Spring 4-20-2022

Come Close and Listen: Exploring the Intimacy of Audio Media

Eleanor Kingwell Sharples Hoover
University of Mississippi

COME CLOSE AND LISTEN: EXPLORING THE INTIMACY OF AUDIO MEDIA

by

Eleanor Hoover

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford

April 2022

Approved by

Advisor: Brad Conaway

Reader: Professor Charles Mitchell

Reader: Professor Kathleen Wickham

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family and friends who have been by my side throughout my four years here at Ole Miss. It has truly been the most amazing experience, and I wouldn't trade it for the world. It feels as though this thesis is a culmination of my time spent here and I am so grateful to everyone who has been a part of my journey. To my advisor, Brad Conaway, thank you for being so open minded and kind-hearted throughout this entire process. I have never felt anything but kindness, care, and compassion from you, and I feel so lucky to have been under your guidance. To all of my professors at Ole Miss, thank you for helping to form me into the more diligent, observant, and dedicated student and person I have become.

ABSTRACT

ELEANOR HOOVER: COME CLOSE AND LISTEN: HOW AUDIO CREATES INTIMACY IN MEDIA (Under the direction of Professor Brad Conaway)

This thesis aims to demonstrate the power of the audio medium to connect speaker and listener, as a result of the uniquely intimate nature of the medium. By understanding how speakers and listeners connect through audio, the research reveals that the audio medium is a sustainable media outlet, one that is durable despite changes in culture in the media market, that has transformed over time, all while keeping itself within the principal constraints of its original form, that being sound as conveyed to a listener. Three interviews were conducted with individuals situated in different areas of the audio media landscape; these are interviews are placed in conversation with findings from literature and data about advertising, marketing, and different forms of audio media, including radio shows and podcasts.

What emerged from the interviews and research was a deeper understanding of why the audio medium was, is, and will continue to be a sustainable source of communication in the media realm; the intimate nature of the medium allows for speaker and listener to connect on a personal level and to develop relationships that allow for a more thoughtful connection than those created through other mediums (i.e. digital media), leading to the medium's ability to translate messages – from stories and ideas to marketing and advertisements to an audience.

As a result of this research, it has become clear that while the ever-changing nature of the media landscape will bring about new forms and mediums, audio will only evolve as a result of its intimate nature.

PREFACE

In March of 2020, I woke up in a boutique hotel in Paris to the rings of an antique telephone shaking beside my head. In a daze, I answered. To my surprise, my sister was on the other end of the line. She said, “Ellie, I don’t want you to freak out, but you need to go to the airport RIGHT NOW.”

A week before I received the call, my best friend and I had set out for a spring break trip that took us first to Amsterdam, and later to Paris. While the daunting threat of a new, scary virus called COVID-19 loomed, we decided that the trip should still go on as planned. All things considered; our timing was impeccable. Our trip went off without a hitch – until the early hours of the day our flight was scheduled to leave.

Back in our hotel room, I tried to piece together how I was possibly talking to my sister on the hotel room phone. She managed to get hold of the manager and asked him to please connect her to my room to tell us the news. When she finished briefing me on the situation, I turned to my friend, who was equally as dazed and confused as myself, and we started laughing. Little did we know that while we had been asleep after a long day of European sightseeing, international borders had been closed, and the American president ordered all Americans to return home. Luckily, we were scheduled to depart from Charles De Gaulle Airport at 8 o'clock that morning and our seats were secured. After speaking to various deeply concerned family members, we departed the hotel and left a rainy Paris behind us.

We were fortunate to have been some of the few Americans in Paris who were previously booked on a flight home that day. The scenes at the airport were like nothing I had ever seen before. Lines wrapped around themselves three times over, attendants telling passengers to not take photos or videos of the scene, with mandatory questioning about where you had been for the past month. After five grueling hours of waiting to get our bags checked and finally board a now completely full flight, we pushed back from the gate and were on our way home. Eight hours later we touched down in New York City to the news that school was canceled for "two extra weeks" and that everyone should go home and stay there. Having experienced our European jailbreak while most of America was still sleeping, I had not had the chance to listen to the news yet. Waiting in line at customs, I popped in my headphones and went to my Spotify app where I turned on that day's episode of the NPR podcast "Up First." The date was March 12, 2020, and the title read "Coronavirus Aid, New Testing Measures, Travel Ban In Effect." Hosts and reporters spoke about measures the Trump administration was taking to increase access to testing, a relief bill that Congress had passed, and the new international travel ban affecting travel to Europe. A reporter named Eleanor Beardsley spoke to a 20-year-old woman at Charles de Gaulle who told her "I think the airport is the worst place you could be right now," and I felt like I was listening to myself. How ironic that just eight hours before I was standing in that same airport having an identical experience, and now I was listening to it on my favorite podcast.

Now, over two years later, everyone knows where this story went next. I spent a few days in Oxford packing up my things and went home to San Diego where I stayed until returning to Oxford in August. Listening to "Up First" had been an essential part of my mornings since my senior year of high school when I discovered the podcast. Its 10-to-15-minute format was perfect for my drive to school. Even on the early mornings when I left home at 5:45 a.m. I could count

on the episode to be available. I maintained my listening tradition when I entered Ole Miss and the episodes were the perfect length for my walks from the dorm to class. Four years later, I rarely miss a day. The voices of the hosts like Leila Fadel, Steve Inskeep, Rachel Martin, A Martinez, and Scott Simon feel like those of close friends. However, if I were asked to pick them out of a crowd I would be straight out of luck; I have no idea what any of them look like. In October 2020 former "Up First" host David Greene left the show and, admittedly, I was upset. Would the show be the same without him there? Who would fill his place? After enough episodes of listening to a new host's voice, things fell back into place, but I felt as though the new host needed to gain my trust. I have a similar experience when any new voice is introduced to one of the many podcasts I consume regularly. After listening to someone as intimately and frequently as one does when consuming audio media, there is a level of familiarity and comfort developed between listener and host, and no one is too keen on a change to that intimate relationship.

This thesis aims to explore that very idea: That the audio medium provides listeners with consistency and continuity through an intimate connection with hosts. The pair, speaker and listener, build a connection that lends itself to success, longevity, and sustainability of the medium. Through an examination of attributes of successful audio hosts, advertising, and transformations in the audio medium, this thesis draws on the idea that the success of the audio medium can be largely attributed to its unique ability to create strong and lasting connections between speaker and listener that have led ultimately to the medium's ability to sustain itself through a period of profound transformation in the media landscape.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

102 years ago, in 1920, radio station KDKA based in Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania became the first modern commercial radio station, which initiated a period now referred to as the Golden Age of Radio. From 1920 through the 1950s, radio stations across the country drew in millions of listeners as the new medium entranced and connected the nation. Music, talk shows, and sporting events alike played on the airwaves, creating unique communities of listeners who tuned in to hear their favorite content in the comfort of their own space. The federal Radio Act of 1927 saw the creation of the Federal Radio Commission (replaced by the Federal Communications Commission in 1934) which oversaw all radio broadcasting. From 1933 to 1945, the nation fell quiet while President Franklin D. Roosevelt gave his famous fireside chats, one of the first instances of synchronized nationwide communication. Before radio, the country had relied on messages to be delivered asynchronously.

Even before radio made synchronous communication possible, the federal government had anticipated the need for consistent, discrete messages that could be "broadcast." During World War I, in an attempt to garner public support for the war, the United States government developed what was called the "Four Minute Man," a "program in which ordinary citizens were asked to give pro-war speeches, four minutes in length (Wu 45). In May of 1917, Governor Carl E. Milliken of Maine gave his support for the program, commending the speakers for their efforts in "spreading public information and in quickening the war spirit of our people." Taking the length and content of the speeches into consideration, the government's goal was to disseminate information in a tangible, digestible manner so that the general population, or those who might not have read the newspaper front to back, could understand the core position and sentiments of the country on the war.

War-time advertisement is often, and often justly so, categorized as propaganda. Tim Wu writes about this phenomenon in the book *The Attention Merchants;* Walter Lippmann, a progressive journalist who worked closely with the Wilson administration, went so far as to say that "any communication is potentially propagandist, in the sense of propagating a view. Any and all information that one consumes – pays attention to – will have some influence" (Wu 47). If the consumer is susceptible to being influenced by any information they pay attention to, the ability to harness that attention is where the medium's power lies. In the example of the Four Minute Man series, the concise presentation of information was what made the delivery successful: Listeners spent four minutes of attention hearing what the newspaper reader might have spent forty-five minutes reading. Additionally, the reader could not have spent those forty-five minutes doing anything else, while the listener was hearing the speech during a transitional moment – specifically, at movie theaters while waiting for the reels to be changed. Here, the practicality of short audio messages became especially apparent. After the war, advertisers latched onto what the Four Minute Man program had revealed: That listeners, more than readers, are prime targets to receive a message and its influence.

The reach of audio messages through radio was rapidly exploited for its commercial potential in advertising. In 1928, Pepsodent toothpaste was on the verge of collapse and under the new management of Walter Templin. One day, while sitting in his family home in Chicago, he heard an *Amos 'n' Andy* broadcast on the radio and had an epiphany. The program is now widely remembered for its explicitly racist content and delivery, but for Templin, it showed that "radio could not only capture attention, it could do so inside the customer's home. It could cause a whole family to ignore one another and listen in rapt silence" (Wu 88). Pepsodent went on to advertise on the show which, in 1931, saw figures reaching 40 to 50 million listeners at a time

the U.S. population sat around 124 million. Needless to say, Pepsodent did not collapse. Similarly, *Amon 'n' Andy* went on to be one of the most wildly successful broadcast shows in American radio history and set the stage for what would be the halcyon days of broadcast radio. More importantly, however, the show and its successful advertising of Pepsodent toothpaste speaks to the ability of audio to penetrate the listener's consciousness at a visceral level, during what are otherwise their most intimate and private moments.

