Sounding out the long-time listener: A study of the talkback radio audience that doesn't talk back in Aotearoa New Zealand

Maureen Sinton

A thesis submitted to
Auckland University of Technology
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
2020

School of Communication Studies
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Abstract

Talkback radio is a very popular medium in New Zealand with hundreds of thousands of people tuning in daily to listen to a huge variety of topics from politics to dreams to stain removal. Anything and everything are up for discussion. This Grounded Theory study of talkback radio listeners in Aotearoa New Zealand asks why do they make the choice to listen to talkback in a digital market place crowded with options. Stereotypes suggest that the talkback listener mirrors the talkback caller: older, right wing with a desire to vent their frustrations. This study finds that talkback listeners are more varied than this stereotype suggests, as are their reasons for listening. However, stereotypes do apply to the content which is in the main presented from *te ao Pākehā*, a Pākehā world view.

Talkback radio listeners and producers and hosts from the industry were interviewed. Listener participants said they listened to learn what other members of their community were thinking at any one time. Talkback's liveness assures them that what they are hearing is current as compared with prerecorded talk-based media. The participant's choice of talkback did not indicate agreement with what they heard, nor did they expect to agree. They did not expect the content they heard on talkback radio to be factually correct. (The exception to this is in emergency situations when listeners prioritise accurate information). Socially active listeners felt that talkback content gave them useful insight into the thinking processes of those with opposing views. Industry participants (hosts and producers) reframe this and believe listeners enjoy the moral outrage of hearing opposing views. As well they believe listeners find comfort in a talkback host who has consistent views.

The study references the work of listening theorists in its analysis of why listeners choose talkback. While seen by some as a passive form of media consumption, the act of talkback listening, requires those who do, to actively 'listen to', rather than just 'being a listener', a role that implies passivity. Talkback comprising as it does entertainment, information, pathos and scintillation, rewards the often-alone listener with the opportunity to be absorbed by what they are hearing. It is an example of polyphonic discourse; a range of opinions or

observations, each one as valid as the other, expressed and curated not for those who call, but for those who listen.

Table of contents

Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: Dated: 22 October 2020

Acknowledgements (Ngā mihi)

Like a marathon, writing a doctoral thesis is in the main, a solo effort. However, there are people without whom you would not have made it to the start line. From there they cheer you on along the way, remind you why you're doing it as you hit the 30 km mark, and are on hand to get you across the finish line.

Ngā mihi nui to my supervisors, Dr Peter Hoar and Dr Vijay Devadas. Always encouraging and so knowledgeable, they never hesitated to tell me when I went off course. Tēnā rawa atu koe to Dr Frances Nelson who, in her inimitable way convinced me that I could and should undertake a doctorate. I cannot thank you enough, Frances. Tēnā koe Richard Betts for being a fine proof reader.

Thank you so much to all the radio listening and industry participants who gave of their time to provide me with valuable data. I hope I have done justice to your insightfulness.

Tēnā rawa atu koutou to my colleagues at the AUT School of Communications, especially the radio department, for their encourgement and advice, the WG12 administration team, and to Te Ara Poutama, the Māori faculty at AUT, for the opportunity to begin my tertiary haerenga (journey) as a mature student some nine years ago. Kia ora Lisa Duder and Atakohu Middleton for your guidance. Ngā mihi and many thanks to my friends whose encouragement to keep running towards that finish line was so appreciated.

Ki tōku iwi Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki me tōku Whānau Beamish – your tautoko is a taonga, a treasure to me. Kia ora Laurie for your blessing to use kupu Māori at times in this thesis. Ngā mihi nui me arohanui ki tōku Whānau Sinton, especially Kris and Frances. I dedicate this thesis to our Johnson whānau, especially Great Uncle Joe Johnson (aka 'Scribe') who plays a role in this thesis. From the Johnsons came my father's love of words. Thinking of you, Mum and Dad, at this time. I'm sorry I missed that appointment with the typing pool, Dad.

And this is for Paul. Moe mai rā.

Ethics approval

This research has obtained ethical approval 17/341 from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 9 October 2017

List of figures

List of tables

Kuputaka (Glossary): Radio industry and research terms

Air time — That time when content is being broadcast; when it is 'on the air'.

As live — Broadcast content recorded to be played as if it is live (either intentionally or not).

Audience ratings — Used in two ways:
1. Generic: the term given to the audience listening figures.
2. Specific: the term for the number of people from a population who have listened to a given text or daypart, usually expressed in '00s' or '000s'.

Audience reach — The estimated number of listeners in the target audience who are reached at least once by a broadcast during a specific period of time (The Radio Bureau, 2020a).

Audience share — The percentage of the listening audience at any one time who choose to listen to a particular text, station or daypart. In most cases, the greater the choice, the lower the share, as it is likely that the audience is more distributed.

Cumulative/cume audience — The total number of unique listeners who tune in to a radio station for at least eight minutes within a daypart during a week (The Radio Bureau, 2020a).

Daypart — The time frames (usually referring to weekdays) in which radio station content is partitioned, most often accompanied by a change of host.

e.g.:

Breakfast	Usually 6 a.m. to 9 a.m.
Mornings	Usually 9 a.m. to midday
Lunchtime	Usually midday to 4 p.m.
Drive	Usually 3 p.m. to 7 or 8 p.m.
Evenings	Usually 7 or 8 p.m. to midnight
Overnights	Usually midnight to 5 or 6 a.m.

GFK — International data collection and analysis company used by both commercial and non-commercial radio networks in Aotearoa New Zealand to gather audience ratings.

GT — Grounded Theory.

In survey	This refers to the time periods during the year when a panel of radio listeners are surveyed to learn who they are listening to. Traditionally a time when stations run promotions to attract listeners.
Mediaworks	New Zealand-based radio, interactive and outdoor advertising company
NZME	New Zealand Media and Entertainment. NZME is a radio, newspaper and digital media company.
S1,year	Denotes the audience listening survey number and year, for example Survey 1 of 2020 is shown as S1,2020. In Aotearoa New Zealand, there are usually four radio audience surveys per year. However, in 2020, following Survey 1, the following two surveys were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic (GFK, 2020b).
Shock jock	Talkback hosts who incite debate through their extremist commentary.
TA	Thematic analysis
TRB	The Radio Bureau: an Aotearoa New Zealand agency focused on marketing the commercial radio sector.
TSL	Time spent listening refers to the average time a listener spends with a station or segment (The Radio Bureau, 2020a). It represents listener loyalty to the station and is a commodity that can be sold to advertising clients. All radio stations (including non-commercial) employ tactics to keep listeners from turning off such as teasing an upcoming song, or in the case of talkback, a particularly interesting caller who is waiting on the line to tell their story.
Unique audience	A listener or viewer who is counted only once within a specified time frame, e.g. within a daypart.

Kuputaka (Glossary): Te Reo Māori (the Māori language)

Ariā	Theory.
Aotearoa New Zealand	New Zealand is increasingly referred to as Aotearoa New Zealand or simply Aotearoa. Aotearoa is popularly thought to be the name given to the country by the first Polynesian settlers. However, prior to the arrival of Europeans, Māori communities existed as distinct tribal nations across several islands and it is unlikely that they would have conceptualised the country as a whole (King, 2003). Aotearoa New Zealand is used by those wishing to acknowlege the country's ancient Polynesian and more recently its European bi-cultural heritage. 'New Zealand' is an adaption of the Dutch name given to the western coast line by an 'unknown cartographer' following Dutch explorer Abel Tasman's voyage in 1642 (ibid).
Hui	Meeting or gathering
Iwi	The people of a tribal nation, often descended from a common ancestor and associated with a geographic area.
Kanohi	The face.
Kanohi ki te kanohi	Face to face, in person.
Kaikōrero	A speaker or narrator.
Kōrero	To speak (verb) or discussion (noun).
Ko wai au?	Who am I?
Kupu	Word.
Kupu Māori	A word in the Māori language.
Māori	A generic name given to the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand. While most commonly used as a proper noun, its other meanings are: normal, usual, common, native. At the time of first European contact it provided a way of differentiating between the indigenous or usual people, and the new-comers, predominantly from Great Britain and Europe. Some Māori prefer to be described by their iwi, which are associated with

	nationhood and geographic location, rather than the generic reference, 'Māori'. For example: 'I am not Māori, I am Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki.'
Mātauranga	Knowledge, understanding. Often used in the phrase Mātauranga Māori which specifically refers to Māori knowledge.
Mohio	to know, to understand, comprehend.
Ora	Life, health.
Pākehā	Foreign, or originating from another country. The generic name given to people of European (often British or Irish) descent. Often associated with being of pale skin.
Rohe	Region or area of land.
Taha Māori	Māori identity, Māori descent; a person's Māori side.
Tāmaki Makaurau	Auckland, the largest city in Aotearoa New Zealand.
Tangata whenua	The people born of the land, the indigenous people of Aotearoa.
Te ao Māori	The Māori world, also the Māori world view (Ka'ai & Higgins, 2004).
Te Tiriti ō Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi is a document signed by the indigenous iwi (tribes) of Aotearoa New Zealand and the British Crown in 1840. It has been a topic of controversy since its inception, due in part to the variations between the te reo Māori and the English versions, both signed at the time. The Treaty itself is not a legally binding document, however, when considering issues relevant to the Treaty, parliament refers to the principles of the Treaty, rather than the text of the Treaty (Department of Justice, 2020b).
Waitangi Tribunal	'The Waitangi Tribunal is a standing commission of inquiry. It makes recommendations on claims brought by Māori relating to legislation, policies, actions or omissions of the Crown that are alleged to breach the promises made in the Treaty of Waitangi' (Department of Justice, 2020a).
Uri	Offspring or descendant.

Waiata Song.
Whakaaraara pā Sentry chant.

Whakaaro Thought, views.

Whakamā Embarrassment, shame.

Whakapapa Literally to layer, but also used to mean genealogy.

Whakawhitiwhiti kōrero ā reo irirangi
Talkback radio (Personal communication, September 18, 2020, Te Mihinga Komene).

Note: unless otherwise stated, sourced from *Māori Dictionary* (Moorfield, n.d.).

The great unknown about talkback is why people listen to it. (Turner et al., 2006, p.109).

'Long-time listener, first-time caller': the talkback caller

Chapter 1: Introducing the long-time listener

1.1 Introduction

As this thesis nears completion, the COVID-19 virus pandemic is in its tenth month.[1] Globally, more than one million people have died and there have been over 35,000,000 confirmed cases (World Health Organisation, 2020). In Aotearoa New Zealand a four level alert system designed to limit the spread of the virus was introduced initially on 21 March 2020, with the most restrictive (level four) coming into force on 26 March. In less than a week, more New Zealanders were listening to radio online.

> As of March 31st, NZME's radio audience increased 51% week-on-week on iHeartRadio.[2] MediaWorks are seeing similar movements, with upwards of 8,000 additional overall app users each week (The Radio Bureau, 2020b).[3]

In the United States 53% of radio listeners surveyed in the period 20 to 22 March were seeking information (Nielsen, 2020). Radio historian Kate Lacey (2013a) points out that the act of listening has always been part of a human's 'early warning system' against danger; 'we can close our eyes but not our ears' (p.30).

Outside of times of crisis, radio listening provides us with entertainment, relaxation, company, gossip, and information to make life easier. One radio genre relies on a small cohort of listeners to provide content for a much bigger cohort of listeners. This is talkback radio, a genre saturated in stereotypes created by the callers. This study sets aside caller content and motivation, and asks the research question: why do people choose to listen to talkback radio? Their motivations and listening behaviours will be analysed within a listening theory framework. The work of key theorists in this field will be unpacked to learn how their findings apply to talkback radio listening. A *te ao Māori* (Māori world view) will be applied to the aspect of the commodification of the talkback listener.

[1] Based on a start date of 30 January 2020, the date on which the World Health Organisation declared a 'public health emergency of international concern' (WHO, 2020).

[2] iHeartradio is an audio streaming platform for broadcast, podcast and radio. NZME (New Zealand Media and Entertainment) and Mediaworks are both commercial media companies owning respectively broadcast radio networks and online news site *NZ Herald* (NZME), and broadcast radio and television networks (Mediaworks).

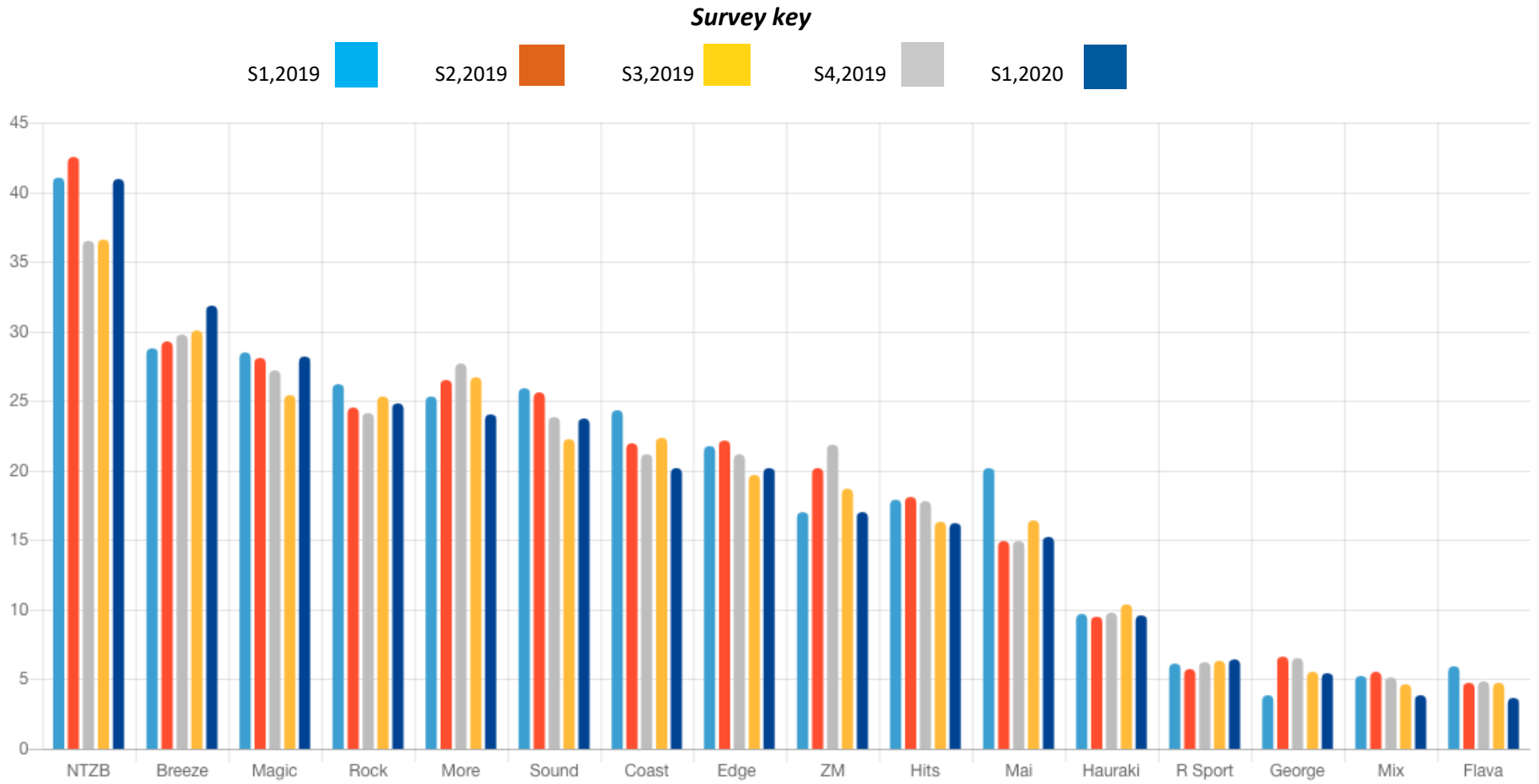
[3] The Radio Bureau is an industry funded organisation whose role is to promote commercial radio to advertisers.

Radio historian Susan Douglas (1999) describes the radio listening process as being 'taken out of ourselves through radio, yet paradoxically hurled into our innermost thoughts' (p.22). This sense of being immersed in what we hear is echoed by Carlyle and Lane (2013) who suggest that listening (in general) creates a 'parallel reality' that lies 'below, beyond, behind or inside that which is immediately accessible' (p.9). It provides listeners with an intimate connection with what it is they are hearing and those who are creating the sound. Of all the senses, Douglas believes that listening is a 'richer form of cognitive processing … [making people] learn how to pay attention' (p.355), and that those who know 'how' to listen are advantaged cognitively. We hear 'not just with our ears, but with our entire bodies … it envelops us, pouring into us' whether we want it to or not (p.30). She suggests that this 'physical' response to sound can often produce a stronger emotion than that generated by a visual image. The same sound can produce different physical responses. For example, the cry of a child will bring a parent running, while it might induce a passer-by to move away. In the case of mediated sound, one text may have different meanings for different listeners and therefore generate different responses. This study aims to use talkback listener responses to reveal their motivations for listening.

Lacey (2013a) suggests that to have agency within the public sphere, the expectation is that you will be listened *to*, rather than be the listener. However, she points out that without the listener, the act of democratic expression associated with the public sphere becomes inconsequential: 'speech requires a listener' (p.165). For a researcher focussed on the listener, as in this study, gathering qualitative data on listeners can be difficult. Unlike callers whose discourse can be heard and analysed, media listeners are the silent, unknown majority; they are 'unknowable' (Lacey, 2013a, p.16). In Aotearoa New Zealand, hundreds of thousands of invisible listeners listen to talkback radio every week. (See Figure 1.1 for average audience [000s] aged 10+.) Figure 1.2 shows that at the time of writing, the most listened to radio radionetwork in Aotearoa New Zealand, based on the average audience share (10+), is talkback and talk radio network, Newstalk ZB.[4]

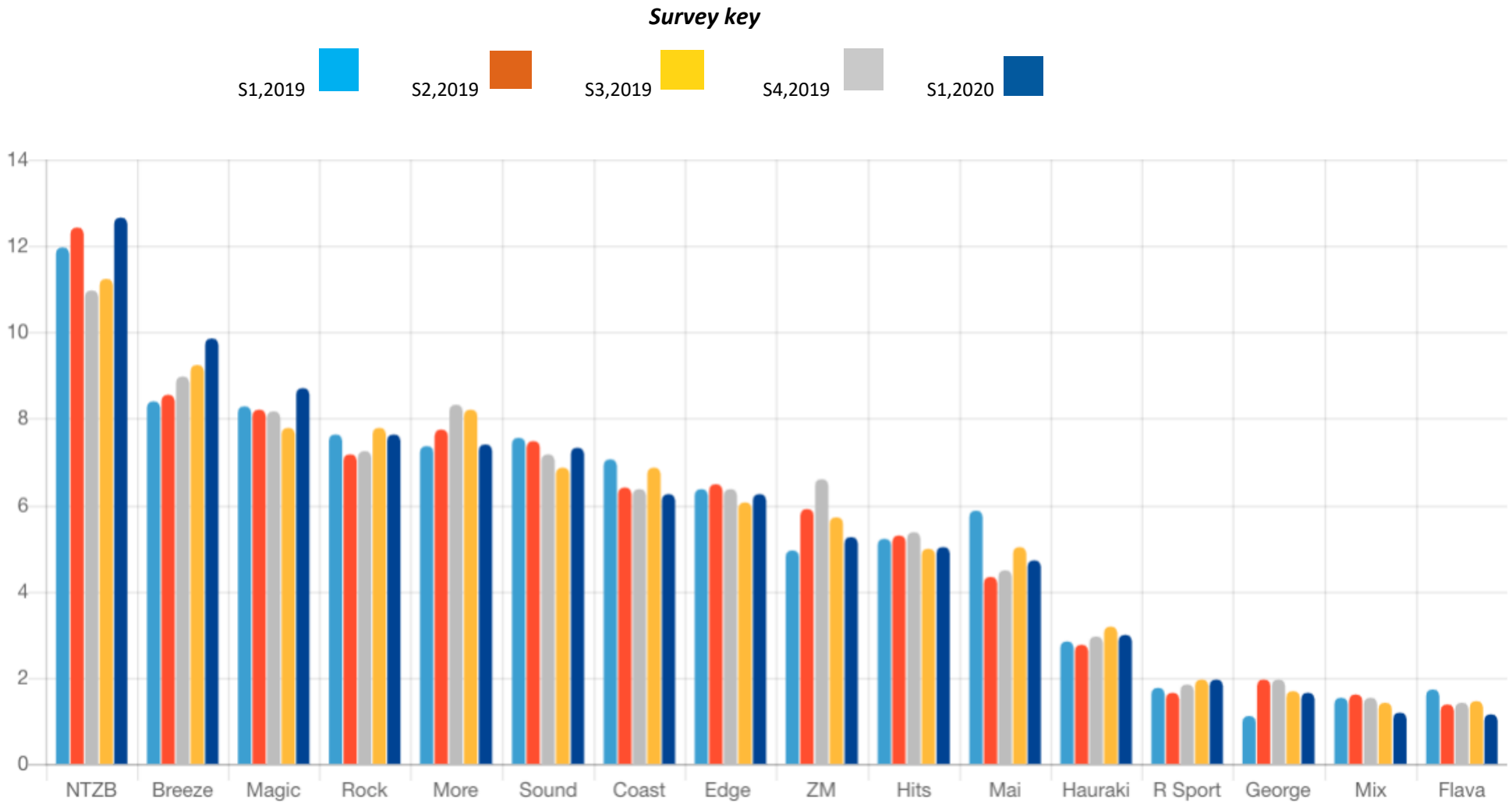
[4] The distinction between talkback and talk radio is discussed in Section 1.3.

