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## Dusty But Mighty: Using Radio in the Critical Media Literacy Classroom

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### Abstract

In a culture dominated by images, what is the capacity of radio-making to enact the ideals and meet the objectives of critical media literacy education that empowers learners and expands democracy? This article conceptualizes a radio-based critical media literacy approach drawing upon a course project called Borderless Radio, where fifty-two students in a large urban Canadian university produced short radio programs narrating how they view and experience “multiculturalism.” Radio making in the classroom is soundscaping that politicizes intimacy, disrupts hegemonic discourses, and allows for teaching and learning to transgress; yet it also illuminates the ways in which self-positionality poses limitations to media literacy education that seeks to link local classrooms to a global world.

**Keywords:** *radio, pedagogy, media literacy, soundscaping, self-positionality, intimacy*

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This article constructs a classroom-based critical media literacy education approach which highlights radio-making as a potent yet affordable and accessible way to enact the ideals and meet the objectives of critical media literacy education that empowers learners and extends democracy. The approach draws upon a project called Borderless Radio, which asks students to produce short radio programs narrating how they view and experience multiculturalism. The project was embedded in the curricula of two university courses on “Education and Popular Culture” and “Urban Education” as a non-graded but required component aimed at fostering student critical media literacy skills and understanding of mass media and popular culture as sites of learning about self, others, and the world at large. Fifty-two students participated in the project, the majority of them women and members of racial and ethnic minorities enrolled in graduate programs in the areas of education, sociology, and equity studies in a large urban university in Canada.

To complete the project, the students learned to use mobile digital audio recording devices including smart phones, mini voice recorders, and

Audacity – the audio recording and editing tool for Microsoft and Mac platforms available for free download (see <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>). Upon completion of the project, the students were also asked to write essays analysing their radio features through the lenses of the critical theories on power, media, hegemony, culture, ideology, and representation addressed in the courses. Teacher-student collaboration throughout resulted in the broadcast of 13 student programs by a local and a foreign radio station.

The project received highly positive student feedback; it was also one of the most rewarding experiences in my teaching practice prompting me to consider in depth the pedagogical significance of radio in media literacy education. In what follows, I address this significance, highlighting especially how radio-making allows for converging literacies, intimacy, transgressing pedagogies, and critical self-reflectivity which enact the principles of critical media literacy education (AML “What is Media Literacy?”; NAMLE “Core Principles”). By emphasizing radio’s pedagogical powers, my hope is to aid media literacy educators in their work but also to challenge our preoccupation with images and

cultures of visibility. Such preoccupation, I suggest, has left understudied equally potent sound and radio-based cultures and approaches whose deeper understanding expands the epistemological repertoire of media literacy education.

### **Radio Studies and Critical Media Literacy Education**

In 1998, media scholar Renee Hobbs summed up “the seven great debates in the media literacy movement,” among them the question about the value of media production in the classroom: “Vote yes if you think that young people cannot become truly critical viewers until they have had experience making photographs...writing scripts and performing in front of a camera...” wrote Hobbs, but “vote no if you've ever wondered what students are actually learning when they make their own videos” (Hobbs 1998, 20; Hobbs, online version). A decade and a half later, this question has been answered definitively by a growing body of critical media literacy scholarship viewing media production skills as an integral part of education that transforms and empowers learners, promotes active citizenship and enhances democracy (Kellner & Share 2007, 65-6).

Critical media literacy positions students to read and write various media texts in relation to power, ideology, and hegemony. Reading media critically means “active, critical construction of meaning” whether the text is a film, magazine ad, television program, music video, or website (Pailliotet et al. 2000, 208). It also means asking questions about the economic interests, purposes and effects of media messages, as well as who and how is or is not represented in these messages (Semali & Hamett 1998). Writing media critically is teaching students to produce alternative and counter-hegemonic media texts, where they tell their own stories in their own voices using various technologies (Share & Thoman 2007, 24). In addition, critical media literacy educators call for “democratic pedagogies” where students and teacher share power and work together to challenge hegemony (Kellner & Share 2007, 64-5).