The staying power of audio and its commercial potential were not, however, universally recognized. In its early days, as companies like CBS and NBC competed for listeners' attention in a changing media landscape, Wu argues that broadcast radio was "thought of as a miracle of science, a sacred and blessed realm that ought to be free from commercial intrusion" (Wu 101). As broadcast radio became broadcast news, some wearied that the medium might lose its pace and slip behind print methods in the race for attention. Yet audio's reach only grew; those who doubted the longevity and success of the medium were overlooking the power of audio to create connections between speaker and listener. Its ability to bring back audiences, time and time again, to the content and voices that help them feel content, was unrivaled by newspapers and print media. The power that audio harnesses is that of listening, of absorbing through the ear. In her book *You're Not Listening*, Kate Murphy writes that "listening, more than any other activity, plugs you into life" (23). By penetrating the personal space, speakers are able to connect with their listeners on a deeply personal level. In a study of brain scans, lead scientist Uri Hasson found that "the greater overlap between the speaker's brain activity and the listener's brain activity, the better the communication. This coupling, or syncing, of brain waves is visible, measurable proof of the transmission of thoughts, feelings, and memories" (Murphy 25). Thus, audio media is unique in its ability to connect two people, speaker and listener, no matter their

physical distance. Thus, beginning with the dawn of radio, and even before it with the contrived speeches of the Four Minute Man, the intimate environment created between speaker and listener has driven the audio medium to become a ubiquitous medium for well over a century, with remarkable success, even as the media landscape continues to transform.

CHAPTER I: PERSPECTIVES FROM RADIO

Walter Templin's epiphany, during that *Amon n' Andy* episode, was that audio can seep through space and time so successfully that it distracts the listeners from the present and from each other. This ability speaks to a potential of audio that is realized today through spoken advertisements, show sponsors, and personal endorsements from hosts. Personality endorsements, advertisements in which brands seek out celebrity radio or podcast hosts to promote their brand, product, or service, are especially effective because listeners already have a pre-determined bond with the speaker before the brand is even introduced.

This is all the more remarkable given that the mechanics of listening, and paying attention, are not innate in human beings. Rather, they develop during the first eighteen months of an infant's life as the child learn to follow a parent's gaze (Wu 115). Listening and paying attention may be learned, but once learned, are the most durable; hearing is "one of the last senses you lose before you die" (Murphy 23). Hearing, of course, is a precursor to responding: The efficacy of audio as a medium, and the construction of a relationship between speaker and listener, comes when a listener acts in response to a message. In his book *Listening Behavior*, Larry L. Barker explains that in the listening process, the listener "is more than just an absorber or receiver of a message. He has the responsibility to respond to the speaker indicating the message has been understood" (Barker 23). In the context of listening to audio media, the indication that a message has been understood comes by way of a listener's returning to that same messenger (in this case, a host) again. The feedback that speakers receive from listeners in physical interactions looks different in the context of audio media, but are still there. Feedback today may come in the form of returning to that content again, or by leaving reviews of a show

or podcast, or by interacting with the host online. However, the listener provides feedback, the key aspect of that exchange is that they are continuing to connect with the show's content.

This listen-respond relationship is particularly evident in broadcast music. In his book *Create, Produce, Consume: New Models for Understanding the Music Business*, David Bruenger highlights audio broadcast with spoken content in addition to music as an important form of promotion for music and musicians. He says that "interview and performance combination was particularly effective because it promoted both the music and the musician as a person and a personality. They also strengthened the performer–listener connection, making the artist more personable, more human, and seemingly more accessible" (Bruenger 241). The connection Bruenger draws here is that using audio as a mode of delivery increases the likelihood of a connection between performer and listener, a phenomenon that also translates directly to broadcast radio hosts. According to a report by the Radio Advertising Bureau (RAB), 81% of listeners "consider DJ's a friend, family member or an acquaintance." Even more striking is their finding that 83% of listeners "value and trust their favorite personality's opinions." Similar to the way listeners of *Amos 'n' Andy* responded to Pepsodent advertising because they indulged in the narrative style of the show, listeners of radio broadcasts, and later podcasts, respond to advertising by the hosts they know, and whom they trust to promote to them.

Nicholas Hinds

Nicholas Hinds is a veteran of the radio industry whose career spanned over 20 years and five different radio stations in the greater New England region. He says that the most important ways to develop a relationship with the audience are by sustaining a consistent voice through everything the listener hears, and by catering to their needs. Hinds spent more than ten years working for The Point!, an independent radio network serving Vermont, New Hampshire, and

New York. The station's philosophy promotes connecting music and musicians with people and asserts that a radio station that does so should be "independent, intelligent, and diverse, like the minds of its listeners." Over a decade has passed since Hinds was with The Point!, but that message has stayed consistent, and so has the radio network's audience. When creating a sales pitch for potential advertisers, Hinds always homed in on the unique audience The Point! attracted, one whose purchasing power was rivaled only by Vermont Public Radio within the Vermont market. Hinds said that he always described the audience to prospective advertisers as "smart, wealthy people who had spending money, discretionary income," and people who valued consistency of quality music.

To make sure they were catering directly to their listeners, The Point! "was one of the only stations that had literally a group of listeners, that was made up of a regular group of people, that would come in every couple of months, and they would have a meeting, and they would talk about what they thought about the music we were playing and the programming," Hinds said. "The station actually conducted their own focus group. They [focus group members] would criticize or they would complement or they would make suggestions and then the radio station would actually listen to what they say and do what they said." The listener group was one of the ways The Point! created a trusting relationship with their listeners. When translating this to advertisements, Hinds said he focused on creating ads that flowed with the music and tone of each host and show.

Even as the radio industry changed and smaller local and independent stations were being infiltrated by large advertising agencies, Hinds said The Point! never gave in. "We wouldn't run any loud ads. You had advertising dollars come from agencies that will want you to run these, whatever, stupid-ass ads that are loud and annoying and we would turn down ads that cost us

money," Hinds said. By turning away advertisements that would have brought in a bigger check for those that sustained the sophisticated level of content listeners expected, The Point! garnered confidence and respect from its audience and continues to do so today. During the 1990s and 2000s, the broadcast radio industry saw massive consolidation under Clear Channel Communications. Sustaining itself as an independent network, The Point! developed a community that is driven by the active participation of its listeners, and that did not lose the value of community. By connecting to their audience and, in turn, ensuring that their audience is connecting with their content, The Point! is an example of the power of audio and how its careful and curated use can deepen the relationship between speaker and listener.

Jane Steffee

One of the most powerful voices in radio, nationally, is National Public Radio (NPR). Incorporated in 1970, NPR has since held down a prominent place in its listeners' ears and minds, delivering quality journalism from around the world. A publicly-funded organization, NPR relies on listener contributions as well as advertising sales revenue to fund its top-tier journalistic pursuits. In February 2022, NPR's daily news podcasts *NPR News Now* and Up *First* were ranked second and third among all podcasts based on listenership, according to Podtrac. On the radio airwaves, 927 stations aired programming NPR programming in 2020, and NPR has amassed an annual listenership of 26 million, according to a Pew Research study.

Advertising sales for NPR are run by National Public Media (NPM), where Jane Steffee works as an account coordinator for the various digital media outlets NPR produces content for. NPM's goal is to produce revenue for NPR through affecting, even poignant advertisements that connect sponsors with listeners, and turn those listeners into customers. Steffee is a firm advocate of creating a broad reach for her potential clients. She is always transparent in telling

prospective advertisers “listen, you shouldn't buy just NPR content, you should buy everything. You don't have to like the listener that's listening to your message. But you need them to react, right?” Listeners’ reactions usually come in the form of a search, or purchase, from an advertisement. When Steffee’s clients do choose to advertise on NPR outlets, the message needs to be just right. Listeners choose NPR for the content, “storytelling in journalism. Our listeners appreciate being connected to public media; they equate that with some quality.” Thus, advertisements must follow suit and be produced with a similar quality of storytelling to the NPR content produced by its hosts.

Steffee noted that host-read advertisements always out-perform third-party advertisements. Listeners find comfort in listening to show hosts as they deliver content across the spectrum, so who better to deliver advertising messaging than an already trusted voice? Moreover, the FCC has ensured that NPR's advertising follows its quality journalistic standards and does not allow NPR to run “call to action” advertisements. Steffee said that “in public media, the focus is to get the journalism and the quality content out, and to embrace that with the messages, not just sell it. We're not going to have all of that quality journalism and storytelling with ads that don't make sense.” In doing so, NPM creates continuity for the listener that spans all of the sponsored messaging.

While founded as a radio station network, NPR content now includes both radio shows and podcasts (along with some television programming). Audio content is accessible on the radio, in applications, and via smart speakers, such as Amazon Echos. With the multiple audio delivery systems available, Steffee said that when talking with potential clients, she always reiterates the idea that “it really does seem like somebody's talking to you. Or you have to listen to that on purpose. You have to say to your smart speaker, here's what I want to hear. You have

to go on to wherever you listen to podcasts, and push the button download this and here's what I want to hear," and NPR listeners do just that. Steffee feels that the intimacy audio media creates is the element that makes it unique and uniquely affecting. "You have to want it to get it. You've got to want it to get it," Steffee said, and the culmination of the desire to acquire NPRs content is an active and loyal listenership, who come back each day and who support NPR. They hear the voices of their hosts (as I do each morning when I listen to *Up First*) and trust those people, so much so that they spend their own money to help keep NPR up and running on multiple platforms.

Hinds and Steffee both attest to the need for audio to transmit a message successfully, particularly when the message is carefully crafted to appeal to a unique audience who have tuned in deliberately to a particular type of content and anticipate a particular, tailored experience. The intimate environment that is fostered when a listener turns the dial on the radio, pops in their headphones and opens their phones, or asks their smart speaker to play their favorite station or show, is a testament to audio's ability to maintain a relationship across time and space, unlike any other medium. As Wu puts it, "print advertising has always been less unpopular than television or radio; for it is more under the control of the reader who can avert the eyes" (Wu 179). The only averting mechanism available in audio is to turn off the dial, take out the headphones, or tell the smart speaker to stop. Audio, however, and particularly hosts on the audio medium, have a special hold on listeners that is almost unparalleled across the media landscape today.