Figure 1.1: *Average 10+ Audience (000s) for Aotearoa New Zealand's Commercial Networks in Surveys 1-4 2019 and Survey 1 2020*



Note. NZTB is Newstalk ZB. From *Recent NZ Radio Listenership, National: All 10+*. (The Radio Bureau, 2020c)

Figure 1.2: *Average 10+ Audience Share for Aotearoa New Zealand's Commercial Networks in Surveys 1-4 2019 and Survey 1 2020*



Note. NZTB is Newstalk ZB. From *Recent NZ Radio Listenership, National: All 10+*. (The Radio Bureau, 2020c)

1.2 Ko wai au? (Who am I?) And why talkback listening?

Ko Kohukohunui te maunga (Kohukohunui is my mountain)

Ko Wairoa te awa (Wairoa is my river)

Ko Umupuia te marae (Umupuia is my marae)

Ko Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki te iwi (Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki is my tribe)[5]

He tangata whenua o Aotearoa New Zealand ahau. I am a person of Aotearoa New Zealand. I *whakapapa* (descend) from Aotearoa New Zealand's first settlers who arrived more than 30 generations ago. I am also a descendant of *Pākehā* (European) immigrants from England, Scotland and Croatia. I am Māori and I am Pākehā. Like many New Zealanders, I acknowledge my *taha Māori* (Māori side) and Pākēhā side in terms of language and cultural norms. This is not a binary action requiring only one language to be spoken at any one time. *He kupu Māori* (Māori words) are now interspersed within written and spoken English (and other language) discourse by New Zealanders of all ethnic backgrounds, increasingly so in the mass media. I have used kupu Māori at times within the predominantly English text of this thesis as I do in my everyday communication. I do this because at times they bring a nuance to a concept that I think is more meaningful than English. They are contextualised within this thesis but their meanings may vary in other contexts. They are defined in the *Kuputaka* (Glossary) on page xv. *Ngā mihi ki Māori Dictionary* (I acknowledge the Māori Dictionary) (Moorfield, n.d.).

I am a long-time talkback listener and early in my media career I was a talkback producer. My interest in media audiences and what motivates them stems from my personal and professional background. I was raised in Whangarei, in provincial Aotearoa New Zealand, in a household in which commercial radio was the main source of entertainment and in a pre-digital world, information. I began my career at the local radio station, Radio Northland, in 1976. I moved to Wellington to be a programme producer (including talkback) for Radio New Zealand (RNZ).[6] I would eventually make my home in Auckland, where I worked as a talk and talkback producer for the Newstalk ZB network and in television as a programmer and

[5] This is a short version of my *pepeha*, which is a traditional and commonly used method in te ao Māori (the Māori world) to identify and introduce yourself to others using geographic information and tribal affiliation.

[6] In 1975, Aotearoa New Zealand's radio and television broadcaster, the NZBC was divided into industry-specific corporations. One of these was Radio New Zealand which included both non-commercial and commerical arms.

producer. Both radio and television roles required the creation and curation of content in a commercial environment that placed emphasis on building listening or viewing audiences for advertisers. My career has undoubtedly shaped my choice of topic. It has also influenced my choice of Grounded Theory (GT) as my theoretical framework, as GT allows for the life experience of the researcher to be recognised in the building of theory (Birks & Mills, 2015). Throughout this thesis I reference my own professional experience, and my observations as a producer and listener.

1.3 Talkback: A definition

Talkback radio is defined by Herrera-Damas and Hermida (2014) as 'spontaneous interaction [on radio] between two or more people at the same time' (p.482). Australian Professor of media and cultural studies, Graeme Turner (2009) defines talkback as 'primary content … generated by listeners' responses to the invitation to phone in and talk live with the host and their audience' (p.415). As a format, talkback is often confused with talk radio (Ewart, 2009). In Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, talkback radio and talk radio are delineated based on the level of pre-arrangement. Talk radio comprises pre-arranged spoken content, primarily interviews, while talkback is in the main, not pre-arranged; it is spontaneous. For example, on the talk-based commercial network Magic Talk, *The AM show,* which runs from 6 to 9 a.m. is *talk radio.* It comprises host commentary and interviews with guests, set-up by the producer before, or during the programme. *Magic Mornings with Peter Williams,* which follows at 9.00 a.m. on weekdays, is *talkback*, with contributing callers screened, but not pre-arranged.

Labels for the talkback format vary internationally. In general, broadcasters and media studies academics in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand use the word *talkback* to refer to the format described by Turner (2009) above.[7] In the United States and United Kingdom, labels include: *talk radio* (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989; Bierig & Dimmick, 1979; Bobbitt, 2010; Douglas, 1999; Hofstetter et al., 1994; Hutchby, 2001; Levin 1987; Romney, 2014; Spangardt et al., 2016; Washbourne, 2010), *phone-in* (Crook, 1998; Hutchby 2001), *open-line* (Hutchby 2006)

[7] These include: Adams and Burton (1997), Ames (2016), Downes and Harcourt (1976), Ewart (2009, 2011a, 2011b), Ewart and Ames (2016), Fitzgerald and Housley (2007), Francis (2002), Gillman (2007), Gould (2009), Griffin-Foley (2010), McGregor (1996), Turner (2001, 2007), Turner et al. (2006), and Ward (2002).

and *call-in* (Herbst, 1995, Perse & Butler, 2005). As an Aotearoa New Zealand-based researcher, I will use the term *talkback.*[8]

Herrera-Damas and Hermida (2014) and Turner's (2009) definitions of talk interaction above can be applied to other radio formats. One of these, *chat-based* radio, takes its name from Tolson's (1991) analysis of televised chat shows. It is a form of talk interaction comprising light-hearted chat and relying on banter and humour between caller and host (Ames, 2016). The use of light-hearted talk interaction within music formats is common. This has been labelled *youth talk* (Francis, 2002, p.211) and *FM talk* (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.416). In this format, an interactive segment is introduced and discussed by the hosts prior to taking calls. It is usually a social conundrum such as: am I a bad person for not allowing my gay brother to come out at my wedding (NZME, 2020a)? The responses are handled in much the same way as in a talkback format. Some callers are put to air and a conversation with the hosts ensues, while email and text responses are also read out. These various versions of interactive talk are adding to the blurring of media definitions (Ames, 2016, p.177). *Talkback* as discussed in the context of this thesis is, by comparison, more serious, foregrounding socio-political issues that have relevance to listeners.

The motivation for listeners to choose talkback is of particular interest because it comes at a time when listening technology offers so many options. Recreational listening choices include podcasts, audio books, e-books, music streaming, live music and, of course, other radio stations both broadcast and internet. Moreover, access to content and the opportunity to interact via a range of devices has never been easier. Emails, texts, and social media posts are now an integral part of radio formats and, in particular, talkback. Digital content is one of the few significant additions to talkback since its adoption as a mainstream format in the mid twentieth century. 'The nature of talkback is changing as programmes are increasingly offering audience members the opportunity to contribute to programmes via email, SMS, and ... websites and social media' (Ewart & Ames, 2016, p.91). If seen as an event, social media platforms, particularly *Facebook* and *Twitter*, have brought a new dynamic to the performance called talkback. It is now a multi-stage live event offering a range of concurrent engagement opportunities for listeners. They can take in the on-air content on the main

[8] Italics are used at times in this thesis to highlight the variation in talkback terms and to add emphasis.

stage, live, while on the off-air stages, they are perusing the station's *Facebook* or *Twitter* page, or the host's own page. Listeners can also listen 'as-live'[9], outside the programme's on-air hours using that station's on-demand facility, if available. In the same way, they can scroll through social media reaction in their own time. However, this retrospective option does not optimise a key aspect of talkback radio which is liveness. This important characteristic of talkback and what it brings in terms of motivation is discussed in Section 4.5.

As a talkback producer in the 1980s, listener motivation was the subject of speculation and assumption in the radio industry. It was assumed that talkback listeners listen because they agree with the views and ideologies expressed by the host and callers. It was assumed that if they did not agree, they would not listen. However, this was based on little, if any, substantive data. Unlike traditional theatre (film or stage) spectators, but like television, radio listeners are a dispersed audience and therefore invisible (Butsch, 2008). It is what makes them more intriguing and possibly frustrating to researchers, and to those wanting to know about them for commercial reasons. Radio salespeople want and need to reduce the unknowability of listeners in order to place advertising for maximum effect (ibid). They want to know, not just how many people are listening (which can be ascertained from audience ratings figures), but also who they are and why they listen. Another industry assumption was that talkback listeners are motivated to listen to the host, rather than the station. The popularity of the host was based not just on audience ratings, but the number of calls they received. If one host got more callers than another, they were assumed to be more popular with listeners. Another method of determining radio host popularity was the response to station promotions within that host's daypart. Unfortunately, this indicator lost its validity due to an incident in 1981 when a promotion on Christchurch radio station 3ZB was found to be rigged.[10] As with talkback, heathy levels of audience participation are not necessarily an indicator of healthy listenership.

[9] Recorded content that has not necessarily been edited and is played back to emulate real time.

[10] The *Cash Connection* promotion (also called Cash Call on other stations within the RNZ commercial network) required the host to announce a specific cash amount at the beginning of each hour. At the end of the hour a random (landline) phone number was rung and if the listener could repeat the amount, they won it. Unfortunately the numbers rung on 3ZB Christchurch's drive time programme were far from random, and were connected to the host. Criminal proceedings followed (*The Press*, March 14, 1981).

The audience participation ratio (callers to listeners) is not the focus of this research project. However, I include an analysis below to validate my earlier statement in this introduction that there are many more listeners than callers. During my time as a radio producer the participation rate was anecdotally cited as 10%; one person in 10 was calling talkback. However, there was little if any evidence to validate that and the figure remained something of a Holy Grail. Bobbitt (2010) suggests that while five percent of a listening audience attempts to participate, those who make it to air, constitute less than one percent.

In contrast to that estimate, in a 2011 report on talkback content *Matters of Opinion: Expectations and Perceptions of Standards in Talkback Radio*, Aotearoa New Zealand's Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA)[11] found that 30% of people have attempted participation and 16% have done so (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2011). However, a critical analysis of this report reveals that the definitions of talkback and talk radio (established above as two separate formats) are melded together.[12] This calls into question the validity of these percentages and the use of the report for setting guidelines for talkback. Another challenge to its validity is the lack of clarification on what is meant by 'participation' (p.13). It makes no reference to digital messages received via text, email and social media posts. This is a significant omission as in 2011 digital content was, and remains today, an important aspect of talkback. Its inclusion allows for higher participation rates than just the traditional talkback telephone call.

My own estimation of the participation ratio is made using as a case study, *Kerre McIvor Mornings*, Newstalk ZB's 9 a.m. to midday talkback programme, and the average weekly 10+ audience figures from the most recent survey data available at the time of this study. The number of calls and digital messages put to air (*x*: an estimate quantified by content analysis) is calculated as a percentage of the number of listeners (*y*: quantified by audience ratings), to give a ratio:

[11] The BSA's role is to develop and uphold broadcasting standards and respond to complaints made by the public (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2019a).

[12] The purpose of the report was to 'clarify the expectations listeners have of broadcasting standards in relation to talkback radio'. One finding was that 28% of the audience listened to *talkback radio* between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. (the traditional weekday breakfast daypart). However, neither of the two nation-wide talk-based networks were running *talkback* in their breakfast dayparts at the time of the study (Francis, 2002, p.9). Instead, the format was talk radio, as defined earlier in this section. The exception to this was Newstalk ZB as Leighton Smith's morning talkback programme began at 8.30 a.m.

$$\frac{\textit{(x) calls and digital messages on air per week}}{\textit{(y) 10+ listening audience figures per week}} \times \frac{100}{1} = \text{participation ratio}$$

The 10+ listening audience figure is taken from the GFK radio audience ratings of Survey 1, 2020 (GFK, 2020b). The 'number of calls put to air and digital messages read out' figure was calculated based on the following:

- The average talkback phone call is three to four minutes long. Allowing for a maximum of 10 calls per hour, in a three-hour programme, there will be approximately 30 callers per day, equalling 150 callers per week (Monday to Friday).
- An edited individual digital message (email, text, or social media post) takes approximately 10 seconds to read.[13] Hosts will generally combine approximately four edited messages into one 'multi-message read'. There may be up to five multi-messages read in an hour. This equates to 20 digital message per hour, 60 per day, equalling 300 digital messages per week (Monday to Friday).
- If phone calls and digital messages are combined, approximately 450 active participants (*x*) are represented in one week on *Kerre McIvor Mornings.*
- The cumulative number of 10+ listeners to this programme, Monday to Friday, according to GFK ratings at S1, 2020 is 240,300 (GFK, 2020b), *(y).*
- The numbers of calls and digital messages put to air does *not* include those who want to participate but cannot get through. Carolyn Leaney (producer) estimates that only 50% of those who called the on-air number were put to air in her programme, and not all digital contributions are read out (C. Leaney, personal communication, February 19, 2018). Using these figures, the estimate is seen as:

$$\frac{450}{240{,}300} \times \frac{100}{1} = .2\ \%\ \text{of the talkback audience participate}$$

I consider this to be a generous estimate. I have erred on the side of more contributions than fewer, and have not allowed for those who contributed more than once, to provide the most conservative estimate of the ratio. This low percentage concurs with Bobbitt's (2010) estimate above.

[13] Based on extended periods of listening to Newstalk ZB talkback content.

Turner (2007) describes some studies of talkback as being done 'in a relatively cavalier fashion projecting an account of the talkback audience without much in the way of evidence to support it' (p.75). This may be attributable to the need for qualitative data. While we can deduce trends regarding choice of station or network, in regard to age, from the quantitative audience survey data, the motivation to listen must be done qualitatively. This study of talkback listening motivation will apply a Grounded Theory framework to data sourced from interviews with listeners and industry participants. The decision to gather data from industry as well as listeners was based on the premise that the job of the industry participants, talkback producer, host or management, is to curate and deliver caller content to attract listeners. This in turn requires an understanding of what motivates a potential listener.

1.4 A history of talkback radio: *Te whakapapa o whakawhitiwhiti kōrero ā reo irirangi*

> *The combination of telephone and radio 'will develop into the most sophisticated form of entertainment in any media . . . and will continue to improve until it is the most advanced form of 'instant communication' ever known (B&T, 1968, cited by Tebbutt, 2006).*

I have chosen to use the Māori word *whakapapa* in the title of this section on the history of talkback radio as it can be applied in two ways. In *te reo Māori* (the Māori language) the term whakapapa is commonly used to refer to genealogy or history. At a *hui* (gathering) it is not uncommon to be asked 'who do you whakapapa to?' which is another way of asking: who are you related to and what is your relevance to this place and this hui? In te reo Māori, whakapapa is also defined as the action of placing one layer upon another (Ngata, 1972 as cited by Taonui, 2015). This is particularly relevant to the history and development of talkback radio because the format is the result of one layer of experimental interactive technology being placed upon another.

The first of these layers was the telegraph, developed by Samuel Morse, amongst others (Phalen, 2014). On 24 May, 1844, the message 'What hath God wrought?' was sent from Washington DC to Baltimore using Morse's technology (ibid, p.16). This heralded a new era of communication and hinted at the interactive possibilities ahead (Carey, 2009). The second layer was put in place on 10 March, 1876, when Alexander Graham Bell famously summoned his assistant to his office using his newly developed telephone (Credo, 2018). Telephone

technology reached Aotearoa New Zealand two years later in 1878, with the first telephone demonstration linking Blenheim and Nelson. From 50 subscribers in 1880 the number rose rapidly to 25,000 by 1910 (Wilson, 2010).

The rapid growth in popularity of the telephone combined with limited supply had unintended consequences for would-be listeners-in. The party line provided subscribers the opportunity to listen (or more accurately, eavesdrop) on their neighbours' activities and opinions.[14] In her history of Canadian telephone culture, Michèle Martin (2012), citing 1936 Bell Canada Archives, noted that 'everybody listens, but very, very, few ever admit that they do' (p.339).[15] Martin cites a *Harper's* magazine article of 1909 that tells of placing a party-line telephone receiver on the pillow of a person who was sick or bedridden. This provided companionship as it allowed the person to hear what was happening in the community, with no requirement to participate. Martin notes that this listening-in wasn't considered eavesdropping, instead it was seen by some as 'participation in community life' (p.338).[16] It is no coincidence that Aotearoa New Zealand's first wholly issue-based talkback programme in 1968, in which listeners heard people in their community expressing opinions, was titled *Party Line*.[17]

As the popularity of telephone technology grew, the third layer, broadcast radio, or 'the wireless', arrived. In a 1921 article entitled 'Wireless Wonders', the *Otago Daily Times* suggested that it was 'very much more wonderful than the average man has any idea of', and points towards the 'dazzling possibilities' it held for the future (23 August 1921, p.2). In Downes and Harcourt's (1976) history of Aotearoa New Zealand radio, Professor Robert Jack of Otago University is credited with the country's first radio (or wireless telephony) broadcast on 17 November 1921 from Dunedin. However, media historian Patrick Day (1994) gives the honour to radio operators on board at least two foreign vessels who used their equipment to

[14] This sharing system allowed access to telephone technology in areas where the number of people wanting their own telephone outnumbered the available telephone lines. Within each area, a group (or party) of telephone subscribers would be allocated a specific ring tone to alert them that the incoming call was intended for them. Eavesdropping on your neighbour's private conversations was as easy as picking up the receiver when you heard their ring tone. If you were quiet, you could do so undetected. The party line was used in rural areas in Aotearoa New Zealand until the end of the twentieth century (Gregory, 2000). They were in use in some provincial areas until at least 1960, including Whangarei, where my own family shared a line with two others in our street.

[15] This reaction mirrors a common response to 'do you listen to talkback radio?', as I found when recruiting participants.

[16] The notion of talkback as a form of eavesdropping is discussed further in Section 4.9

[17] Social issues had featured in *Telephone Time*, Aotearoa New Zealand's first talkback programme (Kelso, 1980)

play music for the enjoyment of fellow seaman but inadvertently broadcast to those on land who happened to be listening in on receivers.

Less than five years after these broadcasts, radio pioneers in both Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia began experimenting with the combining of telephone and radio technology. In 1925 radio station 2BL, Sydney invited listeners to call in and ask questions of a guest in the radio studio (Griffen-Foley, 2009). In 1926, station 2KY Sydney began a Monday night programme presciently, and somewhat hopefully, called *Talk Back*. However, Griffen-Foley suggests that due to regulations set by the Postmaster-General's office, the questions from those who called were most likely to have been written down and passed on to the host. In 1927 an experiment on station 1YA in Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand was reported in the *New Zealand Herald:*

> Mr J. M. Prentice [host] was in charge of a system whereby any listener could connect on the ordinary telephone with him and ask a question on foreign politics. Both the questioner's voice as well as the reply by Mr Prentice could be heard by listeners (*NZ Herald*, 12 May, 1927, p.17)

The response to Prentice's invitation 'jammed the lines' (Perkins, 1996). Downes and Harcourt (1976) state that 'there, in essence, was what became known in radio 50 years later as the "talkback programme"' (p.30). However, as with the Australian experiment that was stymied by that country's Postmaster-General's office, the New Zealand Post and Telegraph department, which regulated broadcasting, did not approve and the experiment remained just that (Downes & Harcourt, 1976; Griffen-Foley 2009; Perkins 1996). Around the same time similar experiments were being trialled in the United States. In late April 1927, WRNY New York host Hugo Gernsback put callers to air in what the *Washington Post* called 'a stunt'. In late January 1929, KSTP Minnesota put calls to air to allow the fans of popular musician 'Little' John Little to speak to him (Halper, 2009, p.11).

Another experiment in 1932, also in the USA, had a longer-term outcome. Radio historian Jason Loviglio tells the story of *Vox Pop,* the first programme to be comprised entirely of the thoughts and voices of the general public. Devised by two Houston advertising executives, it required the radio host to dangle the microphone out the window of the studio and ask passers-by questions on current events. The notion of a host and a member of the public having an unrehearsed issue-based conversation clearly resonated with listeners as the

programme ran for 16 years (Loviglio, 2012). It contained the key elements found in talkback: host, caller, issues and listeners. According to Romney (2014), talkback began appearing as a regular format in American programme schedules by the late 1950s.[18] Across the Atlantic talkback began in the United Kingdom in 1968 on BBC Radio Nottingham (Crisell, 2002). The BBC, under a Harold Wilson-led Labour government, was seeking to democratise the medium (ibid, p.147). This echoed dramatist Bertolt Brecht's classic vision of radio as a two-way medium that allowed the ordinary, person-on-the-street, to become a broadcaster (Brecht, 1932:1993).