The critical media literacy field is especially rich in examples of how video or short film production constitutes such democratic and

empowering pedagogies (Gainer 2010, Goodman 2003, Hammer 2006, Hoemann & Low 2008). Perceived as a “blind medium” (Crissel 1994, 3), “incomplete communication package” (Hendy 2000, 152), and a dusty and “forgotten medium” (Pease & Dennis 1995, xv), radio remains understudied and underappreciated in this body of knowledge as fewer studies examine the capacity of the medium to propel the transformative teaching and learning associated with critical media literacy education. According to Thorn (1996, 1), this domination of the visual stems from a “western cultural bias” that has “largely denied us [sound-based] conceptual frameworks or a language comparable to those of the visual arts.”

Studies on youth radio challenge this bias. For example, the popular non-profit *Youth Radio* in Oakland, California illustrates how radio production brings youth and their teachers into a relationship of “collegial pedagogy” to make and disseminate stories that youth find important (Soep & Chavez 2010, 49-79; [www.youthradio.org](http://www.youthradio.org)). Huesca’s (2008) review of several youth radio projects in the United States highlights participants’ personal empowerment, civic engagement and improved communication skills gained in these projects. Baker’s study (2010) of college Net-radio stations also demonstrates that radio production “allows students to participate in the development and managerial processes of media production, thereby affording them liberation and empowerment in public life” (109). Similarly, Marchi’s work (2009) links radio production to teenagers’ heightened political awareness and civic participation. Research also shows that the technology of pre-recorded downloadable audio files, or podcasting brings new possibilities for youth communication and self-expression in and outside the classroom as “pen pals... are now becoming pod pals” (Flanagan & Calandra 2005, 20).

A related field of inquiry, radio studies have developed concepts and theories that are also relevant to media literacy theory and practice. For instance, radio scholars conceptualize radio-making as *soundscape*, or a creative process of combining sounds to create meaning and intimacy with others (Chignell 2009, 105-6; Kuffert 2009, 306.) Likewise, radio experts offer powerful accounts of radio’s

ability to “create pictures” with sounds that are “better” and “more fascinating” than those perceived visually because the listener finishes these pictures in their mind and populates them with whatever colors, creatures, and actions she wishes (Powell 1995, 75). These imagery powers of radio are collaborated by a more recent stream of sound studies which demonstrate the physical links between hearing and visual fulfilment. Thus, Ihde (2012) writes, there is interdependence and “free association” between what is heard and what is seen in the mind and this association is as phenomenological as it is socially constructed (27-28). The deconstruction of these cognitive associations between sound and vision in radio are laden with unexplored opportunities for media literacy education to tackle the social history of “prenotions” which treat hearing and vision as completely distinct modalities (Sterne 2012, 9). Rather, these clichés are associated with social relations of power and whose knowledge has come to define our understanding of which sense (hearing or seeing), which culture (oral or visual), or which medium (radio or televisual) is primary, significant, and worthy of study.

Equally productive in terms of media literacy pedagogy are studies of radio’s role in nation-building (Hayes 2000), radio’s intrinsic localism yet global role as “an agent of cultural imperialism” (Barnard 2000, 235), as well as the concept of the listener as a subject-participant in political power (Lewis & Booth 1989, 115). These underappreciated dimensions of the medium help us think of media literacy teachers and learners as situated and active producers and recipients of sounds circulating historical yet fractured local and global worlds.

