to a perfect stranger (the interviewer) as if she was his best friend (2009, 65). There are multiple steps involved with decisions being made on the run every few moments. Different kinds of journalistic interviews demand a plethora of different skills: a live radio interview with a politician differs from an interview
with a dying cancer patient in preparation, questioning, style, reporter involvement, length and so on.

The techniques of news and current affairs interviewing are not suitable for in-depth personal storytelling. In the latter format the success of the interview hinges on the willingness and the capacity of the interviewee to share a personal experiences with the interviewer. Memorable interviews result not from the interviewer’s active direction of the interview but from a preparedness to listen intensely and to follow the interviewee’s lead. The interviewee needs room to manoeuvre and to be in charge of how the story is told. Some of the radio producers interviewed for this study talk about the interviewing process as ‘meandering’, just holding the microphone and waiting for the story to be told; and they stress the importance of allocating ample time to dance the tango of interviewing to explore the psyche of a person. ABC Classic FM master interviewer Margaret Throsby employs a sporting analogy:

Very often it doesn’t go where I think it is going to go. It is like a tennis match: you serve a ball over the net and they return it to the backhand instead of the forehand, so you have to chase it, otherwise you don’t get the shot back (Phillips and Lindgren, 2006, 55).

The interview situation is an artificial one regardless of the amount of preparation and pre-briefing between interviewer and interviewee. It is a structured conversation between two strangers for the benefit of a third – the listener/reader/viewer. For a journalistic interview the aim is to make it sound or look like a conversation (Bacon interviewed in Wilson, 2000, 311) while the reality is often the interviewer reading from a list of questions or being prompted by a producer in an earpiece. Veteran broadcaster Phillip Adams comments tartly ‘the job could be done by a literate chimpanzee. Most interviewers aren’t interviewing, they are simply ventriloquists’ dolls whose wires and string are being pulled backstage’ (Adams interviewed in Wilson, 2000, 16). While Adams is describing the
arrangements of some live on-air interviews, his comments are less relevant to the pre-recorded interview. At the opposite end of the scale to Adams’s literate chimpanzee, Ingham et al provide a daunting list of desirable traits and skills of the sort of interviewer they are seeking for sensitive research project into sexual behaviour in the UK. This illustrates well the complexities involved in doing a research interview but it can also exemplify a journalistic interview:

He or she should be stable and experienced, empathic yet intrusive when necessary, non-directive yet structured and systematic, know about the joys and pains about sex, sexual lifestyles and variations, be sensitive to the spoken and unspoken word, be aware of his or her gender roles and values, be aware of the effect he or she has on the participants of the same or other sex, be genuinely interested in what the participants say, completely non-judgemental and accepting, and so forth (Ingham, Vanwesenbeeck, and Kirkland, 1999, 152-153).

Long-format interviews in particular permit a less formulaic approach with room to develop a genuine personal connection between the interviewer and interviewee out of which unexpected, unrehearsed and deeply personal stories can flow. Pre-briefing of the interviewee about the interviewing process and the aims and areas of questioning prior to the interview is crucial to achieving a successful outcome (Beaman, 2000, 70). Melville describes how when doing documentary work, she tries to visit the interviewee’s home for a cup of tea before the interview:

I'll always take my recorder to those sessions, and I just gauge how the person’s feeling. If they're starting to really talk about what I want to interview them about, I might say, 'Look, I have my recorder, would you mind if I record some of this?' If I sense that they're still very nervous or shy I'll just keep talking and then I'll make an appointment time later. I would never do that in a more current affairs setting (Melville, 2010).
Berit Hedemann explains how their producers at the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) spend a lot of time with the interviewees to get the results they want. First they do a research interview with the interviewee to establish that the person is suitable as the main talent of the story. Then the documentary maker returns twice, each time recording a two-hour in-depth interview with the person (Hedemann, 2009).

So what makes some interviews ‘magic’? According to the author Robert Dessai the quality of the interview hinges on the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. In the book A big ask: Interviews with interviewers, Dessai describes the kind of outstanding interviews where the chemistry is created between interviewer and interviewee that leads to two people having a good time together ‘having a good time means learning, excitement, depth, wisdom, new perceptions, a feeling of the utter specialness of the occasion’ (in Wilson, 2000, 30). For Kirsti Melville the magic derives from a combination of factors:

*What makes an interview particularly magic can be a combination of the strength of the person’s story and their ability to tell it, and they don’t have to be wildly articulate, it just has to be that you can hear in their voice the joy, the sadness, the struggle, the inner struggle.

...It’s often just a feeling, if you hear something and you think it’s a great combination of words and emotion and honesty and authenticity in their voice and their experience, and it can be just a pause or a tremor or a realisation or an awareness that they come to while they’re talking to you (Melville, 2010).*

Simon Elmes describes what is required of the interviewer to help create this ‘magic’:

*The answer is a lot of patience, an immense amount of listening, a degree of charm, a degree of persistence, an amazing ability to hold something in your memory and to hold onto a little thought so when you got to the answer three answers down the track you can then say, ‘Hang on, just a moment, you said...’ And that’s not to challenge them but just to say, ‘When you said that, is that to do with that?’ and that’s when you get the third line and that’s when that little filigree crack starts, you start chasing it (Elmes, 2009).*
What is created is an intimate relationship between interviewer and interviewee and for this the placement of the microphone has a significant role to play; the microphone needs to be close (for close-up recording quality) and the interviewer will not turn off the recorder whatever happens. This close recording enhances the sense of intimacy and will make it possible to hear the soul, according to Hedemann who points out that the interviewer and the subject have an unspoken pact:

\[ \text{Og da inngår vi en avtale ikke sant. At vedkommende skal få være med å bestemme på hva vi skal ta med. Nå prøver du og jeg å lage et fint program. Og lage dette finest mulig. Og i det er det en veldig god type avtale. Fordi da går det også an å si: Vet du hva, når du sier det på den måten, så tror jeg ikke lytterne skjønner hva du sier. Kan vi prøve å finne en annen måte å si det på?} \]

**THIS AUTHOR’S TRANSLATION:** We have an agreement, that the interviewee participates in deciding what goes in. ‘You and I are trying to do a beautiful program, the best we can do’. It’s a good contract because you can then say: ‘when you say it this way the listeners might not understand what you mean. Can you try and say it in a different way? (Hedemann, 2009)

The relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee has to be strong, at least during the actual interview, according to Irish producer Lorelei Harris:

\[ \text{I think you have to love your subject, the person you’re talking to, for the period that you’re talking to them. You don’t need to like them, you don’t need to ever want to see them again, but for that period that you’re working with them, there has to be almost a process of surrender which is like a process of really loving them in order to elicit from them what you want to know} \text{ (Harris, 2009).} \]

**Asking questions**

The kind of interviewing required for longer format journalism requires skills identified in other disciplines, of which the prime example is oral history. Feldstein calls the two disciplines kissing cousins (Feldstein, 2004, 1) and many of the issues analysed and discussed by oral historians are significant for radio documentary producers, for example
in-depth interviewing, recording trauma, the nature of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

Many radio broadcasters have programs featuring oral histories in which interviewing plays an integral role (for more on oral history interviewing see for example Anderson and Jack, 1998; Bornat, 2001; Clark, 2005; Feldstein, 2004; Portelli, 1998; Rickard, 1998, Thompson, 2000; Wilmsen, 2001; Yow, 1997). Just as radio producers take great care in searching out interviewees who can share their stories with an audience, Bornat describes an oral history interview as a means for a researcher to access personal experiences and memories (2001, 221). A taped interview preserves a conversation for present and future use: ‘we can rummage through interviews as we do an old attic – probing, comparing, checking insights, finding new treasures the third time through’ (Anderson and Jack, 1998, 157). Through such interviews the complex and many-sided reality can be captured and recreated (Thompson, 2000, 6). Or to use the words of the master of oral history, Alessandro Portelli, oral sources ‘tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did’ (1998, 36). The same words can be used to describe the main character of a radio documentary. However, where the oral history interview cedes power to the storyteller there are many levels of control in a radio documentary interview.

For many people, journalistic interviewing is identified with an antagonistic style and prosecutorial methods, trying to catch the interviewee off-guard so that they will expose someone or something. Feldstein even argues that oral history interviewers could learn from journalists by sometimes adopting a more adversarial interviewing approach that could yield unexpected and interesting answers (2004). Chris Brookes, independent producer for Canadian radio, says he had better interviewing skills when he did information-heavy documentaries for current affairs, but he says those skills of extracting
information from hard-nosed politicians are different and not really useful for most long-format productions:

[Y]ou’re going for information; ‘I ask you a question Mr Prime Minister, I shall ask it again,’ you know? Whereas I think as feature makers we’re more interested in how the prime minister is coughing and snorting and pausing and what’s going on in the back of his brain rather than in the front of his brain, in a way. So I think that’s what we’re trying to capture in feature-y kind of interviews, and so I wind up mostly just holding a microphone (Brookes, 2009).

It is not about cross examination; the aim is to get the interviewee to talk and the interviewer to listen. The idea of the interviewer as a ‘professional listener’ is echoed by Australian broadcaster Peter Thompson who says interviewing is ninety-five per cent listening and the rest is asking questions (in Wilson, 2000, 143). Interviewing for long-format radio is therefore more akin to semi-structured qualitative research interviews than journalistic news or current affairs interviews. There is a balance between structure and openness; a ‘degree of precision, which nonetheless produces openness in the level and range of responses from the interviewee’ (Gillham, 2005, 71).

There is no definitive way of conducting an interview: radio producers will have their own styles and each interview will have its own requirements. German radio producer and grand master of feature documentaries Peter Leonhard Braun encourages the interviewee to talk by asking simple questions:

*I put myself being un-knowledgeable and inferior to the person I’m asking. And then each time something marvellous happens. They love to explain something to me...if they really know what they are talking about it’s marvellous for them, and they don’t give you a sharp answer, no, they are beginning with the universe of the whole thing, then they are coming down to the point, and all the time is the complete personality in the interview* (Braun, 2009).
Simon Elmes calls it ‘informed naïveté’ (2009), where the interviewer does not show off his or her extensive background knowledge in the actual questions. He describes the often meandering road towards getting answers needed for features and documentaries:

* I started spiralling off into all sorts of different corners of their lives
* “Oh I see you’ve got some very beautiful pictures on your wall….”
* “Oh yes, I’m a photographer, I love it” …you start chasing little seams. It’s like seeing a crack in the wall and you start wondering how high, and far, where it goes. And you suddenly find yourself on the other side of the wall from where you started. That – it may not lead anywhere but it may unlock that person - an aspect of that person’s person, personality, character (Elmes, 2009).

Australian producer Kirsti Melville does not work from a list of questions. Instead she asks the interviewee to think through an experience ‘if you could take yourself back to the day that you found out the company was closing. Where were you when you heard, who told you, how did you hear? Take me through that experience’ (Melville, 2010).

How and where you sit when asking the right questions to extract the best answers is also relevant. Hedemann raises the importance of getting the correct positioning for the interviewer and interviewee and advocates sitting slightly on the side, at right angles to the interviewee so the journalist can hold the microphone close (approximately five centimetres) to the interviewee’s mouth. By not sitting opposite each other the interviewee can look away and thereby avoid constant eye contact, which might be challenging when talking about deeply personal and possibly upsetting things (Hedemann, 2006, 70).

**Painting pictures**
Effective radio is about showing what is happening rather than telling, but how is that done in a medium where showing has to be done through words and sounds rather than vision? What is essential in radio documentary work is that the interviewees describe in words the
world they occupy. With no vision or photographs available, it is the words and sounds that tell the story. Hedemann suggests turning the recorder on before knocking on the door. Not only does this provide some ambient sounds that might be useful at the editing stage, but more importantly it will make the interviewee aware of the interview process from the start. This approach requires briefing the interviewee about the recording process and getting consent for the entire session to be recorded. The interviewee might not initially feel comfortable about the recorder being on for an hour or two but will mostly come to accept it as an aspect of the journalist’s professionalism (Hedemann, 2009). It also underscores the fact that an interview is about doing a job. It is not an act of friendship.

Producer Torben Paaske pays a lot of attention to the sound of the voice itself. He explains that he tries to interview people across a 24-hour period to capture changes in the voice – people’s voices sound different at night. For a radio documentary about a Danish farmer fleeing the mafia in Ukraine he woke the farmer in the middle of the night to do the interview (Paaske, 2009). He closely observes his interviewees during the interview and continues to ask himself questions as part of the process:

_Saa jeg er meget opmærksom paa hvordan deres...cyklus er henne, altsaa hvilken rytme de er i. Altsaa, hvordan ser deres oejne ud. Er der en udstraaling i deres stemmer? Er der en rolle de spiller over for mig? Hvilken form for fascination ser jeg i dem, og hvilken form for fascination ser de i mig?_

_THIS AUTHOR’S TRANSLATION:_ So I’m very observant on ... what their rhythm is at home. What do their eyes look like? Is there a personality coming through in their voices? Are they playing a role for me? Why am I fascinated by them and how do they see me?

(Paaske, 2009)

Torben Paaske also directs the interviewee during interview much like a cinema director in order to ensure he gets the balance of sounds he requires. Prior to the interview he briefs the interviewee about how the recording will be done, agreeing on cues for the
interviewee to stop talking while Paaske records something else before the interview resumes. Where and how the interview is done is important for Paaske, who is always looking for a balance between words and sounds:

*Skal jeg tale med vedkommende imens han laver mad? Skal jeg tale med hende imens hun stryger skjorter? Ikke? Hvilken situation skal jeg bringe folk i, for at kunne faa en balance imellem lyd og ord. Og det kan være saadan noget, som en kvinde der vasker op, og det kan være en mand der reparerer sin bil, eller en pige der reparerer sin bil, og en mand der vasker op, ikke? Altsaa det er en maade, at proeve at lege med lyduniverset.*

**THIS AUTHOR’S TRANSLATION:** Should I talk to him while he’s cooking? Should I talk to her while she’s ironing a shirt? What situation should I place people in to achieve a balance between sounds and words? And could it be that the woman is washing the car while the man is doing the washing up? That is a way I try to play around with the ‘sound-universe’ (Paaske, 2009).

One way to help create pictures in listeners’ minds is to ask interviewees to describe what they are doing rather than to reflect on how they are feeling. According to American producer Scott Carrier this has a stronger impact on the listeners,

*When you tell people something they forget it, but when you show it to them, make them imagine it in their own minds, they remember it (Carrier, 2010, 29).*

This is echoed by Berit Hedemann who trains her producers in Norwegian public radio to ask interviewees to describe events in details. Instead of asking “How did you feel when you hit your mother?” they ask for pictures: “Where in the room where you standing when you hit your mother?” “What did she look like?” It is hard for listeners to feel empathy based on the description of a feeling, according to Hedemann who gives this example in her book:

*Vår erfaring er at lyttaren vanligvis føler lite hvis intervjuobjektet sier: “Jeg var veldig redd”. Men vis han i stedet kan lokkes til å si:*
“Jeg prøvde å rope til kamraten min, men det kom ikke noe lyd ut av munnen min, jeg klarte rett og slett ikke å rope”, da vil lyttaren tenke – og føle – at den som forteller, må ha vært veldig redd, og lyttarens medlidenhet blir vekket.

THIS AUTHOR’S TRANSLATION: Our experience is that the listener doesn’t feel much when the interviewee says: “I’m really scared”. But if he can instead be encouraged to say: “I tried to call out to my friend but no sound came out of my mouth; I just couldn’t scream”, then the listener will think – and feel – that the storyteller must have been really scared, and the listener’s empathy will be awoken (Hedemann, 2006, 72).

According to Hedemann, an interview has three different purposes:

1. To create pictures in the listener’s mind (where a listener can ‘see’ what is happening);

2. To tell the story (helps the listener understand the story development); and

3. To let the interviewee reflect on events (where a listener can follow how the interviewee understands and processes what has happened)

For most journalists it is the first two elements that are the most challenging (Hedemann, 2006, 73). For listeners to create pictures in their minds when listening to an interview, the interviewee must be encouraged to describe events, experiences or situations. Hedemann gives this example from a Norwegian radio documentary where the main character talks about how he is dismantling, cleaning and reassembling an old clock:

Da forteller han om sine verdier. Mye bedre enn om man skulle reflektere over, ”nei jeg synes de enkle tingene i livet ofte er det beste jeg”. Det er mindre interessant å høre.

THIS AUTHOR’S TRANSLATION: By doing that he tells us about his values. It’s much better than if he would reflect on [and say] “I think the simplest things in life are the best”. That’s less interesting to hear (Hedemann, 2009).
It illustrates how a listener can observe something about a person’s personal values by seeing them within a sound picture, by ‘seeing’ him or her engaged in a task.

**Reporter involvement**

We have already spoken about the role of the interviewer in creating rapport, but we need to return to this topic to look at it from another angle: not the interviewee’s relationship with the journalist but rather the journalist’s relationship with the interviewee. Many journalists see their roles as objective and impartial observers (McLeish, 2005, 82). As such you can stick a microphone under someone’s nose, asks some questions and then leave. But as we have already seen the interview is a unique social process between two people, never more so than in the intense format of the long-format interview used for the radio documentary. Under these conditions it can be difficult, and not desirable, for the journalist to maintain an objective distance:

> Because of the kind of person I am, I tend to get quite emotionally involved in my interviews. I genuinely am very moved by a lot of people I interview. I feel very deeply for a lot of the people that I interview, so I do often get quite emotional. I shed tears often in interviews. I mean, you’d have to be heartless not to (Melville, 2010).

This ongoing involvement can be challenging to navigate for the journalist. What happens with the relationship after the interview is over? (This is further discussed in chapter 4 in regards to the responsibilities of the journalist when listening to trauma). Kvale points out that a well-conducted interview can be such a positive experience that the interviewee wants to continue the conversation and interviewing process:

> It is not a very common experience in everyday life that another person – for an hour or more – is interested only in, sensitive towards, and seeks to understand as well as possible another’s experiences and views on a subject (Kvale, 1996, 36).
For radio documentaries, the interviewing process can go on for hours and the contact between interviewer and interviewee for much longer than that. The need to build a strong rapport and trust between interviewer and interviewee may mean that the involvement of the interviewer with the interviewee may extend beyond the actual interviewing process itself.

Building the necessary close connection requires getting to know each other which in some cases can mean that you as journalist can develop positive or even negative feelings towards the interviewee (for a discussion within oral history of the impact of liking or disliking the interviewee, see Yow, 1997, 85). The Danish producer Torben Paaske does not do interviews with people he dislikes. He can choose the topics and the people that inhabit his stories so he does not have to spend time with people he does not respect or who dislike him (Paaske, 2009). After spending so much time together with a person it is hard not to become close and he often continues his relationship with interviewees after he has finished a story:

Altsaa, der er mange af dem, jeg har lavet reportager om, som gaar hen og bliver mine venner. Nogle mailer jeg med, ikke? Og saa er der saa nogen der bliver mine naere venner.

THIS AUTHOR’S TRANSLATION: There are many of the people I make documentaries about that become my friends. Some I have email contact with. Some have become my close friends (Paaske, 2009).

Kirsti Melville also often continues to have some form of engagement with many of her documentary interviewees. And in some cases they stay with her long after the interview. Melville recalls an interview over ten years ago with an HIV positive woman who was a single mother with four children.

And I still, to this day, remember sitting on her lounge with her and her telling me her story, and thinking ‘I will leave here and I will never complain about anything again’...you might not maintain a
friendship with them, but for me many people stay in my heart for years and years. You’d have to be cold-blooded not to because some of these people are just extraordinary. To this day, she would be one of the most extraordinary human beings I’ve interviewed. She was so strong (Melville, 2010).

Irish producer Lorelei Harris has a different approach. She acknowledges that doing interviews about traumatic experiences is hard for both interviewer and interviewee, therefore the interviewer needs to make it clear that the interview is a professional arrangement:

You need to know that this a process that you are going through and when it is over you need to be able to walk away from it, because you are setting up essentially a false relationship with that person for the period that you spend time with them, and when you leave them you need to cut those expectations. I have no friends who I make documentaries with, none at all... I didn’t want to bring these stories into my house in that way. ...that’s not to say you finish and you pack up and you walk off and you never contact the person again, but it’s a professional relationship, it’s not a personal relationship, as far as I was concerned, and I didn’t need ever for it to be a personal relationship in order for it to work as a program (Harris, 2009).

Having looked at the complexities of interviewing and the role of an interview as one of the main components in a documentary it is time to return to the process of making the radio documentary.

**Rough editing**

Once all the material is collected the next step is to work out a treatment of the materials to mould them into a narrative. The storyline, the narrative, takes shape through editing. When producing radio documentaries producers are confronted with hours of material to trawl through in search for the best interviews and sounds that will make up the story.

Kirsti Melville describes herself as renowned for always having too much material. Her first cut is always two or three times longer than the nominated story duration (Melville, 2010).
Long-format editing can be compared with the data analysis qualitative researchers do when all the material is reviewed and processed. There are as many approaches to editing as there are different producers. Because digital editing software makes it possible to experiment with different cutting and sequencing options the program will continue to evolve during this process.

*There’s that moment I find after I have gathered most of my material...it seems like it’s just a big pile of stuff sitting in the middle of the room, and I sort of pace around it forever, for days, and I’m reluctant to start because it seems to me wherever you start then it’s going to turn out this way, whereas if I walked around and went in from over there, then it would probably turn out another way* (Brookes, 2009).

The first step is to review the material. This can be done while uploading it from the recording device to the computer’s editing software. Some producers log all their material but without transcribing interviews verbatim as this is too time consuming. Once the material is captured in the producer’s mind (and most often also on paper), the key segments of the interviews can be uploaded into different tracks in the editing software. This means each voice will have its own channel for ease of editing. Simon Elmes describes how he used to log the material in detail before the advent of non-linear digital editing software:

*I used to plan it out on paper...listening to all the material sometimes I’d produce a 40 page book of logging notes... [Now] you can always go back, you can find the bit that you left out. In fact it’s only a security blanket because I never go back once I’ve committed myself* (Elmes, 2009).

Editing is the act of reduction, like making a fine stock where all the ingredients are reduced by cooking away any superfluous liquid leaving a strong tasty mix in the pot. Melville segments the material into sections, or themes. By listening to the material repeatedly she starts to hear a possible beginning and an emerging narrative. For her it is a
process of elimination rather than selection (Melville, 2010). That way the producer ends up with a series of self-contained audio grabs which like bricks can be built into a complete structure.

In some ways editing a radio documentary can be likened to the work of a visual artist.

*It just starts to take shape, much as I imagine an artist would feel when they start painting a canvas and then they get another idea and then they look at it and they think it’s looking a bit dry in that corner, I’ll put some colour in there. ...for me it is also quite a visual process now with digital editing because I can look and I can see this section is very rich with sound and music and that just looks like a slab of words. I don’t rely purely on that but it’s interesting how with digital editing I have become more visual in the way that I structure (Melville, 2010).*

Other experienced producers like Chris Brookes do not need to follow a schema or deconstruct the process of building a successful documentary. Brookes describes the process as ad hoc and almost accidental at times, but this is based on his extensive experience as a program maker who has cut multiple award-winning radio documentaries:

*I’m not a composer but I imagine it must be like this for composers. I start with something and stick something next to it and something under it and then see how that sounds or that sounds, and maybe that leads to something else.....so I really almost start making the final product as I begin. And I like that because it leads me in directions that I think otherwise I wouldn’t think of...if I were planning it out in advance (Brookes, 2009).*

Jurgen Hesse describes this process of listening, selecting and discarding as a novice producer’s first real test. He lists a number of criteria to assist with this process:

- **Common sense** – does the statement make sense to the listener?
- **Relevance** – is it relevant to the general topic?
- **Consistency** – are the interviewee’s arguments and statements consistent?
• Quality – does the statement make sense?
• Articulation – is the interviewee articulate: a good speaker?
• Coherence – do all sentences hang together or are there gaps?
• Honesty – are the statement honest and do you believe them?
• Forthrightness – this is often a quality of people who sound authoritative, knowledgeable and honest.
• Tone of voice – the voice is a useful indicator of truth and therefore important when making editorial decisions on the honesty of people

Adapted from Hesse (1987, 84)

It can be argued that it would also be useful to ask yourself at least some of these questions during the planning stage when finding and confirming interviewees for a story. The interviewee’s voice, articulation and honesty as well as the relevance of the person to the story can be assessed during the pre-interview chat on the phone.

When editing, a major challenge is that the producer comes to know the material too well and loses the ability to imagine what it will be like to the listeners who will come to the story ‘cold’ when hearing it for the first time. To try and regain some objectivity the producer has to take a step back and try to forget all the segments that are NOT included in the story. This is where mentoring systems such as the one used by the Norwegian public broadcaster can prove very valuable. Since 1994 all producers have an assigned mentor who can supply an extra pair of ears during the production process from initial idea through to final mixing. According to Hedemann, this is the reason why the Norwegian broadcaster continues to win international documentary prizes for its productions (Hedemann, 2006, 162-163).
Dramaturgy

I always think the best programs are Perrier bottle shaped: they start quite narrow. They swell out to about two-thirds at about half-way point; they have a sort of widening out, a sort of slower but more maturing deepening and expanding. You can expand on the story [because] you know more details at this point, you can broaden it out. Then you have to zip it into a close that should have wonderful dénouement twist - something that takes you somewhere completely other and reveal whatever (Elmes, 2009).

The word dramaturgy is used to describe the techniques used to writing plays for the theatre. It is an important tool for radio documentary producers as many of the dramatic compositions used on stage can be effective in a radio documentary as well. Simply put using some of the storytelling techniques from Greek and Shakespearian dramas involves a beginning (setting the scene and giving some context), rising drama (character and story development), climax of story (representing a change), falling action (mopping up after climax), then finally resolution (the end) (adaptation from Freytag’s Pyramid in Wheeler, 2004). Berit Hedemann devotes a whole chapter to dramaturgy in her radio documentary book. She emphasises that dramaturgy is not inherent in the material (although some recordings can be more interesting to listen to than others). Instead it is explicitly created by the producer of the story. All radio documentary dramaturgy involves manipulating the listeners’ feelings and responses to what they are hearing. Calling it the Hollywood model, Hedemann, identifies elements that will make the listener feel the desirable expectation and exhilaration when listening to a documentary:

- Identification – a main character for the listeners to identify with (a lonely boy)
- Will – the main character’s will for something to happen (to find a girlfriend)
- Hope – the main character’s hope (and potential) for something or someone special (she has given him encouraging looks)
• Conflict – with an antagonist or place (because she already has a boyfriend)

• Obstruction – someone or something hindering the main character’s will, getting in the way of hope (that boyfriend is better than him at soccer)

The final element is the main character’s attempt to conquer this obstruction (he starts improving his soccer skills), followed by the climax of the story – the point of no return (will she choose him or stay with the boyfriend); and finally the conclusion/epilogue (his new life with her or maybe with someone else). (Translated by this author and adapted from Hedemann, 2006, 106 and 111 -112)

The crafting of a radio documentary is a continuous process which starts with the idea; grows with each recorded interview; takes on multiple personalities during the cutting and scripting process; before final mixing locks in the ultimate shape. Because of the fluidity of the creative process, it is hard to pin down every decision which contributes to the shape of the final product. Different producers will also have their own methods: some will have the whole story fully blocked out at the idea and planning stage, while others will wait for the editing process to pull the story into shape. Different producers will also have their own idea of what makes a successful documentary.

Elmes expands on his ‘Perrier Bottle’ description above of how he designs his radio documentaries to create a sense of drama:

[You can withhold details, essential details, until 10 minutes into your half-hour feature...you can get 10 minutes into “I know where this is going” then suddenly BANG, you discover that these two people very much in love actually got divorced 20 years ago and they have a very strange love-hate relationship...suddenly you see the whole program....in a completely different light (Elmes, 2009).