In Australia, talkback began in 1967. Broadcasters had observed the development of the format in the United Sates and were keen to introduce 'conversation programming' (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.348) or 'two-way radio' (Tebbutt, 2006, p.857) to Australia. As was the case internationally, the random nature of the content was a key hurdle; a caller gone rogue in terms of language or perhaps libel, live on air, could not be tolerated. The answer was to record the conversation and replay it a few seconds later, giving the host or producer, enough time to 'dump' the call should those situations occur. In Australia however, the regulations of the Postmaster General's department stated that it was illegal to record phone calls. In 1966, bowing to pressure from the commercial radio sector, the department developed its own seven-second delay system and in 1967 gave the go-ahead for talkback, as long as that system was used (Ewart, 2011a; Gould, 2007, 2009; Griffen-Foley, 2010; Turner, 2007, 2009, 2010).

News of the talkback concept used in the USA, had also reached Aotearoa New Zealand. Broadcasters were able to put it into action in 1965, two years before Australia. Like her fellow broadcasters from Australia, Prudence Gregory, New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation's (NZBC) Supervisor of Women's Programmes, learned of the new format while on a study visit to the USA in 1965 (Day, 2000; Downes & Harcourt, 1976). Keen to employ it, but unsure if listeners would take to the concept, the NZBC agreed to trial the format on 2XB, Masterton, a small rural community station; it was to be hosted by 2XB announcer Jessica Weddell.[19] The

[18] The exact dates are not given in Romney (2014). The approximation of 'late 50s' arises from establishing that Herb Jepko, who went on to be the first networked talkback host in America, spent a short time at KFI, Los Angeles hosting an existing talkback programme, *Night Owl.* According to Romney, Jepko left KFI in 1961, hence my approximation that the programme *Night Owl* was already established 'by the late 1950s'.

[19] In a 1994 interview, Weddell who went on to become a host on National Radio, explained: 'if the thing went down the tubes in Masterton, it wouldn't be too much of a disaster' (Johnston, 2016).

trial was a success and the concept was introduced to NZBC commercial stations all over Aotearoa New Zealand.

In Wellington, 2ZB afternoon personality Doreen Kelso, introduced her audience to a new radio segment at 2 p.m. on 4 October, 1965.

> This is I feel your part in our programme … the number is 70015 … I'm afraid of course that we can't discuss religion or politics (*Telephone Time, October 4, 1965,* [Radio broadcast] 2ZB Wellington).

The segment sat within a two and a half hour afternoon programme called *Person to Person,* aimed at a female audience. Over the next hour, callers rang asking for advice on burnt saucepans, how to get ink off wallpaper and carpet ('someone's been careless' said Doreen) and a number of other domestic crises. Callers gave their full names and their phone numbers,[20] and listeners who had a solution were asked by Kelso to telephone the caller with the information (Nga Taonga Sound & Vision, n.d.). A young 2ZB producer at the time, Johnny Douglas,[21] nicknamed it the 'recipe and stain show' (Douglas, 2008). However, in her autobiography Kelso (1980) notes that as well as solving household issues, the programme also ran 'topic days' on which callers were encouraged to call on current issues such as abortion and compulsory unionism. This was Aotearoa New Zealand's first talkback programme and featured on all NZBC community radio stations (Johnston, 2016; Downes & Harcourt, 1976). While recipes and stains are less likely to feature as topics on contemporary talkback,[22] the format remains much the same. Talkback is a programme comprising on-air interactivity between a host and callers who have rung of their own volition and is broadcast not for the caller, but for the listener.

In case Kelso's warning about the tabu topics of religion and politics (and presumably the missing third topic which clearly did not even bear mention in that first programme) was not observed, a delay system was used, as Johnny Douglas explains:

> If a woman lost her trolley, and said a rude word, she could be cut off. Or more importantly if she libelled somebody: [for example] 'as far as I'm concerned, this current so-and-so is a dishonest prat', that wouldn't have been allowed (Douglas, 2008).

[20] A rare practice today due to privacy expectations.
[21] Johnny Douglas would later become Head of the Radio New Zealand commercial network.
[22] Former talkback producer Carolyn Leaney notes that current (as at the time of writing) Newstalk ZB evening host Marcus Lush has covered topics such as getting rid of mosquitos, and recipes for buttermilk bread (Leaney, Producer).

As in Australia, talkback content on stations in Aotearoa New Zealand initially targeted women (Day, 2000; Turner, 2007, 2009). Women were more likely to be at home and therefore within range of the household radio.[23] However, in March 1967, *Telephone Time's* popularity began to fade as its listeners were drawn away by the novelty of afternoon television beginning at 2 p.m. (Day, 2000; Kelso, 1980; *NZ Listener*, 1967).[24] Prior to this date, transmission on the single television channel began at 5 p.m.[25] *Telephone Time* and its 'parent' programme, *Person to Person,* ended in April 1974 (NZ Listener, 1974).

Aotearoa New Zealand's first wholly general interest and issue-based talkback programme *Party Line*, a half-hour programme, began at 6.02 p.m. on 5 February 1968 on 2ZB, Wellington. (Douglas, 2008; *NZ Listener*, 1968a). This would appear to be an optimum time for household radio listening in the late 1960s. Most workers would have been home, and even if the household had a television, the evening news programme, which was considered the unofficial 'start' of the evening's viewing, was not until 7.30.p.m.[26] *Party Line* was hosted by former Radio Hauraki DJ Paddy O'Donnell. This was a bold choice by 2ZB and its parent organisation, the NZBC. O'Donnell was known for his 'colourful' and 'incorrigible' on-air style and his 'impish' sense of humour (Blundell, 2009). His maverick style stood out on the NZBC known, like the BBC, as 'Aunty' (*The Guardian*, 2011). According to Douglas (2008) the mandate of *Party Line* was to:

> Open the lines and let people talk about issues of the day, and boy, that was considered daring … the finger was on the dump button all the time just in case someone criticised somebody … everybody [producers and management] sat there with beads of perspiration on their foreheads because of what might be said (Douglas, 2008)

The use of the delay system to censor a caller who expressed a critical view of someone highlights how issue-based talkback differed from other content on NZBC radio stations at the time, even on the commercial stations. The NZBC was essentially a government department working to a conservative framework. From its inception in the late 1920s, the organisation

[23] However, some within the NZBC (including Weddell), recognised that there were men available to listen in the afternoon. This led to what can be seen as the progressive rebranding (and lengthening) of the afternoon segment from *Women's Hour* to *Person to Person* (Johnston, 2016)

[24] I observed this first-hand as my mother, a keen listener and caller to her local radio station ('Val of Onerahi'), lost interest in *Telephone Time*, when we acquired our first television set in 1969.

[25] The programme genre most associated with afternoon television, soap operas *Days of Our Lives* and *The Young and the Restless* began on TVNZ in July and August, 1975 respectively.

[26] Rather than a hosted network news as has been the norm on Aotearoa New Zealand television since 1970, in 1968 the 7.30 p.m. news programme comprised '*film of events, views and items of topical interest' (NZ Listener, 1968b).*

was modelled on the BBC with its 'elitist' Reithian views, named for Sir John Reith, the first director-general of the BBC. Reith saw broadcasting as an opportunity to 'educate and enlighten people in the ways of quality' (Day, 1994, p.90). According to Lacey (2013a) the BBC under Reith was 'as much as anything, a moral crusade' (p.182). Reith's views were shared by W.J. Bellingham, who in 1927 was appointed the first director of music for New Zealand's Radio Broadcasting Company, the predecessor of the NZBC. Bellingham believed that 'the duty of broadcasting was to give people not necessarily what they wanted but what was good for them' (Day, 1994, p.89). (This uplifting ideology had a good chance of being realised due to the lack of competition from other broadcast media in the 1920s.) Despite the nearly four decades that had elapsed, between Bellingham and O'Donnell, many of these conservative standards and codes about what went to air still applied to *Party Line* in 1968. In my experience, they continued for at least another decade into the mid-1970s when my own career began.

Despite trepidation about the listeners' acceptance of *Party Line,* by the end of 1968, 2ZB management appears to have judged it a success. The half hour duration was extended to just under an hour, running from 6.05 p.m. until 7 p.m., and the programme was extended from four to five nights a week (*NZ Listener,* 1968a 1968b, 1968c). A contributing factor to the popularity of *Party Line* with 2ZB's listeners may have been its timing. The 1960s was a period of social and technological change both global and in Aotearoa New Zealand. In 1963 a conservative government led by Prime Minister Keith Holyoake was elected to parliament under the campaign slogan 'Steady does it'. However, by the second half of the 1960s, the public mood had changed, due in part to the introduction of television. The public was now more aware and informed on national and international issues, including the Vietnam War, in which young New Zealanders played a controversial part (King, 2003). *Party Line* gave Wellington radio listeners the opportunity to hear issues debated on radio by people like themselves. Compared with the more formal interviews conducted within a news or current affairs context on radio and television at the time, talkback was informal, instantaneous, spontaneous, and entertaining. Not surprisingly, within a short time, other stations, particularly private radio, looked to introduce the format.

Private radio began in Aotearoa New Zealand, albeit illegally, with the launching of Radio Hauraki in 1966.[27] In 1968 the government set up the Broadcasting Authority[28] as a separate entity from the NZBC. As well as regulating broadcasting standards, it also took on the role of licencing private radio. Besides Radio Hauraki, another licence in the Auckland region was granted to Radio i in 1970.[29] This can be seen as an important landmark in Aotearoa New Zealand's talkback whakapapa, as the management of Radio i recognised the appeal and commercial possibilities of talkback (Day, 2000). Located in the country's biggest radio market, the station had a significant influence on how talkback would evolve over the following decades. Francis (2002) observes that the résumé of the morning host Eccles Smith - doctor by profession, divorced, and with some knowledge of psychology - made him particularly well qualified to be a talkback host. The station's on-air line-up featured journalist and media personality Gordon Dryden and the 'entertaining, rude, argumentative and addictive' combination of Geoff Sinclair and Tim Bickerstaff, who brought a more combative style of talkback (Francis, 2002, p.96-97). A typical example of Sinclair and Bickerstaff's capacity to shock came in 1972 when Bickerstaff encouraged New Zealanders to 'Punch a Pom a day' (Day, 2000).[30] This was new territory for talkback in Aotearoa New Zealand and while critically spurned by those who preferred a more traditional approach to talk-based radio content, it still attracted a keen following (Francis, 2002). Similarly, in Wellington, television journalist Brian Edwards had his own three-hour morning show of 'solid talk', on Radio Windy (Day, 2000, p.280). Talkback's popularity with listeners was growing. By the early 1970s, so great was it (and, possibly, so small was Aotearoa New Zealand's population) that even the Prime Minister, Norman Kirk, was prompted to ring a talkback programme on one occasion to correct a caller (Downes & Harcourt, 1976).

[27] Radio Hauraki was a ship-borne pirate radio station modelling itself on its British counterpart, Radio Caroline, moored outside of Aotearoa New Zealand's territorial waters, and began broadcasting to the Auckland region. It was finally granted a license in 1970. (Pauling, 2014a)

[28] This independent body can be seen as a forerunner of the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA).

[29] The 'i' in the name of this station is capitalised in Francis (2002), but not in Pauling (2014a) or Day (2000). I have chosen to use the lower-case version as it was used in this way as the station's visual logo.

[30] Day refers to the campaign as 'Punch a Pom a day'. However, it has also been called 'Bash a Pom a day' (Phillips, 2015; Francis, 2002). Bickerstaff's motivation also differs according to source. Day (1994) and Gifford (2009) attribute it to the sending home of All Black Keith Murdoch by British rugby authorities during the 1972/3 All Blacks tour of Britain. Francis (2002) associates it with the prevalence in the media of union leaders with strong working class English accents. Phillips references it simply as 'anti-British'.

In 1978, Gordon Dryden started his own talk station, Radio Manukau, which a year later became Radio Pacific, (Boni, 2000; Pauling 2014a; Shanahan, 2005). In contrast to the confrontational style of talkback heard on Radio i, Dryden's vision was a talk radio station that informed and interacted with its listeners, and reflected the local, multi-ethnic community. It could be listened to by the whole family, reminiscent of the gather-around-the-radio style of listening associated with pre-television days when radio was the traditional electronic heart of the household. Rather than shocking listeners as Radio i was doing, he wanted to educate them, seeing the potential of a 'university of the air' (Francis, 2002, p.73).[31] Dryden's ideology was an echo of Bellingham's good intentions 50 years earlier.

However, with more radio and media in general, to choose from, the listeners ignored what might have been good for them and instead chose what they wanted to listen to, which, for many, wasn't Radio Pacific. In 1984, with the station in financial difficulties as a result of the low audience ratings, a new managing director and programme director, former Radio Hauraki 'pirate' Derek Lowe, was appointed. Lowe introduced a new approach, targeting the 40+ listeners with open-line talkback and networking the station to other centres. The station almost immediately began an upward trajectory in its ratings, albeit in the older demographics (Francis, 2002). The network continued to target this demographic successfully, with its best years, according to Francis, being in the early 1990s. Radio Pacific has since gone through two reincarnations, becoming Radio Live in 2010, and Magic Talk in January 2019, (*NZ Herald*, 2018). Through both, it has retained its talk radio and talkback format profile.

The 1980s saw an important shift in commercial radio listening behaviours in the United States (Douglas, 1999; 2002). This was to impact the popularity and accessibility of talkback and was echoed in Aotearoa New Zealand. With the advent of music-friendly FM frequencies in the previous decade, those music stations still on AM found they could not compete and 'abandoned' the task of trying to do so (Douglas, 1999, p.288). However, those AM stations with a talk-based format continued to draw an audience and as a result, some music stations chose to switch to talk and talkback. Douglas notes that the high initial costs of setting up

[31] Dryden cut short his own education at 14, leaving school and lying about his age to become a journalist at *Truth* newspaper (Smith, 2019)

talkback facilities were offset by increased station revenues. This was attributed to an increase in advertising as advertisers recognised the advantages of talkback's 'foreground aspect'. Talkback listeners were found to be more likely to pay attention to what was being said whether it was host, caller or advertisement; 'talk makes good business sense' (Francis, 2002). Music listeners, however, were more likely to cognitively background advertising content, making that format less attractive to some advertisers. This listening behaviour known as 'tap-listening' is discussed in Section 2.2. Another advantage to the adoption of a talkback format was listener loyalty. Broadcasters found that if a talkback listener liked what they heard, they were more likely to keep coming back to that station, which was ideal for advertisers. Audience rating trends showed listeners turning to content that was 'unpredictable, incendiary and participatory' (Douglas, 2002, p. 488). The trend became the focus of attention from other media; in 1984 *Time* magazine reflected this in an article titled 'Why Audiences Love to Hate Them' (Time, 1984).

In March 1987, reflecting the USA experience, a decision was made by RNZ that 'alter[ed] the radio landscape forever' (Francis, 2006, p.225) in Aotearoa New Zealand, and particularly in Auckland. At this time 1ZB, Auckland, an AM station, was in crisis. The previous year, it had celebrated 50 years of providing its audience a mix of music, personality and talk, an all-things-to-all-people format that had worked well in the pre-FM era. However, the combination of the departure of its long-time breakfast host Merv Smith earlier in the year (NZME, n.d) and the competition from FM and other stations in an increasingly well-served market, brought matters to a head (Francis, 2006). Leighton Smith's talkback programme on 1ZB between 9 a.m. and midday, was already a success. Station Manager Brent Harman and RNZ management decided to build on this base and move the station to a newstalk format (talk and talkback content marketed as content that 'informed and entertained').

The switch in formats was made at 6am, Monday, 16 March 1987 with little fanfare, so as not to alert the competition. Unfortunately, the lack of fanfare was reflected in the lack of resources and facilities to produce a wholly talk-based format. Paul Holmes, well known in Wellington for his 9 a.m. to midday talkback show, but relatively unknown in the Auckland market, had been brought up from the capital to be the new breakfast host. As the producer of Holmes's breakfast show on the first day of Newstalk ZB, my memory is one of a chaotic

and expletive-ridden scramble for content.[32] The format change had occurred while the station was 'in survey' and the initial response from loyal 1ZB listeners was not encouraging. I was among the staff members who, three weeks following the change, received the news from Harman that the survey showed listeners deserting the station in droves; it had gone from first to sixth place in the ratings (Francis, 2006). Despite this drop and the accompanying pressure from concerned advertisers, RNZ and Newstalk ZB management chose to stay with the new format. Over time the station recovered and in the 1990s the format was networked throughout the country. Former BBC radio producer Carolyn Leaney[33] who had returned to Aotearoa New Zealand from England in 1988 to take up the role of Newstalk ZB producer on Leighton Smith's 9 a.m. to midday slot, recalls hearing the station for the first time and comparing it to the style of radio she'd left behind:

> There was no radio like it in England … [It was] a wonderful freestyle sort of format, it moved at pace, lots of light and shade … and relied on the strength of its personality (Smith, 2013, p.55).

In 1993 the station took another important step and purchased an FM frequency to allow it to simulcast on both AM and FM (Francis, 2006). Francis describes the ratings success that followed as 'beyond [management's] wildest dreams' (p.243). Since then Newstalk ZB has continued to dominate audience ratings (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2), building on the attraction of interactive media.

Media historian Andrew Crisell (2002) describes talkback as 'almost … the first interactive form of mass communication'; Adams and Burton (1997) describe it as the first.[34] The history of talkback comprises layers of experimental interactivity combined to produce a source of entertainment for the listener. These include John Prentice's 1927 invitation to Auckland callers to join a round table discussion, the hanging of a microphone out a studio window in the 1930s, and the use of vacant AM frequencies for talk rather than music in the 1980s. The technological development in the 1960s, allowing a station to record a caller's voice and replay it a few seconds later, addressed important concerns about censorship and content

[32] At the time (pre-internet) Newstalk ZB's studios and its newsroom were in two separate buildings in central Auckland, several blocks apart. This made communication difficult between journalists responsible for providing the 'news' in Newstalk, and on-air staff. I lasted 10 days on the breakfast show before moving to another daypart. Despite my experience, Francis (2006) describes the first programme: 'It has shape, sounds pacey ... in hindsight one can hear the makings of a product to which listeners could undoubtedly eventually warm' (p.230).

[33] Leaney remained as Leighton Smith's morning talkback producer until his retirement in December 2017.

[34] Non-electronic interactivity, however, has always existed in the form of letters and cards sent via posted mail to media hosts.

management. It opened the door for talkback to become a popular, mainstream format. Apart from the addition of posts from digital media platforms, the essence of talkback content has remained much the same since it began: a conversation between hosts and callers, broadcast not for callers, but for the benefit of listeners.

1.5 Aotearoa New Zealand's radio market: An overview

Aotearoa New Zealand radio listeners are among the most well-served in the world with more radio frequencies per capita than any other country (The Radio Bureau, 2020f). Both the commercial sector and the non-commercial RNZ networks use international data collection and analysis company GFK to gather audience ratings. Both markets are surveyed four times in a regular year, albeit that commercial and non-commercial market survey dates vary slightly.[35] GFK's data collection system uses a cohort comprising 80% of listeners recruited face-to-face, and who are asked to complete paper diaries, and 20% recruited online, completing e-diaries (GFK 2020a). Additionally, the two major radio companies in Aotearoa New Zealand, NZME and Mediaworks, can enumerate those who listen via digital audio platforms *iHeartradio* and *Rova* respectively.

Radio ratings from the most current survey available at the time of writing, January to March 2020 survey period (S1, 2020), show that 76% of Aotearoa New Zealanders (10+) or 3.3 million people listen to commercial radio on a weekly basis.[36] This is an increase of 29,800 listeners on the last survey of commercial stations in 2019 (S4, 2019) (The Radio Bureau, 2020d). Non-commercial RNZ National, also showed a significant increase in its audience figures for the first survey of 2020; 654,300 (weekly cume) listened to the public broadcaster, an increase of 53,700 listeners, which is 12.6% of the radio listening audience. RNZ National is predominantly talk-based but does not include talkback so it was not included in data collection for this study. It does, however, utilise digital interactivity received from its audience via email, text, and social media in the same way as Newstalk ZB and Magic Talk. This is relevant because digital engagement is a significant part of talkback content.

[35] 2020 has seen changes to the radio industry's survey schedule due to the COVID-19 crisis. The January to March 2020 survey period (cited as Survey 1 or S1,2020) was cut short by one week, while both the April to May survey and June to August surveys were cancelled (GFK, 2020a).

[36] This figure needs to be considered in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand's population of just over 5 million as at October 2020 (Statistics NZ, 2020).