Furthermore, the extensive scholarship on pirate radio sheds light on how unlicensed radio broadcasting embodies practices of collective resistance to “the corporate theft of the airwaves” but such oppositional radio politics remain underutilized in critical media education (Langlois, Sakolsky & van der Zon 2010, 4; Walker 2001). As well, studies of using radio technologies to provide basic literacy to rural, remote, and dispersed communities in the United States, Canada, Australia, India, and Africa throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century view radio education as the precursor of current distant learning schemes divorced from media literacy education concerns

(Berman 2008; Haworth & Hopkins 2009; Jamison & McAnany 1978; Mohanti 1984).

This study links yet adds to these bodies of knowledge as it presents a radio-based critical media literacy approach that sheds light on how radio production in the classroom enables counter-hegemonic narratives while transgressing academic boundaries by affirming intimacy, passion, artistry, and the self as valid and equally important ways of knowing the world. Radio-making especially empowers members of minority and marginalized groups; however it also forces both teacher and students to acknowledge and confront their own multiple and sometimes contradicting proximity to power, including privileged social and political locations that dominate communication in the global world. This approach does not exhaust the modes or possibilities of using radio in the critical media literacy classroom; rather, it is intended as a point of reference for media teachers and educators.

### **Radio Soundscaping: Teaching beyond Print Literacy**

Expanding the concept of literacy to include various media forms is a core principle of media literacy education because, as Kellner and Share (2007, 2007b) argue, in our world most of the information we receive originates not in the printed word but in complex visual and sound constructions (62, 369-370). Pailliotet et al (2000) further remind us that this world requires “intermediality” or multiple sets of skills to grasp critically meaning across varied symbol systems (208). Similarly, Paul (2000) envisions literacy development practices beyond the printed text as essential in advancing critical thought especially among urban youth (247).

Soundscapes are important features of the social and media milieus addressed by media literacy scholars because sounds shape the various environments in which we live our lives (Helmreich 2010, 10). Soundscapes are the sonic versions of landscapes but instead of visual geographic features like hills or plateaus, they are made up of sounds we hear on radio (Chignell 1991, 105). The radio soundscape may contain natural sounds like animal vocalizations or the weather, as well as sounds created by humans like music or speech. In any case,

the creation of a soundscape involves the use of vocal and electronically generated sounds to express a feeling, make an impression, or tell a story. Through constructing (producing) or deconstructing (actively listening to) soundscapes, one becomes aware of the social worlds of sonic phenomena (Kelman 2010). Constructing soundscapes also expands one's literacy to include various skills, tools, and modes of communication beyond the printed text.

For example, in Huesca's study (2008), interviews with youth producing radio demonstrate "a raised awareness and appreciation of broader social and political issues such as race and ethnicity, education, social class, immigration, geopolitical conflicts, and gay rights" (104). Participants further reported gaining a plethora of technical and communication skills which encourage self-esteem, pride, and confidence linked to mastering the sound technology and ability to write, narrate, record, mix, and edit a radio soundscape (101). Observing similar effects among the youth in their study, Soep and Chavez (2010) conceptualize radio production as "converged literacy;" that is a space where various literacies pertaining to radio production and distribution – as well as distinct media forms, such as spoken-word poetry, digital photography, and personal interviews – co-exist and merge into a single audio presentation where "the printed word is just the beginning" (23, 47).

The Borderless Radio project sought to create a platform for such converging literacies. The project invited students to fill multiculturalism with meanings derived from personal views and experiences. The project focused on multiculturalism because difference and critical analysis of media representations of race, gender, sexuality, or ability are at the heart of media literacy education seeking to foster oppositional and resistant readings of dominant media texts (Lea 2010, 37; Luke 1994, 31). Multiculturalism is also central to Canadian national identity formations and state policy in various areas of social life as Canada adopted in 1988 the Multiculturalism Act proclaiming the state's commitment to the preservation of the diverse cultural heritages of its citizens. The perceived successes of Canada's multiculturalism policies are mapped especially in the scholarship of Kymlicka

(2001). However, a stream of critical studies on Canadian multiculturalism exemplified by the work of Moodley (2005) documents how state and educational narratives on diversity constitute celebratory discourses and problematic practices that gloss over Canadian realities of racism, discrimination, and exclusion rooted in the country's colonial past.