CHAPTER II: LOUD MOUTHS ON A QUIET MEDIUM

Intimacy, a concept being linked in this thesis to the potency of the audio medium, is often associated with quietness or whispers. Intimate inter-personal conversations naturally occur in a lulled voice, in a quiet room, or in private among close friends. Loud conversations typically are associated with a large group of people and naturally lack intimacy. However, the goal of the low volume associated with intimate conversations is often to ensure the words are only being passed among the people present, those for whom the words are intended. The audio medium does something interesting with this premise: It can be used to create an intimate space, one in which the speaker and listener can be "alone" with each other, all while allowing for the volume of the "conversation" to be much higher than would otherwise be expected. The pitch of intimate conversations that occur through audio does not match that of typical intimate conversations. Here, a unique element of the audio medium is brought to life, particularly well-illustrated by the case of the talk show hosts Howard Stern and Rush Limbaugh.

Both men handled subject matters that might naturally be covered in an intimate tone and did so loudly and abrasively. The two were able to use their "loud mouths" to penetrate intimate spaces, through a normally quiet medium. Moreover, each radio show host has been wildly successful in their ability to create a community among their listeners. In a study conducted by researchers at the University of California Los Angeles and Dartmouth College, researchers found that "who we listen to shapes how we think and react. Our minds not only sync up the moment someone tells us something, the resulting understanding and connection influences how we process subsequent information. The more you listen to someone, such as a close friend or a family member, the more likely you two will be of like minds" (Murphy 25); case-in-point, talk radio shows. Stern and Limbaugh had the ability to sink into their listeners minds for hours at a

time, strengthening the link between their own thoughts with those of millions of listeners worldwide.

Howard Stern

The self-proclaimed "King of all media" and radio's most famous "shock jock" host, Howard Stern, grew up on Long Island as the son of Jewish, liberal parents. As a young boy, he put on puppet shows for family and friends, a tradition that would eventually make its way onto his own radio show. The first time Stern was on the air he DJ'ed a progressive rock show for WRNW in Westchester County, just north of New York City. After a few short stints at stations in Connecticut, Detroit, and Washington D.C., Stern was hired by Mel A. Karmazin to New York's WNBC-FM in 1985; and so began Stern's career of being "outrageous" (Colford). One year later, The Howard Stern Show" was already under fire from the FCC and Stern eventually agreed to a contract that cut off his on-air use of "seven dirty words." Reaching across all demographic and geographic barriers, Stern was the first radio show host to be ranked number one in New York and Los Angeles simultaneously. Despite the deep devotion of his nearly 12 million daily listeners, Stern felt trapped by encroaching FCC regulation and censorship and, in 2005, accepted a $500 million contract with Sirius Satellite Radio, kissing terrestrial radio goodbye. In an interview with Vanity Fair in 1997, Stern was asked "what or who is the greatest love of your life?" His response, "Me. I love everything about me. Everyone else has faults."

While some might argue that this degree of self-satisfaction is entirely unfounded on his part, it worked for Stern. His loyal base of listeners gravitated towards outrageousness they had never heard on the radio before. For some, it was the reality of the content that drew them in, helping them feel like they might not be the only crazy ones out there. His fans admired his fearlessness, and his uncanny ability, during interviews, to make his subject feel comfortable

enough to reveal things they never thought they would say publicly. A prime example was his 2019 interview with Hillary Clinton, a political figure who has been caricatured for decades. She has had a public reputation for being steely and serious, but many of those closest to her have always said the thing they most admired about her is her personal warmth. Stern was uniquely able to show the empathetic and engaging side of the former presidential candidate. During the two and a half hour interview, Clinton was able to reveal her personal warmth with the help of Stern, touching on subjects including sexism, her political colleagues, her faith, and even the Beatles: "You put on the 'White Album,' you listen to that, you learn something every time. It's unreal," Clinton said. She came off as honest, relatable, and personable. Joseph Curl wrote in an opinion piece for *The Washington Times* that Stern "succeeded in making Mrs. Clinton appear almost lifelike in a surprisingly frank interview." Fox News reporter Howard Kurtz even said that "if the Howard Stern version would've run, maybe she would have won."

His success with Clinton was, in part, because of his personal and professional evolution. Stern was a master of personal brand development, before "turning yourself into a brand" was a societal norm. In doing so, he created a dedicated listenership who stayed by his side even as he made a grand exit from terrestrial radio. Over the last 20 years, he transformed his style from disgusting and offensive to churlish but thoughtful. Curl wrote further that the "shock jock, who battled the Federal Communications Commission for years with his childish antics, has mellowed with age (he's now 65). And as he's matured, Mr. Stern has become one of the truly sublime interviewers of our time." Notably, to the point of intimacy between host and listener, Stern has grown up and his fans have as well. This mutual growth is a prime example of the depth of the relationships hosts can create with their audiences, forging new paths together, as a unit of like-minded individuals who have more power than they might realize.

Rush Limbaugh

Collective power as a unit off the like-minded certainly is the case for Rush Limbaugh's "Dittoheads." While what Limbaugh's listeners might hold as core values differ from Stern's, the two groups can agree on one thing: they are devoted to their respective leaders and hold their voices in high regard. In 2008, three years after Stern went to satellite radio, Rush Limbaugh was still on top of the world of terrestrial radio. He accepted a $400 million long-term deal to continue his nationwide politically conservative talk show, "The Rush Limbaugh Show," on AM radio. The contract was a signal of his power, a result of spending decades developing relationships with his millions of followers.

Long before he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from former President Trump, Limbaugh was drawn into the Republican party when his father was appointed to a judgeship by then-president Ronald Reagan. The Cape Girardeau, Missouri native was always conservative and never afraid to say so. "The Rush Limbaugh Show" premiered in 1988 on New York's WABC-AM and his listeners, self-described "Dittoheads," listened as he "defined his conservative principles as supporting individual liberty, limited government, free-market economics, law and order, religious freedom, a color-blind society, and a strong national defense" (Chapman 324). Limbaugh is often credited with creating one of the most evident, and notorious, "echo chambers" in conservative media and for reinventing on-air political discussions. By propagating his views to his peak listenership of 20 million, Limbaugh drew on an audience that felt validated by listening to three hours a day of conservative chatter.

His critics found him shocking and unhinged, while his loyal audience said that even his most outrageous comments were just Limbaugh;s rough attempts at humor. The goal was to "own" or "trigger" "sensitive" liberals, and his audience believed they were in on the joke, even

when, or especially when, something said on his show became a mainstream "problem" – such as his coining of the term "FemiNazi" or calling then-law student Sandra Fluke a "slut" and "prostitute" after her Congressional testimony about the importance of insurance coverage for birth control. Many commentators credit Limbaugh as responsible for creating a certain brand of conservative, and for building a powerful community of like-minded listeners. That community helped steer the future of the Republican party and had a profound effect on the political destiny of the country. It could be argued that his brand of outrageous, plain-spoken transgressive humor paved the way for the presidential run and win of Donald Trump. Through it all, Limbaugh was able to fulfill his self-generated mission using his voice and talent as a broadcaster to gain this power. The strength and power of the bonds he built, are available to him through the unique intimacy of the audio medium.

Both hosts, though covering very different content, utilized audio's ability to saturate a listener's mind in order to engage with their audiences. This saturation ended up resonating with listeners beyond their on-air time slots. Moreover, the presentation of their content garnered the attention of millions beyond their individual fan bases. Wu writes that "attention will almost invariably gravitate to the more garish, lurid, outrageous alternative," something both Stern and Limbaugh provided (16).

While considering the content is important in understanding their successes, the more notable aspect of the two men's careers was their ability to build communities across the country of like-minded individuals who felt a genuine connection to both the hosts and to one another. No matter the content, whether it be the sophisticated music choices of The Point!, quality journalism from NPR, "shock jock" content from Stern, or relentless hammering of conservative viewpoints from Limbaugh, each listener group is a discrete set, and each group connects to a

specific aspect of the content that is engaging to them, all presented by a voice that they have come to know, develop feelings for, and trust. The power of the audio medium, and what propels its success, is the hosts' ability to connect their audience with a specific menu of content that garners reactions and attractions, and moreover that allows listeners to come back for more on a set schedule, filling their audio plates with just what they want to taste. Having been a part of the media landscape since the 1920s, audio has been able to sustain itself through various transformations in the media landscape by holding strong in its foundational ability to envelop listeners into a fold of affinity and confidence.

CHAPTER III: TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE AUDIO MEDIA LANDSCAPE

What is referred to as the "media landscape" is the state of media at a given time: The mediums, means, and modes of delivery of all types of media. Since the early 1900s the audio medium has sustained itself as a dominant force in the media landscape, but not without facing changes in the means and modes of its consumption and delivery. From terrestrial to satellite radio to the beginnings of streaming services and podcasting, audio has been subject to changes in the media industry that have disrupted business models and consumers' bank accounts alike. Accessibility to audio has vastly expanded over the past decade, driven by new technology and platforms like podcasts that allow users to consume what they want, when they want it. The combination of these two changes in the audio media landscape has created not only an environment that is abundant in audio media options and delivery methods, but one that brings into even greater focus the connection speakers make with their audiences. Two elements of the evolution of audio in the past decade are particularly important: The **accessibility** of audio, in terms of both time of consumption and place through internet-based methods, lends itself to connecting speakers and listeners more frequently; and **podcasting** as a delivery system provides an outlet that is unparalleled in its ability to drive what feel like personal relationships, even friendships, between speakers and listeners.