Increases in listening for both the commercial and non-commercial networks can potentially be attributed to the local and international impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which was becoming apparent in the final weeks of both surveys. Increased radio listening via audio streaming platform *iHeartradio* during this time is noted in the Introduction section of this chapter. The two mainstream commercial networks, Newstalk ZB[37] and Magic Talk[38], include talkback (as distinct from talk radio) as a significant and regular portion of their schedules. Talkback features on these two networks in the following dayparts (start and end times vary slightly between networks):

- Mornings: 9 a.m. to midday
- Afternoons: midday to 4 p.m.
- Evenings: 7 or 8 p.m. to midnight
- Overnights: midnight to 5 or 6 a.m. (Mediaworks Radio, 2020; NZME, 2020b).

According to S1,2020, Newstalk ZB attracts weekday audiences of 240,300; 227,800; 175,600 and 160,400 for these dayparts respectively (GFK 2020b).[39] Magic Talk's audience figures cannot be added to these to achieve a combined tally of mainstream talkback listeners because their ratings are bundled together with those for their sister station, Magic Music.

Some targeted stations and networks also feature talkback including:

1. Some of the 21 stations in the Iwi Radio Network, Irirangi.net (Te Whakaruruhau o Te Reo Irirangi Māori, 2020).[40]
2. Ethnic Radio stations targeting communities including Indian, Pacific Islands and Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin)
3. Rhema Media, a Christian media organisation comprising three brands with more than 100 frequencies in cities and towns throughout Aotearoa New Zealand (Rhema Media, 2020a)

For the first two of these, talkback is one segment of a wider content mix, including music, lifestyle content, interviews, news. In some cases, it is a spontaneous addition to a

[37] Part of Aotearoa New Zealand Media and Entertainment (NZME).
[38] Part of Mediaworks NZ, formerly Radio Live.
[39] Audience numbers are only available for specific dayparts; no total daily talkback audience figure is available because audience numbers are cumulative, not unique, across their dayparts. 'Daypart cumes [cannot be added] together because listeners may be listening in both sessions and duplication will occur' (The Radio Bureau, 2020a, Radioinfo, 2020).
[40] Stations in this network are run by local *iwi*, the collective noun for the *tangata whenua* (the indigenous people) of one region, or those who whakapapa (descend from) an eponymous ancestor (Moorfield, n.d.)

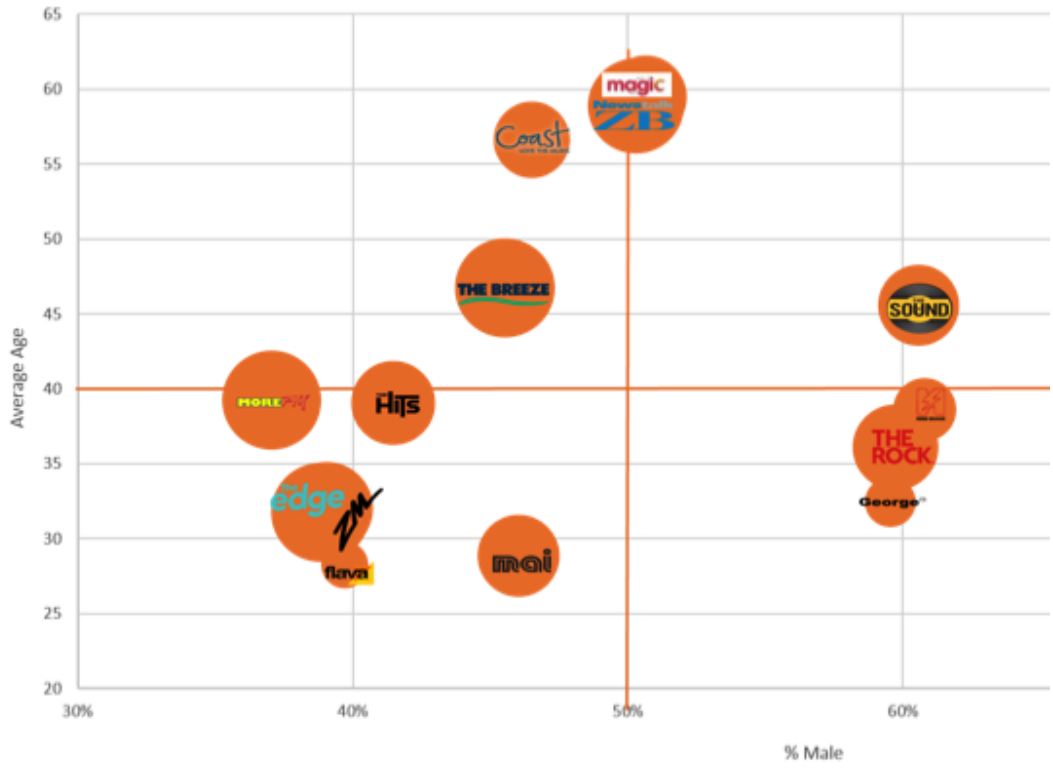
programme rather than a regular slot. The third, Radio Rhema features talkback on Sunday nights from 7 to 9 p.m.

In March 2020, talkback-heavy Radio Sport, an NZME-owned network, closed. This was attributed to financial pressures from a reduction in advertising revenue and the cancellation of sporting events, both brought about by the COVID-19 outbreak (Pullar-Strecker, 2020). Despite its closure, data gathered regarding the network and sports talkback in general, is included in this study as it contributes to the body of knowledge about talkback listening. None of the five university radio stations contacted for this study run talkback as part of their content. Sean Norling, the station manager of Radio One, the station affiliated with the University of Otago in Dunedin, explains:

> These types of programmes tend to have been replaced by open comms/polling /feedback that happens in the social media sphere (Personal communication, February 28, 2020, Sean Norling).

Norling's comment speaks to the skew towards older demographics found in an analysis of talkback audiences (and talk radio in general).

Figure 1.3: *NZ Commercial Radio Network Matrix Showing Age and Gender Skew*



Note. From The Radio Bureau (2020e)

Figure 1.3 shows the age and gender skew across 13 of Aotearoa New Zealand's commercial networks. Average audiences for both talkback-heavy networks, Newstalk ZB and Magic Talk are shown to be in the 55 to 65-year age range. This reflects the observation that the talkback audience undergoes replenishment when listeners traditionally start turning to the format as they move into a life-stage that involves them seeking information and opinion around, for example, buying a house, or educating their children (Francis, 2002). This trend towards a talk-based format is also likely to be a consequence of listeners losing touch with current music trends and choosing either a music station featuring older music, or a station offering information, opinion, and company.

Table 1.1 (below) shows an anomaly found in the Auckland ratings for Newstalk ZB and contemporary music station MaiFM. The two stations consistently rank in the top three stations in Auckland in the 10+ demographic. However, this is not repeated in the 'Total NZ' figures. In S1,2020, in the *Auckland* market, Newstalk ZB is ranked at #1 and MaiFM #2, while in the same survey the *Total NZ* market figures show Newstalk ZB ranked at #1 while MaiFM is at #11. These results reflect similar rankings in the previous four surveys. Anecdotal speculation puts Newstalk ZB's and MaiFM's success in the Auckland market in part down to their place on the FM frequency spectrum, (89.4 and 88.6 respectively) combined with the seemingly random fact that a high number of Japanese car imports arrive in Aotearoa New Zealand every year.[41] This is relevant because while internationally FM frequencies range from 88 to 108 MHz, in Japan the FM frequency bandwidth is 76 to 90 MHz. As a result, many used cars imported into Aotearoa New Zealand from Japan have radios with this restricted bandwidth which in turn restricts their occupant's listening options.[42] One participant in this study explained:

> The reason I listen to Newstalk ZB is because I have a Japanese car. And when I bought the car, I had a band expander which gave me full access to lots of stations, so I did not listen to it really at all. And then something broke so I have two choices: MaiFM or Newstalk ZB (Listener C, personal communication, September 9, 2018).

[41] In 2019, more than 131,000 used light vehicles and over 2000 heavy vehicles were imported from Japan into Aotearoa New Zealand (Ministry of Transport, 2020).

[42] The restrictive nature of Japanese import car radios is seen as a problem by the Radio Broadcasters Association, a radio industry marketing organisation. Its website advises radio listeners how to get the band width widened to allow for a wider range of stations (Radio Broadcasters Association, 2020b)

Table 1.1: *10+ Audience Share and Rankings in Auckland and Total NZ Markets for Newstalk ZB and Mai FM.*

	Auckland	**Total NZ**
Survey 1, 2020 10+		
	Rank (by share)	Rank (by share)
Newstalk ZB	1st (14.2)	1st (12.6)
Mai FM	3rd (8.4)	11th (4.7)
Survey 4, 2019 10+		
Newstalk ZB	1st (12.2)	1st (11.2)
Mai FM	2nd (9.1)	10th (5.0)
Survey 3, 2019 10+		
Newstalk ZB	1st (12.7)	1st (11.0)
Mai FM	2nd (7.7)	11th (4.5)
Survey 2, 2019 10+		
Newstalk ZB	1st (15.3)	1st (12.4)
Mai FM	3rd (7.0)	11th (4.3)
Survey 1, 2019 10+		
Newstalk ZB	1st (14.6)	1st (12.0)
Mai FM	2nd (11.1)	9th (5.9)

Note: From GFK (2020b)

In Auckland, Newstalk ZB on 89.4 MHz and Mai FM on 88.6MHz are the only two mainstream stations under the 90MHz, making them readily accessibly to the drivers of Japanese imports and potentially giving both stations an advantage over their competitors.[43] However, while a well placed FM frequency may be a contributing factor to Newstalk ZB's success in the Auckland market, as it also maintains the #1 position in audience share 10+ across all Aotearoa New Zealand markets, it is clearly not the only factor in its success.

1.6 Summary

The reasons listeners choose to listen to a mediated one-on-one conversation between two people the listener has never met, and is unlikely to meet, will differ between talkback

[43] This circumstance is compounded by the amount of time potential radio listeners spend commuting. In 2015, Auckland commuters spent on average just under five hours per week in their cars (Christiansen, et al., 2016). In 2019, commuters spent an average of spend 85 hours in motorway congestion (Automobile Association, 2019)

listeners. It can be presumed however, that some form of gratification or need is being fulfilled by the listener. It has a value to the listener. Why they listen has value to media and cultural studies. This Grounded Theory study will use the lens of listening theory, in particular Kate Lacey's (2013a) *Listening Publics,* to analyse talkback as a media form and why, despite being stigmatised, it is so popular. Lacey states that the study of listening is 'embedded in the complex realities of unequal power relations, cultural specifics and the dynamics of continuity and change' (p. 22). Lacey implies here that there are many variables in the act of listening, not least of which are the listeners themselves. The following chapter will review existng literature on these variables. This includes texts on the behaviours and motivations of the media audience and the characteristics of the talkback format that contribute to its popularity and its stigma.

Chapter 2: Literature review

On radio, the only reality is sound; if something cannot be heard, it doesn't exist (Crisell, 2012, p.15)

2.1 Introduction

Radio studies literature began to emerge in the 1930s. In the previous decade, the experiment that was radio had become a vital piece of technology (and furniture) in many homes and a new media audience worthy of analysis formed. Theorists such as the writer Rudolf Arnheim (1936) and Brecht (1932:1993) both envisaged new possibilities for radio as a potentially socially and culturally transformative medium. Brecht's call for radio's interactive potential to be realised, an aspect that is at the heart of this study, is often cited.

> Let the listener speak as well as hear … bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him … the radio should step out of the supply business and organize its listeners as suppliers (Brecht, 1932:1993).

Radio's ability to act as a source of information and entertainment, and as companion is a common theme within generalised radio studies literature. Radio historian David Hendy describes radio sound almost as one would describe an occupant of their home.

> Radio's sounds are in the ether waiting to be reeled in – or just as often, left wandering unheard. When we let them into our homes it isn't because they've forced their way in. They don't demand consumption – or indeed any response at all. (Hendy, 2013, p.123).

Taachi (2000) writes about the contribution of radio sound in lessening loneliness:

> … the self is managed, in part, by the use of sound and can, in some cases, be evoked by that same sound. Radio sound is chosen to match one's socio-emotional state, or mood, or alter it; it is used to change, or to aid, the affective rhythm of everyday living from within its routine (p.194).

In her study of the role that radio plays in the lives of 'older' women, Inthorn (2020) notes that as well as providing background sound to domestic chores, it is also a source of information impacting identity and 'a critical engagement with gender politics' (p.211). Crisell (1994) notes the "distinctiveness" of the medium exits not just because it requires the listener to use their imagination, but because that the listener can only rely on sound to do so (p.9).

Radio has provided a handy reference point for the study of media related fields such as listening theory (Lacey, 2013a), sound studies (Hilmes & Loviglio, 2012) and media audiences (Sullivan, 2013). Crisell (1994) uses radio listening to demonstrate Uses and Gratifications theory.

> Listening to radio is a vivid example of the so-called 'uses and gratification' approach to audience studies, in which the central task is to identify what people do with the media (p.209).

The field of radio studies now incorporates many sub-fields such as digital and internet radio, regional radio, talk, and music radio, and interactivity. Talkback or its equivalents, is one of these. Talkback's reputation as an arena for debate, not necessarily informed, will be discussed in this chapter. Prior findings on the motivations of the talkback audience will be contrasted with the stereotypes that have contributed to the relegation of talkback as a subject of academic study. The evolution of media audience theoretical frameworks from the 1930s to today will be reviewed. Literature on the impact of the digital environment on talkback content will also be covered.

In Chapter 1 I note that the terms talkback and talk radio are sometimes confused and incorrectly used. When this occurs within texts such as the Broadcasting Standard Authority's (BSA) report *Expectations and Perceptions of Standards in Talkback Radio* (discussed in Section 1.3), this could lead to a lack of validity if used in an academic research context. In the Aotearoa New Zealand and Australian radio markets, the difference between the two terms is summed up by Lee (2005), who suggests that talk radio is an 'umbrella term' (p.112) of which talkback is just one format. Massarelli (2005) defines *talkback* as one in which the programme 'permits the ordinary person … to take part in public debate in an original and innovative way [the caller]. It also allows those who do not personally take part in the show [the listener] to assume a position or make sense of a topic …' (p.86). Massarelli's definition is used here as unlike other definitions, it differentiates between caller and listener, an important delineation in the context of this thesis.

Another possible description of talkback content has its origin in music composition and literary criticism. Philosopher and critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) uses polyphony to describe dialogic relationships in which multiple voices and opinions are expressed.[44] This can be seen as a description of talkback content and a new approach to the format. Particularly relevant to talkback is Bakhtin's assertion that in some situations, no one party is right or wrong. He

[44] In music, polyphony refers to the style of simultaneously combining a number of [musical] parts, each forming an individual melody while harmonising with each other (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). In literature it is defined as a decentred stance taken by an author, in which all voices are given equal validity (DeBlasio & Epstein, n.d.)

uses the example of two statements: 'Life is good' and 'Life is not good' (ibid, p.293). While one contradicts the other, providing a base for debate, 'they do not argue with each other in any way'. Lacey (2013a) also cites polyphony as an analogy for debate. She applies the concept of plurality to the act of listening and like Bakhtin, finds that there can be more than one truth: a 'polyphonic truth'. Opinions can differ and because each is based on personal experience, no one can be seen to be right or wrong. This concept that opposing opinions can co-exist within a text adds credence (and colour) to talkback content. It is part of the wider field of listening studies. The next section will review texts covering listening theory as it applies to the listening behaviours of a media audience and in particular the talkback listener.

2.2 The theory of listening: Active or passive?

Listening, as a field of academic study in the mass media environment, began to attract attention in the 1920s.[45] In 1927 the philosopher Martin Heidegger suggested that it is through listening that humans experience the world in relation to others (Heidegger, 1927:1962). Goldstein (1940) noted the contribution radio was making to the study of listening while Nichols (1948) focused on students's comprehension of what they heard in a classroom environment. Nichols's study was focused on what students *did* with what they heard. By contrast, in a media studies context, texts on listening from the last 30 years are more likely to focus on what is being listened *to.* This includes: radio (Lacey's 2013a *Listening Publics* and Douglas's 1999 *Listening In*), pre-1940 records, radio and films (Hoar's 2018 *The World's Din),* and online 'listening' (Crawford, 2009). Carlyle and Lane's (2013) *Listening In* covers the sounds of balloons popping (Tidoni) the bombing of Lebanon in July 2006 (Cusack) and a recording of Mussolini (Kyto). These texts fall into the field of sound studies: a study of 'sonic phenomena' in a changing cultural and technological environment (Sterne, 2012, p.3). This review seeks to learn how talkback content as a sonic phenomenon is located as an audio text within contemporary media culture and what aspects of the content attract the listener's ear.

[45] Nichols (1948) notes that the earliest published scientific research on listening was in 1917, while most of the texts he located for his research dated from 1933.

In his collection of essays *Hearing Cultures,* Erlman (2004) highlights the difference between the study of listening and hearing, and the process of hearing sound. For example, Gouk discusses medical theories on the effect of hearing music. Sound theorist Michel Chion's (2012) work on types of listening focuses on how we listen. He lists three types: semantic (listening for a code or language within a message), reduced (focusing on the sound itself, rather than its meaning) and causal. This is listening for a reason or a cause, to learn something from or about, the source of the sound. Talkback is an example of causal listening. Critics of talkback question why listeners choose to listen, pointing to the potential inaccuracy of its content due to the open line, random nature of caller selection. A possible response to this is Chion's suggestion that listeners self-edit what they hear, as this mode of listening is 'easily influenced and deceptive' (p.48). Biswas (2013) attributes this ease of influence to the fact that what a listener hears, whether it be talkback or the sound of waves on a beach, is 'distributed through the body/mind ... a sensitivity so intimate that the feelings become emotional' (p.192).

McLuhan (1964a) and Ong (1982) discuss the importance of language and sound in traditional societies with no written language. Douglas (1999) refers to this as 'the realms of preliteracy ... reliant on storytelling, listening and group memory' (p.29). In Aotearoa New Zealand, pre-European Māori society was an oral (and aural) culture (Royal, 2005). Whakapapa (genealogy) and *mātauranga* (knowledge) were retained by the act of listening. Repeated recitations including *whakaaraara pā* (chant) and *waiata* (song), were recorded in the memory of a chosen person or people from the iwi and passed from one generation to the next.[46] Listening was especially important when information with the potential to impact the *ora* (life or health) or security of an iwi was sent from one *rohe* (area) to another, using, among other methods, musical instruments such as the conch (Te Papa, n.d.). Lacey (2013a) points out that before mass media was developed, even in those societies that had a written language, people would gather in public spaces to listen to important announcements. In these societies, listening in order to gather information would at times have been a need, rather

[46] The success of this method of recording history is evidenced within my own *iwi* (tribal nation), Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki. The whakapapa and mātauranga of Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, accepted by Crown agencies for the purposes of our 2015 Te Tiriti ō Waitangi claim, predate the arrival of European literacy by approximately 500 years (McBurney & Green, 2011)

than a want. In the same way, contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand talkback radio has had an important role to play in emergency situations; this is covered in Section 4.5.2.

Sidran (1971) maintains that 'the advantages of orality have rarely been recognized by Western tradition' (p.xxiv). In the modern era however, Lacey (2000, 2013a), Levin (1993), Sterne (2012), Synnott (1993) and Thorn (1996) suggest that listening, compared with seeing, has been relegated. Lacey (2000, p.280) and Synnott (p.210) both refer to 'ocularcentrism' that exists particularly in Western culture. Lacey (2000) expresses frustration at the lack of literature on media listening and in Lacey (2013a) reiterates this, claiming that this 'curious' lack of interest in the subject has resulted in a 'cultural hierarchy of the senses that privileges the visual over the auditory' (p.3). Thorn (1996) also constructs a 'hierarchy of senses' that places listening as a 'poor second' (p. 5) and Levin (1993) writes of the power of vision - its 'hegemony'.

Douglas (1999), Lacey (2013a) and Hendy (2000) define the difference between listening practices and simply 'hearing'. Lacey says that to listen, as opposed to 'mere hearing', requires the listener to concentrate on what is being heard; listening 'assumes intention' (p.128). She describes the act of listening to broadcast sound as containing 'intentionality, complicity and activity' (p. 183). Douglas (1999) describes the act of hearing as something we do automatically, but if we *hear* something that piques our interest, we have the ability to 'shift cognitive gears' (p.27) and we begin to *listen*. Hendy (2000), in describing our everyday sound environment (including the internet), notes that we do not actually *listen* to these sounds, we *hear* them. In the talkback context, listeners can choose to listen (foreground) or hear (background) depending on their activity. For example, while exercising the dog, it is likely that a walker will foreground the content and pay attention to the discussion. However, in a work environment, whether it be an office, work site or retail, the radio content will likely be backgrounded.

Lacey (2013a, 2013b) also differentiates between the acts of listening-out and listening-in. To listen-out is to be in a waiting mode, (just as Hendy describes radio's sounds above); you are waiting to hear something of interest. Only when it becomes available, can the passive listener moves to listening-in mode, 'a receptive and mediatized communicative action'

(Lacey, 2013a, p.8). At these times, when sound is intermittent, Kyto (2013) says our attention shifts, but we come back to the next one. We go through one 'while casually listening to an ongoing one and are making aesthetic judgements on the whole concoction' (p.79).