Producing a radio feature on multiculturalism allowed students to assess critically the various aspects of Canadian multiculturalism for themselves and from the perspective of their lived experiences. In the process, students gained technical knowledge and skill in handling small digital recorders and the sound recording and editing software Audacity. In two class sessions totalling four hours, students received instruction on using the software and time to practice sound file mixing. Since the program mimics commands common in Microsoft Word that students are familiar with, they master the software rather quickly.

In another two-hour unit, the class spent time learning about radio's social history and the conventions of radio production and broadcast. In a shorter session, students also learned about domestic and international copy rights laws which restrict the use of music, videos, and other media material; yet the class also identified online sources for free download of sound effects and music that could be used under the Creative Commons licence. The majority of the students chose to interview other individuals for their radio programs; hence, the class also spent time discussing interview questions design, obtaining consent, conducting one-on-one interviews, and the ethics of broadcasting.

The project further introduced students to radio composition that is unlike the language composition conventions with which students are familiar. Education in North America revolves around language-based forms and practices as written reports, essays, and research papers have become central yet "tacit traditions" in academia (Russell 1991, 19). English composition courses are also ways to "initiate students" into various disciplinary discursive communities (20). Radio making transcends the compositional norms of essay writing by teaching students how to select and weave together speech, music, songs, sounds, images, and

silences to create meaning and effect (McLeish 2005). Student feedback from the Borderless Radio project shows that mastering radio composition expands and improves student communication skills as well (Student Evaluations 2011, 2012).

### **Teaching Radio, Teaching to Transgress**

In addition to converging literacies, radio-making allows for teaching to transgress. Kellner and Share (2007b) perceive teaching critical media literacy as a way “to sensitize students and the public to the inequalities and injustices of a society based on gender, race, class inequalities and discrimination” (370). Hence, critical media literacy education requires “radical” and “democratic” pedagogies that promote social justice (373). Similarly, Share and Thoman (2007) and Semali and Hammet (1998) insist on “transformative” and “engaging pedagogies” to challenge media messages presenting themselves as “truth.” Inviting radio production in the classroom allows for such critical pedagogies, especially what bell hooks (1994) calls “teaching to transgress.”

“Teaching to transgress” is a purposeful pedagogy aimed at disturbing and crossing boundaries of any kind, including those of academia where excitement, pleasure, and passion are perceived as the antidotes of scientific knowledge and academic pursuit (hooks 1994, 7; 10-12). Radio-making enables “teaching to transgress” by allowing learners in the social scientific classroom to generate knowledges anchored in what Gloria Anzaldúa (2009) calls “that other mode of consciousness” rooted in the world of imagination, artistry, and feeling (103). Linking inner emotions, dreaming, and memory with the rational, reasoning mode of media and social studies is also transgressing and transcending a western culture that splits these modes into two realms— one believed to be external and real, the other internal, imaginary, and unreal (Anzaldúa 2009, 107-8). The Borderless Radio project bridged these disconnected modes of consciousness by rendering the learners’ feelings, desires, memories, vernaculars, and lived lives as important and “valid” ways of knowing the world as the positivist social scientific texts that dominate the media studies classroom.

Broadcasting such knowledge is an essential part of teaching to transgress. In the case of Borderless Radio, activities related to broadcasting fostered the type of collaborative and democratized relations between teacher and students called for by media literacy theorists and practitioners alike (Share & Thoman 2007, 18-19; NAMLE, “Core Principles”). Thus, in our project, the teacher and a group of student-volunteers created a plan where we approached a local radio station which agreed to broadcast one-hour-long radio program featuring three student podcasts from the project and a panel of eight students discussing racial and social equity issues that the students found important (Producer Todorova 2012). We also approached a public radio station in another country which agreed to broadcast ten student radio programs in translation in monthly rubrics focused on multiculturalism as a global and international phenomena (Producer Todorova 2012-2013). Equally important was broadcasting all of the student podcasts in the classroom and allowing students to talk about them. These discussions fostered a sense of community and awareness that together we can achieve something we did not imagine we could do.