Hesse offers another perspective on the methodology of developing a high-impact structure. He describes the process of developing the storyline as like shuffling a deck of
cards until they come up in the order you need as producer. He uses the following self explanatory sections as his guide on how to structure a radio documentary:

A. Teaser
B. Introduction
C. First premise
D. Second premise
E. Debate
F. Balance
G. Conclusion

(Hesse, 1987, 94)

Regardless of which approach is applied during editing, the overarching aim is of course to attract and keep the listeners glued to the speakers for the full duration of the story. Because radio is linear following a real-time timeline, the radio documentary is built by adding one sequence after the other creating an appealing storyline consisting of a clear beginning, middle, climax and end. As the listeners have to navigate through the story using audio cues only, signposting is important to ensure the audience does not get lost (see more on scripting below). Traditionally listeners could not stop and rewind a radio documentary to remind themselves of the introduction or to hear something again that they might have missed. With podcasting this has changed and listeners can now capture audio to listen at their own pace and at a time of their choosing. However at the time of writing there is no evidence that this has had any major impact on dramaturgy in radio documentaries.
Scripting
When the producer has edited down each of the different elements of the story (interviews, actuality, SFX, recorded readings etc) it is time to put them all together. As part of the first stage of editing, a rough structure will have been developed where the many elements are all placed on a timeline in an attempt to create a compelling narrative. This means only two production steps are left: the narrator’s script which glues the components together and mixing them all in the studio into a seamless program.

All textbooks covering radio have a section or chapter on writing for radio with tips on how to structure sentences (generally make them short); how to paint pictures with words; what words to choose; how to ensure simplicity to assist aural understanding (how to avoid abbreviations and acronyms); pace; differences between scripts written for the eye and for the ear and so on (see for example Alysen, 2006; Fleming, 2002; McLeish, 2005; Phillips and Lindgren, 2006). Writing the script for a radio documentary is like filling in the space between bricks with mortar. It makes the different elements join together into a coherent structure since the final script is being written around the material (so it may provide some extra detail or remind us about who is speaking). This does not, however, mean that the script itself is not a creative element in the production. On the contrary, the script – and the presenting of the script – is often where novice producers encounter the most problems. Writing for radio is a skill which seems simple as it is supposedly language ‘just as we speak it’. However, writing for radio is surprisingly complex – just as the production of radio itself (as this dissertation is demonstrating). When radio students are taught to write as you speak, that is only part of the process. Radio language is much more formal and unnatural than most listeners would believe. Shingler and Wieringa (1998, 37) describe it as ‘disguised scripted speech’ and they continue: ‘[b]eneath the apparently
natural flow of radio speech lies something altogether more formal, more structured and pre-determined'. When writing scripts journalists have to carefully construct a text which:

- simplifies complex issues and data which may be difficult to absorb on a single hearing;
- conveys emotions;
- describes events and persons; and
- reminds listeners of the storyline.

At the same time the spoken words have to end at the precise moment when the red light is switched off in the studio, so scripting is always done with exact timing in mind.

Although radio is a mass medium, we listen alone and the radio script caters for one listener. Former head of BBC training Elwyn Evans argues that radio speech must be directed at an individual listener to create the sense of intimacy, which is imperative for radio as a medium. The speaker

... may be reading a script but he sounds as though he’s talking to me alone. My conscious mind may be aware that he isn’t doing anything of the sort – but, as in the theatre, it’s the subconscious impression that counts. If a radio speaker, thanks to the way his script is written, makes me feel he’s talking to me personally, it becomes much harder to switch him off (Evans, quoted in Shingler and Wieringa, 1998, 36).

Returning to Hedemann’s description above of the many roles of the narrator in the radio documentary all the different personalities are created through the process of writing and presenting the script. In the radio documentary every script has to be crafted to suit the topic, format and style of the finished program and requires that the journalist therefore be fluent in many different writing genres. In the words of Braun,
So it’s like looking at a rock; you see the structure in the rock and now you are beginning to stonemason what the material wants, how to use it et cetera... And then of course you can’t just be a writer, somebody who is putting one word to the next, you have to be a kind of composer as well (Braun, 2009).

Final editing - mixing the documentary
It is in the studio where the final version of the documentary is created. Some public service broadcasters still have sound engineers who help the journalist/producer mix the program to achieve the highest standard of sound quality. Producers working for the documentary department with the Norwegian broadcaster (NRK) have, at time of writing, ten days in the studio with a sound engineer to mix the program (Hedemann, 2009). In Australia, Radio National producers are allocated three days in the studio to mix a 54-minute program.

Obviously there are as many ways to do a final mix of a program as there are production teams, but usually the producer will hand over sound files with the edited segments and a script to the sound engineer. There might still be missing components such as special sound effects or music that will be decided on during the mixing process. Some producers will have a rather rigid structure to follow where mixing is a matter of making the transitions from item to item as smooth and inconspicuous as possible. Others see the mixing session as a creative process in itself where elements are moved around, scripts amended and interviews recut. It is at this point that the recorded ambient sound is laid under an interview, the cross fades of two sound sources are adjusted for strongest impact, and the style of the script is tested against the other components to ensure consistency. Whichever method is applied, the mixing is where the final ‘sound’ and duration of the documentary is set and the documentary is captured in its finalised shape for broadcast.
It is very difficult to describe on paper the process of creating a radio documentary in the studio. As with editing, it is easier to appreciate by listening to examples in real life.

As Berit Hedemann points out:

"Detta er ting som det er nesten umulig å beskrive, det er like vanskelig som å forklare hvorfor fire specielle takter i et musikkstykke er fine, det kan bare demonstreres. Vanligvis skapes desse formgrepene i studio, ikke på papiret når redigeringsmanuset skrives."

This author's translation: These aspects are almost impossible to describe. It’s as difficult to explain why four special bars in a music piece are beautiful. It has to be heard. Usually these storytelling techniques are done in the studio, not on a piece of paper when the story manuscript is written (Hedemann, 2006, 150).

What makes one documentary stand out compared to another is not always its dramaturgical framework or how closely someone is miked during an intimate interview. It is more often about the relationship between music and other sounds; about the transition between different sounds; and about the rhythm of the piece.

Conclusion
This chapter has had the ambitious aim of developing a coherent theoretical framework for an under-researched genre. It has supplemented the rather meagre literature on the radio documentary with the insights gleaned from an elite group of international radio documentary-makers. Their experiences and reflective analysis of their craft have yielded new insights and deepened our understanding of a complex and sensitive journalistic activity. Through the process of practice-led research, the embedded methodology has been revealed.

In part II of this thesis, the new knowledge about radio documentary method will be applied to the author’s own practice. Transitioning from practice-led to practice-based
research, the author’s first-hand account of the challenges she faced in producing the radio documentary *Deadly Dust* will provide the reader with an inside view of the full production process.
PART II: PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH – RESEARCH THROUGH PRACTICE

Part II of this study documents the production of a radio documentary from the inside – through the lens of the journalist who produced it. It marks a shift in the thesis from practice-led to practice-based research, from research on practice to research through practice; and from an objective to an autoethnographic perspective.

Following Candy’s definitions of practice-based research the radio documentary is shown to contribute to knowledge by its structure, form and impact on listeners. The context and significance of that contribution are explained in chapters 4 and 5, however ‘a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the [creative] outcomes’ (Candy, 2006, 1).

In part II of the study the researcher uses the theoretical framework of radio documentary production developed from the expert interviews in part 1 to analyse her own practice as she went about the process of producing the radio documentary. This self-reflective approach allows the reader to gain a unique insider view of the production process. By witnessing the production process through the researcher’s personal account and by listening to the documentary that is the result of this process the readers of this thesis can gain an understanding of the theory underlying the practice and an appreciation of the craft of telling powerful audio stories.
Chapter 3 – Deadly Dust: the methodology

This chapter uses the example of Deadly Dust, broadcast on ABC Radio National 23 November 2008, to illustrate practice-based research, the process of research through practice. The chapter tackles the question of whether journalism can be considered research in the academic sense and argues that practice-based research methods can be a useful framework for showing how long-format journalism can be seen to conform to more traditional academic constructions. It looks at the role of the reflective practitioner and also discusses the usefulness of autoethnographical approaches in this context. It explores how narrative studies can be applied as a relevant analytical framework, especially in relation to interviewing about traumatic experiences. It then examines through self observation the processes of radio documentary production in terms of the methodologies identified in part I of the study.

Journalism as research

Journalism studies is a relatively new discipline. What started as a field concerned mainly with mass communication processes and effects has developed into a discipline with a broader scope (Löffelholz and Weaver, 2008, 5). Questions are now being asked about the methodology involved in developing journalistic stories and specifically about the role of research. Initially it was easier for researchers to study audiences and media messages as their access to newsrooms was often limited. However with growing numbers of journalists now in universities there are more opportunities to investigate at firsthand how journalists produce stories and what influences the process of news production (ibid, 6).

The absence of a clearly defined academic framework has troubled journalism academics for a long time. In her book Taking journalism seriously Zelizer describes the challenges of finding a theoretical home for journalism which can fit into any number of
disciplines from sociology through to the creative arts (Zelizer, 2004, 8). She highlights the lack of consensus within journalism scholarship about what is the best way of understanding journalism (ibid, 8). This lack of a theoretical home and confusion over journalism’s role explains why the discipline of journalism studies has been slow to develop a strong research base.

For journalism academics in Australia the relationship between journalism and more traditional academic research has been of increasing concern in recent years. Academics have explored questions such as: Can long-format and in-depth journalistic feature stories be regarded as research? What constitutes journalistic methodology? Can journalism be regarded as a form of knowledge? (see for example Bacon, 2006; Breit, 2004; Bromley, 2006; Lamble, 2004; Meditsch, 2005). But questions have also been raised about where and how teaching and learning about journalism practice fit into academic institutions (for example Anyaegbunam and Ryan (2003); and Steel et al. (2007)) and if and how journalistic outcomes produced by journalist educators should be included in research assessment exercises (Meadows, 2006).

One of the main points of debate is whether it is necessary to apply traditional academic research methodologies to journalistic practice to give it the stamp of academic approval or whether journalism should in fact be measured against its own methods and approaches. The multi-faceted nature of journalism is one of its challenges. Journalism can be analysed both on content and process. In relation to content, journalism can involve itself with any topic. Taking the Copenhagen Climate Summit as an example the media coverage could be analysed from the viewpoint of science reporting, political communication, impact of social media, etc. The portrayal of refugees in the media could be analysed from the viewpoint of the sociology of racism, diversity in news reporting, audience effects, etc. In relation to process journalism can be examined from many
different disciplinary perspectives, ranging from the psychology of interviewing to the
creative aspects of news writing. No wonder it is often difficult to place journalism in the
right academic box.

Some journalism academics argue that by virtue of its very existence journalism
must have its own unique methodology (Bacon, 2006, 87); (Lamble, 2004, 85). Duffield
makes a point that some journalistic forms of inquiry can fit into qualitative research
paradigms that follow standard protocols, such as observation or ethnographic studies
using semi-structured interviews or surveys (Duffield, 2009). Veteran Australian journalism
educator Wendy Bacon echoes Duffield in arguing for long-format in-depth journalism to
be counted as academic research. She says the praxis of this type of investigative
journalism using methods of historical and legal research ‘is one of the few means by
which new insights can be achieved into developments the powerful would like to keep
secret’ (Bacon, 2006, 151).

In Australia there has been a tradition in humanities of accepting creative practice
such as the production of a fine arts piece, films or novels as part of a Higher Research
degree, accompanied by a written exegesis. In these cases, the role of the exegesis is to
present ‘the research framework: the key questions, the theories, the disciplinary and
wider contexts, of the project’ (Fletcher and Mann, 2004). This is no less possible in
journalism where feature articles or radio documentaries can be submitted as the creative
component of a Higher Degree, accompanied by a dissertation or exegesis demonstrating
the methodology and locating the artefact (in this case a journalistic outcome) in an
analytical and theoretical context. Having said it is possible it does not often happen.

Another way to assess the research merit of journalism is when journalistic content
is an output of research projects which have received national funding and been subjected
to Human Research Ethics Committee scrutiny (see section on ethical implications below).

The documentary *Deadly Dust* is an example of both.

**Deadly Dust as research**

One aim of this thesis is to demonstrate how the model of creative PhDs can successfully be transposed to journalism. While the *Deadly Dust* documentary is defined in this study as journalism it is also clearly a creative piece where the journalistic content is enhanced through the creative processes making it appealing to an audience: ‘a good documentary-maker will know how to exploit the pact between education and entertainment’ (Chapman, 2009, 206). It therefore satisfies Murdoch University’s definition of what a creative or production-based thesis is:

1. *Research that is initiated in creative practice, and explores conceptual and theoretical questions, problems, or challenges that are identified within and formed by the needs of creative practice and practitioners;*

2. *Research that is carried out through both creative practice and the practice of scholarly writing (i.e. a thesis) using methods familiar to both practitioners and scholars* (Murdoch University, 2009).

It also demonstrates research merit in the context of research funding. The documentary *Deadly Dust* was produced as one of the research outcomes of the multi-disciplinary research project *Community consequences of asbestos exposure in WA*. The asbestos research project was successful in attracting competitive funding from the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council 2007 – 2009 (NHMRC project number 458519). The medical research funding body acknowledged the legitimacy of collecting and publishing people’s stories about asbestos as a research outcome on the basis that ‘sharing experiences empowers individuals’ (Musk et al., 2007). The author was a Chief Investigator (CI) on that project and her interviews with asbestos victims and their families and the two
documentaries she produced were reported to the funding body as research outcomes. The NHMRC has given a second tranche of funding for the continuation of the multi-disciplinary project with its strong journalism component for the period 2010-1012 (with the author continuing as Chief Investigator). This acknowledges the importance of the storytelling aspect of the project which relies on journalistic methods of collecting, analysing and presenting the interviews with people affected by asbestos (i.e. fieldwork interviews).

As outlined earlier in this thesis, another of the aims of this study is to make the processes embedded in the production of a radio documentary visible through an analysis of the available literature, fieldwork interviews with radio producers and by self-observation of the researcher while producing a radio documentary. Only by articulating and documenting the processes involved in journalism practice can they be made explicit and understood in terms of a research process. Only then can journalism academics mount the argument for an emerging research methodology for the journalism discipline (Duffield, 2009).

In their book Recording Culture Makagon and Neumann praise the audio medium both as a vehicle for research (fieldwork) and as a premium form for presenting data to fellow academics and the public alike.

"Audio recordings can provide qualitative researchers with opportunities to more fully engage with the people and places being studied while functioning as an alternative to the privileged written text that dominates scholarly work (Makagon and Neumann, 2009, xii)."

This is a rare acknowledgement of the potential of radio documentary production to play a research role in an academic world where the written word is king. The authors express surprise that qualitative researchers have avoided audio documentaries completely both as
a ‘site of analysis and a model for creative fieldwork’ (ibid, 2). They contend that the audio documentary has an important role to play as an alternative approach to qualitative work, where ‘recording culture provides for a unique means of experiencing and making sense of reality’ (ibid, 12). This is indeed encouraging for journalism academics who for many years have argued, from the other side of the fence, to have their radio documentaries regarded as research outcomes. The fact that established qualitative researchers are encouraging their colleagues in ethnography and other fields to use audio documentary as both research method and means of presenting data establishes its legitimacy as a research tool.

In this context it will be useful and instructive to compare the steps involved in radio documentary production with those of other qualitative research projects. Here Makagon and Neumann highlight the similarities in the research process between radio documentary production and social science research. They outline the similarities between documentary storytelling and the fieldwork ethnographers would do, which both require great investment in the time spent with the people you are studying. According to Makagon and Neumann producing an audio documentary involves recording all those modes of data collection, i.e. interviewing, observation and engaging with participant observation (Makagon and Neumann, 2009, 43-44):

*The research process can be contingent on several modes of investigation – fieldwork, interviews, historical and archival research, the use of institutional sources of information, personal experience – that are closely aligned with both journalism and ethnography (Makagon and Neumann, 2009, 15).*

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8 The term audio is used by the authors instead of radio so as not to exclude audio productions published for other mediums than radio, e.g. the internet.
The parallels are even more clearly expressed in the table below where the methodologies of radio documentary production are aligned with Weerakkody’s six steps of doing a research project in media and communication (Weerakkody, 2009, 42). While the journalistic approach may appear less formalised than traditional academic research (Duffield, 2009), the processes of data gathering and processing are virtually identical.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weerakkody’s model</th>
<th>Deadly Dust radio documentary</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Selecting and narrowing the topic for a research study</td>
<td>Initial background research to develop pitching document. Writing up and submitting proposal (see Appendix 2) outlining story content, interviewees, references, approach, style, methodology of collecting information, duration, production time to Executive Producer. <em>Deadly Dust</em> commissioned by Hindsight ABC Radio National.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Conducting the literature review</td>
<td>Literature review: reading broadly about asbestos in Australia from medical, social, political and legal perspectives, using academic and industry texts (see bibliography). Literature review is conducted with a variety of objectives in mind: to identify what has been done on the topic before (what is new with the study); establishing what material is available for potential inclusion in the documentary by trawling archives, libraries and online source materials; identifying suitable interviewees; building an understanding of the topic so the producer can build a story that represents the findings (see discussion on the many aspects of the research phase in chapter 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Developing the research design and plan</td>
<td>This is partly done under step 1 where the research design and plan were developed for inclusion in the proposal document. Here a more detailed design and plan is prepared covering the approach of the documentary, style, role of narrator, duration. As part of commissioning process adjustments to original proposal were suggested by the Executive Producer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Deadly Dust was produced as part of a NHMRC-funded research project number 458519 and ethics permission was granted by the Murdoch University’s HREC (project permit number 2006/285).

4. Choosing suitable methodologies and data collection methods

Data was collected using in-depth interviews combined with review of literature, other media and internal ABC and external archives.

5. Carrying out the data collection and analysis

Record fieldwork interviews on location. Record ambience and location sounds. Order archival material from ABC’s sound and film archive for inclusion in documentary. Thematic analysis of material by logging interviews (non-verbatim transcription), archival material, other material to be included into documentary.

The data collection, i.e. journalistic practice, is governed by the ethical guidelines as set out in the MEAA Code of Ethics (MEAA, n.d) and also the ABC’s Editorial Policies (ABC, 2009).

6. Writing a research report or proposal

Scripting and editing the documentary. This includes mixing all components such as interviews, voice links, music, sound effects, and archival materials. Scripting text for website. Establish bibliography (books and relevant web links) for publishing online. Produce photo gallery of interviewees and other photos for online presentation. Program peer reviewed with feedback from producers at ABC Radio National in Perth prior to final mixing. Documentary checked (peer reviewed) by Executive Producer prior to broadcast on 23 November 2008.

Adapted from Weerakkody (2009, 42)

Reflective practitioner

Much has been written about how we can learn from experience and the importance for practitioners to actively think about and document their work processes. Being a reflective
practitioner with the ability for critical reflection is now ‘codified as one of several performance indicators of professionalism’ (Preskill and Brookfield, 2009, 41). A reflective practitioner is someone who uses self-assessment as a tool to examine their performance and adjusts their actions as a result of learning from experience (Ely and Scott, 2007, 184). Reflective practice is one of the formal methods that can make the process of capturing experiences of documentary practice transparent.

Influenced by Schön’s early ideas about reflective research requiring ‘a partnership of practitioner-researcher and researcher-practitioner’ (Schön, 1983, 323) this study was designed to include practitioners as well as the researcher who herself took on both roles as research and practitioner. Schön argues for the ‘reflection-in-action’ that many practitioners do when going about their daily work. Schön describes how when someone reflects-in-action that person becomes a researcher in a practice setting:

*He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case...He does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he frames a problematic situation* (Schön, 1983, 68-69).

This, Schön argues, means reflective enquiry has a rigour in its own right if practitioners’ expertise can be labelled as reflection-in-practice (Schön, 1983, 68-69). Keeping a reflective journal during the production process was one way of capturing those new theories, as identified by Schön above.

The process of introspective examination of the documentary production process involved both reflective and reflexive approaches; this included an awareness of emotions, thoughts and behaviours while producing the radio documentary (reflexivity) and a more structured reflection on practice during the analysis and writing stage of this dissertation (reflectivity) (Ryan, 2005).
Keeping a journal

*Writing helps students to construct their own knowledge by allowing them to express connections between new information and knowledge they already have (Dyment and O’Connell, 2003).*

Reflection requires the examination of the reflective practitioner’s experience to be discussed either orally or in written form (Ely and Scott, 2007, 186). When dealing with a research project that covers many years it is impossible to remember all the details. Keeping a journal is one way a practitioner can reflect on practice where experiences, emotions and thoughts are captured on paper to help make sense of practice, while also opening up possibilities to change the way a practitioner approaches his or her work. Or in the words of Taylor it provides ‘a process to construct, confront, deconstruct and reconstruct your practice’ (Taylor, 2006, 77).

The researcher started keeping a journal before the documentary production started using it as a reflective diary in order to capture the many details and decisions that make up the production process of a radio documentary. Once those decisions, thoughts and emotions were written down it was possible to revisit the experience long after it had happened. The reflective journal was also an important tool in informing the fieldwork interviews with the radio producers. It was possible to pick up issues relevant to the production of *Deadly Dust* and to question whether those were generic issues other producers would grapple with, i.e. emotional connections with the interviewees, the use of music to create drama and enhance the emotional impact of the story, to mention just two of the many production issues reflected on. This cycle of description, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action adhered to Gibbs’ reflective cycle as adapted by Ely and Scott (2007, 197).
It was clear from the beginning that the journal was not a private diary, although it contains personal reflections it was written with an academic audience in mind. At times it was challenging for the researcher to share the personal and painful aspects of producing the documentary, especially as during the months of production one of the main interviewees died from her asbestos-related diseases. Being trained as a journalist and academic to keep the personal at bay, it was uncomfortable at times to share in the experiences of those who were suffering; there was also a fear of being perceived by others as weak or too sentimental. In an academic world where numbers have more validity than emotion the researcher’s own credibility as researcher might be called into question. As Ellis and Bochner ruefully reflect:

*Why should caring and empathy be secondary to controlling and knowing? Why must academics be conditioned to believe that a text is important only to the extent it moves beyond the merely personal?* (Ellis and Bochner, 2003, 221)

The journal was kept as an electronic document which was updated continuously during 2007 and 2008. It covered a period during which the researcher produced a first radio documentary in 2007 about the public’s lack of knowledge about how prevalent asbestos is in the community. The story went to air on ABC Radio National’s now defunct Street Stories program. The researcher continued the journal until the completion and broadcast of *Deadly Dust* on Radio National on November 23, 2008.

**The role of autoethnography**

The process of self-reflection outlined above took the researcher into the realm of autoethnography. There is seldom an opportunity in daily working life to be able to look over someone’s shoulder as they go about their job – even if that is looking over your own shoulder – or for academics to write their own personal story. Autoethnography provided the methodology to achieve such an outcome.
Autoethnography as a method has been criticised for being too self-indulgent and individualised. But we can ask with Sparkes: why not instead use words such as ‘self-knowing, self-respectful, self-sacrificing or self-luminous’ (Sparkes, 2002, 222) to describe the research approach which gives voice to the researcher’s own experience? According to Sparkes the charges of self-indulgence stem from a misunderstanding of the genre (ibid, 222). Just as journalists are expected to be objective storytellers not usually visible in the text, so are academic researchers supposed to stay outside the frame. This model has been challenged in oral history and ethnography and as the disciplines evolve more ‘alternative’ writing practices have become established. One of those involves the researcher ‘us[ing] their own experiences in culture reflexively to look more deeply at self-other interactions’ (Holt, 2003). Similarly journalism is moving towards more personal writings as a result of increased audience engagement through, for example, online blogging.

*Life and narrative are inextricably connected. Life both anticipates telling and draws meaning from it. Narrative is both about living and part of it (Ellis and Bochner, 2003, 220).*

Reed-Danahay defines autoethnography as both a method and a text that places the self in a social context (Reed-Danahay, 1997, 9). Using autoethnographic methods was suitable for this researcher as she is part of the culture, i.e. she is a radio producer herself. In this way, she could reflect on her own journalistic practice, then analyse and draw conclusions by comparing her experiences with those described by the international radio producers interviewed for this study. With an awareness of the pitfalls of autoethnography and its risk of being narcissistic, this method offered a ‘dual-perspective look’ at radio production processes – from both the outside and the inside.

Including an autoethnographical approach to this study also links in with the practice of higher degree researchers in creative arts where the written dissertation or
exegesis contextualises and reflects on the process of making the creative artefact included in a practice-based thesis. It was a decision also informed by a pedagogical desire to share the experience of producing a radio documentary with other radio documentary producers and teachers of radio. The idea was to write a text with accompanying audio that could become a teaching and learning resource in the under-resourced area of long-format radio production. As mentioned before, this was a unique opportunity for the reader/learner to learn by ‘looking over the shoulder’ of a practitioner – an opportunity seldom available either in the industry or academe.

As pointed out by Sparkes, the value of autoethnography is to inspire critical reflections on your own world by being exposed to other people’s experiences (Sparkes, 2002, 221). In the ‘guided listening’ section of this thesis (chapter 5) the researcher takes the reader/listener by the hand and leads him/her through the Deadly Dust documentary with autoethnographical vignettes providing unique insights to the many issues and challenges arising during the production process.

**Narrative studies**

As the topic of the documentary Deadly Dust was the impact of asbestos exposure, people’s personal experiences, whether conveyed via interviews or via self-reflection, were central to this study. (The issues relating to the impact of trauma narratives on both teller and listener are discussed in detail in chapter 4 Listening to trauma). In this regard it can be located in research terms within the realm of narrative studies. Narrative studies is a growing field of research which is gaining wider acceptance despite its reliance on qualitative methodologies with subjective forms of data presentation and small sample groups. Baumeister and Newman write about how constructing a personal narrative can

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9 The production process is covered in detail in chapter 5 and the complete documentary script in Appendix 5 together with the radio documentary on the CD can be used as a teaching resource.
help people make sense of their experiences (1994, 688). The idea that it can be beneficial to tell your story was central to this study in two ways: it motivated the researcher to tell her own story of being a radio documentary producer; and it also underpinned the decision to interview asbestos sufferers, taking both them and the interviewer through gruelling conversations about trauma.

In the medical field there has been a growing interest in the patients’ own illness narratives. Hurwitz et al argue for ‘the need (and the justification) for re-valuing of subjective, the perspectival, and the personal in medicine and health care’ (Hurwitz, Greenhalgh, and Skultans, 2004, 14). This is echoed by Thomas Newman, professor in epidemiology and biostatistics who, while stating he is more comfortable with numbers than stories, argues for the benefits of storytelling as a successful method of getting the message across. He argues the human brain is built to process stories and that through sharing stories of misfortune, ‘they appear to offer a solution – a way to extract some meaning and redemption from tragedy, by preventing its reoccurrence’ (Newman, 2004, 267). Charon also emphasises the usefulness of a narrative approach for both patients and the medical practitioners who listen to the stories:

*It is with the narrative tools of description and dialogue and trope that we can render – and therefore recognise and admire – singular individuals and situations, not as instances of general phenomena but as irreducible and therefore invaluable particulars...It is with narrative employment that we attempt – often against all odds – to make causal sense of random events that have no cause, enabling us both to diagnose disease and to tolerate the uncertainty that saturates illness (Charon, 2004, 30).*

These readings are all specific to the relationship between doctors and their patients but in methodological terms they illustrate the potential for researchers, instead of searching for the truth in numbers, to take on the role of a subjective listener where the focus is on one person’s experience. This requires courage, first because it is more challenging to
emotionally engage with your interviewee, and second, because you expose yourself to potential criticism as researcher for relying on anecdotal evidence and hence displaying a lack of research rigour.