Lacey (2013a) and Hendy (2000) both use the term 'tap-listening' to differentiate between *listening* to the radio and *hearing* the radio. However, there is a subtle difference in their use of the metaphor. Lacey describes tap listening as: 'people who would leave the radio on all the time' for 'companionship, distraction or emotional involvement' (p.125). This implies a tap that is continuously running. Hendy however, defines tap-listening as a tap that you 'turn on, dip in, turn off, several times a day' (p.130).[47] Lacey's use of the term places talkback in a background role (albeit one that can still be heard), and could be more accurately described as tap-hearing. However, the implications of the metaphor are the same: radio is always available. It is 'on tap' for listening or hearing. Hendy contrasts tap-listening with 'concentrated' listening (p.131) and states that the two types of listening are not mutually exclusive, but opposite ends of a continuum that radio listeners travel. Media scholar Paddy Scannell (1996) uses another watery metaphor: the 'continuous, uninterrupted, never-ending flow' of radio. He terms this 'dailiness' (p.149). Crisell (1994) calls the 'ability' of radio content to recede into the background as 'flexibility' (p.11). Douglas (1999) refers to the ability of a listener to focus in on sound, and then just as easily pull back as 'the zen of listening' (p.22). She describes the experience of listening to the radio while driving alone at night: 'Relief and pleasure came … from not having to work at making conversation, from not being obliged to talk back, and even from not having to pay complete attention' (ibid). These findings on listening and hearing have implications for a study of talkback listening.

The location of the listener is relevant to their motivation and ability to listen. Concentrated listening is more likely in a location where the listener is not distracted by the need to listen to other sounds, required to achieve daily tasks. For example, contrast the listening mode of a person driving a vehicle, with a person working alongside others in an office. The driver has the facility to concentrate on what is being broadcast, while this may not be the case in a busy office. The level of activity of the listener is also important. A listener who enjoys listening to

[47] As a radio producer, I used Hendy's definition.

voices in the silence of the night as they are unable to sleep may experience more of a concentrated listening experience than a person who, for example, is listening during the daytime in a busy location. The latter may be listening (via headphones), but the quality of their listening is likely to be intermittent, as they are surrounded by many visual and aural distractions.

Gallagher (2013) wants to move attention away from what listening 'is' and move it towards what listening 'does' (p.44). He challenges two assumptions about the act of listening. The first is that listening is essentially concerned with the communication of meaning. Instead he suggests that 'sound doesn't have to mean anything' (p.42). It is the listener who brings meaning to what they hear, rather than the message itself. He cites the example of listening to a loved one's voice on the telephone. The literal message may have no value to the recipient, for example 'I went to the shops today'. The value is in simply hearing the loved one's voice (this is semantic listening as defined by Chion, 2012). The second assumption about listening challenged by Gallagher is that it is *always* a positive action. As an example of negative listening, he cites the hacking of phone calls by members of the British press that culminated in a major scandal and the closure of a tabloid newspaper in 2011[48]. He points out that the hackers were only concerned with monetary gain and had little in the way of 'ethical concerns' (p.43).

However, Lacey (2013a) suggests that listeners also have an ethical responsibility: if they want to be listened to, then they, in turn, should also listen. The premise of her text *Listening Publics*, cited throughout this thesis, is that our technical ability to listen-in to others, across what in the past would have presented barriers, time and distance, has 'reconfigured the experience of public life'. In the phone hacking example, technology allowed journalists to record the private conversations of public figures. The published transcriptions allowed readers to 'listen' to intimate details of the lives of the people concerned. Lacey states: 'Listening practices [are not] arbitrary … they are shaped by, and feedback into, relations of

[48] In 2011, it was revealed that journalists from British tabloid *News of the World* had hacked the phones of members of the royal family, entertainment figures and people in the media to gain information for news stories. The scandal came to light when the phone of a missing schoolgirl was hacked, giving false hope to her family that she was still alive, and misleading police in what became a murder investigation. As a result of the scandal, *News of the World* was closed by its publisher, News International (BBC, 2014).

power' (p.22). Attali (2012) describes eavesdropping and surveillance (phone hacking encompasses both) as examples of using listening as a 'weapon of power' (p.32). Gallagher (2013) adds other examples: for disciplinary purposes, such as in court hearings, espionage, interrogation, and religious confessions. In his book *Weaponised Lies*, Levitin (2016) cites *hearsay* as another example of an imbalance of listening power, particularly when the source of information is supposedly an expert. Despite its second-hand provenance, Levitin states that because it has come from this reliable source, it can become what we 'know'.

Griffen-Foley (2009) gives an example of the damaging use of hearsay by iconic Australian talkback host John Laws. In 1979 Laws broadcast that an 'impeccable source' had advised him that an Australian financial institution, the St George Building Society, was 'going down the drain' (p.392). The listening audience, many of them with funds invested in St George, heard and reacted, withdrawing millions of dollars. New South Wales Premier at the time, Neville Wran, was forced to intercede and Laws was made to apologise.[49] Turner (2009) writes that while talkback can 'empower its audience by acknowledging their voices' (p.425), by contrast, it can also damage the audience's access to information required in a functioning democratic society. He uses the case study of the 2005 Cronulla Beach riots in Sydney, Australia to demonstrate this. A police report found that 2GB talkback host Alan Jones, and others in the media, were found to have encouraged, if not actively caused, the perception among his listeners that Anglo-Australian lifeguards at the beach were being targeted by allegedly violent Lebanese/Middle Eastern youth, leading to a fracas the force of which, Turner says, shocked Australians (Strike Force Neil, 2006, p.35).

Turner suggests that what occurred on Cronulla Beach is an example of a talkback audience placing trust in their chosen talkback host and relying on him or her to keep them informed about what is and is not important. (p.426). The notion of a trusting talkback audience speaks to the notion of passivity (Turner does not delineate here between callers and listeners). Bobbitt (2010) suggests that there is an element of passivity associated with the talkback listener who is simply passing the time and less engaged than the talkback caller who is motivated by a desire for 'information and intellectual stimulation' (p.30). In a general sense,

[49] Law's admission of his 'terrible mistake' did little to damage his popularity (Griffen-Foley, 2009, p.392) . His talkback career continued for another 28 years (Fanning, 2007).

Peters (2006) is critical of any association between listening and passivity (pp.124/125) because he says that listening can be an 'intensely active practice' (p.125). Here the difference between hearing and listening is revisited as Jourdain (1997) states that 'we can passively hear but we must actively listen' (p.245).

The labels 'active' and 'passive' are associated with levels of power; 'active' seemingly gives power to the participant, and 'passive', little or no power. This notion is apparent in the terms used to direct the attention of the respective senses. The request to '*listen out for …*.' asks a person to listen for something that *might* occur, a passive act.[50] However, the visual equivalent '*watch* out' is not passive. Instead, it implies the active seeking or avoidance of someone or something. Lacey (2013a) refutes binary notions of not weak/weak or proactive/nonactive in regard to active/passive media listeners. She says it is incorrect that the active audience member (the talkback caller) should be seen as 'intentional' and with a 'resistance to influence' by speaking out, while the passive audience member who does not act (the talkback listener) is seen as 'gullible, faceless, conformist, vulnerable' (p.185). Listening to another person's views is not a denial of the listener's own views, it is instead simply 'switch[ing] the focus' to the speaker (Lacey, 2013a, p.178). By doing so they are playing an active role in the communicative process. (p.178). Hendy (2013) agrees that the radio listener takes an active part just by listening.

> The power's all in our own hands. We're receiving a gift really. We might well be moved or appalled or upset by what we hear on the radio; sometimes we might be indifferent. But whatever we feel consciously, we're almost always being 'interactive' inside our heads. (p.123/124).

Whether the listener is passive or active, much of the literature on listening theory can be seen as refracted through Heidegger's 1927 observation that listening creates a contextual relationship. Those who listen experience the world through what they hear; a theory particularly relevant to talkback radio listening.

2.3 Media audience research: The story so far

This section looks at how the perception of the media audience by researchers has evolved over time from a malleable cohort to a powerful commodity. McQuail (2013) writes that the

[50] The use of the phrase 'listen out' in this context is separate from Lacey's (2013) definition as discussed earlier in this section in regard to listening-out and listening-in.

concept of 'audience' has had 'an eventful career' at the epicentre of innovations in twentieth century mass communication (p.9). He notes that the use of the term 'audience', so integral now in media-related issues and studies, was considered 'novel' in the early twentieth century (p.9).[51] Literature on media audience theory commonly uses a television audience lens rather than radio. In his opening sentence of *Media Audiences* Sullivan (2013) references the Superbowl television audience. In his work on the changing paradigm that is the media audience, McQuail (ibid) notes that in the 1960s television 'became the primary medium in terms of reach, surpassing newspapers, radio and film and seeming to fulfil the expectation present in the early concept of mass communication' (p.11). While aspects of the mass communication audience can apply across all media, viewing a media audience through a television lens may not be helpful to those focusing on learning about the radio audience and in particular the nuances of the talkback radio listener. This is because, while audiences for television, film or non-talkback radio are the listeners or viewers *of* the content, in some talkback literature, a section of the audience, the callers, *are* the content. For example, in (Hofstetter et al., 1993), the roles of listeners, non-listeners and callers are all discussed but are referenced in the abstract as 'the political talk radio audience'. Tramer and Jeffres (1983) acknowledge the role of the caller but refers to them as audience: 'The talk radio format allows audience members to actively participate' (p.297). Some texts do clearly differentiate between listener and caller: Armstrong and Rubin (1989) noted that callers found 'face to face communication less rewarding … than those who did not call but who did listen'. Perse and Butler (2005) write: 'Listeners and callers were both more argumentative than non-listeners'.[52]

The field of media audience research into the motivations of audiences can be broken into three theoretical phases beginning in the late eighteenth century. Chronologically these are: Effects theory, Uses and Gratifications theory and Encoding/decoding theory (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998).[53] The concept of Effects theory initially arose in the late 1700s (with a

[51] It was during this era, in 1936, that American company Nielsen began surveying radio audiences quantitatively using the audiometer which, when attached to a radio, recorded what station was listened and at what times. In 1950 the audiometer was adapted for use with television sets to capture saleable data about the growing television audience (Nielsen, 2018).

[52] Other texts to differentiate were Beirig and Dimmick (1979), Bobbitt (2010) and Massarelli (2005).

[53] The networked society has seen renewed interest in the earliest of these, Effects theory. which is addressed later in this section.

resurgence in the late 1800s) just as an 'urban commercial culture' was forming (Hall, 1990, p.53). Traditional values were being put aside, and as a result it was thought that mass society and mass culture were beginning to break down. This left society 'vulnerable and persuadable' (Brooker and Jermyn, 2003, p.5), open to the influence (or effect) of the expanding mass media. 'The Effects paradigm sustained the image of audiences as passive individuals' (Butsch, 2008, p.127). This seemed particularly relevant in the aftermath of World War 1, when the influence of media propaganda became a field of study (Brooker & Jermyn, 2003, p.5). The theory of a passive, vulnerable audience, open to following without question, an edict or ideology, was given further credence by the rise of charismatic leaders in the 1930s including Hitler, Mussolini, and Churchill. Lacey (2013a) cites the BBC's concerns in a 1949 government report that [radio] listeners were more interested in being entertained than informed (p.146).[54] The implication was that a pleasure-seeking audience was more likely to be passive and therefore, once again, vulnerable. Such an audience was therefore an easy target for a cynical media intent on injecting misinformation into the minds of a passive public. The latter analogy gave rise to the alternative label: Hypodermic Needle theory.

However, in 1959, sociologist Professor Elihu Katz, challenged Effects theory. Instead of assuming, as Effects theory had done, that a persuasive media message could sway a vulnerable audience, Katz found that even the most 'potent' of media messages cannot influence a person who 'has no *use* for it in the social and psychological context in which he lives' (Katz, 1959, p.2). Fiske (2013) paraphrases Katz's Kennedy-esque question in which he suggests to researchers: 'don't ask what do the media do to people, but what do people do with the media?' [55] He posits that consumers should 'tum the products of the industry into *their* popular culture and … make them serve *their* interests' (Fiske, 2013, p. 75). This moved commentators away from seeing consumer audiences as passive. Katz described this new way of seeing an audience as a 'functional' or 'uses and gratification' (U&G) approach, (p.2) the second of Abercrombie and Longhurst's phases. Prior to Katz's 1959 article, Herta Herzog's 1941 study had applied a U&G approach to her study of the female audience for daytime radio serials (Sullivan, 2013). Herzog found that these fell into three categories: emotional,

[54] The Parliamentary Report of the 1949 Broadcasting Committee.
[55] Katz posed this question two years prior to President John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech, which included: 'ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country'.

wishful thinking and learning (West & Turner, 2010). In 1943 Abraham Maslow published his *Theory of Human Motivation*: 'basic human needs are organised into a hierarchy … a want that is satisfied is no longer a want' (p.375). West and Turner also mention the work of Wilbur Schramm who weighed up the satisfaction expectation (gratification) of different forms of mass media against the effort gone into achieving it. Perse and Butler (2005) and Ruddock (2007) state that U&G theory provides an audience-centred perspective: it uses the motivations of the audience to gain an understanding of why people choose to listen or view. O'Sullivan (2005) notes the use of a U&G theoretical approach to discuss talkback as a political forum (Hofstetter et al., 1994), and as an antidote for loneliness (Turow, 1974).

In 1980 media audience analysis moved away from U&G into a new theoretical phase: Stuart Hall's Encoding/decoding model (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Hall's theory is based on the premise that sub-textual meanings are embedded in popular texts by elites within the media. The elites wish to communicate a particular stance or message to the audience and hope that the audience decodes the text in what is the *dominant* (desired) way. Hall, however, moves away from a 'simplistic Marxist' view that audiences will automatically believe the dominant frame (p.14). Instead he suggests they may choose to disagree and take the *oppositional* stance. A third option was to take the middle ground, neither agreeing nor disagreeing, the *negotiated* stance (Hall, 1980, p.137-138). Hall's Encoding/decoding theory is developed from the work of Parkin, who preferred to use the term 'radical' rather than oppositional, to reflect 'heightened class-consciousness' (Parkin, 1972 cited by Hutchby, 2006, p.8-9).

Hall's Encoding/decoding theory and Silvan Tomkins's (2008) Affect theory combine in Gibbs's (2001) examination of the media audience's reaction to the 'Hanson phenomenon' (p.2). In this case study, Gibbs analyses the media coverage (including talkback) of controversial, right-wing Australian politician Pauline Hanson. Tomkins (2008, as cited by Gibbs) states that all humans are vulnerable entities: 'receiver[s] of information … at the intersect of an overabundance of sensory bombardment' (p.8).[56] In this case, the 'sensory bombardment'

[56] In this respect, Tomkins' theory echoes the impact of mass media on the vulnerable audiences of the 1930s according to Effects or Hyperdermic Needle theory.

employed by the media included the use of Hanson's distinctive, heavily Australian-accented voice. According to Gibbs, the use of Hanson's voice (along with visual images) emphasised Hanson's 'inarticulacy' together with 'defiance, stubbornness, and unwillingness to think and to argue' (Gibbs, 2001, p.5). Gibbs suggests that the media's dominant sub-textural message, that Hanson was an unsuitable political candidate, was successfully decoded and received by Hanson's opposition, that is, the media's preferred audience: educated middle-class voters.

Shaw (2017) applies Encoding/decoding theory to contemporary interactive media technologies and their functions. When considering the use of a social media platform for example, the dominant (obvious) decoding is that it is used to interact with others, while Shaw suggests an oppositional decoding may be passivity (p.598). Effects theory has undergone a resurgence of interest as a useful tool to analyse new-media audiences. Valkenburg and Peter (2013) point to Castell's (2007) notion of mass self-communication, which widens the focus of Effects theory from the content that is received by the audience to content that is received and *generated* by the audience. Valkenburg and Peter found that those who generate content experience heightened self-esteem and 'a sense of political efficacy' (p.206). As it relates to talkback, the concept of mass self-communication can be applied to the talkback caller, who generates content by calling or messaging a radio station. It can arguably also be applied to the listener who, despite their seemingly passive role, can feel vindicated or fulfilled that by being part of an audience, they are playing their role in the communication process (Lacey, 2013a).

While the mass communication audience (including the talkback listener) falls naturally into the *mass* audience type as defined in Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998), the mass self-communication audience falls into what is defined as a *diffused* audience. This refers to the concept that everyone, at any time, is an audience. Everyday life is a form of performance, as a result of being part of a 'media-drenched society' (p.69). The third audience type, *simple,* as the name suggests refers to an audience of a prepared performance of some kind. The analysis of media audience types is important to this thesis as Armstrong and Longhurst state that the extent to which an audience (for example, listeners) becomes involved in a performance (in the case of this thesis, talkback radio) can affect the 'intellectual and emotional impact' (p.43) of the content produced. Emotional involvement in turn provides a

motivation to listen.

Influential communication theorist Dallas Smythe sets aside the notion that listeners are self-motivated to listen and instead concentrates on how they are commodified. In *Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism* (1977) Smythe theorises that in a capitalist economy an audience becomes a commodity to on-sell to advertisers.

> The information, entertainment and 'educational' material transmitted to the audience is an inducement (gift, bribe or 'free lunch') to recruit potential members of the audience and to maintain their loyal attention (Smythe, 1977, p.5).

Clearly sceptical of the educational benefits of the content, Smythe says that the audience unknowingly give of its valuable 'off the job work time' (p.3) to consume the content, the quality of which is overlooked in the race to profit from audience ratings. In an initial critical response to what she refers to as Smythe's 'rather dramatic' case (p.220), communications scholar Eileen Meehan (1977) writes:

> In Smythe's formulation, the message [content] was merely bait … designed to lure the audience to the point of sale … Each person using mass media thus produced something of value – one's self as a member of a salable [sic] audience (p.219/220).

In a later text comprising a series of essays offering a critical analysis of Smythe, Meehan, (1993) reframes this response by positing that there is both a general audience and a commodity audience, the latter being 'a creature of the market place' (p.388). Of the general audience she says: 'this consumerist caste is demanded by advertisers' (ibid). Of the two theories, Meehan's is a more accurate reflection of my own experience as a commercial radio producer, and commercial television producer and programmer. These roles required me to produce and curate content that created a listening or viewing audience. The advertising and marketing department then sold advertising in and around the content and regularly reminded me of their remit. Consequently, as Meehan suggests, I served two audiences. Audience A was the traditional notion of a mediated audience: the listeners and the viewers, while Audience B comprised the commodity audience, the advertisers who bought 'space' in and around the content. As a producer of content, I was more invested in my listening and viewing audience and their motivations. However, as both my radio and television roles were within commercial organisations (Radio New Zealand, pre-1996,[57] and Television New

[57] In August 1996, Radio New Zealand ceased to be a commercial operation (Francis, 2006).

Zealand), to ignore the needs of Audience B would have been unwise.[58]

The literature on media audiences, their nuances, weakness and preferences, appears to show that each researcher captures a moment in time, and places the audience within it with an expectation that while interpretations will change, the cohort and their behaviours will remain the same. Bobbitt (2010) believes that the profile of the talkback audience is changing from the 'older, less affluent, lesser educated white men' of the 1980s to 'younger, better educated and more affluent listeners' (p.27). He quotes a former news director: 'the audience is far more diverse ... doctors, lawyers, academics, clergy or soccer moms or dads … Talk show fans are not stupid' (p.28). The changes suggested by Bobbitt are likely to be a result of, or at least affected by, the availability of digital devices. For example, 20 years ago, the talkback audience was unable to listen on a smart phone. As a result, a review of media audience research literature must bear in mind the relevance of the findings to a contemporary environment.

2.4 The listener: Socially inadequate loner seeks company, or engaged citizen seeks information?

In seeking to learn the motivations that prompt a listener to choose talkback radio, it is necessary to look at what is already known about the listener. In concluding the last section, I suggested that media audiences are undergoing change, and this should be taken into consideration when reviewing earlier studies. A common theme in early studies of talkback audiences, particularly of callers, is a lack of family or social networks contributing to low social capital (Brauer, 2010). Turow (1974) found that talkback callers are likely to be less mobile and more isolated, older and from a lower socio-economic demographic than the general population. Bierig and Dimmick (1979) found that talkback callers were likely to be males who lived on their own. Bierig and Dimmick also conducted research into talkback listeners. In what can be seen as a contradiction to Turow, they found that the 50 plus audience was more likely to listen, while the 18 to 34-year old audience was more likely to call. Tramer and Jeffres (1983) found that among callers, the greatest motivation is the need

[58] My radio career predated Web 2.0 technology. It was a time when there were far fewer media platforms and therefore less competition for a mediated audience.

for companionship. Horton and Wohl's classic 1956 study of para-social relationships between media host and audience members speaks to an imbalance of power. 'The interaction, characteristically, is one-sided, nondialectical, controlled by the performer, and not susceptible of mutual development' (p.215). It should be noted that Horton and Wohl's findings were published in the journal *Psychiatry* rather than in a media or communications context. I suggest this places a different lens on their findings. Armstrong and Rubin's (1989) study of talkback differentiated between caller and listener motivation. It found that the caller is less mobile, less likely to enjoy interpersonal communication, and less 'socially interactive' (p.89) than those who listen. Some listeners, however, are motivated to listen by convenience, entertainment, and the search for information. They enjoy listening to a conversation, without having to be involved. Both callers and listeners use talkback as a way to pass time, and both used it for companionship; it offers 'a non-threatening forum for interaction' (p.92).