### **The Politics and Pedagogies of Radio Intimacy**

Teaching radio-making further transgresses commonly perceived distinctions between private and public, and between intimate and political. In her powerful feminist conceptualization of critical media literacy, Carmen Luke (1994) develops a pedagogy acknowledging one’s identity and culture, or “subjectivity,” as the mode “of all critical readings” of media texts (32-33). Hence, Luke argues, deconstructing the particularities of “self/subjectivity” is fundamental to teaching media texts as “situated discourses” and “embodied author-authorities (33).” Radio production is especially suitable for such deconstructions because the medium encourages inward looking yet outward reaching which is at the heart of the process of building “intimacy.” According to Jamieson (2011) intimacy is “the close [emotional or cognitive] connection between people” but in building this intimate connection people also re-inscribe relations that are social and public. Jamieson’s definition

echoes Giddens (1992) who theorizes intimacy as an interpersonal domain of sexual relations and confluent love; yet a political sphere where individuals negotiate issues of social and political equality, power, and trust. Likewise, Berlant (1998) situates the realm of intimacy in the midst of “the rhetorics, laws, ethic, and ideologies of the hegemonic public sphere (282).” Intimacy thus transgresses the boundaries between “public” and “private.” Radio-fostered intimacy crosses these boundaries as well.

In the 1930’s for example, broadcasters and listeners alike spoke of radio as an intimate friend visiting their homes and as “personalized speech” on private matters such as health, parenting, and relationships (Kuffert 2009, 306). The medium’s ability to foster that kind of closeness is considered radio’s distinguishing feature related to its small size, mobility and omnipresence in all kinds of human activities and private spaces, from the bedroom to the doctor’s office (Chignell 2009, 85; Barnard 2000 1-2). Furthermore, intimacy has become the hallmark of radio talk as presenters and DJs are trained to adopt an intimate and friendly voice and manner addressing not an audience but a person (Hendy 2000, 150). Similarly, experienced radio talk show hosts become especially skilled in framing their shows as a chat over the backyard fence (Rehm 1995). The effectiveness of such intimacy is further propelled by the medium’s “blindness.” Unlike video production, radio provides visual anonymity which is conducive to a heightened level of individual self-disclosure. Researchers link this propensity for self-disclosure in non-visual media to a reduced sense of identifiability (Joinson 2001).

Accustomed to radio’s intimacy as listeners, the students in the Borderless Radio project seized upon it as producers of personal stories on multiculturalism. In the process, students carved radio soundscapes where the deliberate intimacy of the medium was politicized as it became a spontaneous mode of critical assessment, negotiation, and disruption of public and dominant discourses on multiculturalism. The student radio programs identified these discourses as “a false sense,” “tokenism,” “shallow,” and “superficial” articulations of state and institutional policy regimes

masking practices of exclusion, racialization, and social marginalization that go unacknowledged and unaddressed. The critique was grounded in what Berlant (1998) calls “zones of familiarity and comfort: friendship, the couple, and the family form” or frames within which intimation is commonly sought (281).

Thus in nearly half of the fifty student radio programs produced in the project, the authors weave personal experiences with those of family members, intimate partners, friends, and community peers. For example, a white female student conveys her secret intimate relationship with a black man who became the lost “love of her life” after her racist parents rejected the relationship (Anonymous 2012). In another program, the student interviews a friend who recounts how feeling rejected as “Asian” and “Vietnamese” in childhood led him to drug dealing and “surviving Canada” (Huynh 2012). Yet another program features a conversation between a mother and daughter from Caribbean descent who remember “travelling” post-colonial Canadian spaces of multiple cultures but few bridges across them (Judhan 2012).