The importance of storytelling and the strength of one person sharing a personal experience to carry a story across is of course nothing new for journalists. It is a criticism often voiced about the discipline that one person’s experience is collected and presented to represent a whole group of people. One angry worker who has lost her job becomes the spokesperson for all the workers at that factory. But looking at it from the perspective of narrative studies the individual’s stories can provide important insights while also offering the real potential of helping to instigate change. The telling of stories impacts not just on the teller but on the listener and in journalism this is another important area for reflection. In fact a whole chapter is devoted to this topic later in this thesis (see below chapter 4).

In the final chapter of this thesis the reader will be given a guided tour of the documentary production process as it happens. To set the scene, let us first look at what prompted the researcher to do documentary about the history of asbestos in Australian with its deadly impact on people exposed to it.

**Background to the Asbestos Stories Project**

Perth in Western Australia is often referred to as the asbestos capital of the world. The explanation for this can be found 1600 km north of Perth. In 1943 the Australian Blue Asbestos Company started mining and milling blue asbestos (crocidolite) in Wittenoom Gorge in the remote Pilbara region of Western Australia. Asbestos tailings from the mine were spread out in the township in an attempt to soften the sharp red ‘pea gravel’ common to the Pilbara region, and therefore asbestos exposure affected not only the workers but also residents of the town. The mine closed in 1966 but people continued to
live in the township about 20 km from the mine and mill. The town was officially
degazetted in 2007 owing to the risks of asbestos exposure. Meanwhile the post-war boom
in Australia spread asbestos materials through homes and workplaces around the nation
leaving an ongoing deadly legacy. While the use of asbestos was banned in Australia on 31
December 2003 (Workers Health Centre, 2004) the material is still pervasive in both
domestic and work life. Australia has the highest rate in the world of the fatal cancer of the
lining of the lungs or abdomen called mesothelioma (Robinson, Musk, and Lake, 2005, 397).

The researcher was a Chief Investigator (CI) on an Australian National Health and
Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funded asbestos project. The multi-disciplinary project
ran from 2007 to 2009 involving researchers in public health, epidemiology, medicine,
history and journalism from three universities in Western Australia. One outcome of this
asbestos research project was to develop a website called Asbestos Stories (now known as
the Australian Asbestos Network) featuring interviews with people affected by asbestos.
The aim of the website is to create an information hub for knowledge about asbestos in the
community. First, the site presents the history of asbestos in Australia through words,
pictures and the recorded stories of people whose lives have been touched by the
substance once touted as the ‘magic mineral’. The storytellers includes the workers and
their families, as well as the doctors, lawyers and lobby groups who had been on the
frontline trying to stem the tide of death, prevent future illness, or ensure appropriate
compensation for the victims. The interviews were used both on the website and in the
radio documentary. Second, the site serves as an information centre through which
medical and public health experts can expand community awareness of asbestos risks and
how to avoid them, while also serving as a site where people can exchange experiences and
connect with each other.
Another outcome of the research project was the production of the *Deadly Dust* documentary included in this thesis. *Deadly Dust* was commissioned by Hindsight on ABC Radio National (RN). Hindsight is part of RN’s Social History and Features Unit and it covers a range of historical topics. Programs on Hindsight are pre-produced and pre-recorded productions mostly of 54 minute duration. The commissioning process involves the producer sending in a proposal of the program for approval by the Executive Producer (see Appendix 2). In the case of *Deadly Dust*, the Executive Producer of Hindsight knew the author was Chief Investigator on the asbestos exposure research project and therefore invited her to submit a proposal.

*Deadly Dust* was produced during a three-month part-time secondment (September – November 2008) with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in Perth.

**Factual research on asbestos**

For the purpose of producing the radio documentary about the personal impact of asbestos on Australians, it was necessary to read widely about asbestos from multiple perspectives. The medical research into asbestos-related diseases proved to be a large and often highly specialised field. Articles describing causes and possible treatments of asbestos-related diseases (ARD) and future projections of the diseases were useful (see for example Leigh et al., 2002; de Klerk and Musk, 2002; Robinson, Musk and Lake, 2005).

Because of the historical importance of asbestos in Australia much has been written about it by historians, lawyers and journalists alike. Lawyer John Gordon’s history of mesothelioma litigation in Australia gives an extensive background to the legal aspect of asbestos (Gordon, 2002). Ben Hills’ *Blue Murder* book was the first to outline the health catastrophe in the wake of asbestos mining in Western Australia (Hills, 1989). Fellow journalists Matt Peacock (2009) and Gideon Haigh (2006) have both written histories of the
asbestos manufacturer James Hardie. Australian historian Jock McCulloch has written extensively about asbestos in Australia and South Africa (see for example McCulloch, 2007; McCulloch and Tweedale, 2007 and 2008).

As the human cost of asbestos exposure continues to increase, there are a growing number of first-hand accounts of how the dangerous material has affected individuals and their families. Angela Napolitano (2006) and Lorraine Kember (2003) have both written about how their husbands were exposed to asbestos in the workplace and later died as a result from asbestos-related diseases (see also Miller, 2008 on the human cost of the asbestos tragedy).

The Australian Broadcast Corporation (ABC) has an extensive audio-visual archive. As part of the research for the documentary the researcher spent weeks looking through the ABC archive for stories about asbestos that were used both as background information and as potential audio to be included in the radio documentary (for more about this process see below in chapter 5).

**Recruiting interviewees**

Over 20 interviews were done by the researcher as Chief Investigator between 2007 and 2008 for the asbestos project. Of those about half of the interviews were included in the radio documentary. The recruiting of interviewees was done by the researcher identifying suitable interviewees such as lawyers, academics and others based on their expertise. Finding people who were ill as a result of their exposure to asbestos was harder. They came through contacts with a chest physician (a fellow Chief Investigator on the asbestos project) and an asbestos litigation lawyer. Both contacts asked their patients/clients if they wanted to be interviewed for the radio documentaries and the website. Collaborating with an interviewee’s doctor and/or lawyer was helpful as it gave instant credibility and made it
easier to persuade people to agree to an interview (Adams, 2001, 17). There are many reasons why people are willing to share personal stories publicly, from being paid (cheque-book journalism) to being motivated by a desire to make a difference. Several people interviewed said they wanted people to know about the danger of asbestos and therefore were willing to tell their story to an audience. As has been noted above building trust and good rapport with your interviewee is a vital prerequisite of the success of an interview – introducing yourself via a recommendation from a clinical specialist eliminated a large part of the initial legwork.

The documentary contained 11 voices of people telling how they have been affected by asbestos in their personal or professional life. Ten of those were interviewed by the researcher as part of this study. Asbestos campaigner Bernie Banton had passed away by the time this story was recorded so his voice came from archival recordings held by the ABC. Here is a list of the people whose voices featured in the documentary.

**Rolf Harris**
Entertainer and former Wittenoom worker

**Lenore Layman**
Adjunct Associate Professor at Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia

**Robert Vojakovic**
President, Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia

**Peter Gordon**
Lawyer, Slater & Gordon

**Margaret Page**
Spent time in Wittenoom as a child, died in 2008 from mesothelioma

**Ted Grant**
Spent time in Wittenoom as a child, died in 2009 from mesothelioma

**Angela Napolitano**
Wife of former Wittenoom worker Liborio who died from mesothelioma
These interviews told stories of sickness and death, of corporate greed, of families and social circles gradually depleted by a destructive illness. Doing these interviews prompted the researcher to reflect on a range of issues relevant to interviewing: interviewing ethics and journalistic objectivity, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the interviewer when interviewing people with a terminal illness. Can journalists be objective recorders of traumatic stories? How close should they get to their subject? What is the relationship between interviewer and interviewee? How do journalists manage their own feelings? These issues are explored further in the following two chapters.

Most of the interviews with the professionals involved with asbestos, e.g. lawyers, politicians and writers, were done remotely via link from the ABC studio in Perth to interviewees situated in a radio studio in Melbourne or Sydney. Unlike telephone interviews, link interviews come with good audio quality but have all the limitations of a telephone interview such as challenges of establishing rapport and lack of physical cues. The other interviews were recorded either in people’s homes or in hospital.

**Ethical considerations**

The point has already been made that an interview is a moral endeavour and being involved in an interview affects the interviewee (Kvale, 1996, 109). In particular when
interviewing seriously ill or dying persons about their lives and the reason for their illness, the venture has serious ethical implications.

The radio documentary *Deadly Dust* had to observe three sets of ethical protocols: the ABC’s Editorial Guidelines (ABC, 2009), the Media and Arts Alliance Code of Ethics (MEAA, n.d) and the rules of the revised Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007) which is the official policy of the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at Murdoch University (research project permit number 2006/285). A more detailed discussion about the journalistic implications of dealing with trauma can be found in chapter 4.

**Conclusion**

This chapter began with an overview of the debate about where journalism research is situated in academe. It argued for the different ways long-format journalism practice can be regarded as research within an academic framework. It explored the research methodologies embedded within the process of documentary production illustrating the similarities between long form investigative journalism practice and qualitative research methods. It also outlined how a range of different approaches such as narrative studies and reflective practice combined with autoethnography can be useful methodologies for a study which focuses on practice-based research where an artefact and the practitioner’s reflections on the production of that artefact informs our understanding of journalism practice. The chapter provides a background to the nationally-funded asbestos research project of which the documentary *Deadly Dust* was one research outcome. The aim was to show how and where radio documentary work can be situated within traditional academic research. In the next two chapters we turn to an examination of the production process itself.
Chapter 4 – Listening to Trauma

“Margaret is willing to talk to you but you better hurry because she’s really unwell”, read the message from the Slater & Gordon lawyer. He had just settled Margaret’s claim for compensation for the terminal cancer mesothelioma she contracted from living in Wittenoom, in northern Western Australia. My heart jumped. I had been hoping she would say yes. Margaret had lived in the blue asbestos mining town as a child. Hers was a shocking story of how asbestos had wiped out most of her family. There were 11 in the Whitaker family living in Wittenoom in the 40 and 50s – six were still alive but only two sisters were left untouched by the deadly mineral.

As I lifted the phone to ring her to introduce myself, the initial excitement of her agreeing to be interviewed turned to trepidation. What do you say to someone who has experienced such trauma? How do you interact with a person who is next in line to die from exposure to the deadly dust? Years of working as a broadcast journalist didn’t seem to prevent the anxiety I felt as I finally dialled Margaret’s number.

(Extract from production journal, 20 March 2008. Margaret Page was at that time dying from the asbestos cancer mesothelioma.)

The above illustrates the emotional challenges of reporting on a traumatic topic such as the personal impact of asbestos exposure. It brings up questions about the role of the journalist as listener, the impact of that listening on the person recording the story, and also about what the potential benefits of sharing a traumatic story might have – for both interviewee and interviewer.

The impact of listening to traumatic stories was a topic that obsessed me during the making of this documentary and which occupied a lot of space in my reflective journal. When writing up the dissertation it became obvious that the issues of reporting trauma needed to be explored more fully in a separate chapter. It also became clear that this chapter needed to take the shape of an autoethnographic narrative describing my own
personal experience of the challenges – and benefits – of doing personal and emotional interviews with people who had suffered as a result of asbestos exposure.

This chapter takes a ‘the journalist as a person’ approach describing my own emotional journey through listening to trauma. Giving a personal account of doing an emotional story is not something I have ever done before. Discussing the challenges of an interview might be something you talk about with a colleague or family and friends but not something you share publicly.

The process of journalistic listening can be described as the simultaneous workings of ‘two brains’ during an interview: one part of the brain is closely engaged with listening to the interviewee’s story while the other part is processing the practicalities of the interview, such as timing, monitoring audio levels whilst also thinking about the next question to ask. Another way of looking at this duality is the split between the journalist as a person empathetically getting involved with a fellow human being’s story while the professional side of the journalist is concerned with process. These images might be useful to explain the aims of this and the following chapter 5. While this chapter looks at the personal side of journalistic practice, the next chapter describes ‘the journalist as a producer’ taking the audience through the practical side of making the radio documentary Deadly Dust. Both chapters are told in first person to give the reader an opportunity to share the experiences by getting inside the researcher’s own intellectual and emotional world.

The emotional cost of interviewing people like Margaret Page, whose life had been destroyed as a result of exposure to asbestos many years ago, took me as a journalist by surprise. I did not know how to deal with listening to such suffering and I found my previous journalistic experiences were not all that helpful. In my line of work, I had done many interviews with people who had experienced violence, death, illness and crime.
Those interviews had been done both as part of daily news reporting and also as in-depth reports with longer production times. For both short and long stories I had spent only limited time with the interviewees and, most importantly, I had been able to move on to the next story once the emotional one was completed. The impact of being involved with the asbestos project for a number of years meant I would also be involved with listening to trauma for an extended time. I could not just run for cover into facts and figures as many journalists do. I needed to find ways to manage my own emotions during this process. It gave me the opportunity to reflect on the many aspects of trauma interviewing and to think about ways to deal with the guilt that many journalists describe they feel as they share the most personal stories with their interviewees. It made me think about the role of the journalist as listener and question who owns the stories that are being collected. I found in my fieldwork interviews with other documentary producers that these were important issues that they had thought extensively about. It made me look at what had been written about journalism and trauma. When those readings were not enough, I expanded my reading list to ‘sibling disciplines’ such as oral history in an attempt to make sense of what I was experiencing. I found some of the thinking about narrative studies helpful and especially Rita Charon’s writings about narrative medicine which could be directly applied to journalistic listening. Borrowing frameworks from other disciplines was helpful in making sense of journalistic practice. Here it is important to note that this chapter draws specifically on thinking relevant to journalistic listening. It does not engage with discussions about whether debriefing can re-traumatise victims or what kinds of psychological support strategies should be offered to people affected by trauma. Instead it is a chapter about one journalist’s experience of listening to trauma, the many questions that creates about the impact on both interviewer and interviewee involved in the process,
and ways of looking at how storytelling can be seen as helping both teller and listener in dealing with those emotions.

**Journalism and trauma**

Before I share my own experiences of listening to traumatic stories it would be useful to look at what has been written about trauma reporting. Journalists are often exposed to stressful and traumatic events when covering stories. Just like police and fire and emergency personnel, they arrive at scenes of natural disasters, crime and accidents. Their jobs require them to bear witness to others who often are overwhelmed by traumatic experiences. For many journalists dealing with trauma and disasters is just part of the job description. Journalists are often portrayed as hard-drinking and tough people able to deal with any story. Many journalists speak of it as an unwritten code that stipulates that it does not matter how hard an assignment is – a journalist must always collect information to tell stories: ‘[i]ncluded in this code is the belief that a journalist must proceed to the next assignment without acknowledging or treating the emotional toll of the tragic event he or she just covered’ (Simpson and Boggs, 1999 cited in Dworznik, 2006, 537).

One of the reasons for this perception can be the requirement of journalists to be objective observers of society. The Australian Journalists’ Code of Ethics states that a reporter must strive ‘for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts’ (MEAA, n.d). The idea of objectivity is intrinsic to journalism and for many that is synonymous with not getting involved emotionally. Crying along with the interviewee or showing your emotions is not considered acceptable professional behaviour. This approach is based on the concept of journalists as humans who can turn off their emotions at will and who have established a firewall between their professional and private selves.
However it is clear from anecdotal accounts from journalists themselves and through academic research that journalists and photographers do suffer emotional distress from witnessing trauma. Veteran ABC foreign correspondent Philip Williams reported from the school siege in Beslan in Chechnya, and in the documentary Bearing Witness for the ABC television program Compass he described how the horrors of what he saw in the school impacted on him personally.

*I remember going into that room and feeling the sense of horror that that room gave off. Emotion took over. Now, as a journalist, that’s not supposed to happen. You’re supposed to maintain your objectivity and your distance.*

*.... I felt a sense of guilt there because there was nothing I could contribute to that situation. I couldn’t bring their children back. I couldn’t save them at the time. I was just there, just an observer and that’s, I guess in that sense of impotence, total impotence, I could give nothing except information to my tribe back in Australia* (Williams, 2007).

Over recent years both academics and practitioners have started to take an interest in how covering trauma does affect journalists, and the view that journalists are tough and therefore unaffected by what they see is changing. Research centres such as the DART Center for Journalism and Trauma, with its head office in the US but with branches in many countries, have put the emotional well-being of journalists reporting trauma on the agenda. Slowly the need for self-care and organisational support for journalists is becoming recognised similar to that offered to emergency workers. The DART Center offers online and on-location resources for journalists and educators. The aim is to raise awareness about issues of covering trauma. The network aims to educate journalists about how to be sensitive and respectful when interviewing people who have experienced trauma, but also how to look after their own well-being when dealing with trauma reporting. It makes the point on its website that reporting traumatic stories can be hard but beneficial for the
journalist as ‘an opportunity for personal and professional growth’ (DART Center for Journalism and Trauma, 2009).

Most of the industry focus has been on journalists covering wars and how they are, as a result, more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression (see for example Feinstein, Owen, and Blair (2002)). But academics have also put the spotlight on how reporting other forms of trauma can affect the mental health of the journalist. What about the daily reporting that does not involve a murder or a natural disaster? What is the impact of listening to personal life stories about trauma? What happens to journalists interviewing those in the midst of terrible pain and suffering? (Dworznik, 2006, 535). These were questions relevant to my own experience of interviewing asbestos sufferers.

**Listening to traumatic stories**

While the impact of listening to trauma is an emerging research area for journalism it has been well covered by oral historians, especially researchers in trauma testimonies who often encounter traumatic narratives when recording life stories. Oral historian Mark Klempner interviewed thirty Holocaust survivors as part of a research project and he recalls how he felt when listening to one of them recounting the murder of her entire family:

*I go blank and numb, not knowing how to respond to suffering of such magnitude. I feel cheap somehow, that I am hearing these things so casually, that is, upon having just met her (Klempner, 2000, 67).*

Psychiatrist Dori Laub was instrumental in documenting Holocaust survivors’ traumatic stories by co-founding the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, at Yale University. Laub, himself a Holocaust survivor, is one of the pioneers of trauma testimony. In an interview with Mary Marshall Clark he retells how involved he became in his first
testimonial interviews, which he expected to be finished by 10 pm, but instead the
interviews continued until the early hours of the morning (Clark, 2005, 273-274).

The discipline of narrative medicine (see for example Kleinman, 1988; Charon,
2006), explores the importance of listening to patients’ stories of illness where the medical
listener ‘recognizes suffering, provides comfort, and honors the stories of illness’ (Charon,
2006, ix). This has involved training medical practitioners, social workers and other health
professionals in the art of evoking, listening to and empathising with the narratives of their
patients. Charon acknowledges that this approach is demanding as it requires a willingness
to be emotionally involved as listener:

Practitioners, be they health professionals to begin with or not,
must be prepared to offer themselves as a therapeutic instrument
(Charon, 2004, 32).

The same challenges also apply to journalists recording traumatic stories. Pioneer trauma
researcher psychiatrist Frank Ochberg warns that journalists can, as a result of listening to
traumatic stories, suffer from a post-traumatic stress disorder known as ‘secondary
traumatic stress, or ‘compassion fatigue’ (Ochberg, 1996) similar to that which usually
affects counsellors or family members of traumatised people. Even though the journalists
have not themselves experienced the trauma, listening to victims recall events during
interviews can make the journalists absorb the emotions and thereby feel as if they have
experienced the event themselves. This could be why so many journalists shy away from
doing interviews on traumatic topics. ABC trainers Buck and Gray explain that many
journalists run for cover by asking about facts and figures rather than emotions when
interviews could become uncomfortably personal and traumatic. They give this example of
how a journalist in a live broadcast dealt with a survivor of a bush fire:
Norwegian radio producer Berit Hedemann recognised the difficulties of being at the receiving end of the microphone. She agrees that often it is the journalist – the interviewer – who is most scared of an emotionally challenging interview. When the interviewee starts to cry the reaction is often to turn the recorder off whereas the interviewee is willing to continue to talk (Hedemann, 2009). Producer Chris Brookes describes how hard it is to keep the ‘tape rolling’ when interviewing people about traumatic memories or events:

*I just cling to the microphone and try not to turn the recorder off. There have been times when I have turned the recorder off when it just seems too intimate...when someone slips into a wail or something and they give you that look or you know that this is pornographic to keep recording this and I turn it off. But I try not to* (Brookes, 2009).

When listening to stories from the blue asbestos mining town of Wittenoom and the deadly consequences of people’s contact with asbestos, I was deeply affected by their stories. In my first interview with an asbestos victim, Dianne Kilminster, I had tears rolling down my face but tried to hide them so as not to make her distressed. In my production journal I described how uncertain I felt about how to conduct the interview.

*It was my first interview with a mesothelioma sufferer. Dianne Kilminster had helped her husband erect an asbestos fence (also known as Hardie plank or ‘supersix’) around their farm in rural Western Australia. The contact came from her chest physician who, on my behalf, asked if she was willing to be interviewed for radio. We agreed to meet the same afternoon at her sister’s place in Perth. Dianne had travelled to Perth for her treatment so there was no or little time for me to prepare for the interview. On reflection, it was a short interview where Dianne told me about how she contracted the illness, how it affected her daily life and how sad she felt that she*
would not be able to see her grandchildren grow up. As the interviewer I tiptoed around emotions and stayed on information-based issues like how they built the fence or how much her husband helps in the kitchen now that she was ill. Looking back, I was afraid to talk about her up-coming death, afraid that I would cause her harm and upset by talking about it. Listening back to the interview together with a producer at [ABC] Radio National I could hear that I had not gone deep enough. I was left with questions unasked about how she felt about her situation and about James Hardie, the producers of the asbestos material used in the fence. In retrospect it is clear that my own feelings and fears impacted on the effectiveness of the interview. I felt uncomfortable and decided to censor my questions to her in an attempt to care for her. I think Dianne would have agreed to talk more in-depth about her experience. After all she had agreed to do the interview knowing it would be about her illness.

(Extract from production journal, November 2007)

Writing about the interview experience afterwards alerted me to my behaviour during the interview attempting to protect Dianne Kilminster by not asking certain questions. Yow argues for the importance of reflexivity and awareness of how the interview situation will impact on both interviewer and interviewee, especially as the interviewer, in an attempt to protect the interviewee, might steer away from some questions that might cause discomfort (Yow, 1997).

Extended personal narrative
Being well prepared and a building strong relationship with the interviewee were important approaches when dealing with traumatic listening. This was to ensure I was able to fully engage with the people I was interviewing. David Hendy (2003, 181) writes about the challenges of what he calls the ‘quick fixes of journalism’ where a lack of time means journalists do not fully understand the reality they are reporting and as a result they may not have a sense of responsibility towards the people they interview. According to Hendy, journalists then become tourists in people’s lives and spaces where
...a hasty visit is never the same as real engagement, that the “experience” of the interviewee is somewhat appropriated all too hastily, much like a holiday souvenir, for the journalist’s own purposes, rather than for the interviewee’s (ibid, 181).

To ensure I did not become a tourist visiting asbestos victims I used what Kawamoto calls an ‘extended personal narrative’ technique (Kawamoto, 2005, 9) when collecting the personal stories of trauma resulting from asbestos exposure. This required that the journalist develop a relationship of trust with the interviewees so they felt confident to share their very private and personal experiences. Where usually journalists might have a brief encounter with a traumatised person when interviewing him or her before moving on to the next news story of the day, here I established relationships with the interviewees that stretched over a long period of time.

During my second interview about the impact of asbestos, with Sylvia Lovenfosse, I felt more comfortable showing how sad I became during the interview. It was impossible not to become upset by listening to her retell how asbestos had killed her husband and many of her friends - children and wives – from Wittenoom. I felt more comfortable sharing my emotions as a listener with her because I had had more contact with her before interviewing her.

The Lovenfosse interview illustrated the importance of building that relationship as rapport opens up an emotional space for the journalist as well. Over a period of a few months I had had many phone calls and some meetings with Sylvia Lovenfosse so by the time we sat down to do the first of two one-hour in-depth interviews, we were both comfortable with each other and there was scope for the sharing of emotions inevitably triggered by an interview about death. With Dianne Kilminster there had been no time to establish rapport before arriving at her doorstep. And there was no opportunity for
ongoing communication afterwards either. It was a quick ‘in–and-out’ situation so typical of many journalistic interviews.

At first the ‘extended personal narrative’ approach made it harder for me as journalist because I could not escape the emotions by moving on to the next story. Instead I had to stay and deal with what I was feeling. However, on reflection, the personal connection made me better understand my own reactions to the interviews. I could see the importance of collecting the stories, my role in the process and what it meant for the interviewees. It gave some form of context to the sadness retained in the stories.

Australian broadcaster Caroline Jones tells of how she prepares by being open and by focusing on the interviewee rather than herself during the interview. Jones describes her role during the interview as ‘an accompanist, another human being hearing reverently’ (Bell and van Leeuwen, 1994, 123). Having an awareness of the social interaction of a journalistic interview and the role of the listener is one way to prepare for the impact of listening to trauma.

**The power of narrative**
Support for the notion that talking to a journalist in an in-depth interview can be beneficial for the interviewee can be found in the growing field of narrative studies. The act of telling stories provides humans with a way of validating their contribution to the world they live in and can give meaning to their lives. In medicine patients’ narratives, also called pathographies, are an important tool for assisting patients in conveying what they are going through ‘without these narrative acts, the patient cannot himself or herself grasp what the events of illness mean’ (Charon, 2006, 66).

Obviously there are differences in skills and professional roles between medical professionals and interviewers (whether journalists or oral historians), however, the
therapeutic aspect of telling a personal story can be translated into journalism practice. In an analysis of the confessional interviews conducted by Australian veteran journalist Caroline Jones, Bell and van Leeuwen describe what they call the ‘revelatory genre’.

Jones’s revelatory interviews are explained as vehicles for the discovery of self for both interviewer and interviewee (Bell and van Leeuwen, 1994, 91).

Like Charon, Bell and van Leeuwen argue that meaning is not something that lies dormant in us; it is only through the act of speaking that meaning is created. A revelatory interview allows the interviewee to share his or her path to understanding. Writer and psychoanalyst Stephanie Dowrick agrees that being interviewed can have a therapeutic effect: ‘It gives people a sense of continuity, of things having made sense, of certain moments of enlightenment having emerged out of experience’ (in Wilson, 2000, 215). This is echoed by Baumeister and Newman (1994) who argue that constructing a narrative can be an important first step for a person to understand an experience (688). Klempner argues that trauma narratives can be a way of finding closure (2000, 70). As such sharing a traumatic experience during an interview can give the interviewee a sense of closure where the event or the experience can be left behind. This is especially relevant for asbestos victims as for many there has been no single traumatic event as such. Instead the trauma is ongoing as they cope in their daily lives with the ever present threat of diseases which may kill them decades later.

**Benefits of telling a story – for the interviewee**

The role of listening and the importance of being listened to is beautifully described by psychologist Dr Carl Faber in his book *On Listening*: 
Most people have never been listened to. They live in a lonely silence – no one knowing what they feel, how they live, or what they have done...Because listening can bring about such powerful healing, it is one of the most beautiful gifts that people can give and receive (Faber, 1976, 3).

Ochberg refers to the psychological benefits of the opportunity to give testimony for torture victims in Chile (Ochberg, 1996). Also giving examples from journalism he outlines how members of the Michigan Victim Alliance had offered themselves as interviewees for journalism students at Michigan State University. After the interviews people from the victim group reported some PTSD symptoms but also an ‘overall increase in self-esteem, because their stories have been heard. Often, the facts are told with considerable depth of feeling’ (ibid).