In his study of talkback listeners in Jamaica, Surlin (1986) used Uses and Gratification theory to find that, as with North American studies such as Armstrong and Rubin, listeners were likely to be more socially disenfranchised through socio-economic status, lower education and isolation. However, the key motivations offered by the listeners in Surlin's study differed from Armstrong and Rubin's North American cohort. Rather than companionship and reinforcement, Surlin's participants cited information gathering and surveillance as being more important. Surlin attributed this to the 'strong need for information' by those living in a developing nation such as Jamaica (at the time), where access to information sources affecting personal security was restricted. This finding can be understood in the context of Uses and Gratification theory, which according to West and Turner (2010) is informed by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow places personal security as a higher priority than a sense of belonging (Maslow, 1954).

Bobbitt (2010) challenges findings of the socially inadequate talkback caller and listener and suggests 'that generalisation no longer applies – and may never have' (p.28). He notes the move in political talkback audience demographics to one that is younger, more educated and more affluent (p.27). Two studies of political talkback listeners by Hofstetter address the stereotypes of listeners. Hofstetter et al. (1994) challenges the caricature of the alienated,

cynical individuals who experience political and social isolation. Instead they find the listening audience could not be categorised because of the diversity they found in terms of gender, race and age. Hofstetter & Gianos (1999) found against the stereotypical political talkback audience. Far from experiencing social inadequacy, they found political talkback listeners to be 'characterized by greater political and social participation than less involved … higher in social economic status, more socially and politically integrated in society' (p.501).

Perse and Butler (2005) apply a U&G approach to test competing hypotheses. Noting that previous studies such as Turow (1974) and Armstrong and Rubin (1989) 'presented a dismal view of the audience for call-in talk radio', they asked: does the appeal of talkback radio lie in its ability to 'compensate' for social isolation, or its ability to 'enrich' the listener's listening experience? (p.204). Perse and Butler found on the side of enrichment, stating that while talkback programmes are used by the audience as a source of information, entertainment is also a motivator with listeners enjoying the banter between host and caller. This concurs with Hofstetter et al. (1994), who found that 'heavier users may use talk radio more for entertainment than for public affairs surveillance' (p.477), and Hofstetter and Gianos (1997) who found that listeners find some content 'humorous, or even cathartic' (p.513).

Perse and Butler found that the talkback audience is more likely to be 'civically engaged' (p.218). Listening provides audiences with the cultural capital that comes from being well-informed, and they were more likely than non-listeners to be involved in civic affairs. The study makes the point that an alienated, poorer, listening audience would not be an attractive market for advertisers, nor the radio station owners, yet both parties continue to advertise and employ this format respectively. Ewart (2011b) also cites Perse and Butler's finding.

Berland, (2012) appears to take both sides of the 'compensation or enrichment' hypotheses. She states that radio listening can be motivated by loneliness or depression, and the need to feel a connection with others. However, she also acknowledges that radio has the power to provide 'pleasure, information, power' (p.42). Hofstetter et al. (1994), also find that information-seeking is the key motivation of listeners to political talkback (p.473). Francis (2002) has a perspective from his time within the industry on what uses and gratifications

talkback listeners make and take from their listening experience. He asserts that listeners either want to be vindicated or to learn new information.

Armstrong and Rubin (1989) state that listeners enjoy the ritual theatre of another's experiences, emotions and, on occasions, intimate details about their life. Johnson, writing on the concept of gossip, notes that humans are 'social creatures' who desire to be part of a group, especially if there is information to be shared among them (p.305). Crisell (1994) agrees but adds another advantage of talkback:

> The pleasure the listener gains from the company of those he 'meets' on the medium is bound up with a sense of his own anonymity, of freedom from the obligations imposed by 'real life' relationships … He is not obliged to talk back to his radio companion or to continue listening if he is bored. (p.10)

When listening to these conversations, or radio generally, Hendy (2000, 2013) writes that people can choose to feel that they are alone in the audience or they can choose to be aware that they are part of an audience of many. It can be an individual experience when we are able to 'explore our innermost thoughts and memories' (Hendy 2000, p. 121), or we can acknowledge that what we are hearing is being heard simultaneously by many others. In this case it is 'a more inherently sociable act' than reading about other people or even watching them (ibid, p.120). It provides a 'powerful sense of participation, a collective sensibility' (Hendy, 2013, p.123). Both Douglas (1999, p.24) and Lacey (2006, p.65) refers to the 'simultaneity' of radio listening, albeit that Lacey's reference is historical as she refer to how radio was observed in the 1920s and 1930s. McLuhan (1964a) refers to radio as the 'tribal drum' (p.133), another acknowledgement of the medium's collectivist characteristic. He suggests that once a medium becomes visual, it becomes individualistic, losing its communal elements. However, in a contemporary context, the communal nature of social media use challenges this suggestion.

The communal and simultaneous nature of radio listening communities held together by 'gossamer connections' (Douglas 1999, p.22) is a common theme in radio studies (Douglas, 1999; Ewart, 2011a; Fitzgerald & Housley, 2007; Hendy, 2000; Lacey, 2013a; Scannell, 1996) and one that goes back to its pioneering days. According to Peters (2010), radio:

> … created sociability through the ears and conversation without interaction … radio listeners were invited to feel themselves not as part of a vast public assembly, but as a small group of listeners at home … A mass audience did not mean an audience of masses (p.127).

Radio historian Hilmes (2012) writes that radio listeners in the 1920s experienced 'shared simultaneity' (p.351). In a pre-online world, Benedict Anderson's (1983) *Imagined Communities* painted the picture of a newspaper reader who, while indulging in the solitary act of reading, is aware that thousands if not millions of others are concurrently doing the same. Hendy calls it the 'we-feeling' (2013, p.123). Lacey (2013a) describes it as: 'inhabiting a condition of plurality and intersubjectivity' (p.8). Hendy (2013, p.123) also refers to the 'collective sensibility' of the listening community providing listeners with a sense of participation (Hendy, 2000). Australian psychologist Dr Amanda Krause looks at how people aged 65 plus connect with radio and notes that they listen not just to gain information or be entertained, but to gain a 'close connection' (Wilson, 2018, Para 7), with the community of listeners. Moores (1993) writes of the ability to 'travel elsewhere' that radio affords listeners, giving them the chance to be of part of a 'wider cultural community' (pp.22-23).

The notion of radio listeners in a virtual community, separated geographically yet simultaneously experiencing an unfolding event, highlights another attribute of radio: liveness. Adams and Burton (1997) compare this with film (never live) and most television,[59] describing radio as 'now' and 'the most intimate of media' (p.16). Scannell (1996) says that liveness enhances the 'aura of events' (p.90), while Hendy (2000) notes that it is this 'perishable, immediate' nature of radio that draws you in to listen closer (p.120). Crisell (2012) calls liveness 'a co-presence in time' (p.14). In his work on talkback radio audiences in Australia, Tebbutt (2006a) notes that as early as 1968, media commentators recognised the value of the instant nature of talkback. Tebbutt suggests that 'the idea of 'the instant' in electronic media is also a moment of audience capture, a point at which attention is held and a listener … is at their most responsive' (p.859).

The findings of this review of the profile of the talkback listener form a continuum with socially challenged lonely listeners at one end and engaged and aware listeners at the other. To some extent, it would seem that this continuum doubles as a timeline, with findings from Bierig & Dimmick (1979), Horton and Wohl (1956), Turow (1974) and Tramer and Jeffres (1983) at the socially challenged end, and Bobbitt (2010), Ewart (2011b), Hendy (2000, 2013)

[59] This text predates the advent of social media, and the televised events of 11 September, 2001. However, the live television footage of O. J. Simpson fleeing police on 17 June 1994 had already entered the archives of pop culture and media studies.

and Perse and Butler (2005) at the other. One assumption to explain this movement could be that in a digital environment, more people consume more media across a range of platforms. As a result, the *whakamā* (embarrassment, shame) associated with listening or viewing some forms of media is lessening making it more acceptable to reveal media consumption choices to others.

2.5 The talkback host: Shock jock or just 'larger than life'

The talkback host is central to this study. He or she is seen as a caricature (Adams and Burton, 1997), likely to be high maintenance but essential to the commercial success of talkback, (Francis, 2002), and (or) as an ego-driven misogynist (Douglas, 1999). Their role in motivating listeners, as opposed to the motivating role that the station's identity plays in that choice, is a matter for debate in talkback texts. Hendy (2000) states that radio listeners are more interested in choosing a station than a specific host. However, in Barnett and Morrison's (1989) study respondents felt passionately about the hosts they listened to. Wilson (2018) finds that the connection 65 plus listeners feel with hosts is so deep, they are likely to switch stations if presenters change. Spangardt et al. (2016) support Barnett and Morrison's findings that the personality of the host is paramount in retaining listeners. Scannell (1991) suggests that a talk host should adapt to the caller's environment. He points out that in some public events such as a church service, it is the audience attending who, having an expectation of what the content will be, need to adapt. By contrast, a listener turning on the radio should not have to adapt. They are the consumer, and the host must 'align their communicative behaviour with those circumstances' (p.3). However, here Scannell appears to suggest that hosts should adapt their own world views, overlooking the fact that the political or sociological persuasion of most hosts, especially on talk-based programmes will be known to the listener beforehand. McGregor's (1996) study of two politically opposed talkback hosts and their listeners found that in most cases a talkback audience (McGregor refers to callers) favoured a host who shared their world views. Tebbutt (2006) states that the role of the talkback host is very important in 'shaping participation' and 'disciplining' the audience (p.869).

Fitzgerald and Housley (2007) discuss the role the talkback host plays in bringing together a geographically dispersed group of listeners, to listen simultaneously. According to Francis

(2002) and Barnett and Morrison (1989) the host is the main reason that people choose to listen to talkback. Turner (2007, 2009, 2010) has written extensively on the role of talkback hosts in the Australian radio market, their identity and performance, and their contribution to the commercial success (and scandal) of their respective broadcasters.[60] The host must be opinionated and have a 'larger than life, charismatic personality, [and be] knowledgeable, experienced and credible' (Francis 2002, p.96). The performance aspect of the host's role reflects that talkback is the *uri* (offspring) of radio formats that developed based on theatrical models of the early 1900s such as music hall (Tebbutt, 2006). The music hall MC was, much like a successful radio host, an act in him or herself, displaying 'exaggerated flourishes of [vocal] arm-waving and extravagant exclamations' (Gerrard, 2013, p.494). Similarly, the job of a successful talkback radio host is to introduce the talkback caller, to work with them to develop the content, cover up or fill any gaps in the performance and, most important, keep the audience's (the listener's) attention.

According to Spangardt et al. (2016) one way of keeping their attention is to create parasocial interaction in social media between host and listener. They find that the personality of the host has an influence on the way in which listeners choose to interact with them. Radio presenters use their 'unique' style as their personal trademark (p.69), however it must be authentic and not contrived. They will speak to the listener or the viewer as if they were the only ones listening or watching, what Scannell (2000) calls 'an audience of one' (p.10). Scannell describes this mode of delivery as a 'for-anyone-as-someone structure' (p.11).

> I find when I turn on the news, that I am spoken to while knowing that millions of others are watching at exactly the same time and seeing and hearing exactly the same things ... in each case it is 'for me' (Scannell, 2000, p.110).

This individual focus should not be confused with Anderson's (1983) concept of a mass media audience as a 'community' discussed above. While Anderson refers to the sense of belonging to a collective of listeners, he is also referring to the authenticity of the 'for me' style of delivery, the sense that I am someone.

[60] Turner writes of the media scandal that came to be known as the *Cash for Comment* incident in which talkback hosts John Laws and Alan Jones were found to have been secretly paid for editorialising on-air in support of 'products, companies and political posititons'. Their role was described by another broadcaster as prostitution (Turner, 2001, p.349). See also Section 2.2 for Laws' role in the near collapse of the St George Building Society in 1979.

What will be seen by some as a 'golden age' of the talkback-host-as-star existed from the 1970s until the 1990s. In the United States this was the era of the anti-feminist shock jock whose style is described by Douglas (2002) as the 'male hysteric'. Douglas explains it as a 'deft if somewhat desperate fusion of the desire to thwart feminism' (p.486). Exponents of this style included Rush Limbaugh, Alan Berg and Howard Stern, all of whom have undoubtedly contributed to talkback's image as a home for a disenfranchised, right-wing audience. Douglas (2002) quotes a columnist from *The Boston Globe* in 1994 who described listening to Howard Stern as: 'the electronic equivalent of loitering in the men's room of a bus terminal' (p.485). *The Washington Post* described him as the 'bad boy of talk radio, the *enfant terrible* whose name was synonymous with leering chauvinism' (Lindgren, 2019).

However, Moreau (2019) writes there has been a movement away from the populist style in the United States, a shift epitomised by Stern himself. Reviews of his book *Howard Stern Comes Again*, released in May 2019, in *The New York Times Magazine, The Washington Post and Chicago Tribune* were headlined respectively: 'Howard Stern says he has changed: How much? (Marchese, 2019), '*Howard Stern Comes Again* gives a glimpse of a kinder, gentler shock jock' (Lindgren, 2019) and 'Howard Stern talks about life, death, Donald Trump — and why he can't stand his old narcissism' (Kogan, 2019). Moreau, writing for entertainment industry magazine *Variety,* cites Fred Jacobs, president of Jacobs Media Strategies: 'The king of the shock radio movement, Howard Stern, is now apologizing to the many people he's managed to offend. What does that tell you?' Bobbitt (2010) believes the trend is market driven and attributes it to the diversification of the talkback audience mentioned earlier. An alternative possibility is that the audience has always been diverse, and that it is only now that talkback is being studied qualitatively that this is becoming apparent.

2.6 'Significant Shifts': Listening to talkback in the Web 2.0 era

In 2008 media commentator Paul Venzo noted the effect of Web 2.0 technology on talkback:

> Talkback radio has informed the nature of new media: technologies now provide even more sophisticated means of audience participation, interaction and contribution. I would suggest that *YouTube* is the first cousin of talkback radio: consumers create the content, and it ranges from political satire to pure entertainment and self-indulgence with the capacity for a high degree of anonymity (Venzo, 2008, p.118).

Between 1998 and 2001, the percentage of Aotearoa New Zealand households with a mobile phone increased from 21.3% to 58.3 % (Wilson, 2010). The most up to date data from Statistics New Zealand at the time of writing shows that by 2017 there were 3.8 million mobile phones with an active internet connection. This equates to approximately 80% of the population at the time (Statistics New Zealand, 2017). The adoption of the smart phone by a significant portion of the population has meant that talkback callers can contribute from outside the home or workplace by phone call, via email or SMS texting. Alternatively, they can read and interact with a radio station's social media site such as *Facebook* (from 2004) and *Twitter* (from 2006). This has provided a wider range of perspectives and therefore more diverse and interesting content for listeners. Newstalk ZB (Auckland) morning talkback producer Carolyn Leaney believes that email technology had a positive impact on the quality of the programme she produced (Smith, 2013).[61]

Some researchers believe that social media platforms provide new methods of attracting and interacting with audiences (Herrera-Damas & Hermida, 2014).[62] Ewart and Ames (2016) see the introduction of Web 2.0 technology, as a 'challenge [to] our definitions of … what it means to participate' (p.93). Gould (2009) states that new technologies 'alter the shape and function' (p.95) of audience participation. Douglas (1999) states that the invention of the mobile phone had a profound effect on talkback radio content, increasing its popularity and causing a demographic shift. Achte (2013) and Gillman (2007) agree that younger listeners are more likely to participate in talkback because they can now do so using new media technology.

As well as an increase in participation, listening to talkback is now easier due to the same digital devices. The mobile phone 'liberated talkback listeners from their anchoring in the domestic sphere' (Gould, 2009, p.95).[63] Achte (2013) notes that listening to the radio was 'less and less restricted to place' (p.14). Ewart and Ames (2016) state that any 'significant shifts' in the technologies used in talkback production can have major effects on the use of the format (p.103). One of these is the forming of off-air communities in which the host as the convenor,

[61] Talkback producer Carolyn Leaney notes that texting is the favoured form of communication for abusive messages (C. Leaney, personal communication, February 19, 2018)

[62] An exception to this is *Twitter* which Herrera and Damas (2014) found was used predominantly for one-to-many news updates, with very little host and tweeter interaction.

[63] The introduction of the transistor radio in 1954 can also be seen as a milestone in the liberation of the radio listener (Wolff, 1985).

is not necessarily involved. Portela (2011) sees radio at the 'centre of new digitally mediated relationships' (p.52). Bonini and Sellas (2014) note the increasing use of social media by broadcasters as a method of engagement and to build listening communities. However, what some may see as an advantage is seen by others as a negative, as social media offers increased opportunity for surveillance. According to Lacey (2014) the digitalisation of communication has caused listening to be 'newly represented and exchanged' (p.84). She points out that it presents the opportunity for those listening and sharing via social networks to now be identified, as well as their location and when they listen.

New media technologies have impacted not just talkback but radio content in general in other ways. Lacey (2013a) suggests that 'listening without looking', the ability for listening to be used as an accompaniment for 'domestic and mobile routines' (p. 38), is a reason for radio's survival among the many technological developments of the last century. Public service broadcasting can now claim a closer relationship with its listeners through the on-air use of social media postings, texts, and emails (Sinton, 2018). Gillman (2007) sees online postings, emails, and texts as complementary to the traditional form of calling-in. In regard to the use of SMS texting and email as content, Lindgren and Phillips (2014) see these digital developments as part of radio's versatility. Oliviera et al. (2014) believe that radio has adapted well to the new environment by 'embracing' the opportunities offered by new media platforms (p.iii). Carey (2009) refers to the ways in which new technology has altered 'the normal sense of being alive, of having a social relation' (p.1).

Media scholar Kate Crawford (2009) and Lacey (2013a) both use listening as a metaphor for engaging with social media. Crawford states that 'paying attention online' (p.525) and listening both require 'ongoing processes of receptivity' (p.79). Lacey, who prefers to use the term 'secondary listening' to describe being online, points out that both forms of engagement demonstrate 'immediacy, interactivity and pervasiveness' (p.49). Lacey (2014) also cites Huffington Post writer Simon Tam's 2014 use of listening as a metaphor for interaction with social media. She describes being connected online.

> To exist in something like a permanent state of receptivity, makes the act of consuming social media even in the written form of text, more like listening than reading, listening out for the next iteration in an unfolding and unstable multi-textual universe (p.83).

Martin (2006) notes that digital interactivity gives participants more control over their engagement, the opportunity to be more creative and enjoy more reciprocity (p.315). This study will examine the use of Web 2.0 technology in talkback to learn if these, predominantly positive effects, have changed how listeners engage with the format.

2.7 Talkback radio: An academic tin ear

Academic interest in talkback radio audiences has at times been sparse due to what Turner (2007) describes as a tendency of media and cultural studies to regard the talkback audience as 'cultural dupes' (p.75). Academics 'don't listen to it, but they believe they know who does' (p.74). He sees this as part of the 'offhanded denigration of the 'popular'' (p.74).

> It seems to be generally taken for granted that we know who the audiences of talkback are, why they listen, what they listen to, and what we should think about all of that. As I say, it is likely that much of this comes from an unexamined (and largely unchallenged) distaste for the media format itself (Turner, 2007, p.74).

Bates and Ferri (2010) agree, and state that academia has treated the subject in a disjointed, scattershot, sometimes condescending fashion (p.1). According to Hilmes (2002) this dismissive attitude not just to talkback but commercial radio in general began in the late 1970s, in the United States. However, by the 1980s, new studies challenged assumptions of what constituted high and low culture, including what Hilmes refers to as 'the critical dismissal of popular culture by both conservative academics and their Frankfurtian colleagues' (p.9).[64] With the rise of political talkback, which provided listeners with information on topical issues that directly affected them, the format began to receive academic attention. Hofstetter et al.'s 1994 text on political talkback radio describes the stereotype in detail:

> Talk radio has been glamorized in popular media as a harbinger of populism run rampant, providing opportunities for cynical, malevolent manipulators of public opinion to mobilize the masses and undermine the bases of legitimacy of society (p.477).[65]

Like Turner (2007), who notes a lack of evidence to validate academia's negative view, Hofstetter et al. note the 'paucity of research' (p.477).