Only four radio features in the project have storylines that focus on public events, such as the protests in Vancouver during the 2010 Olympic games related to First Nations land rights (Saifer 2011) or how the Canadian fast food chain Tim Hortons creates images of the “multicultural nation” in its media ads (Humphrey 2012). In a number of radio programs, the authors also play characters – of a child, restaurant goer, foreigner who just arrived in Toronto, weather forecaster, teacher, radio talk host, or journalist. These performances in sound illuminate creativity and artistry unleashed by a medium that stimulates public expression of private feelings and desires in the perceived “safety” of visual anonymity associated with radio (Joinson 2001). Student feedback on the project marks the opportunity for such creativity in the media studies classroom and among the project’s most fulfilling and empowering aspects (Student Evaluations 2011, 2012).

## **Radio and Self-Positionality in Critical Media Literacy Education**

Like video-based media literacy approaches, using radio in the classroom empowers learners yet it harbors the possibility of rearticulating and extending oppressive formations and ideologies, such as the racialized notions in the youth video project discussed by Gainer (2010) or the media studies practices appropriating the other critiqued by Sharma (2010). Like these scholars, Huesca (2008) observes in youth radio projects a great deal of personal growth, oppositional consciousness, and empowerment but also “top-down leadership roles” and “mainstream views” which warn against notions of youth media as always “counter-hegemonic” or “alternative” (108).

The Borderless Radio extends that warning as the project propelled powerful counter-hegemonic messages but also evoked stereotypes, ideological frames, and colonial discourses which prompted the teacher to confront the students. The confrontation suggests that the teacher-student relationship in the critical media literacy classroom is uneven and negotiated, as it is complicated by the teacher’s and student’s “positionality” defined as race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and other constructed aspects of our identities which signify “relational positions” to power and ideology (Maher & Tetreault 1993, 118). Ultimately, however, confronting these limitations of the project in the classroom was part of the intellectual growth and empowerment felt by both teacher and students.

Luke (1994) asks teachers to be aware of how their own readings of media texts, their own choice of course readings, or the questions they ask in the classroom represent “a position” or a particular and sociologically located point of view which should be deconstructed and should not be the only “right” interpretation in the classroom. Understanding such positionality of the self in relation to media texts and in terms of the commodity structures, social practices, and power relations that inform them, Luke argues, is central to any critical cultural studies pedagogy addressing media (31). In a similar vein, Semali and Hammett (1998) conceptualize critical media literacy as a process, where the teacher must ask questions

encouraging students to realize that “their affective and aesthetic responses to texts are constructed” as they are shaped by external social, political, economic, and cultural forces. Kellner and Share’s (2007) discussion of “encoding subjectivity” also encapsulates the ways in which media narratives are framed by the subjectivities and biases of those producing them (12). The Borderless Radio project illuminates the ways in which self-positionality and encoding subjectivities underpin the teacher-student relationship, as well as the media messages they produce.

I, the teacher in this classroom, am an immigrant woman educated in the United States, a non-native speaker of English, and a feminist who travels between east and west and negotiates between geopolitical, cultural, and media worlds that are not equal. Born and raised during communism in South-eastern Europe (also called “the Balkans”), my identifications are shaped in a location that has been imagined and constructed as “a second world,” and the other of “Europe” and the “west”; a perceived place of backwardness, totalitarianism, violence, and separation that inspire the term “balkanization” that populates English-language dictionaries and public discourses in Europe, North America, and beyond (Todorova 1997). The majority of my students are women and members of racial and ethnic minorities in Canada, some newcomers, others second and third Canadian-born-generations of immigrants from all over the world. I asked them to produce radio programs that address multiculturalism in Canada as they see and experience it. I also asked them to produce radio intended for both local and foreign audiences; in this case, radio audiences in Bulgaria.