Danish documentary producer Torben Paaske echoes the words of Faber about the power of being listened to. Paaske says journalists underestimate the importance of conversation, of sharing stories. His interviewees often point out how much they enjoyed being listened to.

At de har været glade for bare, at kunne oese af deres tanker, ikke? Fortælle om deres forelskelse, deres traumer, deres livshistorie, ikke? Altså det har været en form for god kop kaffe... Altså, og det oplever jeg mange af mine interviewede goer. At de har behov for at der er en der sidder og lytter, til hvad det er de siger.

AUTHOR’S TRANSLATION: They are happy to be given the opportunity to pour out their thoughts - to talk about falling in love, about their traumas, their life stories. It has been like a really good cup of coffee.... I feel that many of my interviewees feel this way. They have a need for someone to sit there and listen to what they have to say (Paaske, 2009).

Understanding the personal benefits of storytelling is helpful to journalists when they wrestle with feelings of guilt during intense interviews. Norwegian producer Berit Hedemann describes her constant sense of guilt when taking away people’s stories, ‘when
people have told us about their suicide attempts and their childhood problems, then we say “Thank you” and leave with our catch’ (Hedemann, 2009). Knowing there are also benefits for the interviewee sharing his or her story is helpful as counterbalance:

_Hvordan skal vi få gått derfra, fra person etter person etter person med integritet i behold og uten å ha gjort vedkommende vont? Og da synes jeg faktisk at det er en av de tingene man kan trøste seg med er akkurat det at for de aller fleste er det veldig deilig å få snakke om seg selv i med en god lytter i to timer... Det er en gratis psykolog ...og hvis programmet blir fint så det er godt for dem at vi har gjort noe fint for dem. Sånn at for veldig mange blir dette en god opplevelse._

_AUTHOR’S TRANSLATION: How will we be able to go from person to person with our integrity intact and without causing that person any harm? I think one of the things to take comfort from is [the understanding] that for most people it is really nice to be able to talk about yourself with a good listener for two hours ...It is a free psychologist...and if the [radio] program turns out well, then it’s good that we’ve done something good for them. So for many this becomes a positive experience (Hedemann, 2009)._

Further to the sense of personal benefits of sharing stories, interviewees can also be motivated by sharing their experiences publicly so that others might not have to go through the same hardship. By doing an interview their experiences have been recorded for future generations to share. Rosemary Block, of the Oral History Association of Australia, explains that the Holocaust survivors she interviewed felt they had contributed a ‘huge body of knowledge that will be available for their own children and grandchildren and for future generations’ (in Wilson, 2000, 190). This was also one of the motivating factors behind why two of the asbestos storytellers, Margaret Page and Ted Grant, wanted to tell their story in the documentary _Deadly Dust_: 
I hope you’ve got something out if it that’s going to help (Page, 2008).

Nobody knows. There’s nothing out there...there’s binge drinking, drugs, everything like that, but there’s nothing ever said about the dangers of asbestos on the news, there’s no advertising about asbestos. And it’s common. There are still garages and fences, roofs, lining. ... Asbestos is a time bomb... there needs to be more knowledge put out there (Grant, 2008).

**Benefits of telling a story – for the journalist**

Journalists are becoming more comfortable talking about the effects that covering traumatic events has had on them. But many journalists are still reluctant to talk about feelings such as fear, anxiety, depression, and anger because it could be seen as a weakness.

Interestingly, it appears the journalistic activity itself, involving as it does the telling of stories, may help journalists cope with their experience. According to Bell and van Leeuwen, each interview involves two searches, the interviewee’s search for meaning in his or her own life and the interviewer ‘searching for meaning on behalf of her listeners’ (1994, 92). In a study about models of risk and resilience for journalists covering trauma Smith found that in the group of news journalists she studied 9.7 per cent reported significant PTSD symptoms related to their work, a surprisingly low figure in comparison with other high risk occupational groups (2008, 111). Smith suggests a number of explanations for this; one is that journalists who are constantly exposed to trauma are forced to habituate themselves to the fear – they can’t avoid being exposed to it again so they get used to it and therefore did not report symptoms to the study. Another explanation more pertinent to this study is the positive effects of telling your story. Smith refers to research showing the benefits of storytelling apply not only to the interviewee but to the journalists themselves: ‘Work involving recall of these stories in written or spoken language may serve as a coping mechanism when faced with covering emotional stories’ (Smith, 2008,
So by doing their jobs as storytellers - even telling traumatic stories - journalists may be safeguarded against the mental and physical impact of occupational stress and trauma.

This was true in my own experience. Putting the documentary together was helpful in its own right. Talking to friends and colleagues about interviewing terminally ill people as part of producing the story also helped me process my own experience.

**Making a difference**
The feeling of doing something good for someone else can be another way of dealing with traumatic stories. Dworznik (2006) in her article *Journalism and trauma* refers to a study where American television journalists use the ‘motive of goal attainment’ (540) as a coping strategy. By setting the goal as “telling a good story about a victim” it helped them deal with their own emotions; for the journalists ‘the experience was not remembered as traumatic, but was instead remembered as an opportunity to offer a grieving family a chance to feel better’ (ibid, 540). This is a strategy used by Kirsti Melville when she struggles with her conscience when interviewing people who have experienced trauma.

> Often when I'm sitting there talking to people about something emotional I feel awful, I feel dreadful, I think 'what am I doing this for, why am I doing this to them, why am I making people re-live this?' And I always feel like I have to have a good moral answer to that question in my own head that I believe in, that them telling their story will make a difference to someone somewhere, it will make a difference, it can change lives (Melville, 2010).

These strategies resonate with my experience during the production of the radio documentary *Deadly Dust*. Both asbestos victims Margaret Page and Ted Grant were keen to share their stories publicly, which made me feel that I was doing something ‘good’ by interviewing them.
Debriefing after interview

Another useful way for journalists to deal with the emotional impact of reporting trauma is to talk about what they have experienced. Debriefing opportunities have been shown to be helpful and making mental health services available for those who need it has also proved to be beneficial. Dworznik agrees with Smith that simply by talking, journalists might find it easier to cope with trauma reporting ‘without violating the covenant of stoicism which pervades journalism today’ (Dworznik, 2006, 551). Melville seconds that:

*I talk a lot so I tell people about it; I tell all my friends and my family about other people’s experiences as a way of saying, look, we don’t know how lucky we’ve got it. And I find that it’s affirming of my own life as well.*

*But also some people I keep in contact with, it might be once a year or once every few years, but I think that helps too. There have been a few people that I’ve stayed in contact with over the years that have touched me particularly. I mean, they’re people that in another place and another time I would have met and been friends with, and they’ve felt the same and so we’ve maintained some sort of connection (Melville, 2010).*

After the most emotionally challenging interviews with people dying from asbestos-related diseases, I took the opportunity to debrief with a psychologist attach to the asbestos research project. The ethics permit covering that research project (permit number 2006/285) stipulated the need to engage a clinical psychologist to support interviewees if they became distressed as a result of the interviewing process. However I found debriefing useful myself as a way of coping. It helped me to disentangle feelings of helplessness after spending months interviewing people affected by, and in many case dying from, their exposure to asbestos. The bullet points below summarise some of the points the psychologist highlighted during our session for me to think about.
• To allow myself to be affected by their stories.

• They [the interviewees] trust your values and your judgement. Otherwise they wouldn’t be interviewed by you. They choose to be interviewed by you. No one forced them.

• You can’t make their illness and pain go away, but you can be a true ally to them by listening and telling their story. And that’s pure gold for them.

• Importance of being an interested listener. You have demonstrated intense listening to their stories. You ask to clarify things you don’t understand in their answers. It’s a satisfying experience to be listened to. It’s ‘honour listening’. You could have ‘listened within limits of the job’ which is different. You choose to listen intensively.

(Notes from debriefing session with psychologist, from production journal, February 09)

Benefits of telling a story – for society

The individual benefits of personal growth for journalists braving the challenge of reporting trauma can be extended more broadly to society at large. Kawamoto argues that producing a sensitive and well-crafted story about trauma is good not only for the reputation of the news organisation but also for the victims’ communities. When people feel connected they are more likely to engage to ‘help pass legislation assisting crime victims; speak out about the personal violation or social injustice; demand public safety accountability… as the personal tragedy of strangers becomes a communal concern’ (2005, 10). Charon talking in the context of clinical medicine also notes the community benefits to be derived from story sharing:

[N]arratively obtained knowledge of the other, especially the other who has suffered pain or trauma, can serve to improve health in the widest, most global frame by harnessing narrative as a force for freedom (Charon, 2006, 230).

Ethical challenges

Interviewing traumatised people presents a particular ethical challenge for journalists as it requires different techniques from those of daily news reporting. To ensure I employed
Kawamoto’s ‘extended personal narrative’ technique (2005, 9) I developed a relationship of trust with the interviewees so they felt confident to share their very private and personal experiences.

As pointed out by Kvale (1996, 36) this type of personal long-form interview where an attentive and sympathetic listener focuses specifically on the interviewee’s life, can be such positive experience for the interviewee that he or she wants to continue the relationship with the interviewer. In the case of one of the asbestos interviews, the interviewee died before the radio documentary went to air. My relationship continued after the death of the interviewee where I attended the funeral and met the family of the asbestos victim. This ongoing relationship can be beneficial for both parties but challenging from a professional perspective for a journalist-researcher who might interview many different people where it would simply be impractical to foster deep ongoing relationships with everyone.

Journalists must follow set ethical guidelines when collecting interviews for a story. Being aware of the balance of power is another important aspect of ethical behaviour. And when dealing with victims of trauma, the bar must be set high, as Charon states,

*Whoever listens, from the relative refuge of health, to the ill or traumatized speaker holds a profound responsibility not to exploit, not to expropriate, not to use the other for one's own ends.* (Charon, 2006, 233).

**Conclusion**

As this chapter has shown the act of telling and listening to traumatic stories can be emotionally challenging. However, sharing difficult experiences also has the potential for healing. This is an aspect of interviewing in general and trauma interviewing in particular that is not widely discussed amongst journalism academics or industry practitioners. Mary
Marshall Clark, in her reflection on the difference between video testimony, oral history and narrative medicine highlights the importance of listening. Although her ideas are located within the social science disciplines, they can be applied specifically to long-format journalism such as radio documentary work. Listening to and telling traumatic stories can be beneficial for the interviewee, the interviewer and society in general. Clark places the responsibility on the interviewer firstly to recognise and respond to the suffering of the individual; secondly to recognise and respond to the root causes of that suffering.

_The act of listening to others’ accounts of trauma or suffering give us the grounds upon which to establish ourselves as members of communities of knowledge, even when the community is constituted by virtue of sharing suffering (Clark, 2005, 281)._ 

This applies no less to journalists who, informed by a solid understanding of their responsibilities when collecting people’s personal stories of trauma, can share a sense of achievement with those interviewed as the stories become a valuable tool for making sense of the world. This is especially true for people whose lives have been destroyed as a result of being exposed to asbestos.

These arguments are useful – and helpful – for journalists agonising over the rights and wrongs of doing an interview with a traumatised person. Obviously guided by ethical principles and following recommendations from centres such as the DART Center, it is possible to regards an interview as potentially beneficial to the interviewee by allowing them to talk about their experience.

The next chapter outlines how the radio documentary _Deadly Dust_ was made describing in first person the challenges of dealing with traumatic interviews as one of the many production issues the producer/author had to address.
Chapter 5 – Deadly Dust: an analysis of practice

In this chapter I want to tell the story of the production of the radio documentary *Deadly Dust* which was commissioned and broadcast by the Hindsight program on ABC Radio National in Australia in 2008. My reflections on my own journalistic practice are informed by the radio documentary theory established in chapter 2 in part I of the thesis. That theory forms the framework for my analysis and discussions about the production process of *Deadly Dust*. Whereas part I of this thesis deals with practice-led research, i.e. research on radio documentary practice, part II of the dissertation takes the lessons learned in part I and applies them to the actual practice of making a radio documentary as an example of research through practice (or practice-based research).

The chapter outlines the different production steps - from original idea to final broadcast - of developing a radio documentary. It mostly follows the headings developed in chapter 2 to make the theoretical radio documentary model explicit. In some cases, themes have been amalgamated for ease of analysis, for example sound and music are dealt with here under a single heading. Also, scenes are discussed under interviewing rather than under the ‘radio documentary ingredients’ as in chapter 2. Each production step contains issues that are embedded in the production process which require actions and decisions by the producer. By pulling apart the production such embedded theories of practice become evident to the reader and listener. The chapter can be described as a guided listening exercise.

**The radio experiences**
The best radio story is one where the listener becomes so absorbed in the story that he or she is oblivious to the act of listening to a program. Asking listeners to deconstruct and analyse a radio documentary will take away some of pleasure and impact experienced at
‘first-hearing’ Therefore, for the purpose of this guided listening I ask readers of this thesis to first listen to the whole documentary _Deadly Dust_ on the CD without thinking about its approaches, issues and possible merits. Enjoy the listening experience first, then we can look at how it is done in detail.

I have written this chapter in first person in an attempt to offer entry into my head (and heart!) as I go through the process of making the documentary. As a radio producer you often work alone during the planning, recording, editing and scripting process. You might have colleagues give you feedback during the development by listening to parts or the whole draft of the story. However, only during the final stage of mixing in the studio with a sound engineer will you have the benefit of another pair of ears listening and working side by side with you on the story. Explaining the details of the production process - with all it involves - of one documentary can hopefully give the reader the experience of being involved in the production: being able to look over the shoulder or be a ‘fly-on-the-wall’ in the room with me while I go through the weeks of work from the initial idea and proposal to the broadcast program.

During the production process I immersed myself in radio listening as a way of improving my own skills by learning from others. I have always listened to a lot of radio but since the advent of podcasting I have been able to listen to a radio documentary or program while going for a daily morning walk. I would often come back home feeling enlightened and as if I had been on a journey to another place. Going for a morning walk with a radio documentary plugged into my ears thought headphones is an intense radio experience. I often come home after a walk feeling as if I had learned something fundamental about the human condition – having shared very personal experiences with voices that had been plugged directly into my being. In my production journal I observed how I reacted to the stories I listened to:
I have listened to many Street Stories, Radio Eye and Hindsight documentaries [on ABC Radio National] while commuting to East Perth on the train. This research allows me to reflect on what makes some stories more effective – and therefore successful – than others. Spending so much time immersed in radio content has reinforced to me the importance of creating an emotional response with the listener. Radio is less about the actual content, or facts and information, of the story and more about your emotional response as listener. I have found myself crying on buses and trains because of the strong impact of the words and sounds. The story of how a grandmother ran with her dead grandchild in her arms to meet the ambulance [from the documentary '000 Emergency' on ABC Radio National] had me hiding behind my sunglasses with tears running down my cheeks. I saw the picture so clearly in my mind’s eye. I felt her grief hit me in the stomach. When people share deeply personal experiences and their words are mixed with sombre music and sounds, the impact is overwhelming. You don’t have pictures to interpret that can get in the way of the emotional impact. The words, voices and sounds coming out of the headphones have direct access to your heart.

(Extract from production journal, 26 March, 2008)

Applying a first-person narrative through this guided listening section of the dissertation follows an autoethnographical approach where I draw on my own experience. This can be a useful method where the researcher is part of a group or culture studied; in this case I am writing a thesis about radio documentary theory and practice while being a radio documentary producer myself. Ellis and Bochner describe autoethnography as a genre of research and writing where the boundaries between the personal and the cultural become blurred (2003, 209). They emphasise that social science autoethnographies usually cite other academics and use academic language (ibid, 215) so an autoethnographical text is not just a personal narrative written for the self as sole audience. This chapter is built around production journal entries from mid-2007, when I first started planning for a documentary about asbestos, to the end of 2008 when the documentary was broadcast. The journal was kept as a professional diary for the purpose of this thesis. My aim was to
capture my own practice, expertise and experiences which would add another perspective
to the fieldwork interviews with international documentary producers about the theories
and practice of radio documentary production. These autoethnographical vignettes were
reflections on the challenges of producing *Deadly Dust* and they ‘set the scenes’ for further
reflections and discussions around issues of reporting on trauma, relationship between
interviewer and interviewee etc.

For a study that tries to understand the theory and practice of making a radio
documentary – a creative activity – the experience of the producer is an important aspect
of that knowledge. This subjective perspective offers another approach to understanding
how something is done and what processes are involved.

*When the dual nature of the meaning of autoethnography is
apprehended, it is a useful term with which to question the binary
conventions of a self/society split, as well as the boundary between
the objective and the subjective (Reed-Danahay, 1997, 2).*

The chapter follows in a broad sense the structure of chapter 2 *Radio Documentary Theory*
with similar headings to make the translation explicit between the extracted theory as
developed in chapter 2 and its application here reflecting on practice during the production.

The different production issues identified and discussed in chapter 2 will be further
discussed here.

**The Story Idea**

*ABC’s Hindsight program wants the documentary! The Executive
Producer...is very interested. She wants me to write a short brief
outlining story, angle, talents, structure and sounds. It’s a 53-minute
radio documentary, the long-format being a big challenge for any
documentary maker. But with such a big topic as asbestos it will be a
squeeze to fit everything in: medical and legal history, domestic/residential and industrial perspectives. I guess if I aim for
10 talents, that still only leaves them with less than 5 minutes each
over the whole program.*

*(Extract from production journal, August 2007)*
My desire to do a documentary about the impact of asbestos in Australia started a few years earlier. When I moved to Western Australia from Sweden in 1998 I was shocked by the complacency people showed about the dangers of asbestos. Like so many houses in Fremantle the house I bought in 2001 was a 1940s fibro house. Although the fibro sheets containing asbestos had been enclosed with bricks I was concerned about living with asbestos so close to me. Many of the fences around the property were also made of asbestos cement sheets and so were many roofs in my street. But asbestos was not on people’s radar. When I suggested I would do some journalistic stories on the impact of asbestos in Australia I was told by friends and journalism colleagues that those stories have all been done and asbestos was a story of the past, not an issue for the present. However, I was convinced there was a need for asbestos stories as I wanted to hear the people affected by asbestos talk about the impact of such an all-pervasive material. As a result I became involved with the Community consequences of asbestos exposure in WA research project in 2007. Once I realised that the incidence of asbestos-related diseases in Australia was not predicted to peak until around 2020 I was convinced the story was worth doing. My strong conviction was that it was important to let the impact of asbestos be heard from those people affected. Those voices had not really been heard in the Australian media before, even though the topic of asbestos had been covered intensely over the years. It became clear to me that because of legal restrictions in compensation agreements the human experience had not been the focus of the many asbestos stories in the Australian media – many sufferers had signed caveats restricting their capacity to talk about their experience. So here was a story that needed to be told and radio was the perfect medium to let these voices be heard.
Proposal
The first step in the production process is to do enough research to be able to write up a proposal. This includes a program mission statement, identifying whom to interview, a rough idea of the storyline, and background information that contextualises the story so an Executive Producer can assess whether to commission the production. For the producer this is where the idea begins to be fleshed out and is tested against other stories that might have been done on the topic previously. Since asbestos was such a big topic with multiple angles to explore, there was extensive research for me to do before being able to explain my ideas in a proposal.

I can hear parts of the story already, which is a good start. I remember hearing the beginning of the documentary in my head while driving up to Geraldton in May (got caught speeding as a result – my mind was elsewhere). The concept/idea that asbestos is now being dug BACK into the ground because it’s so dangerous is an important one. Just as we dug it up for prosperity we are now digging it back down again. I want the doco to begin with sounds of asbestos removal team dressed in protective space suits stripping a house. And maybe the story can end with the sheets being buried in the ground.

(Extract from production journal, August 2007)

The proposal (Appendix 2) was sent to the Executive Producer\textsuperscript{10} for ABC Radio National’s Hindsight program via a producer working at Radio National in Perth. In it I proposed to tell the story of Wittenoom and the people affected by asbestos there, but I also wanted to explore the contemporary issues of the increasing number of people diagnosed with asbestos-related illnesses and how asbestos continues to impact on Australians today – hence my comments in my journal above about recording asbestos removalists clearing asbestos from homes and digging it back into the ground. The feedback (in email below)

\textsuperscript{10} Michelle Rayner is Executive Producer for Hindsight, ABC Radio National’s history program. She has been supportive of this research and has consented to being identified in this study.
from the Executive Producer of Hindsight via the Perth producer shows that I tried to cover too much in my proposed documentary and therefore needed to scale back the scope of it:

From: Michelle Rayner  
Sent: Tuesday, 21 August 2007 1:13 PM  
To:  
Subject: RE: asbestos draft

I think her proposal demonstrates that she has a thorough and rigorous understanding of the issue and most importantly for Hindsight, of the history.

My major comment is that Mia would appear, in this proposal, to want to try and make both a Hindsight AND a Background Briefing [author’s note: a national current affairs program on ABC Radio National] - all in the one program. This is simply impossible. She needs to set herself a kind of 'stop sign' limit on the parameters of the story. We cannot, in a Hindsight, go into this territory:

+ **Epidemic - predication 50,000 will have died from exposure to asbestos by year 2020.**

+ **Medical research – new Perth-based National Centre for Research into Asbestos-related Diseases at University of Western Australia**

+ **The next wave. Renovators at risk – danger of asbestos today; builders, DIY renovators.**

I would suggest that Mia actually uses the legal battle as her 'end chapter' - which means that she could still explore, in her oral history interviews, this part of the experiences of those who have been affected and have become involved in the legal action. But she will not be able to both give us the social historical perspective on why asbestos was so central to the WA story and how it has affected the lives of so many people in that state.

So, yes definitely 'where it all began' plus overview - plus aftermath - both human and industrial.

The contemporary stuff about 'next wave', 'asbestos graves' and current medical research - all of these issues would be better placed in a street stories, which could obviously still include contemporary personal experiences but would not need the tight historical frame which is absolutely the brief for a Hindsight of this nature.

As a producer the above feedback was very useful and it confirmed the ABC was interested in the story. It also highlighted the challenges of overextending the scope of the program, even where the duration is one hour. In my reflections upon receiving the feedback I was
hesitant to limit the approach to an historical exposé without the connection to the contemporary problems of living with asbestos in the community today:

*This feedback ... is correct and useful. I have in my proposal tried to include too much and I haven’t focused enough on the historical side of the story. Hindsight has a specific history brief so all my ideas about contemporary issues like where the asbestos is being buried, are not relevant for their program. ...Perhaps it would be better to do a 30-minute Street Stories program first based on my proposal for Hindsight. I could use the many interviews we will collect as part of the Asbestos Stories project to build a Hindsight [program] later. That way I wouldn’t have to go looking for the history-based sources now. I’m very tempted to do the ‘Living with Asbestos NOW’ angle first.*

(Extract from production journal, August 2007, after receiving feedback from Hindsight’s Executive Producer on my proposal)

As a result of this feedback from the Executive Producer I decided to do two radio documentaries about different aspects of the impact of asbestos:

1. *Living with Asbestos: the Third Wave*, broadcast on ABC RN’s Street Stories program 21 October 2007

(http://www.abc.net.au/rn/streetstories/stories/2007/2060192.htm). This 28-minute documentary was produced on a freelance basis. The documentary explored how asbestos impacts on contemporary life in Perth; how abundant the hazardous material is in the city, and how limited people’s knowledge is about the material and its dangers. The title refers to the third wave of asbestos victims. The first wave were the miners; the second the manufacturing workers and builders; and now the third group of people at risk of exposure are the home renovators and tradespeople coming in contact with the deadly material today. The documentary featured interviews with tradespeople about their awareness of and contact with the building material; residents of houses containing asbestos; and two people
whose lives had been shattered by the effect of asbestos (one’s wife had recently
died from mesothelioma and one woman suffering from mesothelioma herself); and

2. *Deadly Dust*, broadcast on ABC RN’s Hindsight, 23 November 2008
(http://www.abc.net.au/rn/hindsight/stories/2008/2418680.htm). This 54-minute radio documentary took listeners on a journey from the early history of asbestos mining and manufacturing in Australia through to the lengthy fights for compensation and on to the personal stories of lives destroyed because of corporate greed. Interviewees included former workers and residents of the mining town Wittenoom, a historian, lobbyists and campaigners, a politician, an asbestos lawyer, and a book author.

After completing the first asbestos story I updated my proposal for *Deadly Dust*. Having already completed one documentary about asbestos my background knowledge was extensive. Based on that I could identify themes I wanted to use as sections in the second documentary.

1. **The rise of the ‘magic mineral’** – post-war building boom; usefulness of material

2. **Wittenoom** – CSR involvement; migrants; working conditions; sense of community

3. **Doubts and warnings** – medical warnings; first cases of asbestosis in Wittenoom; Dr Eric Saint; US Dr Selikoff warnings in 1970s about epidemic in 2000
4. **The court cases** – companies fighting against compensation claims; first successful case

5. **Fighting James Hardie** – responsibility of company; relocation; compensation fights; Jackson Inquiry

6. **Third Wave** – today; ongoing court cases; complex issue ‘too hard to deal with’

The updated proposal (see Appendix 3) was sent to the Executive Producer at Hindsight and it received the following feedback in an email:

> That structure looks fine to me and I can “hear it” too, which is good. I like the idea of starting with the magic mineral and using Wittenoom as a discreet, fully embodied illustration of the wider, tragic story within this history; then definitely moving through to the emerging awareness of the dangers, and the flagrant nature of both industry/company and state response to this growing awareness. And I think this latter section is where the real heart of the story will ultimately rest as it’s the narrative “meat” isn’t it, of the larger story. I hope this helps.

I really think you’ve nailed the body of the history and the exposition of the story...

Fantastic!

(Email from Michelle Rayner, Executive Producer, 25 August, 2008)

**Background research and planning**

The amount of research required to produce a one-hour documentary about the history of asbestos and the complex saga of the involvement of the asbestos company James Hardie was extensive. The research process can be divided up into three stages:

**BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE**: Building up my own background knowledge and understanding about asbestos through reading books, newspaper and journal articles, listening to radio programs and documentaries, and watching television programs (for details see bibliography).
IDENTIFYING INTERVIEWEES: Identifying possible interviewees for the documentaries out of the process of gathering, analysing and processing the information in step one. Once done, these people were contacted and confirmed for interviews.

THEMES: Identifying potential themes to explore in the narrative (see Appendix 3). It was clear from the research that Wittenoom would play a big part in the story as I could access interviewees who worked and lived there. The research also made clear to me the importance of telling the medical, legal and historical perspectives of the topic chronologically so the listeners could follow how the public’s awareness of the dangers of asbestos exposure grew over time.

My extensive research filled a whole ring binder. Some of the research facts can be heard in the actual story but most of the information is embedded within the story and cannot be identified when listening to the final product. Instead this broad research was necessary to ensure the quality of the documentary with the research process informing the many decisions the producer had to make along the way. This is evident when selecting interviewees, when doing the interviews, when writing scripts, when looking for suitable audio etc.

Radio documentary ingredients
As discussed in chapter 2 Hedemann identifies five main ingredients of a radio documentary: interview, scenes, sounds, narration and music (Hedemann, 2006, 61).

Deadly Dust contains four of the five ingredients: interviews, sounds, narration and music. In this case the ingredient ‘scenes’ is missing (the reason is discussed below). When reflecting on the practice of making Deadly Dust it was helpful for me to use Hedemann’s headings. To make my reflections more coherent I have chosen to group together the ingredients, so interviewing and scenes (or in my case, lack of scenes) are discussed
together; sound and music are dealt with as two aspects of a similar issue; and narrator is grouped together with scripting a bit further down in this chapter. Here it is worth noting that just as in chapter 2, the heading ‘interviewing’ refers both to interviews as a building block of the story and as a technique for collecting information.