Accessibility

Accessibility has always been the "trump card" of the audio medium. Traditionally, one of the most appealing features of radio was the ease with which people could access it, specifically – after the 1940s – from their cars. While radio could be accessed in the home, cars provided broadcasters with listeners who were, for the most part, not distracted by conversation or other means of media and were often physically captive in traffic. Someone on the 405 in Los

Angeles moving at an average rate of ten miles per hour at 5:00 p.m. on a Wednesday might be convinced to decamp for another place; given a radio, though, those captive listeners might be able to convince themselves that living in a place where it takes more time to get to and from a destination than the time spent at the destination is acceptable.

To this point, in 1989 Claudia Puig and Dennis McDougal reported for the *Los Angeles Times* that Los Angeles was the number one market for radio ad revenue. The article, "'80s Radio: The Sound of Money and Format Changes" said that "another factor that has contributed to the new-found success of radio as a business venture is the increased number of listeners in cities such as Los Angeles plagued with traffic and congestion. Many people listen to radio in their cars. Those trapped in traffic jams are captive audiences for radio." Between 1980 and 1990 Los Angeles County saw the registration of 730,000 cars, bringing the total on the road to about 4.5 million. Nationally, in 1989 the total vehicle miles travelled per capita (VMT) was 2,036,457, which increased in 2,110,889 in 1990, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. To radio advertisers like Hinds, that increase meant revenue. In the early 2000s when he was selling advertising for The Point!, he said that he always led a pitch by reminding whoever he was selling to that "radio gives you that ability to make many more impacts than print or television does. You get in your car every day and you listen, repeatedly, to ads, whether you realize it or not. And then you walk into the store, and you see the product you heard an ad for and boom! You'll buy it," he would tell his clients.

As radio has seen its position shift from the dominant medium to one among many, competing with a myriad of streaming services like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, TuneIn, and others, the consumer is no longer at the will of radio stations when selecting content; instead, the consumer can choose a delivery system and content at will. Instead of having to be in a car or tuning into a

radio show at a specific time, podcast listeners in particular have the freedom to choose when and where to consume their favorite shows, and enough content options to listen to audio continuously without a repeat. This foundational transformation in the audio media landscape give listeners the ability, or rather the necessity, actively to choose audio content for themselves. Listeners can access radio stations on the internet, and many radio stations now stream talk shows as podcasts on streaming services. To listen to any radio show or podcast, listeners can also choose among smartphones, smart speakers, tablets, computers, or switch on the radio dial in the car.

Audio also is much less restrictive and technically simpler than other multimedia forms like video and print, which gives hosts more creative freedom. The simplicity of audio fuels its accessibility, which has been identified as one of its lifelines as broadcasting declined in total influence and internet-based delivery accelerated. Fortunately for audio, forms of access have increased dramatically since the days of car, home, or hand-held radios. Steffee argues that, beyond the smart phone containing multitudes of potential listening options, smart speakers, Amazon's Alexa, Apple's Siri, and Google Home have further transformed the way listeners access their audio content, and thus engage with their favorite hosts.

With so many options available, listeners have not necessarily taken to devoting more time to listen to each other. In fact, "as machines have increasingly competed for our attention over the past century, the average amount of time people have devoted listening to one another during their waking ours has gone down almost by half, from 42 percent to 24 percent" (Murphy 175). While they might not be listening to each other, they are listening to podcasts.

Podcasts

The explosion of the podcast industry provides ample evidence for the strength, sustainability, and evolution of audio as a foundational part of American media. As of January

2022, there were over 2 million podcasts available on Apple Podcasts and over 3 million available on Spotify, compared to the 15,445 commercial radio stations across the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic helped fuel growth in the industry with global listenership increasing by 42% between when and April 2020. The pandemic also illustrated how listener choice, given the sea of potential options on podcast platforms, has been driven my what listeners know, and who they trust, reflecting the continuing or even increasing value of audio's intimacy relative to television and print. In March of 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Nielsen reported that "radio and on-air personalities present a connection to the real world that listeners gravitate toward and trust. Importantly, 60% of Americans of adults 18 and older hold the radio in high regard and trust it to deliver timely information about the current COVID-19 outbreak." It was further noted that 53% of participants said that listening to their favorite host during the pandemic had helped them feel more informed about things they needed to know, while 46% said it made them feel more connected to a community. When connections were hard to come by, listeners turned to radio, or podcasts, to feed part of what was missing from their daily life, giving even more power to hosts to use their platforms to connect with audience members. That trend did not falter as people began to return to a more regular pace of life. Spotify reported that in 2021, listeners spent 78% more time listening to podcasts than in 2020.

The ability of podcasters to create tailored content that will build a sense of intimacy with listeners is illustrated by the experience of Mary Patton Murphy, a junior English major at the University of Mississippi. She is one of many who felt that listening to a conversation, specifically on her favorite podcast *That Sounds Fun* hosted by Annie Downs, made her feel less isolated and more connected during the COVID-19 pandemic, even from her home in Jackson, Mississippi. She was inspired to create this type of potential connection herself, by launching her own podcast

Be Loved Be Bold, which "exists to encourage students to live boldly for Christ in light of being loved by Him." Inspired by the storytelling abilities she developed when sharing her experience on a mission trip, Murphy dove into the podcasting world headfirst. For Murphy, it was during quarantine that she decided to take a leap of faith and launch her podcast. "I was like, this is so neat, I think I could do this too," Murphy said. While she is now in full swing with the second season of her podcast, Murphy still listens to Downs's content each week and even uses it as inspiration for her show. "I learned from them in knowing there's not a right or wrong way of doing a podcast. And that's what's fun about it," Murphy said.

Looking back, Murphy says she is "starting to draw the connections. And what I think I see is that I just have a love for storytelling. And that's like, that's what English is too, you know, tell stories. So, all these novels and articles and journals, and things that make great classes are usually based on some sort of narrative. And that's what I'm finding that I'm doing in the podcast." The faith-based podcast hosts interview-style conversations between Murphy and people in her life who have made a lasting impression on her faith or that she feels God has placed in her path with particularly uncanny timing. She feels that, for listeners, experiencing her podcast is "every day, just normal face-to-face communication. There's something that's just like really special about like this intimate scene."

Murphy also feels like the intimacy provided by podcasts – which lend themselves to private listening, free from judgment or visibility to others - is perfect for fostering her subject matter, religion. "My topic matter is so just like, individual, almost, you know, and personal to the person, they want to be listening to that probably in a space that's more solitary," Murphy said. Podcasting felt like the perfect platform to host the subject that Murphy wanted to approach, and she wants her listeners to feel that way too. Her small but loyal fan base has

allowed Murphy to turn what began as a fun quarantine activity into a full-scale podcast. She is entering her second season of the show and intends to promote its continued growth. As a full-time student, Murphy has yet to dive into the possibility of securing sponsors for her show but sees the possibilities in the current media landscape as extensive. Directly targeting her own age group, Murphy's listenership is made up mostly of college students who choose her podcast because of the specific topic. Murphy knew going into it that the topic would not appeal to everyone, but whoever a listener is, she wants them to feel like they are sitting down next to her, no matter how far apart they are physically. Because the content of *Be Loved Be Bold* is niche and listeners must seek it out, Murphy feels that her audience is that much more dedicated to the show.

Podcasting hosts like Murphy have the creative freedom to connect their audiences with the content they want to deliver outside the reach of FCC regulations (unlike Stern who faced FCC censorship multiple times). The industry, particularly because it is still new and developing, provides the ideal platform for podcasters like Alex Cooper of *Call Her Daddy* and Joe Rogan of *The Joe Rogan Experience*, whose content would not likely be allowed on national broadcast airwaves. Cooper and Rogan sit at two very different ends of the podcasting spectrum, yet they are interconnected in more ways than either of them might care to admit. In 2018, Cooper and her then-co-host, Sofia Franklyn, started the *Call Her Daddy* podcast under the management of Dave Portnoy's Barstool Sports. Two years later, Cooper entered what she refers to as the "single father era" and signed a $60 million contract with Spotify, making her show accessible to listeners only through the Spotify app. The deal came at a time when Spotify was investing heavily in podcasting, acquiring companies like Gimlet and Anchor, and shows like the *Joe Rogan Experience*. Cooper, 26 years old at the time, told the *Wall Street Journal* that when her contract with Barstool Sports

came to an end and she was fielding offers from various media groups, “in negotiations, I own the audience they all want.” Like Limbaugh and Stern before her, Cooper has a boisterous audience of Millennial and Gen Z listeners that call themselves a name – in her case, the “Daddy Gang.”

Like many successful hosts before her, Cooper has learned how to engage with her audience through the audio medium, creating an environment that feels intimate and protected for individual listeners, and for a fostered group of the like-minded. While the podcast has seen a shift away from the explicit sexual content that characterized it originally and now has a focus on mental health, sustaining healthy relationships, and working through familial issues, Cooper’s content is well tailored to the audio medium and to podcasting as a delivery system. The combination of explicit and private content Cooper covers is not something most audience members would be comfortable watching on TV with others present; Rather, listeners feel comfortable popping in their headphones or closing their doors and listening to Cooper’s call that she is “back at it again with another episode of *Call Her Daddy*” in their own private space. This creates the best possible environment for privacy and trust for advertiser. The content that can be covered and the delivery of advertisements in podcasts can blur the lines of what is “appropriate” as there is no concern over the ears hearing the information. Advertisements during an episode of *Call Her Daddy* sound very different than those during a local 5 o’clock news broadcast.

This intimacy developed both through the content Cooper creates and the way listeners receive it speaks to the potency of audio and further underscores why the audio medium has proved sustainable in the content-flooded internet area, and why it has been able to sustain itself, especially in the rapidly evolving and unpredictable media landscape of the past ten years. While the podcasting world has seen an explosion of new content, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, Cooper has sustained herself at the top of the charts: In 2021 she hosted the second most popular

podcast on Spotify, jumping up three places from her fifth place standing in 2020 despite the availability of a sea of competing content.