To enable students, I assigned readings and facilitated class discussions on the history of Bulgaria and its position in the global media markets. The discussions focused especially on the “global village,” where media and culture flow from a center situated in the west to peripheral cultures constituting dumping grounds for locally produced but globally distributed English-speaking news, television, books, films, music, fashion, and radio (Hannerz 1997). The conversations in the classroom also addressed how this uneven contemporary global flow of mass culture replicates and perpetuates past

western European conquest, colonization, and racialization. Despite the discussions, I was receiving proposals for radio programs by students whose narratives had little interest in the intended audience abroad or talked down to this audience. The narratives exhibited the patterns of first-world citizens and empowered subjects who speak English, the language of economic and cultural power. In that language, some student narratives lectured rather than shared stories and articulated attitudes reminiscent of the ways in which self-defined “enlightened” western colonizers address those deemed racially and culturally inferior. Disturbed by it, I confronted the class and told students that their discursive postures extend historical divisions between east and west and between first, second, and third worlds. I told them they speak English, the language of media conglomerates from within Canada – a self-defined extension of Euro-centred civilization, whose values and imaginations about others have permeated their radio proposals intended for audiences in the Balkans presumed socially and politically deficient, hence needy of lecturing on how to use the Canadian experience to conceive of their own multiculturalism. I invited my students to recognize that our experiences of social marginalization did not preclude our participation in forms of oppression and othering as we attempt to speak to the peripheries of the global world.

Feedback shows various student reactions to the confrontation. For many students the event marked a significant turn in their radio experience as they began interrogating their own privileges as media producers in a global world. But for as many, the confrontation merely marked a bump in otherwise “great opportunity” to share “lessons on diversity” from Canada (Student Evaluations 2011, 2012). A few students also wrote in their self-reflection papers that they did not even attempt to address audiences abroad because they “could not feel” or “connect” to these audiences (Self-Reflection Papers 2011, 2012). Not surprisingly, some students enacted stereotypes and framing in their podcasts all the while deconstructing their own pain and oppression inflicted by similar media constructs (Self-Reflection Papers 2011, 2012).

Despite such limitations, the students’ self-reflection essays illuminate heightened student

awareness of how time, the technology and the aural means available to them shaped decisions they made during the process of producing radio. In turn, students also gained appreciation of how structure and context influence the media messages that reach them as audiences. Many also wrote about how having full control over the content and mode of their radio programs made them highly aware of the links between media and power and forced them to rethink their own proximity to that power. The student essays call these realizations “disturbing” and “totally challenging” yet “transforming” experiences of learners who were moving from the position of recipients of media messages to critical and empowered radio producers of alternative messages (Student Self-Reflection Papers 2011, 2012).

## Conclusion

Radio is an old and “dusty” technology but it is a powerful, accessible, and affordable tool to teach students critical deconstruction of messages and representations in hegemonic media texts, as well as skills to produce radio soundscapes that position learners to negotiate, disrupt, and subvert these texts. Explorations grounded in individual perspectives and lived experience are especially “radiogenic” because, unlike video/film production, the medium is conducive to intimacy propelled by a sense of visual anonymity. Radio soundscaping also allows both teachers and learners to unleash their creativity, passion, emotions and desire defying academic boundaries around “knowledge” and “truth.” Teaching radio is thus teaching and learning to transgress. However, we are yet to incorporate the study of radio and sound in critical media literacy education as the field has been extensively focused on the visual as the signifier of media and culture in the new millennium.

<sup>1</sup> All student radio features produced in the project are available at [http://cmce.oise.utoronto.ca/Podcast\\_1/Dusty\\_but\\_Mighty\\_Using\\_Radio\\_in\\_the\\_Critical\\_Media\\_Literacy\\_Classroom.html](http://cmce.oise.utoronto.ca/Podcast_1/Dusty_but_Mighty_Using_Radio_in_the_Critical_Media_Literacy_Classroom.html)



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