**Interviewing**

*It’s been challenging to interview people about traumatic experiences. Even when they aren’t talking about it as traumatic, my empathic nature seems to work against me by reading into the conversation my own emotions about the person’s experience and then getting upset. From their stories it’s easily possible to imagine how I myself would feel, or how the disease would impact on my situation and my own family. I have to learn to separate myself from the interviewee – listen and ask but not take in or incorporate into my own thinking and feeling. It’s a very tricky balancing act. As a journalist I could often hide behind the role of asking. As a news journalist I would process the stories fairly quickly and wouldn’t therefore need to have the emotions churning inside of me for a length of time. It was more about listening and regurgitating the story. In this project I have to process the person’s story more closely (is this more important when the interviewee is dying?). The resemblance to life stories (at least their asbestos life story) means my role is more that of a facilitator of narrative rather than [as] a journalist.*

(Extract from production journal, 4 September, 2007)

The interviews included in *Deadly Dust* were a mix of interviews I had done previously for the NHMRC-funded Asbestos Stories research project and new interviews conducted specifically for the documentary. Most of the former interviews were with asbestos victims and their families while the latter ones were with the experts needed to flesh out the details of the asbestos story, from historical, industrial and legal perspectives.

**Finding interviewees**

Identifying the ‘experts’, the ‘official’ voices in the asbestos story, was easy. People like Greg Combet, Peter Gordon, Robert Vojakovic and Bernie Banton had featured in many
previous media stories about asbestos. Finding them was just a matter of emailing and ringing them to set up interviews (Bernie Banton had passed away in 2007 so his interview was sourced from archival material). Finding people affected by asbestos exposure who were willing to share their story was more challenging. As a result of working on the multidisciplinary asbestos research I gained access to the patients of a chest physician who was part of the research team. Thanks to his long involvement in asbestos research and his high esteem amongst his patients he was able to ask patients whether they wanted to participate in interviews. Another contact point was a lawyer working with Slater & Gordon in Perth. He was able to ask potential interviewees on my behalf once their compensation settlement had been finalised. These two access points were crucial to the success of contacting people personally affected by asbestos exposure.

Interviewees were sought to represent the themes of the documentary. The asbestos victims and their families would tell stories about what it was like to live and work in Wittenoom; how asbestos had impacted on their lives; and how they had to fight for compensation. The historian and the author could tell the big picture story of asbestos to explain its pervasiveness in Australia; its importance as building material during the post war building boom; how medical awareness grew and with it the emerging fight for compensation. The lawyer and lobbyist could talk about the development of court cases against the asbestos companies and the ongoing fights for compensation.

Doing the interviews
I did the first interview for the documentary in the United Kingdom in 2007, where well-known entertainer Rolf Harris gave witness to how he was exposed to asbestos when working as a miner temporarily in Wittenoom as a young student in 1948. His father was also exposed to asbestos when working at the East Perth Power Station and died from asbestosis as a result. The interview was done on camera for the asbestos project rather
than just audio as Harris’ fame would give extra weight to the Asbestos Stories website after he generously agreed to give his support. The audio was extracted from the video recording so I could use it in the radio documentary.

The other interviews with asbestos victims and their families were conducted in their homes or at hospital. I wanted experiences both from people who were unwell as a result of their exposure and from family members who had lost loved ones. Ted Grant and Margaret Page were suffering from mesothelioma at the time of the interviews and their illness limited the duration of the interviews. Grant and Page both talked about how wonderful it was to grow up in Wittenoom and the sense of community that existed in the remote mining town. Sylvia Lovenfosse and Angela Napolitano had both lost their husbands to mesothelioma after working in Wittenoom. Theirs were stories of the terrible impact of asbestos on whole families.

Gideon Haigh, Peter Gordon and Greg Combet were interviewed via link from Melbourne and Sydney to the ABC studios in Perth. Doing an interview via line rather than telephone gives you better audio quality (often it is not detectable that the person is on the other side of the country), however, it imposes the same limitations on your interaction with the interviewee as a phone interview does. There are no visual cues to read when the interviewee is getting tired or annoyed. As interviewer you have no way of showing that you are listening and you do not want to interrupt the answers with making affirming sounds of listening. All three interviews became more formal as a result, with the focus on their expertise rather than their personal experience of asbestos.

Historian Lenore Layman was interviewed on location in the ABC studio in Perth so her interview was a face-to-face encounter but in a formal setting. This was suitable as she was talking about her expertise on asbestos rather than personal experience. Robert
Vojakovic was interviewed in his Perth office at the Asbestos Diseases Society. The office setting was appropriate as he talked about both his own personal experience of working in Wittenoom and his many years of lobbying and building support for asbestos sufferers.

**Asking emotional questions**
The impact of listening to trauma was explored in detail in the previous chapter. Suffice to say here that doing interviews with many people personally affected by the consequences of asbestos exposure impacted on my approach to the interviews and the questions I asked. I became self-conscious about what kinds of questions I could and should ask in an attempt to protect both myself and them. I did ask questions such as ‘how do you feel about asbestos now? How has asbestos impacted on you and your family?’ But there was more scope to delve deeper into personal cost of exposure to the deadly material.

Borden argues that journalists routinely use what she calls ‘empathetic listening’ as a technique to extract information from interviewees they might not want to share. These techniques can be ‘flattering attentiveness, reassuring gestures, and encouraging responses’ (Borden, 1993, 219). In my mind I employed empathetic listening which included reassuring gestures and encouraging responses to help the conversation along and to create a safe interviewing environment. However, I did not deliberately try to push interviewees to share more information and I had not perceived empathetic listening as something potentially negative. On the contrary, as already noted, I tried to protect the interviewees by not exposing them to probing questions that could be upsetting. The interviews affected me personally and I felt a great sadness for a period after the documentary was completed and broadcast. On reflection, I think my awareness of their terminal illness got in the way of the interview. I became preoccupied with what questions to ask and I did not fully acknowledge that all the interviewees had volunteered – and in some cases insistently – their stories to the asbestos project. I ignored the empowerment
aspect of telling a story. They wanted to tell their stories so that others would not have to experience what they had gone through.

Scenes
As mentioned above the interviews were all done without the interview location being a significant presence. This is unfortunate as the voices of the interviewees lack a sense of place. This is especially the case with the asbestos sufferers where there was no real scope to include sounds of them in their environment. For Ted Grant who had to spend so much time in hospital due to pain caused by his asbestos disease it might have been appropriate to allow the ambience be present and to record scenes where he talked to nurses and doctors. The same is true for the interview with Margaret Page in her home. The mesothelioma limited her ability to do much and she was forced to spend most of her days and nights in a recliner chair. Margaret mentions this in the interview but there are no sounds to paint pictures for the listeners. In hindsight I believe the impact of her story would have been even greater if listeners could have been able to ‘see’ her, through the use of sounds, sitting in her recliner. Instead that image is only hinted at when she appears in a short audio grab in the beginning of the documentary.

Margaret and Ted were some of the first dying people I had interviewed and on reflection I think that impacted on my approach. I usually record ambience and create scenes to assist story development. But in these two cases my focus was on their inner experiences – their memories, thoughts, feelings and emotions. I was self-conscious about the interviewing process, not wanting to make them uncomfortable by asking them to do anything outside the actual interview. I believe both Margaret and Ted would have been more than willing to oblige had I asked to record scenes with them. The hesitation, as a result of my desire to protect them, was all my own.
Sounds and music

As mentioned above, this story was word-based without much opportunity to follow interviewees in their daily lives as a way to create scenes and spaces. Interviews were done in homes and in hospitals with people who were unwell, and via studio link from other capital cities. So the soundscapes connected with the interviewees were limited. My focus was on what the interviewees said rather than where they said it. This is one of the downfalls of this documentary – the lack of ‘scenes’. The interviewees are not allowed to develop as characters through the sounds of their reality. We cannot ‘see’ them in their sound spaces. Instead their voices are disembodied like ‘the voice of God’; a voice without any physical context (see discussion about interviewing above).

With these voices devoid of a sound location it became important to create emotions, pace and spaces through the use of music and sounds. If the interviews are used to supply information and offer human stories for listeners to identify with, the sound effects are there to create atmosphere; to give credibility (e.g. validate location and events though archives); give context to the issues; and to make the documentary more interesting to listen to. Doing a story about the history of asbestos is challenging from a sound point of view. It was inadvisable to travel to Wittenoom to record sounds because of health risks due to asbestos. It was possible to use generic industrial sounds to illustrate mining and manufacturing but those sounds were limiting as enhancements to an emotional story.

Rummaging through archival material was a way for me to find sounds to make the documentary come alive. I was able to extract the sound from archival films from the 1950s and 60s and could cut them up to be interspersed between interview grabs to emphasise or pick up a point in an interview. The sounds were mainly sourced from archival material such as old films from Wittenoom, old radio programs and old newsreel type films selling
the wonders of asbestos. The style of these films added to the sense of the program covering the past. They gave context by showing what people’s perception of asbestos was at the time – the magic mineral. Listening to them with the current knowledge about the dangers of asbestos also allowed listeners to laugh at the irony of spruiking such a dangerous building material. Using a cheesy advertisement from early 1980s for James Hardie’s building material had the same impact.

Archival news reports were often used to convey a sense of period rather than for the information contained in the words. Another example of this was an archival AM report about lawyer Peter Gordon’s compensation win for the Wittenoom workers, which was followed by the interview I did with him where he talks about winning that specific case.

Being able to reinforce with sound effects or music what is being said in interviews produces a powerful impact in a documentary. Music was selected to suit the different themes in the program. During the ‘magic mineral’ boom section I used music from the Australian film *Newsfront* to create a sense of boom time. When the documentary moved into more personal territory and a growing awareness I selected eerie and threatening-sounding music. For the Wittenoom story I wanted to use the Wittenoom song *He Fades Away* by Alistair Hulett, sung by June Tabor. Often producers try to avoid using the lyrics of a song since it makes editing and fading the song harder. In the case of *He Fades Away* I wanted to use it for its lyrics. It is a very sad song telling the story of a woman whose husband is dying of an asbestos-related disease after working in the mine in Wittenoom. The song’s lyric reinforced the stories told by my interviewees and therefore strengthened the impact of those stories.
Archival material

Telling the history of asbestos in Australia required the use of archival material to give life to the story. The ABC has an extensive sound and video archive with thousands of broadcast stories about asbestos. I spent weeks trawling the archives. During this phase of the production it was difficult to know exactly which archival stories would be useful to include in my story. Instead I trawled rather broadly. Reading and recording the information about each item including a story introduction, name of ‘talents’ and broadcast date added to my body of knowledge about the issue. It also meant I would remember the item when I started editing so I could retrieve it later if I wanted to quote from it. Trawling the archives is about scoping the territory – to ensure I had not missed anything and to give me a ‘feel’ of what’s been done before my story.

There is a risk of becoming overwhelmed as producer during this digging-in-the-archives-phase. With so much material available it is tempting to want to use a lot of older stories. It is also easy to lose confidence about the level of research required. There is of course no finite point where all archival material has been processed. I think I probably have spent too much time digging in the archives in an attempt to reach the point where I feel I have watched and listened to enough archival stories. I am yet to experience that feeling. Instead I have to assure myself that I have done enough and that I know a sufficient amount about asbestos to tell the story. I guess the saturation point is different for everyone. Being able to reflect around and self-assess your own knowledge base is difficult and personally I have a tendency to overwork the research phase as a result of my desire to know everything about a topic married with a compulsive tendency to want to control and contain the information I have collected.

(Extract from production journal, 10 October, 2008)

I searched the archives online on the ABC intranet and then ordered 20 items from 1966 to 2008 to be copied to more accessible format on CD or DVD (TV and film items) for me to listen to and if suitable, include in my documentary. The oldest item was a 12-minute film
from 1966 from the closing of the Wittenoom mine. It was in film format which required it to be transferred into digital format to extract the audio.

**Copyrighted material**
The material I found in the ABC archives was mostly produced and copyrighted by the broadcaster. But even material available in the ABC archive may require copyright clearance. The film *A Town is Born* about the Wittenoom mine and township was produced by the Department of Education in Western Australia in 1951 so in that case copyright had expired.

I found three items in the Australian National Film and Sound Archive (AFSA) in Canberra. To access the items I had to show the AFSA I had copyright permission from the individual producers before they would release the films. When I contacted the production company Kingcroft in Sydney to ask if I could use a small section of an advertisement from 1978 for James Hardie building materials I was told that in the late 1990s James Hardie had placed a blanket restriction on the use of the old film. The owner of Kingcroft Productions said it was not in his interest to challenge his old client’s wishes to restrict the film for public access/viewing. He would, however, be happy to forward a request for release from me to James Hardie. I decided against that as I expected the outcome to be negative. Instead I sourced old advertisements and information films about asbestos (from YouTube) from the 1950s which therefore were out of copyright. The audio from these films was mixed into the documentary to create illustrations of how asbestos was seen as the ‘the magic mineral’ in the 1950s.

**A balanced account?**
*Deadly Dust* is a story about corporate greed and ongoing resistance toward corporate responsibility for an industrial disaster. A big part of the documentary deals with the roles
of asbestos companies such as CSR and James Hardie and their unwillingness to acknowledge the dangers and impact of asbestos on their workers. As the producer I did ask myself if I needed to seek interviews with James Hardie executives to ensure journalistically-balanced reporting. Coming from a news journalism background balanced reporting is second nature to me. In this case, after a great deal of consideration, I decided against seeking responses from CSR and James Hardie. The focus of the story was on the history of asbestos seen through the eyes of the people affected by it. I knew there was no one from the current James Hardie’s board of directors who would answer questions such as ‘Why didn’t you stop mining and producing asbestos? Why didn’t you protect the workers?’ Both Gideon Haigh and Matt Peacock’s books on James Hardie had previously given company executives the opportunity to explain the controversial history of asbestos and the building product company but to no avail. As a result I decided that it would be a waste of time chasing comments from the company.

An exposé of the history and impact of asbestos in Australia did not require a narrative where both sides got to tell their story. The many archival segments mixed with the interviews made the corporate attitudes of the two Australian asbestos companies CSR and James Hardie very clear.

**Rough editing**

I had a clear idea of the aim of the documentary *Deadly Dust* and the style I wanted to apply to achieve that aim. It would tell the history of asbestos; explain why there is so much asbestos around in Australia; give context to that abundance; draw a timeline across when the medical professionals, industry and general public knew about the dangers of exposure to the material; provide an overview of the lengthy legal battles for compensation by using some specific cases as illustration; and show the callousness of the
asbestos industry and its reluctance to accept responsibility for the health impact of asbestos. The narrative would be built around personal experiences of the interviewees – a mix of oral histories and more targeted interviews with a variety of ‘experts’. The personal stories would allow the audience to identify with the victims of asbestos while the experts supplied the context and commentary. I wanted the story to be told with as few scripted links as possible and without me being visible as the producer. My voice came in where background or explanations were needed or where the story changed direction. I also wanted to work with sounds and music that would reinforce what the interviewees were saying, thereby enhancing their stories. I looked for archival sounds that would illustrate for example the optimistic post-war era with its building boom while also giving listeners short breathing spaces in between all the spoken words. I also knew roughly how I wanted the story structure divided into different themes: from the post-war building boom and Wittenoom through to the growing awareness, the legal battles and finally the James Hardie saga (see Appendix 3). Interspersed with the ‘bigger picture’ would be the asbestos victims and their families as a reminder of the personal costs of the magic mineral. The overarching structure did not change much during the editing process. However, individual interview grabs were moved around or deleted.

One facet of the Wittenoom story that I wanted to develop concerned the many migrants who worked in the mine and mill. There were over 20 nationalities living in Wittenoom and many of my talents talked positively about the multicultural aspect of the town. Many migrants came to Australia through the post-war Commonwealth Migration Scheme and they had to commit to staying in Wittenoom for two years. I wanted to explore what to me was the terrible irony of people escaping a war torn Europe only to die from asbestos-related diseases 20 years later. I had many voices with strong and emotional stories talking about this, which I thought would make the Wittenoom story even more
compelling. However, developing a theme like migrants in Wittenoom would take up 5-7 minutes of the story and after feedback from my colleagues I recognised it as a side-track. I was lured by both quantity and quality of the content, but it would have distracted from, rather than enriched, the overall story.

**Narrator and scripting**
I would have preferred to develop the documentary so the different components followed on from each other without the need for scripted links. However, as the story of asbestos in Australia is a complex one requiring explanatory links, I had to accept the intrusion of my voice in recorded links. These links would include necessary data to give context and depth to the personal experiences presented in the interviews. They would also introduce the interviewees and give personal background to those voices so a listener could understand how the many stories fitted together into a bigger picture.

Once I had settled for the need for voice links the next question was to determine the role of the narrator. Would I be present as the producer, i.e. would my own story be relevant and therefore included? Would the narrator instead be the ‘voice of God’ coming in from above as a faceless voice linking the many segments? Or would the narrator take on any of the many other functions available, from that of the neutral voice describing interviewees’ ages and life circumstances to that of the narrator as one of the main character who talks about herself as ‘me’. (Hedemann, 2006, 127-149). After some consideration I decided to opt for the neutral voice which linked the segments and filled in the information gaps not presented in the interviews. This decision was based on the style of the documentary which, although containing the personal experiences of people exposed to asbestos, was similar to an information-rich current affairs production where
the personal interviews reinforced information presented in other forms, such as scripted links and archival material.

On reflection this decision made *Deadly Dust* sound more ‘newsy’ than necessary and took away some of the impact of the personal stories told in the interviews.

**Editing**

*I think it is true to say that regardless of how much time you have allocated to produce a story, the last week always becomes intense and hectic. The experience of time-running-out can be helpful in motivating you, when you are so sick-and-tired of the story, to mount the last bit of energy to get across the finishing line. It reminded me of how I felt during the last week of pregnancy where life becomes so uncomfortable with a huge belly that the hardship becomes a great motivation - you cannot wait for the child to come out even though you approach the physical pains of labour with trepidation. You have just ‘had enough’ and can’t wait to get it over with. This is the period where strong self discipline is needed to complete the project to a high standard. It is tempting to settle on what you have in front of you and not go through another version of editing and rescripting.*

(Extract from production journal, 10 October, 2008)

The complete creative process of assembling the radio documentary took ten weeks part-time¹¹ (in my case the work with researching and collecting interviews had started already in the beginning of 2007). It can be helpful to divide this rather overwhelming process in your mind into smaller, achievable phases, i.e. research, interviewing, scripting, editing, and mixing. This segmentation of the creative process can result in it becoming difficult to move from one phase to the next. In my case, I hesitated and procrastinated for a few days unable to start loading all the interviews into the audio editing software to begin the editing phase.

¹¹ Usually producers working fulltime for Hindsight would have 4-6 weeks assigned to make a program.
I think one of the reasons for my hesitation to move from the research – hunting and collecting – phase to the editing phase is that once you start editing it is mentally very hard to do more interviews. It feels like taking a step backwards. Your brain is in a new creative phase where collecting seems too unfocussed and instead you want to start painting with the voices and sounds you already have. I wonder if it is like mixing colours before you start painting for a painter. You want to prepare everything beforehand so you don’t have to stop and go back looking for something when you are desperate to move forward in creating your ‘masterpiece’. Once I became aware that I was stalling, I forced myself to start editing. Up until this point you can, as a producer, work more organically, collecting material that you think might be useful for the program. Once you start cutting the interviews into a narrative, the structure and your storytelling skills become paramount.

The first step of the editing process is the time-consuming work of listening to and logging all the interviews and other recordings. ‘Logging of tapes’ (the term ‘tapes’ is still in use even though no one in the industry uses tapes any more) is an important tool for the producer to get an idea of what sort of material there is and how it could be used. Logging can be done by listening to the interview while taking down notes of time code and what is being said. For this project I used a method recommended by ABC producer Kirsti Melville. She logs directly in the editing software (and also takes notes where necessary) so while listening to the interviews she cuts them up and renames each segments to assist in finding a particular part quickly. When working with hours of material for a long-format production, losing and forgetting material is a real risk. I found this method useful as it meant I got all the interviews labelled and roughly cut while at the same time I had a list of potential audio grabs and quotes to include. All the audio files were uploaded into the non-linear editing software (ABC Radio National in Perth uses the software Wavelab) on the computer. Then I copied all the files and placed them on empty tracks in the multi-track editor. Working with
copied files ensured I had access to the original intact audio files and could therefore easily find them again on the screen if I changed my mind or made a mistake. I cut up the long interviews into shorter chunks, or building blocks, and renamed the blocks as individual files.

Before I started editing on the computer I visualised the story on paper with some main themes identified in a possible structure. Brainstorming with boxes, circles and arrows was a useful technique for developing the structure of the story, the themes, the sound and the relationship between the interviewees, i.e. their placement in the narrative. For me this framework on paper gave me a visual map – a chance to ‘see’ the story as a whole.

The cutting and shaping of the documentary began with lining up interview grabs together based on themes. Without thinking of the order of the interview grabs I started developing the Wittenoom segment/theme which I anticipated would make up a third of the story. It meant I began about seven minutes into the story and left out the beginning for the time being. This method of working on separate segments of the story can be risky if they don’t join together in the final production. But I found it useful to start somewhere and my confidence with editing grew as I could hear the story developing ‘in front of my ears’.

The process of building the narrative from beginning to end also involved selecting each grab based on what was said in the previous one. At this point my focus as editor was on matching the words from the different grabs to create a lucid and flowing narrative. The risk when working with this approach of building ‘words on words’ is that the narrative takes on its own life like a slithering snake where it is difficult to control the beast to fit it into the overall structure I set out in the paper representation of the story.
Editing the audio interviews is always done on a micro and macro level simultaneously. I find it useful to imagine that I use my two ears independently of each other to monitor and work on these two levels:

a) on a micro level I listen to the individual audio grab and

b) at a macro level I listen to how the audio grab fits into the overall storyline.

It is like two intertwined strands of information that need to be processed simultaneously where what happens to one will impact on the other. As I listened to the individual rough cuts I cleaned away major stumbles, hesitations and other audio distractions. I also shortened grabs and cut them to condense talking to clarify meaning.

A one-hour documentary is obviously long format radio but even so the individual segments need to be interesting and relatively short to maintain listener’s attention. However, I cannot cut it too tightly before I know exactly where the edited audio grab fits into the narrative because I do not want to risk losing information that might be useful if the grab is placed in a different position in the documentary. As a result the first edit can be twice the duration of the program. When the narrative structure feels right I can then start shortening or deleting the grabs.

I started editing the interview grabs first before I added the archival sounds and actualities. The interviewees’ words are there to convey information to the listener – as comments, opinions and sometimes questions. But words also convey emotions and my editing decisions are based not only on what is being said but how the person is saying it and if those words fit in with what others are saying. It is like doing an enormous jigsaw puzzle where the individual bits fit together in a certain way but where a whole section can be extracted and moved to another place in the program. If one piece is moved or deleted it impacts on all the bits adjoining it.
Different story topics require different approaches to editing. For narratives that are built around events or where the locations are important I assemble the content into small building blocks set around a location or an event. These smaller blocks are then gathered into bigger self-contained blocks to be adjusted in relation to each other. The smaller blocks still have to flow from one to the next, but the success of the story is based on how well the bigger self-contained blocks interact with each other to tell the story.

*Deadly Dust* was a word-based story with few opportunities for on-location audio enhancements, i.e. the technique used to take the listeners to the location to meet the ‘talent’. Instead the focus was on the personal experiences of some people affected by asbestos-related diseases. The personal stories of several people were melded into a single narrative where their different experiences blended to tell the one story of suffering, albeit from different perspectives. The techniques of using multiple interviews to ‘script’ a shared experience can be more difficult than basing the story around locations. As producer you are building a storyline based on the inner worlds occupied by the interviewees: their memories, emotions and experiences. The challenge is to externalise those lived experiences, to fix them in space, by crafting an aural experience to be shared with the listeners. This approach requires the producer to have a strong sense of narrative and a trust in gut instincts as you don’t know what the story is going to sound like until you have listened to all the words edited together. Even if all the words were transcribed verbatim on paper before being edited, you don’t really know if the narrative will flow until you hear it. Radio production is not just about the words making sense – it is about how it sounds as well. The way an interviewee says something can be as important as what is said.

The aim of editing is to develop a narrative that flows, but it is also to make the artifice of program-making invisible. As a producer I want the listener to forget that he or she is listening to a radio program; instead the aim is for the listener to be swept away by
the content and focus on the experience and impact of the story. Receiving feedback from people saying they cried when they heard the asbestos story is reaffirming for just that reason (see also notes from a formal ABC Radio National feedback session below).

**Revision**
The documentary structure and script went through multiple versions before going to air. It is crucial to have fresh ears listen to the story since the producer quickly loses the ability to assess its impact after having listened to it many times during editing. This is an important aspect of production not to be underestimated. Because radio is a medium that woos the heart and brain of the listener, the initial reaction of the listener hearing the story for the first time is very important. After hearing the story over and over again during editing (it is not uncommon that the producer goes back over a sentence ten times to get an in-breath right or to cut out a hesitation) the producer can no longer experience the impact of a certain word or sound or be moved to tears by music. The ‘dual listening’ method mentioned above also interferes with the experience of listening as the producer will continue to monitor details in the story rather than allowing him/herself to sit back and be moved along a compelling story line.

The *Deadly Dust* documentary went through eight rewrites before the ninth and final version (only finalised during actual mixing, see comments about that below) after feedback from five persons (my supervisor listened and commented twice on the story). The process of asking colleagues and peers (academic colleagues in journalism and history and producers at ABC Radio National) to listen and provide feedback meant ongoing amendments where I updated scripted links and tweaked structure. As the producer I chose to ignore some comments, where I felt it was a matter of taste, but all the feedback was useful in helping me develop a compelling, correct, interesting and cohesive documentary with strong emotional impact on the listener. I found it useful to continuously
remind myself about what I wanted with the story so as not to get confused or overwhelmed by the constructive comments from the test listeners, remembering German producer Peter Leonhard Braun’s words: if 12 producers are asked to do the same story ‘you will get 12 different documentaries’ (Braun, 2009). This was especially true the closer to the final version I came. Every story can be developed in so many different ways, with different angles. Therefore the five test listeners each had their own idea of what would make a good story (see Appendix 5 for the final script).

Two major issues came up as a result of the feedback process: a) as mentioned above I dropped the migrant story of Wittenoom and b) it became obvious that I needed to include an interview with Robert Vojakovic, the President of the lobby and support group the Asbestos Diseases Society. I had left him out on purpose because the two interviews I had done with him in 2007 and 2008 had not achieved what I wanted. Instead I ensured I mentioned him in one of my voice links, and in an interview the lawyer Peter Gordon also talked about his significance in supporting asbestos victims. Two of the ‘test listeners’ felt that an interview with him should be included in the story so listeners could hear his voice. As a result I went back through an interview with Mr Vojakovic and found two quotes that I could include in the documentary. Without that feedback I would have settled for a version without his voice which would clearly have been inferior in quality compared to what went to air.

Mixing
Producing a radio documentary is a moving feast and not until it goes to air is it completely finished. I had three days set aside for mixing along with David Le May, a very experienced sound engineer at ABC Radio National in Perth. Because of some late amendments to the scripts, I asked David if I could use the morning of the first mixing day to rewrite my voice
links. In the meantime he started working on the audio grabs. All the material was stored on an external hard drive which allowed him to take just the drive into his studio to start tweaking audio quality and levels. When I came into the studio to start mixing after lunch, he had already worked through most of the audio and adjusted and enhanced the sound.

I came in equipped with the script, a stack of music CDs, a bottle of water, and pen and paper. The producer always prints two copies of the script which is a kind of mud map of the story (see section from the *Deadly Dust* script below). It should be laid out clearly enough with in and out cues to each individual grab – be it an interview or some sounds effects – so the sound engineer can follow the instructions without the producer being present (sometimes the producer needs to leave the mixing studio to do other work tasks). Here is a section of the *Deadly Dust* script (complete mixing script is available in Appendix 5):

**Mix with music + SFX Old film: Asbestos wonder material – fade down under**

IN Flowing hot mineral gases [mixed with music background]....