Cooper was outcompeted for the number one spot by Joe Rogan. In 2020 and 2021, *The Joe Rogan Experience* was the number one podcast on Spotify, having only joined the streaming service in September of 2020. The deal that brought Rogan exclusively to Spotify, worth $200 million, has been compared in its revolutionary impact to Stern's departure from terrestrial radio to satellite. Rogan, who averages more than ten million listeners per episode, has produced close to 2,000 episodes. His extended podcast form of over two hours mimics more closely a radio show than the 2019 average 36-minute podcast (in 2019). Even with an extended format, with some episodes reaching five hours, Rogan dominates podcasting. His techniques, viewpoints, and commentary could be described as inflammatory, provocatory, or outright deranged, but from an audience-building and advertising standpoint, the combination is unquestionably effective. Like Limbaugh before him, Rogan capitalizes on a conservative audience that might not be inclined to fact-check the host, and whose political passion is reinforced by hearing their thoughts echoed in the podcast. Rogan does not, however, take himself too seriously. Last year amid the Aaron Rodgers COVID-19 vaccination controversy, Rogan said "I'm not a doctor, I'm a (bleeping) moron. I'm not a respected source of information, even for me." Nonetheless, listeners are drawn in by Rogan's absurdity and by the unique breadth of guests he invites on his show. His most listened-to episode featured Elon Musk, owner of Tesla, and the next most listened-to featured Alex Jones, a far-right radio show host and conspiracy theorist.

Much of Rogan's success can be attributed to his podcasting format. His ability to bring listeners into the fold by implanting himself, quite literally, in their ears for such extended periods creates a clear rapport between speaker and listener, and one that has been found to compete and

to win out against various screen-delivered media and entertainment. In 2019 Spotify CEO Daniel Ek said that a shift in the media industry directly aimed at reducing screen time provided an opportunity for the "growth in audio — podcasting. There are endless ways to tell stories that serve to entertain, to educate, to challenge, to inspire, or to bring us together and break down cultural barriers. The format is really evolving and while podcasting is still a relatively small business today, I see incredible growth potential for the space and for Spotify in particular." Rogan and Cooper's deals with Spotify in the years following this statement are tangible examples of Ek acting on his vision for the company, and his material faith in the future of audio – even as visual and multi-media content options proliferate.

These transformations in the audio media landscape illustrate both the degree of dynamism in the media market, and the persistence of audio. In the early 2000s podcasts were few and far between; twenty years later, podcasting is understood as an essential form of media on par with broadcast and print. The key elements of audio that have sustained it through multiple transitional periods stem from intimate nature of audio, which is unique to the medium and will continue to help it sustain itself in the future. That intimacy, created by relationships that develop between speaker and listener, serves as a way for hosts (and companies) to ensure listeners keep coming back. With so many options of content for consumers to choose from, creating a strong connection between host and audience remains a critical aspect of the success of an audio media platform.

Podcasters like Cooper and Rogan have capitalized on the intimate nature of the audio medium to deliver their messages in a way in which their audiences feel both comfortable with receiving the content and as if they are in communion with the host. With expanded access to their shows through streaming services available on all devices, including new technology like smart speakers, Cooper and Rogan's audiences can listen to them anytime, anywhere – and do. Even with

the many and fundamental transformations in the audio media landscape of the last twenty years, listener numbers demonstrate clearly that audio now is more powerful and prevalent in the American media landscape than ever before.

CONCLUSION

When I woke up to the sound of ringing in my ear from an antique phone in a boutique hotel in Paris in March of 2020, I could have never imagined what the next few hours, days, weeks, months, and years could bring. That day, when I finally landed in New York, all I knew was that I could find some answers, and hopefully a sense of calm (alas, that did not happen), by listening to the *Up First* podcast from NPR. Hearing the voices I trusted to give me the news that would help determine my next movements was comforting at a time when comforting feelings were starting to be few and far between. I had never stopped to reflect on the hold that podcast had on my day. For weeks before the day I needed to hear it most, I listened to the hosts talk about a flu-like illness taking over a city in China that I had never heard of. When the virus made its way to Italy, I heard the hosts talk about Milan Fashion Week being canceled. Even at that time, as I planned a trip to Europe, I did not think I would ever hear them talking about schools in the U.S. shutting down, and students not going back after their spring breaks. However, when it came time that what they discussed each morning directly affected me, I was ready to listen with open ears to the voices I trusted.

In times of crisis, the world has turned to listening to the voices they trust to hear compelling messages of hope, support, or faith. During World War I, Four Minute Man speeches garnered support for the war at a grassroots level, by asking friends, neighbors, and strangers alike to listen and hear why they should support their troops in battle. Devout listeners of *Amos 'n Andy* heard advertisements for Pepsodent over the radio, ones that went on to transform the company and bring it out of a financial abyss. The juxtaposition of a skit radio show and a toothpaste commercial may have seemed odd at the time, but it laid the groundwork for the idea of connecting people with products, goods, or services by targeting them while they are

susceptible to influence due to their devotion to a speaker. That susceptibility has been capitalized on every day since.

At The Point!, Hinds and his colleagues understood this importance and went to great lengths to ensure their audience was connecting with their content. Beyond that, by catering carefully and systematically to their listeners, The Point! was able to create an environment of trust, one that helped Hinds bring advertisers to the station. Not only were advertisers entering into a beneficial negotiation, but the listeners were also being exposed to a product by a station and hosts that they knew, loved, and above all, trusted.

Steffee works similarly at NPM to attract advertisers who she knows live up to the value and quality that is the hallmark of NPR content. NPR listeners expect a high level of journalistic integrity and confidence in the news they are presented, and it would break that trust if advertisements did not follow suit. To deepen those relationships between speaker and listener, Steffee only brings on clients and subsequently content to which she knows her audience will respond positively.

Knowing the audience is a cornerstone of any media success, and Murphy knew that when creating her podcast *Be Loved Be Bold*. She also knew that the faith-based content would be received most powerfully through a podcasting platform as it lends itself to being consumed on an intimate and individual level. The community she can develop with her listeners through audio fosters confidence and trust.

Creating community through audio was pioneered by radio show hosts like Stern and Limbaugh. “Shock jock” listeners and “Dittoheads” alike found a community in listening to their beloved shows where they could be themselves and feel surrounded by others like them. Each

day the speakers and listeners were able to spend time with each other and continuously develop their relationships, without ever speaking to each other directly.

Years later, Cooper and Rogan follow a similar model of connectivity and kinship to drive their podcasts. As a result of various changes in the audio media landscape, the two hosts are now able to connect with their audiences more easily and more frequently, allowing them to get inside their listeners' heads in numbers rivaling the Amos n Andy broadcasts of the 1930s, when other media did not exist. The sheer accessibility of their content fuels the relationships they can create with their audiences.

The culmination of this research is the conclusion that audio media, and the audio medium, work because the speaker and listener are in communion with one another. Listeners hear the voices they have come to trust while doing mundane tasks, moving through a regular day, or during times of grief and sorrow, great joy and happiness. Whatever those moments may be, they are personal, and they are intimate; perhaps the only person a listener is sharing those moments with is the speaker they are hearing. That is what is so powerful about audio: The intimacy of the medium lends itself to building relationships between speakers and listeners that form communities of people who trust each other, and what is more powerful than trust?

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

Eleanor Hoover

What did you study in college?

Nick Hinds

I studied journalism. I went to Dean Junior College in Franklin, Massachusetts, a liberal arts school. And I didn't figure out quite what I wanted to do. Then I went to New England College in New Hampshire. I was told by my mother that I was a good writer, so I should try journalism.

Hoover

How did you get into advertising and sales?

Hinds

I got into advertising sales through radio by going to, ooh I forgot about this, The Connecticut School of broadcasting. See, this is I went to the Connecticut School of broadcasting. That inspired me to get on the radio and being in the radio field. And then, you know, it wasn't until later on after being a DJ that you know, I figured out that if you wanted to make a real living, you had to go into advertising sales not being on the air as a DJ.

Hoover

So, what was your sales pitch when you were reaching when you're going to new businesses for The Point specifically?

Hinds

My sales pitch would be comprised of several different things that range from our reach with our antenna, how far out our signal went to all the different markets. It would also be based upon you know, Arbitron ratings that showed what our listenership was all about and prove that we had an eclectic audience that had higher incomes than most radio stations and that the only one that higher was higher than ours was the Vermont Public Radio Station.

Hoover

What specifically about your listenership was unique and drove them to be good, active listeners that would be attractive buyers for your clients?

Hinds

Well, first the new eclectic music that we played and the demographic of smart, wealthy people who had spending money, discretionary income.

Hoover

Why was radio a good place for advertisers to be?

Hinds

Because of the proven fact of how many people listen to the radio and for reaching people on a regular basis.

Hoover

Do you think you are getting more impressions on radio than other mediums?

Hinds

Um, absolutely. Radio gives you that ability to make many more impacts than print or television does. So yeah. I would tell clients that you get in your car every day and you listen, over and over again, to ads, whether you realize it or not. And then you walk into the store, and you see the product you heard an ad for and boom! You'll buy it.

Hoover

What makes an effective ad?

Hinds

Quantity, creativity, and memorability. The ability to reach long term memory.

Hoover

What was different about businesses sponsoring programs instead of just running an ad?

Hinds

Well, then you would get an ad at them in the beginning of the show an ad ended the show. You get an intro and an outro.

Hoover

What did that do? Like? Were you reaching a more specific audience?

Hinds

Well depending on where you were running your ads and what show it was in and stuff like that, yeah, I mean you definitely going reach different people with the folk show, then you are probably with the jazz show or late-night programs.

Hoover

What about ads at The Point made them unique or made them appealing to the listeners?

Hinds

They're never annoying. And they're always, you know, soft spoken, appealing ads that inspire people's interest.

Hoover

What did the listener group do for you? How did you use their opinions and takes to improve your strategies?