Ward (2002, p.36) describes talkback radio as a 'blind spot' for political science and communication studies in Australia. Ewart (2011a) agrees, and cites Herbst (1995) who notes

[64] However, this reference to the Frankfurt School overlooks the contribution of Walter Benjamin to popular culture studies (McRobbie, 1994)

[65] Section 4.9 discusses the stigma attached to talkback radio.

that academics are highly critical of talkback, labelling the content as 'inane, dangerous or just too conservative' (Ewart, 2011a, p. 272). Herbst suggests that those who study political communication should take heed of the opinions of callers expressed in political talkback. An example of this is Fitzgerald and Thornborrow's (2017) analysis of political engagement within the media leading up to the 2015 UK General Election, which found that talkback played a significant role in that engagement. Despite this, academic antipathy remains in some quarters and is strongly expressed.

> These bombastic talk show hosts' behaviour is immoral and unethical, including the uttering of untruths, name-calling, and the mean-spirited rhetoric. Those of us who care deeply about radio should be outraged that this practice has become an acceptable business model (Shrader, 2013, p.289).

The findings of Bierig and Dimmick (1979), Horton and Wohl (1956), Turow (1974) and Tramer and Jeffres (1983) in Section 2.4 establish a stigmatising profile of an audience lacking social networks: 'This notion of media use as a compensation for deficiencies in social activity undergirds much of the research on call-in talk radio' (Perse & Butler, 2005, p.206). By contrast, Perse and Butler found that in the main, talkback enriches the lives of listeners and callers through the seeking of information and 'valued arguments' (p.204). In their studies of issue-based and political talkback, Hollander (1996), and Hofstetter and Gianos (1997) found that listeners were more likely to be from a higher socio-economic demographic and be more educated than non-listeners. Lacey (2013a) attributes the academic stigma that still exists, despite these more recent findings, to the passive role played by the listener. The active audience (the caller) is described in positive terms: 'selectivity, utilitarianism, … involvement', while the passive audience (the listener), is seen as 'faceless, conformist' (p. 185).

Despite the academic view, from an industry perspective, talkback is a commercially successful mass media format. Commercial success however does not prevent those within the industry from holding a negative perception of talkback as a form of mass media, or those who listen to it. Producer Jeremy Parkinson suggests that some journalists 'look down their nose' at talkback. When newsworthy events are occurring, 'journalists want to be the person who told you about that' (J Parkinson, personal communication, April 2, 1019). However, in unfolding circumstances, a talkback host can elicit information from the public; at times this can be information that hasn't gone through the editing process for duration or clarity. In

their study of the role of talkback during emergencies, Ewart and Dekker (2013) found that in using their network of callers, a talkback programme is able to provide information for listeners before traditional news programmes. This occurred in Newstalk ZB's coverage of the Christchurch Mosque shootings of March 15, 2019, and is covered in Section 4.5.2 on liveness in time of emergencies.

These low expectations of talkback as a cultural product in academia, society and the industry are promulgated by the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA). In 2015, in *Parlane & Wilson and Mediaworks Radio Ltd,* the BSA dismissed two complaints lodged against then Radio Live host Sean Plunket for referring to Aotearoa New Zealand author and Booker Prize winner (for *The Luminaries*), Eleanor Catton, as a 'traitor' and an 'ungrateful hua'.[66] In doing so, the BSA stated that Plunket's comments were 'within the bounds of audience expectations of talkback radio' (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2015). A similar judgement was made in *Day & Moss and NZME Radio Ltd*, (the circumstances of this case are discussed in Section 4.2). In that ruling the BSA found that the host should be censured because her statement had 'significant potential to cause harm, through distress and denigration'. Despite the potential for 'distress and denigration', the BSA states:

> Listeners would *not* have expected a balanced or authoritative examination of these issues *in the context of the talkback environment.* (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2019b, emphasis added)

These and other standards set for talkback are likely to have been influenced by the findings of a BSA report released in 2011 (which I contend in Section 1.3 contains invalid data). These low expectations regarding balance and authority relate directly to the status of talkback as a media text. 'Low status is usually a precondition for the stigmatization of a cultural form' (Lopes, 2006, p.388). While talkback continues to be considered a low-culture form of media by some academics, a view supported by the government-appointed BSA, attention from researchers in the fields of media and cultural studies is likely to be limited. This is unfortunate as talkback would seem to be an ideal opportunity to gain insight into issues of public interest for those involved in forming public policy. This study acknowledges the stigma attached to talkback in academia and wider society but it did not arise as a de-motivating issue during the

[66] Both complainants believed that Plunket had used the term 'hua' deliberately instead of 'whore'. Plunket's response, which the BSA appear to have accepted, was that they were mistaken. Plunket said the term referred to 'a woman who annoys you' (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2015).

interview process. This study, with its specific focus on the talkback listener, hopes to raise the profile of talkback radio as a topic of academic interest. It looks to build on the work of earlier studies such as Perse and Butler (2005) and Bobbitt (2010) by focusing on the choice to listen to talkback in a multi-platform digital environment.

2.8 Summary

In order to review literature that addresses the thesis question: why does a listening audience choose to listen to talkback radio, I sought to cover three fields of scholarship: listening, media audiences and talkback radio. This chapter has reviewed listening theory and how that might be applied to talkback as a text. In this area, Lacey's (2013a) *Listening Publics* has been a particularly valuable resource. I aim to build on her concept of a 'polyphonic truth'. Both Lacey and Bakhtin (Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984, p.293) pluralise the notion of one truth, giving credence to the variety of opinions expressed within talkback content. Theories about the media audience, and what social or cultural capital they may or may not possess, are important because they connect with issues of what constitutes passive and active in relation to listening, power and participation. Lacey's theory that listening is not a passive act because it is an important action in the communication process, is applicable to this thesis as it gives power to the overlooked listener. Lacey implies that by the act of listening, the listener is responsible for the act of speech as they are 'inviting the others to speak' (p.196).

Literary texts on talkback are still tainted by academic disdain. However, lack of interest from other academics (with some exceptions including Australian academics Graeme Turner, Jacquie Ewart and Kate Ames, and Elisabeth Perse and Jessica Butler from the USA), can be an advantage to a researcher wanting to concentrate on an overlooked aspect of their chosen topic, in this case: the reason for talkback's popularity with listeners. The reason for the disdain is an area of enquiry itself.[67]

[67] I acknowledge Professor Brett Hutchins, Head of Media, Film and Journalism at Monash University, who suggested this concept. It is discussed in Sections 2.7 and 4.10.

In conclusion, this review ends by linking the two components of this thesis: talkback and listening with two texts. They are separated by 15 years of technological development, of Ewart and Ames' (2016) 'significant shifts'.

> Talk[back] radio entertained and educated, fused learning with fun, allowed people to be titillated and informed, and encouraged them to be good citizens and unruly rebels, at the same time … the genre filled an array of needs for contact with others and for participating in and shaping public discourse (Douglas 1999, p.287).
>
> It is easier now to listen to a greater variety of voices more easily than ever before … [but] the struggle over the meanings and practices of listening has perhaps never before been this urgent (Lacey (2014, p.86).

Here Douglas appears to write of a halcyon era when talkback was one of the few electronic platforms offering public opinion. During this era, content veered between the frivolous and the serious, and listeners could step in or out of the listening zone as they pleased. A relatively short span of 16 years later, the number of platforms has increased greatly. Lacey notes that the listener is now surrounded with many more texts, images and sounds to read, view and listen to, placing on them, a greater responsibility for meaning-making.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Talkback is the most popular radio format among Aotearoa New Zealand listeners (see figures 1.1 and 1.2 in Chapter 1). The attitudes and behaviours that motivate listeners to listen to talkback underpin the thesis question for this study and the qualitative methodology used. Silverman (2001) states that qualitative methods are justified when 'attitudes relate to what we actually do – our practices ... [qualitative] methods provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena' (p.32). This chapter describes the methodology used in this qualitative study that seeks to answer the reaseach question: why do people choose to listen to talkback to radio. I have chosen to use a Grounded Theory (GT) approach to building theory for this study as I believe the answer or answers to my thesis question is grounded in the attitudes and behaviours of the listeners. The GT premise of testing the results of earlier studies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is particularly applicable to the talkback format as it continues to evolve as media audiences' needs and expectations change in the digital environment. The GT approach allows for theory to be extracted from qualitative data analysis, including thematic analysis (Charmaz, 2006). I will be using thematic analysis (TA) to identify patterns and themes in the initial stages of coding and categorisation.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Data sets

This research project used three of the four main methods of qualitative research listed by Silverman (2001): interviews, analysing texts and documents, recording and transcribing (p.11).[68] The methods are at times combined, which, Silverman says, is a common practice. Three data sets were gathered for this study:

Data set 1. Recorded and transcribed interviews with talkback listeners

Data set 2. Recorded and transcribed interviews with talkback hosts, producers and former talk and talkback radio management

Data set 3. Talkback discourse from on-air recordings

[68] The fourth method, on Silverman's list, observation was not used.

Data sets 1 and 2 are 'research-provoked': data that would not occur without the researcher's intervention (ibid, p.159). By contrast, data set 3 is 'natually occurring' as it 'exists independently of the researcher's intervention' (p.160). On its own, the naturally occurring talkback discourse would not have provided the insight needed for this study. All media listening is a choice from a range of options offered by media providers and platforms. A researcher can make assumptions about the motivations behind the choice from listening to the content. For example, the assumption could be made that a listener chooses to listen to a right-wing host because they enjoy hearing ideologies that match their own. However, to gain a more accurate picture of the listener's motivation, the researcher needs to address the listener directly. To achieve this, a research-provoked method, such as an interview, is necessary. The decision to interview both regular listeners to talkback and those in the industry who create it, was made to capture what Neuman (2011) calls a 'fuller picture' (p.165) of a social phenomenon. The perspective of the industry cohort is important to this study as it is their expertise in content creation that attracts listeners.

Data set 3, the examples of on-air talkback discourse, will be used in Chapter 4 to illustrate the themes revealed in the thematic analysis. The decision to use talkback content for this purpose was only made at the analysis stage and is an example of step 2 of the GT process, concurrent data generation. This step encourages the researcher to continue to identify new sources of data as the study is progressing (see Section 3.4.2). The collection of Data set 3 is discussed in Section 3.5.2. Another source of data, my experience as a producer of talkback will be used throughout the analysis. However, I have not labelled it as a data set, because it is not a structured gathering of data as per sets 1, 2 and 3.

3.2.2 Time frame

Data collection took place between October 2017 and April 2020. A number of key events occurred in the Aotearoa New Zealand market during that time that affected talkback content.

- The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 dominated talkback for weeks during March and April 2020 and affected radio listenership.

- In March 2020, NZME announced that the Radio Sport network, a non-mainstream but predominantly talkback station, was to shut down due to the lack of content caused by Covid-19 (Puller-Strecker, 2020).
- In December 2018, Leighton Smith, a high-profile, 30-year veteran of morning talkback (8.30 a.m, to midday) on Newstalk ZB retired, along with his producer, Carolyn Leaney.
- In the same time period, Heather du Plessis Allan, former morning talkback host on Newstalk ZB Wellington moved to the drivetime daypart on the same network. This is a talk radio slot not talkback. Du Plessis-Allan's talkback content, prior to her move to drivetime is discussed in this thesis. Smith in Auckland and du Plessis-Allan in Wellington were replaced by Kerre McIvor who was networked in the 9 a.m. to midday slot from 14 January, 2019 (*NZ Herald*, 2019a).
- In July 2019, Newtalk ZB's weekday 1 to 4 p.m. daypart, formerly issue-based talkback, became a 'chat-based' format featuring light-hearted banter between two hosts. The choice by the dominant talkback broadcaster in the Aotearoa New Zealand marketplace to remove talkback on serious social and political issues from this slot is significant and is discussed in Section 4.3.
- On 29 November, 2018, it was announced that Radio Live, the only mainstream talkback network in Aotearoa New Zealand beside Newstalk ZB, would be re-formed and re-branded as Magic Talk (McConnell, 2018). Significantly, in the biggest market, Auckland, Magic Talk is only available on AM; the FM frequency in Auckland is now branded as Magic Music, a golden-oldie music format. Unfortunately, unlike its predecessor Radio Live, the performance of Magic Talk is not quantifiable in audience listening data analysis as the audience figures for both brands are bundled together.

3.2.3 Participant recruitment

Twenty-nine participants were recruited for the study: 16 industry and 13 listener participants. (See Appendix A). Industry participants were found through my own contacts and knowledge of the talkback market. Twelve of the 16 are or have been associated with the two predominant talkback stations: Newstalk ZB and what was Radio Live, now Magic Talk. I had hoped to interview current full time hosts and producers at Newstalk ZB, and Radio Sport. A request made to a senior content executive at NZME was not declined, but nor was it

granted, as no reply was received, despite several approaches. Host Kerre McIvor, whose discourse is used in this thesis, was approached directly, but after an initially positive response, chose not to respond further. However, two current part-time Newstalk ZB hosts did agree to take part. Additionally, I was able to interview three former Newstalk ZB staff, who are still associated with the brand. These are: former network manager Bill Francis, former 9 a.m. to midday host Leighton Smith and his long time producer, Carolyn Leaney.

The remaining industry participants are from Christian radio network Rhemamedia, iwi radio station Radio Ngati Pōrou, and ethnic radio station Radio Tarana. Brief interviews were also conducted with five university radio station managers and another iwi radio station manager. These established that these stations did not run talkback on their stations. A breakdown of the roles held by the industry participants and a brief biography of listeners can be found on page xi. Both Francis and Smith have published work on talkback which is referenced in this thesis, as well as their interview data.

Listener participants were recruited initially through my personal network of work and social acquaintances and from there the snowball method was applied. When recruiting, I was aware that the stigma attached to talkback listening (discussed in Sections 2.7 and 4.10) had the potential to impact the process. For this reason, I advised possible listener participants that, if they wished, they could choose to contribute data anonymously. Some of those approached denied listening to talkback; 'denied' is used purposely here. Their responses were defensive, with the subtext that I had insulted them by asking. However, others responded more positively and 13 listener participants were recruited. To give validity, I recruited participants from a range of socio-economic and age demographics and also ethnicitie. Participants included a lawyer, a sports journalist, a website copywriter, a youth worker, and a retired school teacher. Two are former radio employees but have not worked in radio for at least 20 years. The age demographic ranged from late 20s to early 70s. In the recruitment process it was important to ensure that listener participants listened to talkback as distinct from talk radio (this distinction is discussed in Section 1.3). Most listened to both, but in the interviews, and in the analysis process, care was taken to ensure that the data used pertained to talkback. Of the participants from both cohorts, four of the 29 participants (two listeners and two hosts) identified as Māori.

3.3 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was used in the initial coding stages of the GT process. Boyatzis (1998) and Ryan and Bernard (2000) see TA as a process that can be used as a part of other analytic methods, including GT. Braun and Clarke (2006) acknowledge TA's flexibility in this sense, but argue that thematic analysis is a research method 'in its own right' (p.78). Thematic analysis searches the data for 'patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest' (ibid, p.86). It requires the researcher to familarise themselves with the data, generate codes and collate them into themes that are then defined. Importantly, there are no quantifiable parameters as to what constitutes a pattern (ibid). For example, only three of the 16 listener cohorts responded to follow-up questions regarding their talkback listening habits during Aotearoa New Zealand's first COVID-19 lockdown period. All three commented that they were listening more and that they were seeking information. While limited in number, these responses were validated by findings from America around the same time (Nielsen, 2020). The relevance of a theme, what Braun and Clarke refer to as 'keyness' (p.86) is also not quantifiable, but instead is reliant on its importance to the thesis question. For example, the theme of liveness, that talkback provides the most current opinion and information, is not overly prevalent in the data. However, during the analysis it became clear that the elements of immediacy and authenticity that liveness brings to talkback are significant motivators for listeners. The initial coding of the data using thematic analysis is shown in Appendix B.

3.4 The Grounded Theory process

Birks and Mills (2015) identify Grounded Theory (GT) as the 'preferred choice when the intent is to generate theory that explains a phenomenon of interest to the researcher' (p.18). In this study the primary focus is on the phenomenon of talkback listening: why do people choose to listen? GT differs from other frameworks in that the area of interest need not be a problem (Glaser, 1992). Talkback radio listening is not a problem; it is a social and cultural phenomenon. GT goes beyond the 'simple description and exploration'; it explains it (Birks & Mills, 2015, p.16).

Due to my experience of both generating and listening to talkback, I began this study anticipating a range of reasons for listening. Some would be top-of-the-mind responses such

as the desire for companionship, while others would require drilling down into listening behaviours and the format itself. In this respect, talkback as a focus of study, can be thought of as a tree with many roots, some near the surface and almost visible, some deep down. Neuman (2011) uses a similar analogy in which he refers to 'trees of connections' (p.536). Each root represents an aspect that contributes to the health of the tree, a reason to listen. The premise of Grounded Theory, the building of a theory from the ground up, is appropriate to this study, as by identifying each root and its contribution to the health and success of the format, the reasons and motivations to listen are identified.

In choosing GT as the theoretical framework for this study, I looked for an example of its use in media research projects. Dr Matt Mollgaard, a former radio broadcaster, applied GT to his doctoral study of the rise and eventual demise of Kiwi FM, an Aotearoa New Zealand-only music radio network. Mollgaard explains his reason for choosing GT for his study:

> I found grounded theory forced me to take new perspectives, abandon long-held assumptions and biases and that it also made me acknowledge my background and history in the field that I was researching (Mollgaard, 2015, p.72).

The abandonment of 'long-held assumptions' garnered from industry-based experience can initially be seen as contrary to the GT step of theoretical sensitivity which encourages the researcher to apply that experience to their research project. However, I suggest that by applying theoretical sensitivity the researcher is reframing those assumptions. Their experience is not so much put aside, but reinterpreted in light of what the new data is revealing.

The biases and assumptions mentioned by Mollgaard provide a secondary focus for this study. As mentioned in Section 3.2.3 (participant recruitment) above, anecdotal discussion about talkback produces a response that is rarely passive and usually emotive. Often there will be a denial that the person listens to it, a response that reflects the academic view of talkback (Bates & Ferri, 2010; Turner, 2007; Ward, 2002). When compared to responses to other popular media products, talkback is unusual in that it is often critically judged by those who do *not* listen. This raises the question: how do they know? Contrast this with the response to other popular culture products such as Netflix series *Game of Thrones* and the television and movie franchise *Star Trek*. Both have a huge fan base who readily admit to watching, and

whose tribally based critiques have become as much a part of popular culture as the programmes or movies themselves: 'Kirk or Picard?' (Pérez, 2019; Mccorkle, 2016). Those who choose not to watch, choose not to comment. However, those who choose not to listen to talkback do comment on it. This response could mean one of two things. First, that some non-listeners are 'closet' listeners (as suggested by an industry participant in Section 4.10), but feel ashamed to admit it as it reduces their cultural capital. Second, whether they listen or not, they believe that expressing a negative judgement of talkback increases their cultural capital. One of the aims of this study is to learn why talkback evokes strong reaction from both listeners and non-listeners. If this can be established, is this reaction a motivating or de-motivating factor?

Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasise the concept of 'theory in process', which sees theory as 'an ever-developing entity, not as a perfected product' (p.32). Contributing to this concept of evolving theory is the notion that the grounded theory process, particularly the data collection, coding and analysis, should be done concurrently whenever possible. 'They should blur and intertwine continually from the beginning of the investigation to its end' (ibid). To this end, the following 10 steps of the GT process are numbered for the purposes of identification, rather than a chronological layering.

3.4.1 Initial coding and categorisation

A pilot study comprising four listener interviews was conducted in the period October to December, 2017, to test the question line. The coding and categorisation of the data from the pilot study began immediately using thematic analysis (TA). As with all interviews in this study, they were transcribed using North American transcription software *Trint*. Editing of the transcriptions was necessary due to accent differences,[69] the use of industry terminology or Aotearoa New Zealand slang, and ambient noise that at times interfered with clarity. Transcripts were edited as soon as possible, so that if correction was required, my memory of the content was fresh. Following the pilot study, 25 further interviews, comprising nine more listeners and 15 industry participants, were carried out between January 2018 and April 2020.

[69] Trint software offers the opportunity to choose a non-North American accent.

Direct quotes from the participants, each representing a theme associated with talkback listening, were categorised using TA. Neuman (2011) suggests that in identifying themes a researcher should think conceptually, (rather than giving data a literal meaning), and possess a good background knowledge of the topic including relevant information. The latter concurs with the GT step of theoretical sensitivity (see Section 3.4.6). Neuman notes that while the research question acts as a guide, the process can lead to new questions. This is addressed in the following section.