OUT ...largely unseen, played important role in our standard of living.

**VIEW GIDEON HAIGH**

IN Asbestos had many many wonderful properties...

OUT ...strong public reputation, but unfortunately the reality was otherwise.

**SFX Old film: asbestos can’t be destroyed - fade down under**

IN As you might expect the Greeks had a name for it, they called it....

OUT ....rare qualities for which is stands alone.

**VIEW TED GRANT**

IN Asbestos used to hang in the trees like cob webs....

OUT ... nothing ever said, no one ever knew.
Firstly, I recorded all the voice links. There were many short voice links and I found it hard to make them flow like the interviews. Sitting in a small studio being wired up to a control desk trying to sound engaged and relaxed is challenging. As a result my voice is too soft and lacks the energy my voice usually carries. The script sounds artificially ‘read’ rather than spoken. I really struggled with getting the voice links right and this was commented on during the Hindsight feedback session (see below).

Having all the voice links recorded means the sound engineer can start from the beginning with the first item and keep adding bits as he sews the story together. As David Le May and I worked our way through the program, segments were changed, shortened or added to. The documentary ended up 20 seconds short of final duration of 53’53”. This could be solved by allowing the music to play a little longer and to insert more ‘air’ between some of the interview grabs.

It is invaluable to work with another person during the mixing. It is another pair of ears listening to the story; asking questions about unclear scripts; or just giving reassuring words of encouragement. David was able to comment on edit points that could be made smoother or suggest a rerecord of a voice link that sounded too harsh. We spent almost an hour looking for background sounds that could disguise a rather metallic sound in the Rolf Harris interview which had resulted from the audio being transferred from video tapes to an audio format.

With such high quality production values everything in the story needs to be perfect: every sound wave is tweaked to get ultimate quality, every word in the scripted links is refined and checked. It took us two and a half days to complete the mix of the documentary. I was satisfied with the structure, script and the sound before I entered the
mixing studio; I was elated when I left almost three days later. David Le May had technically improved the sound of the story and thereby the overall experience of listening.

**ABC Hindsight website**
The work with finalising the documentary does not end with the mixing. The producer writes an introduction to be read by the presenter of the program. A studio introduction sets up the documentary for the listeners by giving enough background and context to the story; it aims to sell the story by encouraging the listeners to stay tuned; and it can also give information about the producer and the interviewees. Publicity and promotional material is also written by the producer prior to broadcast.

ABC Radio National has a strong web presence with all stories available online for download. This means the producer of a radio documentary is responsible for writing and producing the material posted on the program’s webpage. This includes a web introduction, which is similar to the presenter’s introduction but written to be read online rather than by a person in a radio studio. The online introductory text includes a list of all contributors in the program, relevant web links and publications. *Deadly Dust* also comprised a photo gallery and a video of a film from 1951 called *A Town is Born*. It was time-consuming to process all this material for the web, especially developing the photo gallery (i.e. select the order of the photos; write captions for them and any additional text for the web). All the photos were renamed to comply with ABC’s web protocols. It may not look like it is a complex process when you see the result online; however, I found it took me a full day’s work to assemble everything.

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12 Photo gallery and other web resources for *Deadly Dust* are available at [http://www.abc.net.au/rn/hindsight/stories/2008/2418680.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rn/hindsight/stories/2008/2418680.htm)
Feedback
ABC Radio National’s Hindsight program runs formal feedback sessions for staff and freelance producers. This is a great opportunity to reflection on the production and to get peer feedback on what you have done.

These are my notes from the feedback meeting after the broadcast of *Deadly Dust* which was held with six producers from around Australia. The process loosely followed evaluation criteria examining: overall impact of story; did it sustain duration; selection of talents; use of sounds; mix; and scripts/voice links. It is a written account of the session with comments listed in order as they were given during the conversation via telephone hook-up.

*Feedback session for ABC Radio National’s Hindsight program 12 December 2008 (via phone hook-up)*

**Producer 1:**
Incredibly moving program, structurally worked well as one program (during the planning process it was discussed whether the documentary should be divided into two programs: 1) telling the story of Wittenoom and CSR and 2) James Hardie and the legal battles)

**Producer 2:**
I loved the program! The second part (about James Hardie) didn’t move as much as the first part. Archives provided wonderful sounds. It gave a social history of the role of asbestos in Australia. Found it illuminating and marvellous. Had a very strong connection as listener with the Wittenoom story. Glad it was contained in one program rather than two.

**Producer 3:**
More familiar with the James Hardie saga. Great to hear the story ‘behind’ it and how enthusiastic people were about asbestos at that time. The documentary gave me the whole story; the post war history and how carelessly they used asbestos. The documentary gave context. Abundance of archival material made story come alive. Each personal story itself was so rich.
Producer 4:
Urgency around the story. It’s ongoing. It’s not a finished topic with the asbestos fences around us. Rear Vision [another Radio National program] could have done a history of asbestos but it wouldn’t have been as emotional and not as strong impact.

Producer 1:
The documentary dealt with the corporate section really well. Full of facts but not boring. Liked the music – not at all ‘bleeding heart’ music as you would get in an Australian Story (even though the topic was similar with first-person stories).

Beautiful mix – fluid with soft breathing sounds and subtle use of music
Really good scripts. Short and sharp. Flows in the narrative.

Voice links – did you receive any voice coaching? Let it sound more like ‘you’. Too soft – you have so much more energy in your normal speech. Could have more passion, an outrage, in your voice.

Here I told the group how I as a freelancer felt unsure of how to present the voice link in a Radio National style. I know I tend to sound too ‘newsy’ – a leftover from many years of reading news bulletins on radio. So I was keen to try another, softer, voice.

The documentary sustained its 54-minute duration without any problems. It did not feel long at all.

Producer 5:
The picture gallery really enhanced the program. I viewed the photos first before listening. I wasn’t really very interested in asbestos, feels like we have heard it all before, but I listened so I could do this feedback session. However, when I heard the Wittenoom story I got sucked in. It really sustained the duration. Wittenoom instantly grabbed me. But I felt a bit bored with James Hardie. Felt I knew the story. It is also too current – not what I expect as listener to Hindsight.
**Producer 6:**
I didn’t know the history of asbestos. The documentary was a good example of where the impact of history together with personal experiences can create a great program! Wonderful sounds moving us through the story; sounds are interwoven into history. I cried when listening!

It contextualised the complex issue of asbestos so well. It had all the components: archive, personal stories, facts and historical post war context.

**Conclusion**
Deconstructing the process of producing *Deadly Dust* by applying the theory extracted in chapter 2 mixed with the notes I made in my production journal makes the many steps involved in producing a long-format radio documentary explicit. In this chapter I have outlined these steps and the radio production theory embedded in this practice. It has highlighted both the professional and personal experiences of the producer from the excitement of having the story commissioned by the national broadcaster, to the challenging interviews with asbestos victims with terminal illness as a result of their exposure, and finally to the demands of the editing process where the many components are compiled into a narrative of the history of asbestos in Australia. My entries in my production diary have been crucial aspects of this reflection by jogging my memory and adding vignettes to the ‘story of how the story was made.’
CONCLUSION

Radio is an integral part of our everyday lives. For many people it is a constant companion in the background (even in the current turbulent media environment) while they go about their daily lives: having breakfast, cooking dinner, travelling in the car on the way to and from work. Good radio sounds like a natural part of life, but it is a matter of fact that the more ‘natural’ the sound, the higher the production values: quality radio is about the successful concealment of all artifice. Being a medium in the background has meant radio has been taken for granted, undervalued as a creative medium, and easily overlooked as a site for analysis and academic inquiry.

This is true not just for radio but more generally for journalism. Lamble (2004) and other journalism academics have repeatedly called for more documentation of journalism practice and methods in order to situate journalism within academe. Part of the problem lies in the fact that journalists in industry seldom have time to reflect on their own practice while academic researchers rarely have the opportunity to spend long periods of time gaining firsthand experience of the industry. This thesis has begun building a bridge between journalistic practice and academe.

The study was motivated by the researcher’s own desire to better understand the processes of radio documentary production. As an industry practitioner she had produced many radio stories without much opportunity to reflect on the process. As a practitioner academic she had argued to have her long-format radio productions assessed and valued as legitimate research outputs. This study provided the opportunity for reflection on practice in such a way as to expose the research processes involved. The insights gained will add new dimensions to the teaching of radio documentary that will be as relevant to industry as they will be useful in the classroom. As a relatively new discipline, theory about radio is still being articulated and this study provides a model and a vocabulary for other
practitioner academics wanting to reflect on their practice and also capture their journalism practice in a way that makes sense to people external to the study field.

This project sought to answer two research questions:

1. How can radio documentary practice be defined in terms of research, and which research paradigms are suitable for this purpose?

2. How does the concept of ‘journalism as research’ assist in analysing and understanding the processes and protocols involved in producing long form radio documentaries?

In seeking answers to those questions the researcher designed a study which would give answers in two different formats: through a radio documentary production combined with a practitioner’s reflections around that production, and through a dissertation which developed new radio documentary theory by applying standard qualitative research methodologies to collection and analysis of data. The study identifies the research process embedded in practice while also demonstrating that journalism is itself a research methodology. This was done though a three-step process:

- First the researcher produced a one-hour radio documentary *Deadly Dust* about the history of asbestos in Australia. The documentary was commissioned and broadcast on ABC, Radio National’s Hindsight program in 2008. During the production a detailed reflective journal was kept to ensure the production process was captured.

- As a second step fieldwork interviews were conducted with a group of international award-winning radio documentary producers asking them to reflect
and discuss their journalistic practice. This constituted new theory in the field of radio studies.

- These practitioner insights – the new radio theory - were then brought back to the production of *Deadly Dust* where they informed the analysis and deeper reflection on practice of documentary production.

The study applied practice-related research methodology as the framework to extract theory from practice. Candy divides practice-related research into two parts: practice-led and practice-based research (2006, 1). In this case the fieldwork interviews with eminent radio documentary producers were examples of practice-led research – which can be described as research on practice. Here the researcher was able to derive theory from their practice and thereby supplement the scant literature on the radio documentary. The insights gained through the professionals’ reflections allow a more informed and detailed knowledge to be constructed. The radio documentary itself was an example of Candy’s practice-based research – which can be described as research through practice. The creative production contributed to knowledge in and of itself through the meticulous research process required to tell the history of asbestos. In addition, the producer’s self-reflective account of the production process illustrates the theory embedded in practice.

To fully understand the complex processes of journalism practice it was necessary to borrow analytical frameworks from other disciplines. Using a variety of approaches it was possible to capture the multidisciplinary nature of journalism. During the course of the project it became clear that in-depth journalism practice shares many traits with social science methods such structured and semi-structured interviewing, data collection through both fieldwork and archival research, and the analysis and processing of the data captured. This helped the researcher to situate journalistic methods within the plethora of methods.
that constitute academic research. The study also showed the usefulness of ‘mixing and matching’ a range of methodologies drawn from a variety of disciplines. For example through autoethnography the researcher was able to capture and share her own experience, while the techniques of reflective practice encouraged a deeper thinking about a familiar process of producing a radio documentary. The areas of narrative studies, and especially narrative medicine were particularly important for sections of this study dealing with trauma listening, while oral history methods were useful in refining techniques needed for collecting stories of suffering.

**Journalism as research**

Journalism academics around the world face the challenge of defining their work in terms of academic research outcomes. They are under pressure to account for the research value of journalistic activity. This study presents a model for how journalism practitioners-academics can combine the production of in-depth high-quality journalism with theoretical analysis that confirms its standing as legitimate academic research. This research project focusing on the radio documentary has demonstrated not only that a radio documentary is a piece of research in itself but also that it can be used as a research method in other disciplines. This has already been noted by Makagon and Neumann who state that:

> [A]udio documentary also increases opportunities for researchers to reach academic and popular audiences and to collaborate with participants in a common pursuit and representation of experience and knowledge (Makagon and Neumann, 2009, x).

In summing up, this thesis shows not only that journalism is a research methodology but that it can be a useful methodology for other disciplines as well.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Fieldwork interview protocol
Appendix 2: Radio documentary proposal (August 2007)
Appendix 3: Updated radio documentary proposal (August 2008 - after Executive Producer’s feedback)
Appendix 4: The story so far – story development during production (October 2008)
Appendix 5: Final *Deadly Dust* mixing script – (November 2008)
Appendix 6: Transcript of *Deadly Dust* documentary from the Hindsight ABC Radio National website
Appendix 1: Interview protocol

PhD interviews with documentary makers (May 2009 in Dublin)

Professional background
Tell me about yourself: age, nationality, workplace, work history, how long have you worked as a radio producer?
How many radio documentaries or features have you produced? Where broadcast?

Process
How long does it take you to make a story (e.g. one-hour or 30 minute finished documentary)?
Describe the process of producing a documentary. Where do you start?
Identify the different production steps/areas.
Is one of the steps/areas more important that the others? If so, which?
(How much time do you spend on those individual steps/areas?)
How do you manage the creative aspect of documentary making?
What style of documentary or feature do you like yourself as listener?
How do you listen critically?

Documentaries with impact
What are the challenges for you when making a documentary or feature?
What makes one documentary better than another?
What components are needed to create impact on listener?
Is there a model to apply?
How do different topics require different treatments?

Interviewing
How long is a long-format interview? How do you prepare for the long-format interview?
How do you get people to open up and be willing to share very personal experiences?
What makes a good interviewer?
Describe what you think happens between interviewer and interviewee during a successful interview? Is it a methodology that can be replicated?

What are your methods for dealing with interviewing about strong emotional and/or traumatic experiences? Describe the impact of listening to traumatic personal stories on you professionally vs. personally?

How do you debrief and manage emotionally challenging interviews?

What are your methods for doing on-location interviews where you follow a person for extended time?

Personal involvement

How involved do you get with the story and the people in the story?

How do you feel about that engagement?

What is your role as the producer?

What are your responsibilities towards the talents of the story? Does this extend to beyond the production process? Does this raise any ethical issues for you as a journalist or producer?

Thank you! I have no more questions, is there anything you would like to add or comment on?
Appendix 2: Radio documentary proposal (August 2007)

“Deadly blue dust” – 53-minute documentary for Hindsight, ABC Radio National

Producer: Mia Lindgren

Background

Before outlining the proposed documentary I would like to give a brief contextual background to asbestos in Australia, particularly focusing on Western Australia.

Although the Wittenoom blue asbestos mine in the North West closed in 1966, its legacy is apparent today in the ongoing human death toll in death from asbestos diseases. As a result of its asbestos history, Western Australia is facing an asbestos disease epidemic which isn’t due to peak until 2020.

Asbestos has been used extensively in Australia; in industry as insulation and in homes as the traditional Hardie fence or as ‘fibro’ sheets. Its versatility and durability made it a very practical building material; it is the only mineral that can be spun and woven like cotton or wool into useful, but dangerous, fibres and fabrics.

With over 3000 asbestos-containing products still surrounding us in our daily environment, there has been, and will continue to be, environmental and occupational exposure to asbestos in the wider community. Therefore it is important to make the public aware of the prevalence of asbestos and of the need to follow safe handling/disposal practices when removing these products.

Most people are aware of the dangers of asbestos through the many court cases against James Hardie Industries for compensation. The law firm Slater & Gordon became involved in asbestos litigation in the 1985 Victorian action of Pilmer V. Mcpherson Ltd. Mr Pilmer suffered from malignant mesothelioma as a consequence of his asbestos exposure at work. His case was the first successful claim for negligence in relation to an asbestos disease and he received damages of $270,000. James Hardie made headlines earlier in 2007 by finally approving the long-term compensation funding arrangements for asbestos-related personal-injury claims, paying $184.3 million into the Asbestos Injuries Compensation Fund (AICF).

Since 1975 researchers at the University of Western Australia in Perth have followed the health of people who worked, lived in, or regularly visited the township of Wittenoom prior to 1993. Over 12,000 people have been identified as belonging to this group. Over the years, this research has provided a wealth of information on the link between exposure to blue asbestos and its impact on health; it has played an important part in getting asbestos banned in Australia, and in obtaining compensation for those with asbestos-related diseases and their families. It has also established the Vitamin A program in Perth which is being trialled as a preventative treatment for people exposed to asbestos.
The impact of asbestos exposure is not limited to physical illness. In a recent case, a former Wittenoom worker was awarded compensation for chronic psychological stress and anxiety resulting from his fear of future illness as a result of exposure to asbestos after witnessing the deaths of close former workers and friends from asbestos related illnesses.

Hindsight program

The story of asbestos in Australia is extensive and it will be a challenge to fit it into 53 minutes of radio. What makes asbestos particularly relevant today is the impact it still has on us and its potential danger for the future. Even though the Wittenoom mine closed in 1966, its legacy remains through battles for compensation and a continuing steady stream of new cases of asbestos-related illnesses. What is perhaps more worrying today is the projected number of people who will contract asbestos-related illnesses as a result of home renovations and even ‘non-specific’ exposure to asbestos. With that in mind, I intend the Hindsight program to cover, in a chronological way, the story of asbestos. This would include the industrial history of asbestos, the raised awareness of its dangers, the legal fights over compensation, the medical battle to control asbestos-related diseases, and finally the domestic situation today – all told in first-person voices.

Possible radio program structure:

- Opening: Asbestos removal company in space suits stripping a house of asbestos sheets. Some personal grabs from people affected by asbestos (how in contact with asbestos?)
- Overview of asbestos – historically (cheap building material post-war), culturally (the Aussie fibro shack) and geographically (lots in WA and Qld, parts of Sydney, nothing in Tas or Canberra).
- Where it all began: Wittenoom mine in Pilbara (Australian Blue Asbestos); eyewitness accounts from people who lived there; the beauty of the place, blue tailings in play-ground, isolation, heat, 12,000 people identified as having lived in Wittenoom more than 3 months; ‘the magical mineral – usefulness and export to the world.
- The industrial aftermath: People started to get sick; legal cases; compensation
- Epidemic - predication 50,000 will have died from exposure to asbestos by year 2020. The illnesses (asbestosis, mesothelioma, plural plaque), 20-30 years latency, symptoms, Vitamin A program in WA attempt to prevent deadly mesothelioma
- Medical research – new Perth-based National Centre for Research into Asbestos-related Diseases at University of Western Australia (The Commonwealth Government has allocated $6.2 million in funding 11 research projects into asbestos over three years)
- The next wave. Renovators at risk – danger of asbestos today; builders, DIY renovators, people still living in Wittenoom (phone interview?) What can we do about it today? Strict regulatory framework in Australia. In our homes: 3,000 products listed made of all or some asbestos. Almost impossible for anyone not to have come into contact with some form of asbestos during their lifetime. Houses in WA built between 1940s and 1980s contain asbestos:
Ending
Asbestos sheets being dug back into the ground. The radioactive poison that rained over Europe from Chernobyl at least has a half-life, albeit a long one. No safe way to destroy the fibre except dispose of it back to where it came from - asbestos ‘graves’ around Perth.

Potential talents and organisations:

- Clinical Professor Bill Musk, University of WA/Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Dr Musk is WA’s foremost expert on the epidemiology of pneumoconiosis (chronic lung disease) and cancer; particularly related to Wittenoom blue asbestos.
- Robert Vojakovic, President of Asbestos Diseases Society (main office in Perth)
- Associate Professor Lenore Layman, Murdoch University, historian who has written extensively about asbestos
- John Gordon lawyer from Slater and Gordon
- Rolf Harris, father died of asbestosis after working as turbine driver at East Perth Power Station. Incidentally Harris worked in Wittenoom for one month in 1948 (interview already done in Windsor, UK)
- Former WA Health Department official Dr James McNulty, who warned the Wittenoom manager of lung damage in workers in 1959
- Individuals affected by asbestos: former Wittenoom workers, their wives and children; builders, people on the Vitamin A program
- Worksafe and possible local government representatives
Sounds:

As with many Hindsight programs, the bulk of the story will be told through the voices and words of the people. However I expect to enhance the narratives by using sounds from building sites, mining, atmos from Vitamin A clinic in Perth, actuality from asbestos removal, ‘Pilbara sounds’ (birds at sunrise etc). I also assume I will want to dramatise/have someone read court documents, correspondence between Health Dept and the mine management and personal letters.

20 August 2007

Mia Lindgren
Appendix 3: Updated radio documentary proposal - (August 2008 - after Executive Producer’s feedback).

Note: internal working document to assist production, for producer’s use only

Updated short synopsis - History of Asbestos for ABC, Hindsight,

Mia Lindgren, 21 August 2008

The rise of the Magic Mineral (7 min)

Context to why so much asbestos and such widespread legacy. Result of industrial revolution – lagging on stream engines for insulation. Need to hold the heat on ever-increasing number of engines.


Use James Hardie (JH) ads, eyewitness builders (Haigh book).

Talents: Lenore Layman (historian), Gideon Haigh (journalist), dramatisation of texts

Wittenoom (15 min)

CSR wanted to get on the asbestos bandwagon. ‘Silly sidetrack’ with terrible consequences. 20,000 people in Wittenoom 1937 – 1966. 7000 workers of which 25% die from asbestos-related diseases (ARD). Commonwealth migrant program. Develop the north cut across commercial profit imperatives. Never made any money – overall losses (only 2 years profit). JH refused to get involved. Instead, CSR (ABA, later Midalco) exported other parts of Australia and the rest of the world (mainly UK and US).

Responsibilities: the Mines Dept did take its regulatory duties seriously; they did not lack diligence; they were not uncaring; but they were engineers and technicians who accepted that dust was historically part of mining; they did not listen to health dept; they thought they knew mining best, unions, ABA (Midalco) NB Concept of duty of care was not legislative reality in Wittenoom’s time. Players were not ill-intentioned; they were rather ignorant and over-confident and focused on other matters (eg mine safety).

Talents: Lenore Layman (historian), Sylvia Lovenfosse (victim) and her oral history interviews, Margaret Page (victim, lost 6 siblings to asbestos)
Doubts and warnings – the Magic Mineral starts crumbling (10 min)
Early medical warnings about Wittenoom. Brief history of medical knowledge. They should have known about asbestosis from 1931 - no excuse for ignorance
Story breaks in the media with Matt Peacock’s documentary 1977 which brings everything to the public.

Talents: Jim McNulty (oral history interview, former WA Commissioner for Health), Matt Peacock (journalist), Lenore Layman (historian), pathology of Nelly Kershaw (TB) and asbestosis? GP Dr Greg Deleuil, Dr Eric Saints warnings (dramatise text)

The court cases (against Wittenoom and JH) (15 min)
Late 70s, 80s and 90s court cases. First attempt – first victory.

Rise of Asbestos Disease Society (ADS) and Slater and Gordon. Finding the lost ‘Wittenoom Papers’.

Talents: Dianne Kilminster (died from mesothelioma from JH fence 2007), more affected? – occupational/builder mechanic?, Peter or John Gordon (Slater & Gordon lawyer/barrister), Gideon Haigh (journalist), Matt Peacock (journalist), Robert Vojakovic (president ADS), readings from court transcripts.
[NOT SURE I NEED JOURNALIST HERE - CAN PROBABLY SUMMARISE AROUND FIRSTHAND ACCOUNTS OF VICTIM/CAMPAIGNER/LAWYERS?]

Fighting James Hardie (7 min)

Talents: Gideon Haigh (journalist), Bernie Banton (file), Greg Combet, former ACTU.

The Third Wave (5 - 7 min)
Although asbestos is no longer mixed into cement products, wasn’t until 31 Dec 2003 that Australia banned all import of asbestos.

We are still surrounded by asbestos with not much done about it, gets dug back into the ground as it gets removed. Existence now, risk to third wave of victims, e.g. home handymen and builders disturbing the dust.

Because of the long latency time between exposure and diagnosis, people continue to die from asbestos. Estimated peak in 2020 when in total 50,000 Australian will have been affected by the impact of what was the magic mineral.

Talents: Lenore Layman (historian), Sylvia Lovenfosse (victim), current residents? handyman? builder?
Rolf Harris about Wittenoom and death of father from asbestosis.
Appendix 4: The story so far – story development during production (6 October 2008)

The asbestos story so - Interviews and content completed 6 Oct 08

Victims/persons affected

Rolf Harris went to Wittenoom in 1948 as 18-year old to make some money and because his mother suggested it would be a good place to paint. Harris found the work in the mine very hard. As a result he was moved over ground to a job assembling and inspecting pipes. Harris describes the working conditions and how bad he was at his job as miner. He also talks about how his dad Crom died from asbestosis after being exposed to asbestos working as a turbine driver at East Perth Power Station. Rolf Harris warns people against removing asbestos themselves and about the dangers of asbestos exposure.

Sylvia Lovenfosse was in Wittenoom 1958 – 1960 with her husband Phil and two small children. Phil worked as a mines surveyor and Sylvia worked in the stores and helped in the hospital. Phil was diagnosed with mesothelioma and died 10 years ago. His death prompted Sylvia to return to university to do a degree in creative writing and history. Sylvia wanted to tell the story of the women and children who lived in Wittenoom and the terrible impact asbestos exposure has had on so many of her friends. As part of her Honours project, she interviewed over 50 former residents of Wittenoom and compiled their stories into a thesis called the Children of Wittenoom. Sylvia talks about her own experience and the effect of asbestos on her life. But she also refers to the stories of the many people she interviewed as research for her project. In 2009 she is starting her Masters of Creative Writing at Murdoch University. She is going to continue to process, analyse and describe the legacy of the blue asbestos mine in remote North Western Australia.

Angela Napolitano her husband Liborio worked in Wittenoom in mine and mill 1959 – 61. He was a newly arrived migrant who wanted to make enough money to marry and buy a house. He made 22 pounds/day there compared to 20 pounds/fortnight in Perth. In 70s, as he became aware of dangers of asbestos and his friends started to get sick and die, he got anxious of his possible death as a result of Wittenoom. He enjoyed dancing and socialising at the Italian Club but started to avoid it since friends often would talk about Wittenoom and people who were ill. He developed a phobia towards dust and smoke and avoided places where people smoked. In 80s he resigned from a plastering job because of bad health and fear of dust. He became depressed as a result of his fear of ARD and death. In 1994, he was diagnosed with mesothelioma. In 1994 he took CSR (Midalco/ABA) to court for both mesothelioma and psychological suffering, i.e. his severe depression. He was offered compensation during mediation but took case to court. His case was the first dealing with psychological impact of asbestos exposure and he won it. He died two weeks later.
Margaret Page was in Wittenoom as child. She describes the beauty of the place but also how basic living conditions were. No-one told them how dangerous the dust was. Of six children in the Whitaker family, only two have so-far escaped ARD. She was diagnosed with mesothelioma in 2007 at 69 years of age – 50 years after exposure in Wittenoom. She talks about how her family has reacted to her diagnosis. She described the medical impact on her; she sleeps in a chair so she doesn’t drown at night. She’s looking forward to compo so she can buy a new washing machine and a bed. Victim of asbestos; terrible impact on her family; acceptance of illness; description of Wittenoom.

Ted Grant was in Wittenoom as child; describes his life there with lots of freedom and positive experiences. He was later exposed to asbestos when loading bags of asbestos at Point Samson and also when working for the Fire Brigade in Melbourne. He describes the terrible impact of the illness on him and the medical procedures he has done in attempts to live longer. He was diagnosed with mesothelioma the same day that his father died from the same disease.

Dianne Kilminster died from mesothelioma in 2007. During the 70s she helped her husband erect a James Hardie asbestos fence around their farm in Lake Grace. She held the sheets while her husband drilled the holes. She describes how the illness affects her and her sadness for not being able to see her grandchildren grow up.