Hinds

So, what was great about The Point was, it was one of the only stations that had literally a group of listeners, that was made up of a regular group of people, that would come in every couple of months, and they would have a meeting, and they would talk about what they thought about the music we were playing and the programming. They would criticize or they would complement or they would make suggestions and then the radio station would actually listen to what they say and do what they said.

Hoover

Why did that work so well?

Hinds

You know they could say, we love when you play Bob Dylan, we love it. We hope you keep continuing something like that.

Hoover

Why were they good listeners? Why were they willing to come out make sure that you guys were continuing the efforts of putting out the content that they liked?

Hinds

Yeah, our listeners were passionate about the music therefore it was their radio station. It was their music, and it was our station, but as we said to them, it's their music. So, what they like you know, we'll listen to, and we'll take their input.

Hoover

Do you think because you told them that it was their station that you had more of a responsibility to give them advertisers that you trusted and that you thought would be a good fit for them and that weren't obnoxious?

Hinds

Yeah, we wouldn't run any loud ads. You had advertising dollars come from agencies that will want you to run these, whatever, stupid ass ads that are loud and annoying and we would turn down ads that cost us money.

Hoover

what were the biggest changes that you saw working the industry?

Hinds

Automation. Electronics taking over humans. Serious pre-programmed programs that take away the local talent and have some, you know, guy from Hollywood go just a three-hour program. And then like stations being bought up. You had the Clear Channel thing whereas many stations as they can take their money.

JANE STEFFEE

Eleanor Hoover

How did you get into your career? Where did you go to college? Did you study something in particular how you kind of ended up in the field?

Jane Steffee

I did go to college; I was at a small liberal arts school. I studied photojournalism. So, my goal was National Geographic or Sports Illustrated photographer, and write the stories. Great. Turns out that's harder than it seems. So then my thought was, ooh, a PR that also not great. But still looking for media. So fell into ad sales is kind of a sideways way intermediate. I gosh, I started in syndication, I worked for cable, I worked for print, believe it or not people used to read paper. And then digital, which encompasses everything and then so settled in to NPM, which is everything except print, I guess, audio and podcasts and digital and smart speakers and. And just kind of growing up and being in college and working in media.

Hoover

What has your personal relationship with consuming audio media with audio providers? What do you like to consume? Or who have you liked to consume? And why have that? Or has any person or show been particularly appealing to you?

Steffee

I'm going to take that in two parts. One What have I consumed? I have really tried everything because I guess, maybe this is a personal, hate to say political thing, but you should listen to everything. Do I agree with it? I don't know. But I usually listen to it. So, listen to everything. Um, the other side is, where is it going? Right, as a business. So, podcasts have been the shiny new thing for a few years now. So you got to get there. And like I said, when I got into digital, that was the shining this thing right in native advertising, which I don't even think anybody talks about? No. But it's about a listenership, right? And how they, how they respond to the message? What do they do? And do I talk to an insurance agency? Do I talk to a bank? What content do you want to be wrapped around? And why?

Hoover

Do you think that because you have consumed everything, whether you like it or not, how do you think that that affects your ability to sell or your ability to know the buyer and to know their consumer?

Steffee

The short answer is well, so I will say to prospective and also current clients who are in radio or in podcasts who are in digital, “listen, you shouldn't buy just NPR content, you should buy everything.” You don't have to like the listener that's listening to your message. But you need them to react, right? Like that's the business side of it. And as ugly and like kind of nice, as it seems you want everything to be bright and shiny. But you need a listener to listen to your message and say, “Ooh, I can use that. Or somebody on my team really should know about that. Or I should go as soon as I get to somewhere I can listen to that link that they just said,” so it's

really about consumerism, right. We all want something. With inflation even the way it is, we all need things; we need eggs and gas, and we need content and we the cars and we need all of that. And somebody should say, here's why I'm better than the competition.

Hoover

Can you tell me about National Public Media? What audio platforms they support? Who their audiences, all that?

Steffee

Yes. And I will respond with a question, or do you listen to NPR?

Hoover

Yes, I listen to “Up First” every single day. I could be I really high up in the listener charts with them. I don't go a day without it. In terms of, I think NPM as a whole, what is their goal? And what platforms do they support? And then in terms of the listener, versus like the consumer? What are the differences?

Steffee

So um, NPM, in the very, super simple, simplest is the sales arm of NPR. So, there's NPR content, right, you can go online, you can hear all of the shows in the podcast, radio, smart speakers, all that. And then NPM national public media cells that we are a subsidiary of that. So, there are various owners. But the goal is, its sales. So, the goal is to get as much poignant revenue as possible. It's radio sales, both national and spot, I'm on the spot team. We can sell

them into podcasts, into digital, into PBS. We can sell local PBS. Whatever the PBS station is in your area, you might have a local spot that NPM plays. So, the goal is to get these sponsors connected with the listeners, and the viewers to a very high level of journalism and storytelling. And, again, this is my view, but in no way do I think there are advertisers who should only be on NPR. If you're a media company, or you have an ad or online something to sell, you don't want to be just on NPR, you should be everywhere. But this is a unique and good audience. And that's our I think that's going to turn into your next question is a selling point. And yeah, spot on.

Hoover

What about the audience, that your advertisers will be directly selling to on these shows, is unique?

Steffee

Well, one, the content, storytelling in journalism. Our listeners appreciate being connected to public media and listening to that content. It sounds like you may relate to this at least listening to the content and say, Yeah, I appreciate that. And because I'm listening to it on my public radio station, I equate that with some quality.

Hoover

Do you think that that public piece of it gives your advertisers a better way to connect with their audience because the audience knows that it is funded by the public and for the public? How does that affect your sales as opposed to it being a private company? What are advertiser's keener to? or less keen to? Because it is a public company?

Steffee

Yeah. They are more keen to the sponsorship times. I listen to XRT in Chicago all the time. But you listen to an ad pod, and it comes in and it's 10, 11, 12 – it can be up to 18 minutes of sponsorship time on commercial radio. In public radio it's about two and a half to three minutes. So that is a great point in that the listeners equate the content to the messaging that they hear from their sponsors like oh, wait, actually keep listening. This is not only is its great messaging, because the FCC tells us we can't have calls to action, like you won't hear on public media, "get your card payment for $99." You can't have calls to action, that kind of thing. And there's a reason for that. And that there's some time there, that, again, you can listen to commercial radio and hear a billion sponsorship messages. But in public media, the focus is to get the journalism and the quality content out, and to embrace that with the messages, not just sell it. We're not going to have all of that quality journalism and storytelling with ads that don't make sense.

Hoover

Why do you think audio is effective?

Steffee

In selling advertising or in spots, its intimate. Even on a radio or sports, a smart speaker, or particularly with podcasting where people earbuds in or just their phone on. It really does seem like somebody's talking to you. Or you have to listen to that on purpose. You have to say to your smart speaker, here's what I want to hear. You have to go on to wherever you listen to podcasts,

and push the button download this and here's what I want to hear. It's by message, right? And it's by messaging by effort.

Hoover

Do you think that's consistent between radio and podcasts or do you think that one has a leg up on the other for a certain reason?

Steffee

I don't have any numbers to back it up but as a consumer, I'll say podcasts. That's the shiny new thing right in now anyways. It has been for 10 years, but radio has always been there. And don't get me wrong, the numbers took a dip Last year with the pandemic but have come back. Ridiculously. So, people find the content they want it. Yeah, I'd say podcast because it's easier.

Hoover

Do you think that because people can listen to exactly what they want to hear in podcasts that it pushes people towards them as opposed to listening to a radio show where they might not know what they're going to get?

Steffee

I don't know, do people search podcasts by content? I guess in essence, it's more by the speaker and if you like that speaker's content. But I think it's more content than searching a personality.

Hoover

When making the transition to podcasts, because they are the shiny new thing, what changed? What did that transition look like? And how did people adapt to it?

Steffee

Smart speakers because somebody can say to you know who play this! I mean, I guess just to drill down from that, accessibility. I don't know that radio in general did a great job of saying hey, you know, you can stream this if you like this morning show. But you're not getting it because you haven't been driving for the past two years for pandemic. You can actually stream it, but that's come back. Yeah, so that's the transition. Everybody likes the new shiny thing. Right, it's new. Oh, wait. I can listen to this, but when I want to, and it's so easy. I can go to Apple or Stitcher Well, and, and those platforms making a buy for it. Right Spotify and the whole Joe Rogan thing I know is a mess. And Apple and Stitcher and. And a year ago nobody knew what Wondery was but then Amazon bought them, and everybody now knows what that is. Of course, I know what that is. I'm an Amazon subscriber. I can't have what's her name without having Amazon.

Hoover

How, outside of really being on air, is NPR or NPM connecting with their audience and getting them to the shows?

Steffee

Events! Those are coming back slowly. I think everybody's kind of coming back slowly after this total mess. And it depends on the state you live in, and the rules you have to be and have

embraced. And our CEO acknowledges we should do more of this for a number of reasons. Social media, so it's tough with an audio, right? People know NPR as audio. So, does that translate to Instagram? Not really, or YouTube? Stuart Stevens got the interview he wanted for years with Donald Trump, and he put they put that on YouTube, but that's few and far between. So, it is a road to manage for sure. In that everybody wants everything at the same time. Where can listen to this podcast? Can't I see it? In YouTube? While I'm taking my walk? Or sitting on the bus? No, actually, no, you can't see. That's another part of this whole ecosystem. Everybody's going to manage the content they want when they want it and how they want it. Right? And isn't that is fascinating, isn't it? So, what do you want? And how do you want it at any given time? So, it's, it's so much more than public media and about media and consumption.

Hoover

Where do you draw the line between being an audio production and between being a video production?