Experts

Lenore Layman  historian
Peter Gordon  asbestos lawyer from Slater & Gordon
Greg Combet  former ACTU secretary and NSW negotiator with James Hardie after the Jackson Inquiry in 2004.
Gideon Haigh  author who has written a comprehensive history of James Hardie Industries
Robert Vojakovic  President of Asbestos Disease Society.

Interviews to do:

Matt Peacock  ABC journalist who broke the asbestos story in late 70s. Produced series Broadband for Science show on ABC Radio National in 1977-78.
List of archival material from ABC radio, TV and film archives – for potential inclusion

‘A Town is Born’ – promotional 1950s film about Wittenoom and its importance to the region and the migrants who lived and worked there. Film speaks very positively of CSR as company. 9:40

Dust to Dust –1980 Director Sabrina Wynn

Four Corners, Special Inquiry– Killer Dust 22.11.74. Reporter Ken Burslem dur: 16:36 – Interview Dr McCullagh

Four Corners – Blue Death 4.11.88 AWAITING ARCHIVE

Four Corners – Dirty Secrets 1989

Asbestos – Work as health hazard. Producer Matt Peacock – Broadband 1977 – 78, Program 1 and 4 most useful for this doco, approx 20 mins each

Wittenoom Mine Closure - News 1 Jan 1966 AWAITING ARCHIVE

Asbestos disease in Wittenoom 1978 AWAITING ARCHIVE

US conceals evidence 1979 AWAITING ARCHIVE

Joan Joosten mesothelioma 9.10.79

Diseases society 5.11.79

Residents out of Wittenoom 6.10.81

Wittenoom victims settlement 6.10.89

Wittenoom 27.8.03

Jackson Inquiry 16.3.04

Statutory scheme 14.7.04

James Hardie shareholders 15.9.04

WA court ruling damages awarded 14.10.04

Hellicar defends Hardie 25.11.04
Sounds

YouTube clips:

- Vinyl Asbestos Floors 1:02
- James Hardie (Australian ad) 1:00
- 1950s Asbestos Houses 0:38
- Diseases from Inhaling Asbestos 1:01
- Milling asbestos ore 1959 1:56
- Uses of Asbestos: Examples from the 50s and 60s 4:44
- Introduction to Asbestos from 1959 2:31

Bruce Horgan, asbestos inspector looking at asbestos fence.

Lung function tests from Vitamin A program

Some ideas for music

Dirt Music

Blue sky mine/Midnight Oil

Blood in the gutter/Johnson

Asbestos/ Lyell Sayer 2007

Asbestos Fibre / Jayco Brothers 2003

Laurie Anderson

1950s

Potential other materials

Old asbestos ads [texts]

List of 3000 products containing asbestos

Court transcripts: Simpson, Haynes & Barrow

Autopsy report from first asbestosis diagnosis in UK
Appendix 5: Final Deadly Dust mixing script – (12 November 2008)

Deadly Dust, RN Hindsight - final script with music

Presenter’s introduction:

Today’s Hindsight tells the story of asbestos – the magic mineral with a deadly legacy that continues to impact on people’s lives today. While mining and manufacturing of asbestos has ceased in Australia, the human toll from asbestos-related diseases continues to mount. The use of asbestos was banned in Australia from 2004 but the material is still all around us; at home and at work.

Asbestos plays an important part in Australian history – it was the material that built up the country after the Second World War. And the fibro shack is an Australian icon. Until 1960’s, one quarter of all new housing was clad with asbestos cement. Between 1945 and 1954, 70,000 asbestos cement houses were built in NSW alone (that’s over 50 % of all the new houses). Many houses built before 1987 contain asbestos.

Long after the asbestos mine closed in Wittenoom, WA and the warning bells had started to ring, asbestos mining continued in Australia. The Baryulgil mine closed in 1979 and Woodsreef, also in NSW, didn’t close until 1983.

Asbestos exposure can lead to asbestosis, lung cancer and the deadly cancer mesothelioma. There has been an increase of mesothelioma in last 20 years - it’s now as common as bone, liver and bladder cancer. Australia has the highest rates of mesothelioma in the world.

Medical researchers predict the total cases of mesothelioma to be about 18,000 by 2020. That is the expected peak of the human cost of our asbestos legacy in Australia; a total of 50,000 Australians will then have either died or contracted asbestos-related diseases as a result of their asbestos exposure at home or at work.

Almost everyone who lives in the industrial world has asbestos fibres in their lungs. And most people in Australia have stories to tell of their experience with asbestos. This is ‘Deadly Dust’, produced by Mia Lindgren.

Duration: 53’53”

In cue: [starts with music, then mixed to old film sound] first word:
Out cue: ..so lethal. [then ends with XX secs of music]
Back announce: Last we heard Ted Grant and Rolf Harris. Producer Mia Lindgren with technical production David Le May.
Margaret Page died from mesothelioma on 30th October (2008).

Links and more information on our website [www.abc.net.au/rn/hindsigth]
Mix with music + SFX Old film: Asbestos wonder material – fade down under

IN  Flowing hot mineral gases [mixed with music background]....
OUT ...largely unseen, played important role in our standard of living.

IVIEW  GIDEON HAIGH

IN  Asbestos had many many wonderful properties...
OUT  ...strong public reputation, but unfortunately the reality was otherwise.

SFX Old film: asbestos can’t be destroyed - fade down under

IN  As you might expect the Greeks had a name for it, they called it....
OUT  .....rare qualities for which is stands alone.

IVIEW  TED GRANT

IN  Asbestos used to hang in the trees like cob webs....
OUT  ... nothing ever said, no one ever knew.

IVIEW  MARGARET PAGE

IN  I sleep sitting in my chair because I cannot lay down....
OUT  .....do not have to do my washing by hand anymore.

LINK MIA

Margaret Page, one of the many asbestos victims in Australia.

In Australia asbestos is more pervasive than anywhere else in the world. Not only was it mined and manufactured here, but it became the material of choice in the post-war building boom.... And it persists to this day at home and at work for many Australians.

At first, it was known as the magic mineral... Historian Lenore Layman in Perth has written extensively about asbestos.

MUSIC under end of my link – FROM NEWSFRONT – FADE UNDER Lenore

IVIEW  LENORE LAYMAN

IN  It was very much the 20th century’s modern mineral, multiple uses...
OUT  .....new world of steam, electricity and blazing furnaces.
Well asbestos is an incredibly ubiquitous mineral....

...to produce a substance called fibre cement.

Gideon Haigh has written a history of the asbestos company James Hardie.

Now fibre cement became hugely popular in Australia....building products were generally scarce.

It’s the building of the new world after WW2...

...particularly used, not all round but particularly in NSW, WA and Northern Territory.

We’re a hot country and it didn’t retain heat, we’re a bit country and it’s easy to transport...

...durable, the key product for JH for which it became known in Fibrolite.

And so asbestos cement took its place next to....

...wood, brick, stucco and stone. [fade down and under]

Uniquely suited to Australia....

.....highest per capita consumption of asbestos than any country in the world.
James Hardie said in its post-war ad...

.....come true, build a Fibrolite home.

SFX JAMES HARDIE 1980S AD – music fades under my link

Everyday, wherever you are, whatever you do, James Hardie is there with you....

LINK MIA

From the early part of the century, the James Hardie company was the biggest manufacturer of asbestos products in Australia. They imported asbestos fibres from Canada and South Africa for their production plants that were established in most capital cities. This made the prospect of local asbestos mining very tempting so before we talk about the asbestos manufacturing industry, we need to make a detour - a deadly detour - to a remote town in the Pilbara region, in the Northern Western Australia, where blue asbestos was dug up from the ground.

SFX OLD FILM – A TOWN IS BORN – fade up and fade down to continue under link

]Music] then old speaker voice “1200 million years ago.......

LINK MIA CONTINUES

The Australian sugar company CSR had branched into building products and wanted to get on the asbestos bandwagon. So CSR bought a small blue asbestos mine from the future-mining-magnate Lang Hancock and the Wittenoom mine was born. And it would take decades before the deadly consequences of this venture would be known. CSR, or Australian Blue Asbestos, as the company was called in Wittenoom, recruited many migrants as part of the Government’s post-war migration scheme. But there were also local workers - one of them was Rolf Harris.

IVIEW ROLF HARRIS

1948 I was at uni in Claremont and we had this prospect of this long holiday....

.....it was a shock to say the very least.

IVIEW LENORE LAYMAN

The way they attracted people up there was to sign them up for 6 month contract...

... so unhappy, so dissatisfied that they left.
The temperature was like a 121 in the shade and there was no shade...

......really difficult.

SFX MINING FROM OLD FILM – fade up and out

I found the work was impossible impossible for me.....

.....try to shovel bent double.

All they knew was that these mines were very low ...

...mines were quite safe.

Angela Napolitano’s husband Liborio, worked in Wittenoom for two years from 1959. He started in the mill packing the fibres into 100-pound bags then he worked in the mine. He was a migrant from Italy. He died from the fatal cancer mesothelioma in 1994.

There was nothing at all ever mentioned about the actual product....

.....no idea what so ever that the dust was so dangerous that it was deadly.

In the shadow of Hamersly a town is born...

When we got there the town was very small....

Margaret Page was ten when she arrived in Wittenoom with her family in 1948.
The school that we attended when we went to Wittenoom... didn’t know what we were in for when we got there.

My name is Ted Grant I went to Wittenoom in 1956 arrived there on my 12th birthday... great place to be as a kid.

See a lot of people got the skims from the mine so they wouldn’t get the red dust... damage of course.

Sylvia Lovenfosse went to Wittenoom with her husband Phil and two small children in 1958. Phil, who was a surveyor, would later die from mesothelioma.

It was everywhere, the roads.... both the school yards.

The school yards had 4 inches of asbestos tailings so it was soft.... it was just accepted

They effectively moved the mine to the town when they brought in all the tailings.... didn’t die from asbestosis but with meso you don’t have to have enough you only have to have very little.

Sylvia Lovenfosse went to Wittenoom with her husband Phil and two small children in 1958. Phil, who was a surveyor, would later die from mesothelioma.

SFX A TOWN IS BORN – MIGRANTS fade under my link

Wittenoom provides a fine example of rapid development....

......3/5 are migrants [fade down under iview].
IVIEW SYLVIA LOVENFOSSE
IN One of the things I’ve found really difficult was...
OUT ....yellow peril will come down and get us and the rest of it.

IVIEW LENORE LAYMAN
IN It’s very unlikely that CSR had made the decision to go into Wittenoom....
OUT ...populating the north, the empty north..

SFX - 1966 news report from Wittenoom
IN music Wittenoom very existence has relied on Australian Blue Asbestos...
OUT ....the mine must close. [fade under]

IVIEW LENORE LAYMAN
IN CSR’s intervention into the asbestos industry is really bizarre...
OUT ....one of the worst in Australia’s history.

LINK MIA
Because of the terrible working conditions Wittenoom had a transient population. During the mine’s 20 year operation, 7000 workers and another 5000 residents were exposed to asbestos. And for many, it would take decades before the deadly consequences of that expose became know. Margaret Page and Ted Grant were both children in Wittenoom:

MUSIC –He fades away – loop instrumental under my link??

IVIEW MARGARET PAGE – MIX THE FOLLOWING THREE GRABS WITH MUSIC – “HE FADES AWAY.”
IN I have the mesothelioma.....I was...
OUT ....before it can open up and wreck your life.

MUSIC – MIX THE FOLLOWING GRABS WITH MUSIC – “HE FADES AWAY.”

IN
OUT

IVIEW TED GRANT
IN I knew when dad was diagnosed and eventually died....
OUT ...for dad it was 20 years for me it was 50 years.
I have lost quite a few of my family with it...
....only six of us left and only two of my sisters that haven’t been diagnosed with it yet.

MUSIC – “HE FADES AWAY” continues

the microscopic invisible fibres that enter the lungs......
....15 years, sometimes 20 or 30 years.

MUSIC – under my link

Today we know that asbestos exposure can cause asbestosis and mesothelioma. But the challenge with asbestos has been the long lag time between exposure and illness... For mesothelioma that can be up to 50 years.

And the compensation cases that were to come once people started to get sick, hinged on when and how much the companies knew about the health impact of the magic mineral?

In Western Australia, Dr Eric Saint predicted as early as 1948 that Wittenoom would create [quote] ‘the richest and most lethal crop of cases of asbestosis in the world’s literature’ [end quote]. But the dangers of asbestos were actually known even earlier. Historian Lenore Layman....

The really significant turning point was 1931 the Merewether report...
....went around the English-speaking world.
There were further explorations in the 40 and 50s in UK and US and SA..... in South Africa..

Author Gideon Haigh.

In the second part of the sixties..... links between asbestos exposure and asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma.

Asbestos fibres can also cause the lungs to form scar tissue... and it gets harder and harder to breath.

Did anyone ever talk about the asbestos [Mia’s question]... they knew in 56 about the dangers of asbestos and were still mining it.

Mesothelioma has killed large numbers of multiple member of Wittenoom families ...

....filled everyone with even more horror.

In NSW we hear about the Hardie...

....looking over your shoulder wondering when it’s going to pounce on you.

music....this is AM...

....asbestos at Wittenoom [fade down and mix with].
The mine closed in 1966 and it was … 

will be next you know.

(phone report) earlier this year asbestos experts linked … 

….didn’t know about the dangers until 1964 [fade down and mix with]

music….hello and welcome to Broadband I’m Matt Peacock….

That was Matt Peacock’s groundbreaking series on ABC radio from 1977. As the public awareness about the impact of asbestos exposure grew and the asbestos-related diseases started to make themselves know, the lengthy fight for compensation started. The first cases were brought by the Wittenoom miners and their families, and soon those of the James Hardie workers would follow.

In 1977 Cornelius Maas was the first to take CSR to court but he died before the trial started. The second case was Joan Joosten in 1979. She had contracted mesothelioma after working in an office across the road from the mill in Wittenoom. Mrs Joosten lost the case and died just hours before her appeal was about to be heard. Here she is interviewed on ABC radio:

Mrs Joosten why did you bring your case in front of the court...

…. hoping verdict would be given before I die.

I got a call out of the blue one day from Robert Vojakovic...

and could we help?

Lawyer Peter Gordon who’s worked with asbestos cases for Slater and Gordon for 25 years.
So I very quickly went over there with a few colleagues...

distance themselves from what had gone on at Wittenoom

music...this is PM I’m Paul...

.... Caty Cronin reports....[fade down]

In the case of CSR CSR fought the need to pay compensation....

.... promptly by lawyers empowered by that company.

music...James Hardie, James Hardie

....music ..... in the country....fade down and mix

The more we consume the more as 20th century modern ...

.... worm at the centre of this beautiful apple.

While Rolf Harris was exposed to asbestos as a miner in Wittenoom, his father Crom came in contact with the material when working as an engine driver at the East Perth Power Station.

My dad worked at East Perth Power Station all his life....

....created lung cancer for him which killed him.

under law companies were able to manufacture....

.....retailed and distributed these products.

Greg Combet, former .....

....Secretary for Australian Council of Trade Unions
VIEW GREG COMBET continues
IN They did not in my opinion....
OUT ....however the law wasn’t very clear on that point.

IVIEW LENORE LAYMAN
IN From the beginning of the 1970s.... ...
OUT .... all its mouldings, all its products.

SFX– BREATHING OR BREATHING TEST EFFECTS BETWEEN AND UNDER GRABS HERE

IVIEW GREG COMBET
IN In Sydney in the manufacturing plant for example....... 
OUT ....the unions were deceived like the rest of the community.

IVIEW GIDEON HAIGH
IN I have always thought of the Hardies story as kind of....... 
OUT ....health requirements were less than in Australia.

IVIEW PETER GORDON
IN In what we know of James Hardies reflects the attitudes....... 
OUT ....a necessary predicate.

IVIEW GIDEON HAIGH
IN The funny thing about Hardie is that if you had...
OUT ....it had been, turned up to haunt it again.

SFX JAMES HARDIE AD
IN [music fade up] the James Hardie group of companies.... 
OUT ....music ..... there with you [song ends]

LINK MIA
With much fanfare, in 2001 James Hardie set up a compensation fund called the Medical Research and Compensation Foundation, in an attempt to resolve the ongoing compensation issue. This was a trust with assets of 293 million dollars.

At the same time, the now international company James Hardie moved its new parent company to the Netherlands while its head-quarter was located in the US.
The company denied that the restructuring and relocating was to avoid its asbestos liabilities.... Instead it gave ‘greater international tax efficiencies’ as the reason.

But it quickly becomes clear the new compensation fund wouldn’t have enough money. Lawyer Peter Gordon.

IVIEW PETER GORDON
IN What the James Hardie board of directors were seeking to achieve........
OUT ....close to 10 times that amount.

IVIEW GIDEON HAIGH
IN Because a lot of the decisions that had been made at Hardies ...
OUT ....how quickly they became public enemies.

SFX NEWS REPORT
IN [reporter’s voice] The motivation became close to home the following year [fade down] ...
OUT ....for victims and their families. [quick fade out]

LINK MIA
Bernie Banton became the public face of asbestos victims and took on the fight with James Hardie until he died from mesothelioma in 2007. Here he talks with Andrew Denton on ABC TV:

IVIEW BERNIE BANTON
IN [Andrew Denton question] you worked at Hardies for 6 years...
OUT ....all you could see were our eyes.

IVIEW GREG COMBET
IN Bernie Banton together with a couple of is brothers........
OUT ....in Sydney in 2004.

LINK MIA
By then, protests from trade unions and asbestos victim groups had led the New South Wales’ government to order a Special Commission of Inquiry into James Hardie’s compensation fund.
IVIEW GREG COMBET

IN I remember the evidence given in the Jackson Inquiry.......  
OUT ....fight very hard for some justice.

IVIEW BERNIE BANTON

IN well they always wanted to talk about numbers...  
OUT ....because they killed thousands more Australians.

IVIEW GREG COMBET

IN Bernie was able to cut through the......  
OUT ....Bernie’s role in helping to build that pressure was immense.

SFX PM REPORT

IN [PM’s theme] Good evening and welcome to PM ...after years of denying..  
OUT ....special foundation it established in 2001. [fade under]

LINK MIA

The Jackson Inquiry found that James Hardie had misled the community by setting up the under-funded compensation foundation. And that additional money was needed to cover future asbestos compensation claims.

In the aftermath of the Jackson Inquiry, Bernie Banton and Greg Combet were part of a negotiating team for a new settlement with James Hardie.

IVIEW GREG COMBET

IN In 2004 I was the lead negotiator with ......  
OUT ....so many cases are prosecuted in the NSW system.

LINK MIA

In December 2004, James Hardie agreed to a new compensation deal.... But it would take another three years of waiting before a final agreement could be signed.
In 2007 James Hardie’s shareholders voted in favour of a 4-and-a-half billion dollar compensation package.

But the real future cost of asbestos is hard to predict. Robert Vojakovic is the President of the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia.

MUSIC SEA 5 – MIX UNDER

IVIEW ANGELA NAPOLITANO

IN It was a time bomb, he often used to say......

OUT ....and it’s going to win.

IVIEW SYLVIA LOVENFOSSE

IN One girl said I never think about it.....

OUT ....much aware.

IVIEW TED GRANT

IN My brother’s been so angry.....

OUT ....was at the bottom of the bed.

MUSIC ‘THE SEA 5’ FADE DOWN AND UNDER

LINK MIA:

Because of the long latency period, the impact of asbestos is not expected to peak until 2020. .... and by then, it’s estimated that a total of 50,000 Australians will have died or have become sick with asbestos-related diseases. The miners were the first wave of victims, then the people who worked with the material.... now fears are for home renovators and others exposed to asbestos without even knowing about it.

IVIEW TED GRANT

IN Asbestos is a time bomb.....

OUT ....sometime or other.

IVIEW ROLF HARRIS

IN It changes your whole attitude......

OUT ....unaware that it could be so lethal.

ENDS MUSIC ‘THE SEA 5’
Appendix 6: Deadly Dust transcript (from http://www.abc.net.au/rn/hindsight/stories/2008/2418680.htm)

Jennifer Bowe: Hello, I'm Jennifer Bowe, and Welcome to Hindsight. This is Asbestos Awareness Week and in today's Hindsight we look at the social history of asbestos and its legacy for people's lives today.

Asbestos exposure can lead to asbestosis, lung cancer and the deadly cancer mesothelioma. Asbestos played an important part in the post-war building boom, and the fibro shack still has an iconic status in Australia. Despite health warnings, asbestos use in Australia kept increasing until the 1970s and asbestos mining continued in NSW until 1983.

The material was banned in Australia at the end of 2003, but asbestos, the once magic mineral, is still all around us. This is ‘Deadly Dust’, produced by Mia Lindgren.

Archive material: Theory says that through these fissures flowed hot mineral-bearing waters and gases, and as the Earth spun off more millions of years they crystallised and in so doing formed the most unusual and useful mineral fibre known to man. Largely unseen, seldom recognised, it has played a tremendously important role in the improvement of our standard of living.

Gideon Haigh: Asbestos has many, many wonderful properties and was immensely useful and immensely popular, and identified in the public mind, ironically enough, with safety and with durability. It actually for a long time had a very strong public reputation, but unfortunately the reality was otherwise.

Archive material: As you might expect, the Greeks had a name for it, they called it the unquenchable, indestructible stone. They called it asbestos. Unaffected by fire, unchanged by weather, untouched by time's dark captains of rust, rot and decay, asbestos possesses rare qualities for which it stands alone.

Ted Grant: The asbestos used to hang in the trees like cobwebs. That used to blow down from the mill, the dust, and it was like cobwebs in the trees, you could see it hang in the trees. We'd go there and knock it down. The next morning, the next day, a couple of days later, it would all be back up there again. We threw it at one another, sucked it, played in it, rolled in it. It couldn't do you any harm. Well, there was nothing ever said. Nobody knew.

Margaret Page: I sleep sitting in my chair because I cannot lay down, I start choking because I get a lot of phlegm build-up in my throat and it just chokes me, I wake up choking and I get scared. But I am looking forward to the day I can afford to buy myself one of those electric tilt-a-beds so I can go back to my bedroom.

Mia Lindgren: So that's something that you'll be able to do once the compensation money comes through?

Margaret Page: Once my compensation money comes through I shall be able to do that. I shall be able to get myself a washing machine so I do not have to do my washing by hand anymore.
Mia Lindgren: Margaret Page, one of the many affected by asbestos.

In Australia, asbestos is more pervasive than anywhere else in the world. Not only was it mined and manufactured here, it became the material of choice in the post-war building boom. In NSW alone, 70,000 asbestos cement houses were built in the ten years after the war, and until the 1960s a quarter of all new houses in Australia were clad with asbestos cement. At first it was seen as a magic mineral. Historian Lenore Layman in Perth has written extensively about asbestos.

Lenore Layman: It was very much the 20th century's modern mineral. It was found to have a whole multiple array of uses, and so as the 20th century progressed it was used more and more. Johns-Manville, which was the major asbestos company really in the world but certainly in North America, they had this little statement that 'it fits the needs of this new world of steam, electricity and blazing furnaces'.

Gideon Haigh: Asbestos is an incredibly ubiquitous mineral. It's a fibrous silicate, it's hugely strong, and in particular it forms a very strong bond with Portland cement and water and sand to produce a substance called fibre cement.

Mia Lindgren: Gideon Haigh has written a history of the asbestos company James Hardie.

Gideon Haigh: Fibre cement became hugely popular in Australia, especially after WWII when the housing demand was acute and building products were generally scarce.

Lenore Layman: It's the building of the new world after WWII that you get the huge number of what we in Australia used to call fibro homes, an enormous number of them. Governments were keen to rehouse people into better housing and this was the big state housing programs. And this asbestos cement was particularly used. Not all around Australia but particularly in NSW, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Archive material: [vinyl asbestos floor ad] Vinyl asbestos, with the beauty and texture of a handcrafted swirl-chip design. A floor that belongs in the active rooms...

Gideon Haigh: We're a hot country and it didn’t retain heat. We're a big country and it was light and easy to transport. And while it’s probably best known for its fire resistance, it’s incredibly durable. The key product of James Hardie's line, the one for which it became best known, was something called Fibrolite.

Archive material: And so asbestos cement took its place with other sidewall materials; wood, brick, stucco and stone.

Gideon Haigh: And it was uniquely suited to Australia and it’s one of the reasons why we have probably the highest per capita consumption of asbestos of any country in the world.

Lenore Layman: James Hardie said in its post-war ads: 'Make your dreams of a modern beautiful home of your own come true; build a Fibrolite home.'

Archive material: [James Hardie ad] Every day, wherever you are, whatever you do, James Hardie is there with you. James Hardie in a thousand ways, at work and play, James Hardie is there with you...
Mia Lindgren: From the early part of the century, the James Hardie company was the biggest manufacturer of asbestos products in Australia. They imported asbestos fibres from Canada and South Africa for their production plants that were established in most capital cities. This made the prospect of local asbestos mining very tempting, so before we talk about the asbestos manufacturing industry, we need to make a detour, a deadly detour, to a remote town in the Pilbara region in northern Western Australia, where blue asbestos was dug up from the ground.

Archive material: Twelve hundred million years ago nature brought forth a mountain range now known as the Hammersleys, 700 air miles north of Perth, capital of Western Australia. Early pastoralists in search of grasslands and prospectors in search of gold may have known of the existence of the rich seams of blue asbestos...

Mia Lindgren: The Australian sugar company CSR had branched into building products and wanted to get on the asbestos bandwagon. So CSR bought a small blue asbestos mine from the future mining magnate Lang Hancock and the Wittenoom mine was born. CSR, or Australian Blue Asbestos as the company was called in Wittenoom, recruited many migrants as part of the government’s post-war migration scheme. But there were also local workers. One of them was Rolf Harris.

Rolf Harris: In 1948 I was at uni in Claremont and we had this prospect of this great long vacation coming up, which stunned and amazed me, but my mother, who ever, ever had the eye for the great advantage of this, that and the other, she said, 'I've been reading an article about Wittenoom Gorge, and the scenery there from the photographs is just amazing, and you should get up there and do some paintings of Wittenoom Gorge.' So away I went. I approached the company and got taken on board to go up to Wittenoom Gorge, and off I went with all these canvas boards and things, paint and stuff, and turned up there. It was a shock, to say the very least.

Lenore Layman: And the way they attracted people up there was to sign them up on six-month contracts from Perth. So they paid their airfare up there, they worked there for six months and then they paid their airfare back. If they wanted to get out before the six months they had to refund the airfare up. So that did hold some people there for six months, but 44% weren’t held; they slipped out, or they paid it back. Anyway, the conditions were so bad, they were so unhappy, so dissatisfied that they left.

Rolf Harris: The temperature was like 121 in the shade and no shade anyway and fierce, and the workers all lived in a sort of a tent city, as it were, so you had your own little tent and bed, and if you worked in the night shift you slept during the day. Trying to sleep in the day in that temperature, even though you’re inside a tent, was just really difficult.

Archive material: The darkness of underground is penetrated by faintly flickering lights as all trains from different parts of the mine rattle over lightweight rails and head for the...
feet, so I was five-foot-eight, five-foot-ten or something and I was bent double, trying to work bent double and trying to shovel.

**Angela Napolitano:** All they knew was that these mines were very low, they were only a metre high, they didn’t have to go deep down like they do for gold mines, so they thought the mines were quite safe.

**Mia Lindgren:** Angela Napolitano's husband Liborio, who was a migrant in Italy, worked in Wittenoom for two years from 1959. He started in the mill packing the fibres into bags, then he moved to the mine. He died from the fatal cancer mesothelioma in 1994.