Steffee

You need to be where the listeners are. You need to be where the audience is, and you need to broaden that audience. NPR has had a really defined audience for some time, and we're breaking that out and trying to get to everybody. Podcast are helping that going forward, but you need to be where the listeners are. But I'll also say you need to work with your expertise. And again, this is this is just me talking not NPR. We're not a video ordinance. This is not our expertise, journalism content is. Reporting. Being everywhere. But that doesn't mean video. And that's okay. So, in my lane, in sales, if I talk to somebody who needs that, I'm happy to say listen, I

want to take your money. I'm the greedy salesperson. But then you need to go somewhere else. You shouldn't just buy NPR content and these stations and these podcasts and this digital and this on smart speakers. Go somewhere else. It shouldn't be so pigeonholed. So, advertisers have got to say, where do you where's the best focus for my money?

Hoover

Why is audio compelling for advertisers selling, having their message on audio? Is it because of that intimate nature?

Steffee

Yeah, you have to want it to get it. You've got to want it to get it. I wanted to work for NPR for a really long time. I do appreciate the content. And I appreciate the storytelling. Everybody's got a view. And these political times are certainly interesting. But I do think NPR does a good job of keeping it down the line, and real and not partisan. So, I do think consumers can find that with NPR. My job in the sales realm of audio and media is to say to potential sponsors, and sponsors going forward to renew, “this is a good audience.” Is it your only audience? Nope. No, it is not. No, you should be everywhere. Even if you personally don't like that audience.

Eleanor Hoover

So, just starting, tell me about yourself where you from? What do you study here?

Mary Patton Murphy

Okay, so my name is Mary Patton Murphy and I'm a junior here at Ole Miss. I'm an English major, history minor. And I'm from Jackson, Mississippi. I have two siblings, on is a freshman here, on is a senior in high school, love my siblings. I came here because I wanted to stay in state, but also really have always loved English and figured, you know, Oxford is like the literary town. And so just like really was so perfect. And I've loved every second of it.

Hoover

Now, why did you choose English? Because you loved it first, and you thought it would be a good thing to continue?

Murphy

I didn't choose Ole Miss really for the major, I started out in IMC, actually. But I always loved English in high school. So, I appreciated that about Oxford, like, knowing that Faulkner was from here, and like other good writers and artists and singers. So started out in IMC but I didn't love it. I like, got kind of bored with it. And so, I was like, you know, what, I need to like, go back, and retake some English classes that I loved from high school. And so, I switched -

actually switched to English education because I was thinking like, I want to be a teacher, but then I dropped the education part.

Hoover

So, because you were an IMC but then you started a podcast? Does your podcast have anything to do with your major? Is it totally an unrelated passion?

Murphy

Okay, so, yes, and no, um, it's, it's unrelated. It started as a hobby. But as I look back now, I'm like starting to draw the connections. And what I think I see is that I just have a love for storytelling. And that's like, that's what English is too, you know, tell stories. So, all these novels and articles and journals, and things that make great classes are usually based on some sort of narrative. And that's what I'm finding that I'm doing in the podcast.

Hoover

But when you are producing your podcasts, are you doing writing before and then speaking? Are you going on with the flow?

Murphy

A lot of times, I'll prepare beforehand. So, I'll prepare a list of questions and then kind of like you just said that you were pivoting, I do the same thing. Because like, I like to, you know, if somebody is rolling with an idea, and I'm like, man, I really want to explore this some more, I'll follow up questions or whatever. But I do kind of have a structure that I follow, which is like, I'll

start with, you know, introducing who the guest is for the episode. And then maybe, maybe it's topical, what I want them to talk about, or maybe it's just like “tell me your story,” then hit some questions there. And then usually, because of what my podcast is called, it's called “Be Loved, Be Bold,” I'll ask them at the end, sort of just like a wrap up of, “how would you encourage students to be bold?” – which is like good consistency, I think for listeners.

Hoover

What is your podcast about? Why did you choose this topic? How did it start?

Murphy

So, it's called “Be Loved, Be Bold,” and I'm doing the second season now. The first season I started to a year and a half ago, right after COVID started. It’s crazy if you research how many podcasts were created during that time it's like an astronomical number. Because everybody was at home, and we all started to try to communicate in different ways. And you had like the big podcasters start zooming with each other and there was all this collaboration happening, just kind of like what happened with music, you know, the same thing. But I heard of a girl who was a camp counselor at the camp that I was going to the next summer, doing it, and I listened. And I was like, this is so neat, I think I could do this too. So, she was just interviewing like friends and family, and mentors and stuff like that from home, that she wanted to get to know better and share their stories. So, I listened, and I was like, I think I can do that. It's a basically a faith-based podcast is what it's about and I just have different people in my life that have meant a lot to me and inspired my own personal faith journey to share that as an inspiration to students.

Hoover

And why did you choose that topic?

Murphy

I chose that because really, truly, like that's what guides my life like that's kind of like the basis and foundation that I live on. So that's just my way of kind of giving back but giving back in a way that I think matters the most and honing in on the spiritual aspect of what people are going through.

Hoover

Had you ever been able to do storytelling, about your faith about what drives you before the podcast? Was this a new outlet that you found was really unique in helping you drive your own story?

Murphy

That's a really good question. So, I actually have had some experience with storytelling and like sharing my own story in the past. In high school I went on a mission trip to Madagascar. One of the components of that and one of the things I had to agree to was that when I got back home, I would go and share about the experience. And so that was a really great way for me to get comfortable with speaking before others, and kind of adapting to this interview style. So that was really neat. And I look back on everything, and I'm like, I can definitely see how I was just kind of prepared and primed for this. I didn't know how to use technology, I had to figure all that out. GarageBand on my computer is what I use to edit the episodes and I'd actually done some work

with GarageBand in high school. I was on my school's dance team, and we had to put music together for our dances. So, it was like, oh, man, that's like really neat now that I can look back and like connect the dots as to how I was prepared for what I'm doing.

Hoover

Do you think that with the storytelling aspect does it feels different? Telling the story to microphone versus telling the story in front of a crowd?

Murphy

Yes, for sure. It's different. Sometimes I forget, I'm like, oh, man, my audience is like out there, not here. But they will be there when they listen when this is published, and I think that's good. Because what I want to do is make it feel so real. When I'm in a conversation with someone that I'm interviewing it's just like me and them having coffee, and I think about that genuine feeling that people hear when they go back and listen that they're like, "okay, this is really cool, I like this about this podcast."

Hoover

So, when you're communicating your message, why do you think listening? Are people listening are going to grasp it more than if they were reading it? If they're watching a movie about it? If they're watching a video about it? Why is it that by listening to you having these conversations about your faith they will grasp it better?

Murphy

Well, because it's just so authentic. There’s so much that's raw that you pick up on sometimes I'll apologize and be like, “I'm so sorry that like there's background noise” and this, you know, I've gotten better with the technology side of it, and like getting quiet spaces or whatever. But people just really like the experience of hearing what sounds like every day, just normal face to face communication. There's something that's just like really special about like this intimate scene of like, just you before microphone.

Hoover

And do you think that because the topic of your podcast is about faith and religion, do you think that this is a topic that people want to listen to more intimately?

Murphy

Yeah, that's a good point. Yeah, I think so. A lot of people, I wouldn't encourage people to substitute this for their, like religion, or like, you know, quiet time, but people love to listen to it in the morning when they're getting ready, maybe after they've read their Bible, or like on the treadmill, at the gym, and kind of like those solitary moments. So yeah, for sure.

Hoover

So, it provides a type of solidarity that they can maybe think more deeply about how what you're saying affects them?

Murphy

Right. Because like, my topic matter is so just like, individual, almost, you know, and personal to the person, they want to be listening to that probably in a space that's more solitary.

Hoover

And what's the experience for the guests that you bring on the podcast?

Murphy

I'm different every time. So, you know, usually, like I said, like, we catch up to start, but I think I think they enjoy it because it gives them a chance to look back and really think through their own story. Like, you know, a lot of times we miss having a chance to just stop and reflect on life. So, I think they kind of learned things about themselves as I ask them questions, which is fun.

Hoover

When you're creating a new episode, what are the factors that you consider the most? How do you shape each episode to each guest? What other factors go into how you decide to format your questions?

Murphy

Usually when I think of someone, and that's always funny how that happens, too, it's like sometimes they're placed in my path, or somebody refers them to me, or one time I had a guest come to me and say, hey, I want to be on it, and I was like, let's do it. So usually, I will have that person in mind. And based on their interests go with a topic. One of my good friends that was on the podcast who's a student here at Ole Miss, a nutrition major, we talked about why in the

religious sense, glorifying the Lord with our bodies, and how do we eat well, and all that. So, like it was tied to her interest, which made it really, like, really great for that kind of podcast.

Hoover

So, each episode, you're not targeting a different audience because the audience is coming because it's a faith-based podcast. But the topic matter is reliant on the guest. And what is your relationship with your listeners? Do you know who they are? Do you have any ideas about who they might be?

Murphy

It's a good question. So, the podcast is dispersed through Anchor which is produced by Spotify. So, they all upload through that platform, and they'll disperse it to you know, Google podcasts. Outcast, like there's all these different ones that are used before. I can see like, what percentages of listeners based off age and gender, but I can't see individual people, sadly. People will tell me about a lot like, “Hey, I'm listening,” and my family, big, big support base, and then friends. Jackson, my hometown, has the largest percentage of listeners then Oxford. And then I can see like, what percentage of people listen from what location, and I've had people from outside the country and like lots of different countries listen, which is crazy.

Hoover

And do you think that even though you're so far away from maybe these people who are listening to different countries that they feel close to you?

Murphy

Oh, yeah, I think so. Yeah, it's really neat how that happens, but that's how that's the same way I feel when I listen to any of my favorite podcasters. For sure. There's one in particular, Annie Downes. She's always like, I hope that you just feel like, you know, I'm like right there beside you on your walk or like with you as you put the dishes away. And I hope that's how my listeners feel, too.

Hoover

And what types of content do you like to consume? What types of audio or podcasts? Do you think you've gained something from listening to them? Do you learn from them? Do you think that they learn from each other?