**Angela Napolitano:** There was nothing at all ever mentioned about the actual product. It was dusty but all the men didn’t worry about the dust because the money was good and they had no idea whatsoever that the dust was dangerous, it was deadly.

**Archive material:** In 1948 in the shadow of the Hamersley Range a town was born, a town which in four years has grown to be the largest inland town in the north of Western Australia - Wittenoom.

**Margaret Page:** When we got there the town was very small, there wasn’t any shops there. They were still building our house. There was only the one street in town and that was on the main drag to the mine, and our house was number 11, Second Avenue.

**Mia Lindgren:** Margaret Page was ten when she arrived in Wittenoom with her family in 1948.

**Margaret Page:** The school that we attended when we went to Wittenoom Gorge was one room, and the staff accommodation out at the staff quarters out at the mine. We went out to school on the back of the ute, sometimes the same bus the miners used, which was full of asbestos dust.

**Ted Grant:** My name is Ted Grant. I went to Wittenoom in 1956, arrived there on my 12th birthday and stayed there for nine months. My dad went up there as a paymaster and he transferred from paymaster to become a miner but he was too tall to be a miner and injured his back and ended up being the guard or the train driver bringing the ore out of the mine. It was beautiful, the most beautiful scenery I've ever seen. I was fascinated with it, and it was a great place to be as a kid.

**Sylvia Lovenfosse:** See, a lot of the people got the skims from the mine and spread them all over their yard so the children wouldn’t have this red dust. The fact that they had fibres hanging of their hairs when they came inside didn't seem to worry the parents. That's not going to do any harm, those fibres hanging in their hair, but it's what they'd breathed in in the meantime that had done the damage of course.

**Mia Lindgren:** Sylvia Lovenfosse went to Wittenoom with her husband Phil and two small children in 1958. Phil, who was a surveyor, would later die from mesothelioma.

**Sylvia Lovenfosse:** It was everywhere; it was in the roads, it was in the bitumen in the roads, the tennis courts, the airport, the picture theatre, and most of all it was on both the school yards.
Ted Grant: The school yard had four inches of asbestos tailings on it so it was soft. There was pea gravel everywhere, so the sides of the road was lined with asbestos, around the house there was asbestos, under the clothes line there was asbestos, everywhere you went there was asbestos so you wouldn’t hurt yourself on the pea gravel, and it was just accepted.

Sylvia Lovenfosse: They effectively moved the mine to the town when they bought all those tailings in, they just bought it in by the truckload and put it everywhere. You just asked, 'Can I have a truckload of that for my back yard?' 'Yes.' Then they tried to say that the people wanted it, so...if that hadn't moved off the lease it would have been like most things, it would have been the men that got affected, the workers, but not...you know, they've had school teachers, they've had the postman, they've had lots of people like that that lived and worked in the town and never went near the mine die of meso. Those people didn't die of asbestosis because they didn't get enough of it but with meso you don’t have to have enough, you only have to have a very little.

Archive material: Wittenoom provides a fine example of rapid development by progressive private enterprise. It is a monument to the success of Australia’s post-war migration program. Migrants from many parts of the world come to Wittenoom, and of the total population of nearly 900, three-fifths are migrants, and 20 different nationalities are employed...

Lenore Layman: It's very unlikely that CSR would have made the decision to go into Wittenoom without the huge encouragement particularly of the West Australian state government but also of the federal government as well. The West Australian state government was the more important of the two and provided the greater encouragement. There was this idea that if this could just be opened up then this would be the next mineral boom. In fact they talked about an asbestos Eldorado. This was about state developmentalism, and in particular it was about developing and populating the north, the empty north.

Angela Napolitano: They did it for the money because these young boys wanted to forge a future for themselves and their families that they were planning to have.

Sylvia Lovenfosse: One of the things that I found really difficult was the fact that they came out here expecting a better life and some of them, their husbands were dead in less than 20 years, you know? It was just terrible. It was...and the government actually allowed it to happen. In fact they encouraged it, for people to go to the north-west. It was part of the Menzies thing; populate or perish, or the 'yellow peril' will come down and get us, and all the rest of it.

Archive material: Wittenoom's very existence has depended on the Australian blue asbestos company which took over the original workings 20 years ago. Since then, fibre has been produced worth around $31 million, two-thirds of it for export. But the company’s losses are said to have now reached $2.5 million, and as a result the mine must close.

Lenore Layman: CSR’s intervention into the asbestos industry is really bizarre. They had no mining experience. And this blue asbestos, crocidolite, was the least used, most difficult to manufacture or to mill and most difficult to market. So it was a real over-confidence in their technical ability, their skill, and they were proved so inadequate. It’s really hard to
make sense of it. It was a massive corporate misjudgment, we know that. It was the most dreadful industrial health disaster, one of the worst in Australia’s history.

**Archive material:** It’s the microscopic invisible fibres that enter the lungs which can do the most damage. Inhaling these asbestos fibres can cause cancer; lung cancer and a fatal cancer of the lining of the lungs or abdomen called mesothelioma.

**Mia Lindgren:** Today we know that asbestos exposure can cause asbestosis and mesothelioma. But the challenge with asbestos disease has been the long lag-time between exposure and illness. For mesothelioma that can be up to 50 years. And the compensation cases that were to come once people started to get sick hinged on when and how much the companies knew about the health impact on the workers.

In Western Australia, Dr Eric Saint predicted as early as 1948 that Wittenoom would create 'the richest and most lethal crop of cases of asbestosis in the world's literature'. But the dangers of asbestos were actually known even earlier. Historian Lenore Layman.

**Lenore Layman:** The really significant turning point is 1931, the Merewether Report, the report of the British factory inspectorate that examined a workplace and reported that there was asbestos related disease, asbestosis, in the workplace, and that there needed to be dust control. That report went around the English-speaking world.

**Gideon Haigh:** There were further explorations in the 1940s and 1950s in the US and in the UK and in South Africa.

**Mia Lindgren:** Author Gideon Haigh.

**Gideon Haigh:** In the second half of the ’60s then you had a South African doctor, a man called Chris Wagner, who found that there was a very high incidence of a rare and really, really terrible cancer called mesothelioma among miners of crocidolite, a particular kind of asbestos, what’s known as blue asbestos, among workers in South Africa who were largely black. Again, the industry did its best to prevent the dissemination of Wagner’s work, but it actually got here anyway and the first case of mesothelioma in Australia, a worker from the Wittenoom mine was diagnosed in the early 1960s. So by the early 1960s you’ve got strong links between asbestos exposure and asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma.

**Archive material:** Asbestos fibres can also cause the lungs to form scar tissue. This scar tissue isn’t elastic like the lungs are. Too much asbestos, too much scar tissue and it gets harder and harder to breathe.

**Mia Lindgren:** Did anyone ever talk about the asbestos that was everywhere in Wittenoom?

**Ted Grant:** No, it was just accepted. There was nothing ever said. Nobody knew. And then I find out in later years that in 1898 they knew about it, in 1926 they had a symposium, and in 1936 they also had another one. So they knew in 1956 the dangers of asbestos, and they were still mining it.

**Mia Lindgren:** Because of the terrible working conditions Wittenoom had a transient population. During the mine’s 20-year operation, 7,000 workers and another 5,000
residents were exposed to asbestos. And for many, it would take decades before the deadly consequences of that exposure became known. Margaret Page and Ted Grant were both children in Wittenoom.

**Margaret Page:** Yes, I have the mesothelioma. I was...I think I was 16 when I left Wittenoom Gorge, I am 70 this year and I was just diagnosed in November last year. So that is how long it can sit dormant before it can open up and wreck your life.

**Ted Grant:** I knew when Dad was diagnosed and eventually died...I saw Dad and I knew my turn will come because I was at Wittenoom and I worked at it, in Samson, in the sheds and on the ships. Dad died on the 22nd April, 1977, and I was diagnosed, told, on the 22nd April that I had it. For Dad it was 20 years, for me it was 50 years.

**Margaret Page:** I have lost quite a few of my family with it, which is sad. I lost a brother just before Christmas, and I've got another one up in hospital in Geraldton at the moment, he has pneumonia but he also has asbestosis. I've got a brother over in South Australia who has just come out of hospital from heart condition, he also has asbestosis. I've got a young brother living in Mandurah, he has got asbestosis. So out of the six of us children, from a family of 11 that went up that way, there's only six of us left and there's only two of my sisters that have not been diagnosed with it as yet.

**Lenore Layman:** Mesothelioma has killed large numbers of multiple members of Wittenoom families, and it was the deaths of the children that began to be identified in the 1970s that caused so much fear and horror and realisation of just how horrendous this problem was and what the dimensions of the disaster were.

**Sylvia Lovenfosse:** In NSW we hear about the Hardie problem, but the Hardie was the husbands or the workers and occasionally a wife, but in Wittenoom it was the whole town, the whole town, and those little children, they were the most innocent victims of that, because they didn't have any choice whether they went there. Phil and I had a choice but our daughters didn't. It's really hard to come to grips with it. It's sort of like having a big, horrible bird sitting on your shoulder all your life, you know, you're looking over your shoulder wondering when it's going to pounce on you.

**Mia Lindgren:** That was Sylvia Lovenfosse.

It wasn't until the 1970s that the public started to become aware of the dangers of asbestos. Matt Peacock's groundbreaking *Broadband* series on ABC Radio put the spotlight on the issue in 1977.

**Archive material:** [ABC Radio’s *Broadband*] Good evening, I'm Matt Peacock and welcome to *Broadband*. Tonight and every night this week we'll be bringing you a special series on 'Work as a Health Hazard'. We'll be examining, as a case study in occupational health, the now well known hazard of asbestos. We'll be showing, amongst other things, how...

**Archive material:** [ABC Radio’s *AM*] This is *AM*, good morning from Kel Richards. On yesterday's *AM*, Roger Grant reported on the growing concern in the United States over diseases related to asbestos. A doctor in Perth has predicted a rise...
**Angela Napolitano:** The mines closed in 1966. It was several years after that, I would say probably in the very, very early ‘70s, that the media began to report the dangers of asbestos and asbestos fibres and that, and we became very fearful, very, very fearful. And as the years went by in the ‘70s we started to lose friends and by the ‘80s we had lost quite a few friends that had actually been working there with him alongside him in the mines. This was very, very frightening because he was worrying about what had happened to his friend and that he may be next.

**Archive material:** Early this year, federal cancer experts linked asbestos to as much as 18% of all cancer cases expected in the United States in the immediate future. The documents that have been unearthed during recent court hearings point to the fact that manufacturers have had serious questions about the effect of asbestos on health since 1934.

**Mia Lindgren:** As the asbestos-related diseases began to make themselves known, the lengthy fight for compensation started. The first cases were brought by the Wittenoom miners and their families, and soon those of the James Hardie workers would follow. In 1977 Cornelius Maas was the first to take CSR to court but he died before the trial started. The second case was Joan Joosten in 1979. She had got mesothelioma after working in an office across the road from the mill in Wittenoom. Mrs Joosten lost the case and died just hours before her appeal was about to be heard. Here she is interviewed on ABC radio:

**Interviewer:** Mrs Joosten, why did you bring the case before the Supreme Court?

**Joan Joosten:** I just felt that so many people were dying or so many had already died and were becoming sick and there were more to come, and they were doing nothing about it. This was originally 18 months ago. More people should be made aware of what was happening because of Wittenoom.

**Interviewer:** Did you expect to win?

**Joan Joosten:** Not really. I hoped, of course, and had very high hopes, but it's very hard for the little man to win, I think, anywhere. Not only in Australia but anywhere.

**Interviewer:** This was a test case, wasn't it, for all the people who have lived in Wittenoom?

**Joan Joosten:** Well, that's how we were treating it, yes, because nobody else had managed...others had tried, Mr Maas had tried to get it to court but had died beforehand and this usually happened with mesothelioma cases, and seeing as I'd kept fairly well for so long, we were hoping that it would get to court and the verdict would be given before I died.

**Archive material:** [newsreader] A national asbestos litigation campaign was announced in Perth yesterday. The Asbestos Diseases Society is planning a series of test cases in every state to prove that there's been negligence by the companies involved...

**Mia Lindgren:** Even from the very start there's been a lot of fighting.
Robert Vojakovic: Yes. CSR, you know, they wanted to destroy us, they knew that we are not obviously...we were rubble but we try to get organised, we persuade the government to amend the legislation, we were a fighting force, we were really getting there, slowly, slowly.

Mia Lindgren: That was Robert Vojakovic, president of the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia and he himself an ex-Wittenoom worker. The ADS played a pivotal role in bringing the asbestos companies to justice. It lobbied the Western Australian government to change the law to allow cases previous caught by the Statute of Limitations to be heard in the courts.

Peter Gordon: I got a call out of the blue one day, or my office did, from Robert Vojakovic who told me that he ran the Asbestos Diseases Society in Western Australia and they were facing a formidable fight with CSR over the operation of the Wittenoom mine, and he had hundreds of members, many of whom were dying from mesothelioma, and they faced a deadline to get proceedings underway, and could we help.

Mia Lindgren: Lawyer Peter Gordon has worked with asbestos cases for the law firm Slater & Gordon for 25 years.

Peter Gordon: So I very quickly went over there with a few colleagues and we decided that we could and should help. And over a course of two or three weeks we had to get about 360 writs issued before a statutory deadline expired. So I’d have to say that knowing almost from day one that we had 360 cases, many of whom were for people who’d been suffering from asbestos disease for many years, we were in no doubt that it was a very substantial undertaking for a large number of people. I guess we probably had no idea of the length and complexity of the litigation which was involved because CSR certainly did leave no stone unturned in their efforts to distance themselves from any responsibility for what had gone on at Wittenoom.

Paul Murphy: [archive PM] This is PM, I’m Paul Murphy, and this evening a settlement for the victims of Wittenoom asbestos.

Peter Gordon: It’s a magnificent day and it’s an emotional day for the victims of Wittenoom and the people who’ve been looking after them all this time. It’s really the culmination of years of struggle. It’s a day that means that 201 of them will receive their compensation in the next three weeks rather than having to fight long court battles over the next three or four years.

Paul Murphy: The Melbourne lawyer Peter Gordon, obviously delighted that his firm’s battle for a mass settlement for Wittenoom asbestosis victims has been successful. For ten years Peter Gordon and his colleagues have tried to settle hundreds of common law claims for former Wittenoom workers.

Gideon Haigh: CSR fought the need to pay compensation as avidly as Hardie was later to do. But once it lost the key cases in the mid 1980s...I think because it had more of an engineering culture and I think because asbestos hadn't been such an important part of the company's own identity, it was able to reach what was called the CSR global settlement in the late 1980s. And since then, cases that have turned up in the courts related to CSR have been settled fairly promptly by lawyers empowered by that company.
Archive material: [James Hardie ad] Every day, wherever you are, whatever you do, James Hardie is there with you. James Hardie in a thousand ways, at work and play, James Hardie is there with you...

Lenore Layman: The more we consume as a 20th century modern society and the more our standard of living has risen, the more asbestos we consumed in the second half of the 20th century, and so asbestos becomes by the 1960s and 1970s really ubiquitous, it’s everywhere; in schools, school roofing, hospitals, through the environment, in pipes, in industry, it is rising prosperity and asbestos is absolutely central. So it’s like something where there's a worm at the centre of this beautiful apple.

Mia Lindgren: Even with the dangers of asbestos clearly documented and with a growing public awareness, asbestos continued to be used extensively in Australia. The consumption of asbestos peaked in the 1970s with over 700,000 tonnes used in that decade. So workers continued to work with the deadly dust in asbestos factories and other workplaces where the material was used.

Rolf Harris's father Crom was exposed to asbestos in his work as a turbine driver at the East Perth power station.

Rolf Harris: All the pipes that were used to cool the mechanics and the turbines and whatever, they were all lagged with woven asbestos material. They were all covered to save lots of heat. The turbine that was brought in to create the power was running ragged, it was shaking and juddering, and it took a month to repair the main turbine, and all that time Dad said he would arrive at work and it was like walking into a blue/grey fog. And 40 years later he's coughing up blood and they x-rayed him and they find these little filaments of asbestos in his lungs, all surrounded by some sort of a protective thing that the body tries to fight these outside demons with, and it wasn't working, and he had asbestosis, which created lung cancer for him, which killed him.

Greg Combet: In Sydney at the James Hardie manufacturing plant, for example, the union was working on these issues and trying to ensure that there were safer work practices and the like.

Mia Lindgren: Greg Combet, former secretary for the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

Greg Combet: They were being assured all of the time in the 1950s, '60s and '70s that it was safe and there was no real evidence that it caused health diseases. All those arguments were being put to the union representatives at the same time that the company was doing medical screenings of the employees to identify just how badly some of their lungs may have been affected. The unions were deceived like the rest of the community.

Lenore Layman: From the beginning of the 1970s James Hardie has a company policy of getting the asbestos out of its products, and so it gradually reduces the asbestos content in its wall boards, in all its mouldings, in all its products.

Mia Lindgren: Historian Lenore Layman.

But James Hardie didn’t stop using asbestos in its products until 1986, and it took until the end of 2003 before all use of asbestos was banned in Australia.
**Greg Combet:** Under law, companies were able of course to mine and manufacture, distribute and retail these products. They did not, in my opinion, once they became aware of the potential health effects, have any moral or legal right to continue to market them and expose people to these hazards. However, the law wasn’t very clear on that point.

**Archive material:** [James Hardie ad] ...from the cities to the country, from the racetrack to the outback...

**Gideon Haigh:** I have always thought of the Hardie story as being kind of a century over which Hardie has been involved in asbestos, and probably about 70 years of that history was in asbestos, and about the next 30 years was trying to get out. That 70 years began winding up around the mid 1970s when the news media and health authorities begin to become extremely concerned about asbestos long-term health effects. Hardie began to move manufacturing operations offshore where of course health and safety requirements were less than they were in Australia.

**Peter Gordon:** What we know about James Hardie in many ways reflects the attitude of most of the asbestos corporations and their behaviour in Australia over the past 50s years. I think this is a point that’s important. There are many common features to what James Hardie did that CSR in various guises has done itself, and many other companies as well. James Hardie Asbestos used to be the name of one of the principal James Hardie companies and they used to operate from a building called Asbestos House. One night in the dead of night in the late 1970s, once they knew that the asbestos problem was going to be a big PR and legal problem for them, they changed the name of the building in the dead of night, and the 'Asbestos House' moniker was removed. Over time the name changed from James Hardie Asbestos to James Hardie Industries. What do all these new names have in common? Of course they're all sanitised names to take the asbestos out and confuse people in relation to the former true history. It was, I guess, a necessary predicate.

**Gideon Haigh:** The funny thing about Hardie is that if you'd been asked to name an evil asbestos company perhaps even ten years ago, the chances are that it would have been CSR, and oddly enough Hardie very successfully remained out of the public eye, and that was because it was able to settle cases on terms of confidentiality, it courted no publicity. And as the compensation market got hotter, Hardie took a tougher line and fought some cases to verdict and mostly lost, but in that sense Hardie was able to almost successfully divorce itself from its asbestos past. But what happened in the 1990s was that kind of ghost of the asbestos company that it had been turned up to haunt it again.

**Archive material:** [James Hardie ad] The James Hardie group of companies provides Spartan aviation and marine paints, Hardie Iplex plastic pipe and fittings, Horscroft dry-cleaning equipment, Pierlite domestic and commercial lighting, Hardie's building products, Wilson fabrics and wallpaper, Tudor and Spicer stationery, James Hardie paper and packaging, and Summit records and tapes. James Hardie, they're with you.

**Mia Lindgren:** With much fanfare in 2001 James Hardie set up a compensation fund called the Medical Research and Compensation Foundation in an attempt to resolve the ongoing compensation issue. This was a trust with assets of $293 million. At the same time, the now international company James Hardie moved its new parent company to the Netherlands while its headquarters was located to the US. The company denied that the restructuring and relocating was to avoid its asbestos liabilities. Instead it gave ‘greater international tax
efficiencies' as the reason. But it quickly becomes clear the new compensation fund wouldn't have enough money. Lawyer Peter Gordon.

**Peter Gordon:** What James Hardie's board of directors was seeking to achieve throughout the '90s and the early 21st century was to minimise its payout. Even the language of James Hardie setting up a compensation fund...James Hardie fought like stuck pigs to avoid any liability to asbestos victims for many years. The compensation fund that it set up in 2001 was in fact an apportionment of what it knew its legal liabilities to be. There was no element of giving or largess or generosity in the establishment of this fund, it was simply a provisioning of its legal liabilities, and it was of course a fundamentally dishonest apportionment of its liabilities. They came up with an initial assessment of $293 million for the future liabilities of James Hardie, and of course we now know that the real figure was close to ten times that amount.

**Gideon Haigh:** Because a lot of the decisions that had been made at Hardie relating to this compensation foundation and its re-domicile had been made in the United States, there was a general level of ignorance about the public odium that very soon enveloped the company once the story became known. I think the Hardie executives certainly got a very big and unpleasant surprise by how quickly they became public enemies.

**Bernie Banton:** [archive material] We're going to fight until we get justice for victims and their families.

**Mia Lindgren:** Because of confidentiality clauses in their compensation settlements, many asbestos victims were unable to talk about their experiences, and so were denied a public voice. So Bernie Banton became the public face of asbestos victims and took on the fight with James Hardie until he died from mesothelioma in 2007. Here he talks with Andrew Denton on ABC TV:

**Andrew Denton:** You worked at Hardie for six years, late '60s, early '70s, and you were a union rep there. Was there any talk then about the dangers of asbestos?

**Bernie Banton:** Yes, there was talk about the danger of asbestos, but they never, ever told us that it would kill you.

**Andrew Denton:** The group you worked with were known as the 'snowmen'. Why was that?

**Bernie Banton:** Because we were covered from head to toe with the white dust of asbestos in the manufacture of calite. The factory was just covered in dust, and that's why when we used to walk out, if we didn't use the air hose to blow the dust off, all you could see was our eyes.

**Greg Combet:** Bernie Banton, along with a couple of his brothers, had worked at the James Hardie manufacturing facility at Camellia in the inner western suburbs of Sydney in the 1970s. He of course first contracted asbestosis and he'd had that condition for quite some time when I met him. I met him during the Jackson Inquiry in Sydney in 2004.
Mia Lindgren: By then, protests from trade unions and asbestos victim groups had led the New South Wales' government to order a Special Commission of Inquiry into James Hardie's compensation fund.

Archive material: [ABC Radio's PM] Good evening and welcome to PM, I'm Mark Colvin, and among our stories tonight, the chief executive of James Hardie Industries says he doesn't believe predictions of doom from lawyers representing victims of asbestos related diseases. Peter Macdonald has told PM that his company will relish the chance to put the facts at the special commission of inquiry which began in Sydney today. The inquiry will investigate claims...

Greg Combet: I remember the evidence that was given in the Jackson Inquiry was quite horrifying in many respects, from a moral point of view more than anything else, I think that's what shocked people. A lot of evidence was given about the way in which the company went about restructuring, the motivations they had, the internal advice, the emails and the like, which all...without reflecting upon the legal elements of that, it was the moral outrage that people felt that was most compelling, and it wasn't very pretty listening to some of the evidence. It's as if people just had no heart at all when they were sitting considering making these decisions, and I felt that myself when I sat across from some of these directors and executives that they just did not seem to understand what life was like and how exposure to their products really affected people. I just felt it was so abhorrent that...anyway, it was sufficient motivation to fight very hard for some justice.

Archive material: This scarring is called asbestosis. Unfortunately the scar tissue doesn't turn back into good lung tissue, so the disease doesn't get better once it develops. The more asbestos you breathe, the greater your chances of developing this scarring.

Bernie Banton: [ABC TV's Enough Rope] Well, they always wanted to talk about numbers and the amount, and I think what I brought to the table was a humanity that they couldn't deal with. I was so cranky with their attitude, that all they were doing was trying to minimise and put into numbers the hurt that they had...not personally, but they were representing the company that had the technology way back in 1953 to do away with asbestos and yet they chose to continue to use asbestos. For that...I don't think there is any forgiveness for that because they killed thousands more Australians.

Greg Combet: Bernie was able to just cut through all of the guff, the complexity, the legal argument, the technical arguments, the procedural things around a commission of inquiry and cut to the chase and communicate with people what this was really all about. It's not to be underestimated, the importance of that in the campaign to bring James Hardie to justice because the fact of the matter was that the company, of course, had used all of the top legal brains in the country and internationally to restructure in a way where they felt they would have insulated themselves from their obligations to people in the Australian community, and at least it looked very difficult to us to achieve justice by using the legal system, and we needed to utilise massive public pressure on the directors and executives of the company to bring them to the table and to negotiate a solution, and Bernie's role in helping build that pressure was immense.
Archive material: [ABC Radio’s PM] After years of denying any further liability for Australian victims of asbestos diseases, the building products giant James Hardie has now said it will contribute additional money to the special foundation which it established in 2001.

Mia Lindgren: The Jackson Inquiry found that James Hardie had misled the community by setting up the under-funded compensation foundation and that additional money was needed to cover future asbestos compensation claims. In the aftermath of the Jackson Inquiry, Bernie Banton and Greg Combet were part of a negotiating team for a new settlement with James Hardie.

Greg Combet: The negotiations with James Hardie and their corporate and legal advisors in 2004 were the most complex negotiations that I have been involved in, and as a union leader over 25-odd years I’ve been in plenty of difficult ones, but this was extremely complex.

Mia Lindgren: In December 2004, James Hardie agreed to a new compensation deal.... But it would take another three years of waiting before a final agreement could be signed. In 2007 James Hardie’s shareholders voted in favour of a $4.5 billion compensation package. But the real future cost of asbestos is hard to predict. Robert Vojakovic is the president of the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia.

Robert Vojakovic: Asbestos doesn't discriminate whether you're brainy, whether you’re a blackfella, whether you’re Caucasian or rich or poor, you know, we all have to breathe and we all inhaled dust in a background situation, and most of us may be susceptible, some are not. And the more we inhale it, the more we actually domestically also have some renovating experience, touching asbestos or taking the dog's shed down, it also adds up, it's accumulative exposure which causes disease. So we are not even...we may be just discovering what asbestos really does, how dangerous it is.

Angela Napolitano: It was a time bomb, and he often used to say, 'This is a bomb that's going to explode.' This is the demon and no-one can beat the demon. No-one ever has and no-one ever will. If I've got that, it's the demon and it's going to win.

Sylvia Lovenfosse: One girl said she never thinks about it, 'I never think about it,' and then a few minutes later I asked her does she keep in touch with any of the kids from Wittenoom. And she said, 'No, no, I never have anything to do with Wittenoom people, they all die.' So she was very much aware.

Ted Grant: My brother's been so angry all the time that he wouldn't go and get the test done because he was so angry and in denial. When I first told him that I had it, I can still remember him standing in my kitchen with his hands on the door, straight-faced, and I told him, and he turned around and walked away. I didn't see him for two years, until I went in for a bronchoscopy and when I came out of it he was at the bottom of the bed.

Mia Lindgren: Because of the long latency period, the impact of asbestos is not expected to peak until 2020, and by then, it’s estimated that a total of 50,000 Australians will have died or have become sick with asbestos-related diseases. The miners were the first wave of victims, then the people who worked with the material were the second, and now fears are
for the third wave, the home renovators and others exposed to asbestos without even knowing about it.

Rolf Harris: It changes your whole attitude to asbestos to have somebody so close and so dear to you killed by the stuff. Before that I'd been totally unaware of it, totally unaware of the fact that it could be so lethal.

Ted Grant: Asbestos is a time bomb. It will catch up with all of us some time or other.

Jennifer Bowen: Ted Grant and Rolf Harris concluding today's Hindsight.

Margaret Page died from mesothelioma on 30th October this year (2008).

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