Murphy

They definitely learn from each other. Like we talked about, like the collaboration that like everybody seems to be doing right now. Like all the big podcasters are like having each other on, which is cool. It's a tight knit community. I think I learned from them in knowing there's not a right or wrong way of doing a podcast. And that's what's fun about it. But I think to that I can see in their questions like what are some good things to ask, what are some good things to follow up on? What are some good ways to structure? But it's all really ultimately a matter of opinion.

Hoover

What do you feel that you do on your podcast to sway your listeners to have an opinion of your podcast? To come back?

Murphy

Yeah, so I'm trying to do better about that, like, maintaining attention. I talked about how Anchor shows me like what I can and can't see, but they can show me retention throughout the podcast. So, at different points, you know, people are going to be more tuned in obviously, at the beginning. But then, like, what I'm what I'm working on now is how to maintain that retention rate throughout because you do lose people at certain points. So, like, how to keep it fun, energetic, throughout.

Hoover

Do you think that your audience has certain expectations from your podcast?

Murphy

I think so. But I think they also come in with an open mind. I mean, I think that they look at a podcast title, and they're like, “Okay, I think I think I get an idea of where this is going.” But also, I think it's surprising too. It surprises me every time that I interview someone, I don't always know what they're going to say. But we do always go back to that question at the that is consistent.

Hoover

I've researched a lot about the accessibility of podcasts and how there are so many out there but how do people come to a certain one? I think a lot of it comes down to, like you said, people are looking for a specific type of podcast. Have you found that for yourself or listeners of your

podcast that they've fallen into it as opposed to seeking it out? Or have you fallen into any podcasts as opposed to seeking them out?

Murphy

So, like, do you mean like you'd fall into one because of like, what reasons? Would you fall into one?

Hoover

Explore pages, recommendations from other friends. I think one of the qualities of just audio in general is like, because you're listening and because podcasts are so accessible, you have to be selective about what you're listening to. So how do you choose what you're selective about listening to? And how do you think other people choose to listen to your podcast?

Murphy

Like what makes it unique? Yeah, that's a good question. Because it started as a hobby it's really like word of mouth. I do have an Instagram to promote it, so I think social media factors in.

Hoover

Have you ever thought about monetization?

Murphy

Oh, yes. I've looked into it a little bit. The listens to get an ads is like 2000 per episode, like at the smallest, but I can't remember exactly. But I'm not quite there yet. So maybe one day.

Hoover

Have you researched it or looked into it? Would it be something that you'd be interested in? And if you were how would you gauge your advertisers to make sure that they were in line with your topic?

Murphy

Yes, I thought about it. Like Amy Downes, one of my favorites, her podcast is faith based, too, and her advertisements are usually like CRU, which is a religious college campus organization. I think a lot of them are like tied to her too and her own personal growth. She advocates for counseling, and she has a counseling story of going through that.

Hoover

So, making sure that it was aligning with the theme. Do you think that if they weren't your listeners would be deterred? If an advertisement is aligned with the topic that you're listening, are you more or less inclined to research it, maybe purchase it anything like that? As opposed to like, if you're listening to a faith-based podcast and it has some out of the wood's advertisement – what is your relationship with that?

Murphy

Yeah. I'm definitely more likely to look into an advertisement for something that's related to the topic for sure. I people would be like, a little bit shocked if I had some advertisement for even like local stuff. It just wouldn't make sense for me to have anything that wasn't related to like,

personal growth, spiritual growth, spiritual organizations. I think people would be a little bit like thrown off.

Hoover

Do you think that if somebody has some like, super out of line ad you question their motives for placing it in their show?

Murphy

Yeah. All of these podcasters need support. So, at the same time, it's like I see how someone take with I can get you know, but the ones that keep it in line with their, like purpose statement for their podcast, I think are going to do a better job of maintaining the attention of our listeners.

Hoover

In the future, or near future, or just the future of podcasts in general, do you think that they're sustainable?

Murphy

I have thought more about this lately. I'm just like, whether or not we're going through a phase. I feel like blogs kind of died out, you know, so I'm like, "Oh, are the podcasts going to do that too?" I hope not, though. I think there's something about the audio aspect that just people love. I think about like historical documentaries and audio files that still resurface today, and I think I just I think audio is going to stick around.

Hoover

But I think I think it makes sense. If you look at just the audio medium as a whole, it's gone through so many different phases.

Murphy

Yeah, I think your point about connection is really important because there's always going to be something to connect about. Yeah, I mean, that's not going to go away. It’s just that like that voice. Because I compare it to blogs and all that I just think something about hearing someone's voice and their testimony. In a podcast, I think the audio aspect is just really incredible.

Hoover

Do you listen back to your podcast?

Murphy

Yes. Well, I wasn't back through them, but I have to edit them. So that's kind of my chance to hear how the conversation went. And it's always fun, because maybe I forgot what we said or maybe it actually went better than I thought.

Hoover

Was there a barrier to getting used to listening to your own voice?

Murphy

Yeah, yeah, hearing for the first few times. I was like, man, I just cannot with my voice. And now I hear myself as I hear myself on my podcast, which is crazy.

Hoover

How do you think your voice changes? Or your demeanor? Or do you think you come across really authentically?

Murphy

I think I think it come across authentically. I mean, you know how you are with your family members versus with someone you don't know, you're going to be putting on a little bit of an of a front in a way. It's just part of it. At the end of the day, I hope people see that like, the person I am on the podcast is like me in everyday life, too. So do you think having guests helps with that because that I feel like that forces you to be less performative. The communication and connection, the connection that people are longing for about listening to a podcast is found like within that connection that's happening in the conversation.

Hoover

Do you feel like you're in conversation with your listeners, even if it's just you talking?

Murphy

I think so. And usually that starts at the beginning where I'm like, you know, “Hey, welcome back.” I try to kind of gear that stuff towards listeners so throughout they feel present. That's so awesome.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"A New Chapter for David Greene." *NPR*, NPR, 1 Oct. 2020, https://www.npr.org/sections/npr-extra/2020/10/01/919052861/a-new-chapter-for-david-greene.

Barker, Larry Lee. *Listening Behavior*. Spectra, 1988.

Barthel, Michael, et al. "The American Public Shows Mixed Familiarity with New and Evolving Forms of News." *Pew Research Center's Journalism Project*, Pew Research Center, 10 Dec. 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2020/12/08/the-american-public-shows-mixed-familiarity-with-new-and-evolving-forms-of-news/.

"Coronavirus Aid, New Testing Measures, Travel Ban in Effect." *NPR*, NPR, 14 Mar. 2020, https://www.npr.org/transcripts/815677216.

Curl, Joseph. "Howard Stern 'Goes There' with Hillary Clinton, Makes Her Look Surprisingly Lifelike." *The Washington Times*, The Washington Times, 10 Dec. 2019, https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/dec/10/howard-stern-goes-there-with-hillary-clinton-makes/.

Ek, David. "Audio-First." *Spotify*, 6 Feb. 2019, https://newsroom.spotify.com/2019-02-06/audio-first/.

Florsheim, Lane. "'Call Her Daddy' Host Alex Cooper Wants to Have the Biggest Podcast in the World." *The Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones & Company, 21 July 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/call-her-daddy-host-alex-cooper-wants-to-have-the-biggest-podcast-in-the-world-11626871648.

"Four Minute Men: Volunteer Speeches during World War I." *HISTORY MATTERS - The U.S. Survey Course on the Web*, http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4970/.

"History of Commercial Radio." *Federal Communications Commission*, 12 Apr. 2021, https://www.fcc.gov/media/radio/history-of-commercial-radio.

"How America Listens: The American Audio Landscape." *Nielsen*, 4 May 2018, https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2018/how-america-listens-the-american-audio-landscape/.

"Joe Rogan Experience Podcast Stats." *JRE Library*, 9 Mar. 2022, https://jrelibrary.com/articles/stats/.

Lee, Bruce Y. "Howard Stern Calls Aaron Rodgers a 'Liar' about Covid-19." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 9 Nov. 2021, https://www.forbes.com/sites/brucelee/2021/11/09/howard-stern-calls-aaron-rodgers-a-liar-about-covid-19/?sh=7582f73b5de4.

Misener, Dan. “Podcast Episodes Got Shorter in 2019.” *Medium*, Pacific Content, 27 Apr. 2021, https://blog.pacific-content.com/podcast-episodes-got-shorter-in-2019-69e1f3b6c82f.

“Personality Endorsements.” *Radio Advertising Bureau*, Radio Advertising Bureau, 2019, https://www.rab.com/whyradio/WRnew/faq/pdf/faq5.pdf.

“Public Broadcasting Fact Sheet.” *Pew Research Center's Journalism Project*, Pew Research Center, 15 Dec. 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/public-broadcasting/.

Salem Media Interactive. “How Has the Pandemic Impacted Time Spent with Audio?” *Salem Surround*, Salem Surround, 27 Jan. 2021, https://salemsurround.com/content/blog-podcasts/how-has-the-pandemic-impacted-time-spent-with-audio.

“The Development of Radio.” *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/rescue-development-radio/.

“Top Podcasts.” *Podtrac*, http://analytics.podtrac.com/podcast-rankings.

“Travel Monitoring.” *U.S. Department of Transportation/Federal Highway Administration*, https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/travel_monitoring/historicvmt.cfm.

“Trends and Facts on Audio and Podcasts: State of the News Media.” *Pew Research Center's Journalism Project*, Pew Research Center, 15 Dec. 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/audio-and-podcasting/.

Wu, Tim. *The Attention Merchants: From the Daily Newspaper to Social Media, How Our Time and Attention Is Harvested and Sold*. Atlantic Books, 2017.

“Why Podcasting Has Survived (and Thrived) during COVID-19.” Burrelles, 14 June 2021, https://burrelles.com/why-podcasting-has-survived-and-thrived-during-covid-19/.

“2021 Wrapped for Publishers.” *Resources*, https://www.megaphone.fm/resources/wrappedforpublishers21.