3.4.2 Concurrent data generation

Birks and Mills (2015) describe this step as 'fundamental' to the research design of a GT study. Themes gleaned from each round of coding and analysis inform the next round of data collection. For example, it became apparent from the analysis of early interviews that the inclusion of digital content (texts, emails and social media posts) was potentially impacting talkback listening perceptions. While it had been included as a question line for industry participants, it was not included in the question line for listeners. As a result, I re-engaged with several listeners following their initial interview and asked for their views on this topic. I decided that a face to face interview was not required for this followup question and it was done instead by email. All subsequent interviews with listeners included questions about digital content. Concurrent data collection was undertaken with non-mainstream broadcasters about the role of talkback on their stations.

A further reason for concurrent data collection is what Birks and Mills (2015) call unforeseen 'future incidents' (p.90) that occur during the time of the research project. The emergence in Aotearoa New Zealand of COVID-19 in early 2020 could be seen as the quintessential 'future incident'. The topic monopolised both mainstream talkback networks (even featuring in sports talkback), providing an ideal data collection opportunity on listening motivations. Accordingly, questionnaires asking about listening behaviours during this time were sent to listener participants.

3.4.3 Writing memos

As with the other stages, this GT step, in which the researcher makes mental or written notes for themselves as thoughts occur, does not fit neatly into a chronological timeline. It is an

organic process with no set time line and no quantifiable requirements. It can and often does occur away from the researcher's writing desk. It is a process that for me began even before my topic was confirmed by my university and has continued throughout the writing process. Its value cannot be underestimated. It is information generally sitting outside the data gathered but can be prompted by the data. Additionally, in a mediated environment, new information becomes available providing new insight, new events occur changing a timeline, or a new event may prompt a memory of an old. As Birks and Mills (2015) suggest, no note (or memo) should ever be thrown away.

3.4.4 Theoretical sampling

Birks and Mills (2015) describe this as the 'identifying and pursuing [of] clues' (p.181). It requires the researcher to be strategic about 'what or who will provide the most information-rich source of data to meet their analytical needs' (p.11). It is important that the researcher allow for their results to be challenged as well as validated. It may require deviating from the researcher's original list of potential participants or even the type of data being collected. For this research project the events of 15 March, 2019, in which a gunman killed 51 people in an attack on two Christchurch mosques, provided those deviations. It led me to gather data that I had not previously anticipated collecting: the live first-hand witness accounts of the talkback callers from Newstalk ZB's on-demand site. The importance of liveness had already presented itself in interviews as a motivation for listeners in relation to the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes. As a talkback listener on the day of the 2019 shootings, the coverage of the attack on Newstalk ZB provided another example of the value of liveness. For this reason, as well as capturing the broadcast material, I also interviewed the host of that day's programme, Andrew Dickens. This is covered in Section 4.5.2.

3.4.5 Constant comparative analysis

Theoretical sampling requires the researcher to be a strategist – constantly looking ahead, and from side to side, to evaluate valuable sources of data. By contrast, constant comparative analysis requires the researcher to look back at what has been collected and analysed, and to compare it with new data. It is part of the inductive process on which GT is based. Neuman (2011) suggests that an observation can take on new meanings when seen through a different lens. For example: one of the most aurally apparent aspects of talkback is the presence of

strongly held, often right-wing opinions. As a result, talkback listeners are seen through the same lens as talkback callers and it is assumed that they too hold right-wing ideologies. However, there is no proof of this. Indeed, the data collected for this study suggests that this is often not the case, and some listeners were able to explain why they might listen yet not agree.

3.4.6 Theoretical sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity allows for the researcher's own insight into a topic to be applied to the analysis and allows the researcher to immerse themselves in the data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that theoretical sensitivity is an indication of the intellectual capabilities of the researcher. Birks and Mills (2015) state that 'researchers are a sum of all they have experienced' (p. 12). My 30-year career in media, including the role of talkback producer, has provided me with the ability to 'recognise and extract … elements that have relevance for the emerging theory [of the study]' (Birks and Mills, 2015, p,181).

For example, the following two pieces of data refer to the characteristic of currency found in talkback radio.

> Talkback's now and if you miss it, you've missed it (K. Smyth, personal communication, November 16, 2018).
>
> It's instant, so it's current, everything is current that you're learning, that you're listening to (Listener K, personal communication, January 22, 2018).

As a talkback producer when important stories 'break', radio's flexibility allows information to reach listeners live, as events unfold on an ongoing process.[70] One example during my time as a producer was the bombing of the Greenpeace flagship Rainbow Warrior in Auckland harbour on 10 July 1985. At the time Aotearoa New Zealand was seen as a leader in the international anti-nuclear movement. I recall that reaction from listeners that evening varied between concern for what had happened and the less empathetic reaction: 'bloody Greenies'.[71] I recognised the data (above) as a response to the wider and important concept of liveness. Liveness is discussed in section 4.5.

[70] While television can also cover events live, practicalities such as setting up cameras, having a journalist on hand to appear on camera in the field and in the studio and, as was the case in this event, the difficulty of breaking into prime time evening programming.

[71] One crew member died in the explosion. At the time, the involvement of two French agents, later convicted of manslaughter, was not known.

3.4.7 Intermediate coding

The intermediate coding step is one of the most important steps in the GT process. This process creates new individual categories by linking the subcategories identified in the initial coding and analysis (Birks and Mills, 2015). The themes from both data sets are integrated and collapsed into subcategories. (See Appendix B.)

3.4.8 Identifying a core category

Birks and Mills (2015) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) place this step at the centre of the theory generating process. The core category is a 'frequently occuring variable' (Birks & Mills, 2015, p.98) extracted from existing data; all subsequent data should be able to sit under it, if it is to be of use to the researcher. Birks and Mills (2015) list seven different theoretical approaches to the creation of a core category (p.87). They cite Strauss and Corbin (1990), who define the core category as a singular 'central phenomenon' in answering a thesis question, and Clarke (2005), whose definition 'multiple possible social processes and sub-processes' pluralises the concept and moves away from the concept of a single core category as the answer to the question. As it became apparent that this study would reveal several core categories, it was decided to adopt Clarke's approach. Identifying the core category or categories can be seen as a time-saving mechanism as data that does not link to this variable can be set aside. For example, in this study the podcast phenomenon was initially seen as potentially relevant to talkback listening as it is another form of listening in the digital environment, and therefore can be seen as competing for listeners' ears. However, the analysis of data collected on podcast listening did not link to talkback listening. While a talkback listener may also listen to podcasts, their motivations for each appear to be quite separate. For this reason, data collected on podcast listening was not used in the analysis.

3.4.9 Advanced coding and theoretical integration

Advanced coding is the final step prior to the generation of theory. Themes generated by the earlier categorisation are integrated to produce that explanation. If, as is the case with this study, there are a large number of categories in both the initial and intermediate coding, as the study moves towards theory generation, several variables may be apparent. Appendix B shows that that the answer to the thesis question is a 'comprehensive' rather than a 'one size

fits all' explanation (Birks &Mills, 2015, p. 13) which fits with Clarke's pluralised concept of 'core category' mentioned above.

3.4.10 Generating theory

Birk and Mills (2015) describe the generation of theory as the 'result of the interaction between you as the researcher and your data' (p.123) which produces an 'integrated and comprehensive grounded theory that explains a process or scheme associated with a phenomenon' (p.13). This stage of the grounded theory process can be likened to arriving at the start line of a marathon. Hours of training are behind the runner. All the work has been done, it remains only for them to run the race. In a grounded theory study, all the hard work of finding participants, collecting data, coding and categorisation and analysis has been done. Theories on the phenomenon have been studied. Memos have been written along the way which will provide the basis for your theory. In essence theory generation (just like marathon fitness) starts the day you begin the GT process and the final step of generating the theory, of crossing the finishing line, can be seen as an integration of all you have worked towards. Birks and Mills sum it up as 'this is where a grounded theory either comes together or not' (p.14).

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Data sets 1 & 2: Listener and industry interviews

A face to face semi-structured interview using an open-ended list of questions was chosen as the most appropriate method of data collection for data sets 1 and 2 (listeners and industry participants). Silverman (2001) says that open-ended questions are the most effective way to gain an 'authentic understanding' of the participant's experience (p.13). McIntyre (2005) suggests that the researcher allows for the question line to change during the research period depending on what earlier interviews revealed.

> 'You want to know about a part of social life from the interviewee's point of view – about what's important to them. … The idea is to let them answer your general questions ... and then listen for things that need elaboration' (pp.223-224).

Neuman (2011) states that open-ended questions allow for a 'richness of detail' and allow respondents to clarify their responses if they felt it was necessary (p.325). He says that open ended question are more likely (than closed) to lead to 'unanticipated findings'. Further, the

responses to open-ended questions can reveal the participants' 'thinking process and frame of reference' (p.325). This is an important aspect of the study and can highlight contextual issues of participant behaviour. For example, some listener participants said they listened to a particular station or host 'because they always had'; their listening behaviours were habit rather than choice. Before being invited to join the study, they hadn't considered the reasons for their preferences. While in the main, the questions differed for each cohort, some were asked of both groups. One particular crossover question had an interesting outcome. The response to the question (paraphrased here): 'why do you/listeners choose to listen to opinionated hosts with whom you may not agree' differed significantly between the two cohorts.

Twenty four of the 29 interviews were recorded (audio only). McIntyre (2005) recommends taping qualitative interviews as the interviewer cannot know beforehand, what might become important. Of the remaining five, the responses of one interviewee were taken down in written note form while four were conducted by email. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in locations set by the interviewees in order to provide the environment in which they felt the most comfortable. These included their home, their work place, and cafes. A list of questions was sent to the participants beforehand. In keeping with the concept of concurrent data collection, follow-up questions were sent by email to gain insight into particular themes that had emerged in the initial and intermediate coding, or events that had occurred. Two examples of this were the use of texts and emails within talkback, and lockdown listening behaviours during the COVID-19 crisis.

3.5.2 Data Set 3: Talkback content

Data set 3 comprises recorded talkback content. Most of this discourse is taken from the Newstalk ZB on-demand platform. This was not a deliberate bias against the other mainstream talkback station, Radio Live. It occurred because during the main period of data collection, Radio Live, underwent a major restructure to become Magic Talk, and material needed to illustrate a point was not readily available. The data was downloaded from Newstalk ZB's on-demand site and transcribed using *Trint* transcription software, as per the participant interviews. This data had to be collected within one week of broadcast as it only remains on Newstalk ZB's on-demand platform for that period.

3.6 Revealing the themes

The coding of the data to produce the thematic analysis was done manually in both the initial and intermediate stages. Using the Grounded Theory step of theoretical sensitivity, I applied my own industry knowledge and experience to code and categorise data (See section 3.4.6). Additionally, I analysed the use of language within the data. I looked for the following (with examples):

1. Repetition of themes, for example, the expression of strong opinions is inherent to talkback:

   > People like *opinion*, because they like to react. Whereas, if you try and please all the people and just paint it all with one big happy colour, it's boring (K. Smyth, personal communication, November 16, 2018).
   >
   > You've got to have the *guts of your convictions* and it comes across in your voice on the radio that you're quite *passionate* about a situation that you're putting on the table (J. Tamihere, personal communication, September 24, 2018).
   >
   > *Polarising* is a good thing to do … if everyone likes you, there's something wrong (M. Davis, personal communication, September 11, 2018).

2. The use of first person and conjunctions to provided an explanation or reason for listening:

   > *I* think it's quite interesting to hear what the general public are thinking (Listener J, Personal Communication, September 28, 2018).
   >
   > [*I* listen] if its a subject that *I* know about (Listener F, personal communication, September 10, 2018).
   >
   > *Because* it is just always there. It's a constant. (Listener F)

3. The use of adjectives and intensifiers to describe the listening experience

   > My mother has dementia, so I'm *very* interested in that topic (Listener J).

4. The use of phrases that imply personal motivation:

   > It's the evening and it's late and *I'm wanting to wind down* and so instead of having some loud music, it will be just be Marcus Lush and his soft voice (Listener H, personal communication, October 20, 2017).

5. Beliefs and concepts, particularly by industry participants.

   > [The listener] likes to be *consistently annoyed,* you know that, it's like a comfort (Parkinson, producer).

The result of the initial coding of data can be seen in Appendix B.

The next step towards building theory was to apply the GT processess described in Sections 3.4.2 to 3.4.6.[72] These processes drill down into the themes identified in the initial coding in order to achieve what Birks and Mills (2015) describe as a key task of intermediate coding: to link together or integrate categories. This requires the researcher to take individual themes arising from the interview data, identify and categorise them. For example: 'I don't necessarily agree with what's being said' can be linked with another response such as 'I'll listen to it then I'll make up my own mind'. From this a broader theme of talkback as a source of opinion for listeners builds in the intermediate coding process. Having established intermediate coding categories, the themes were further integrated to create the advanced coding as shown in Appendix B. The themes shown in the advanced coding column provide the foundation for the data analysis undertaken in Chapter 4 that seeks to answer the research question: why do people choose to listen to talkback radio.

3.7 Limitations

There were limitations to this study. Primarily, unlike talkback *callers*, talkback *listeners* are the silent actors in the talkback transaction. While a caller's motivation is overt and apparent in their discourse, a listener's motivation is tied to attitude and behaviour, neither of which are directly observable. The Radio Bureau (TRB), which exists to market commercial radio as a medium, was approached to learn about these attitudes. However, like NZME, TRB chose not to reply to my requests. (The difficulties in recruiting current industry participants from NZME-owned Newstalk ZB are detailed above in Section 3.2.3 on participant recruitment.) I have made the assumption that the reluctance of both NZME and TRB to contribute is due to commercial sensitivity. Both the TRB and GFK (data collection and analysis company) websites contain ratings data and insights on audiences. However, it is, not surprisingly, limited. Despite this, data that is available does contain useful information and has been used in this study.

In marketing parlance, talkback radio could be said to have low brand equity with some sections of the media audience that perceive it to have low cultural capital (see Section 4.9).

[72] Concurrent data generation, writing memos, theoretical sampling, constant comparative analysis, theoretical sensitivity.

This was potentially a problem when seeking participants; I anticipated that listener participants might be hard to find. However, this was not the case. Any initial media-shaming concerns experienced by potential participants appeared to be neutralised by the knowledge the project was part of a doctoral study, giving it cultural capital. This, along with the assurance of anonymity for listeners, allowed the participants to speak frankly about their listening habits with no concern that they would be seen in a negative light by the researcher. A second concern around recruitment was that none of my listener participants fell into the cliched category of the lonely and socially inadequate person seeking human interaction. This was not an intentional bias; I acknowledge that this listener type exists but they did not present when recruiting. While most talkback in Aotearoa New Zealand is listened to on the two mainstream networks, Newstalk ZB and Magic Talk, it also features on targeted stations (see Section 4.11), often in provincial locations. This study was able to speak to producers and management of these stations but due to its low profile and irregularity, no listener participants were spoken to.

Initially it was thought that geographical differences might be a limitation in regards to data gathering, that motivations may vary depending on where listeners lived. Travelling to other centres both metropolitan and provincial was considered. However, early analysis of data showed that this was not necessary. Among the motivations people gave for listening, was the relevance of the topic to them and how it might impact their lives. For example Auckland talkback listeners are motivated by debate about house prices, while Christchurch talkback listeners want to hear about post-earthquake insurance claims. In both cases the motivation is the same: relevance to them economically and socially; their geographical location is irrelevant. The terminology given to motivations by the different cohorts was potentially an issue in the coding and categorisation of the data. For example, industry participants spoke of ‘engagement’, a word often found in a media studies or industry context but not heard in the interviews conducted with listeners. Instead listeners spoke of ‘relating to’ or ‘learning’ or simply ‘listening’.

Throughout this thesis I have included my observations from my experience as a radio (including talkback) and television producer. I acknowledge that there are limitations with this data as my time as a radio producer pre-dated the Web 2.0 era. However, I consider that

my 30 year career in radio and television as a producer and curator of content, does allow me to make observations about audience behaviour.

3.8 Summary

The qualitative methodologies used in this research project have been chosen for their capacity to gather knowledge about attitudes that are not observable. These are attitudes that are often closely-held by the talkback listener, due to perceptions of the social and cultural capital attached to talkback. The views of the industry cohort were important to this project as they added the experience of those who have expertise in the curating of caller content. Further, this cohort has access to audience survey information not publically released and therefore may have knowledge of what motivates talkback listeners. Talkback as a format, as part of the wider radio industry, and as one of the many listening products now available, is evolving. It was for this reason that Grounded Theory, which allows for flexibity of data collection time lines, for constant comparisons and for the theoretical sensibility and intellectual ability of the researcher, was used as the theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter 4: Data analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the characteristics and nuances of the talkback format found in the themes initially lifted from the raw interview data, coded and integrated according to the Grounded Theory (GT) process. Appendix B shows the coding process from raw data, through the initial and intermediate coding stages and with advanced coding, into the final themes:

- Listeners can hear current opinion from their own community.
- Talkback content from the te ao Māori perspective (Māori world view).
- The role of the talkback host.
- The importance of liveness.
- The contribution of digital messaging.
- Talkback as companion.
- Talkback as accompaniment.
- The voyeurism of talkback radio

This analysis is illustrated with transcribed talkback content (Data set 3). In accordance with the theoretical sensitivity step of GT, where applicable, I apply my own experience as a talkback producer to add insight to the analysis .

While not addressing the research question, data analysis revealed a further three themes shown in Appendix B:

- The stigma of talkback
- Talkback on targeted stations.
- The future of talkback.

Stigma and the role of targeted stations are important discussion points in the context of talkback's location within the current media environment and are included in this chapter. The future of talkback is discussed in Chapter 6.

The two cohorts interviewed for this study approached the thesis question of why people listen to talkback from their own contextualised perspective. Listeners construct their own meaning through the lens of their unique world view. Lacey (2013a) describes this process:

> The interpretive bundle is laid at the ears of the listener. The listener accepting the invitation to listen, is obliged actively to seek out the meaning. The act of listening literally *makes* sense (p.183, emphasis by Lacey).

For this reason the views of the participants in this study differed within individual data sets depending on their interpretation. For example, one listener describes a particular talkback host's commentary as 'bloody soliliquies' (Listener M, personal communication, August 19, 2018), while another describes the same host as making 'some really good comments' (Listener E, personal communication, November 9, 2017). While some themes were common to both listeners and industry data sets, the number of themes unique to each data set vindicates the decision to interview both listeners and industry. Listeners are choosing to listen, usually as a form of recreation, usually in a place of their choice. For them, listening is a peripheral act, (with the exception of listening for emergency information, which is covered in Section 4.5.2.). Their analysis of talkback content and their reaction to what they hear is based on self: 'what *I* heard', 'what *I* thought'.

By contrast, industry views are based on 'them', that is the audience, and meeting their requirements. In her study of how presenters view their audience, Wolfenden (2014) writes:

> Presenters do not experience their audience as a discrete object. Instead they know their audience collectively as a relational subject. In a direct exchange with an audience, both literally and virtually, the challenge is to build a connection that feels real – both for the presenter and listeners. (p.12).

More over, their views are coloured by their experience of interaction with the audience, both on-air and off-air (particularly in the case of producers who screen the incoming calls). The perspectives of industry participants, even those who are now retired, are likely to be coloured by the requirement to listen to the content rather than making a choice; it is, or was, their job.

4.2 The voice of the average Joe

> *I like strong-minded and strong-willed people saying what they think, and then someone rings up with a contrary view. Good! You know, I like that … you think, I wonder if anyone is going to take on what they say … you know, … the Christians in the Coliseum (Listener A, personal communication, August 16, 2018)*

My great-uncle Joe was a working-class man with strong opinions. He wrote regularly to his local newspaper, the *Northern Advocate* in Whangarei, Aotearoa New Zealand, in the 1920s and 1930s, under the pseudonym 'Scribe'. Figure 4.1 shows an example of his correspondence

on the topic of 'Palestine and the Jews', in which he describes a previous correspondent's biblical notions as 'small potatoes'. *The People's Column,* like letters to the editor sections in most newspapers and magazines, provided a voice for Whangarei citizens wanting their say, (and wanting to let others know they said it). It offered people with little social and financial capital, such as Joe Johnson, the opportunity to have their say (Kitchener, 2018), much as talkback does today. Additionally, it gave people of all social demographics an opportunity to learn the thoughts of others in their community.

Figure 4.1: *The People's Column, The Northern Advocate, September 27, 1929, p.9*


THE NORTHERN ADVOCATE. FRIDAY. SEPTEMBER 27. 1929. 9

PYJAMAS

Many things make the difference between a comfortable Pyjama, and just a Pyjama. Amongst those things cutting is of high importance. The perfect fitting collar, shoulders and trousers of an H.B. Pyjama — the roominess and general comfort—all these are made possible in the H.B. cutting rooms.

The materials present a wide choice—Tebralcos, Wincyettes, Trieolines, Poplins, Luviscas and Fuji silks. The range of prices, when the quality is considered is most attractive

9/6, 12/6, 15/6
19/6, 25/-, & 30/-

Hallenstein Bros., Ltd.

NEW ZEALAND HB CLOTHING FACTORY

CAMERON STREET - - WHANGAREI
Also at Hamilton and Auckland (2 Stores)

many are the little needs of BABY MINE

Under mother's loving care does the future of Baby's happiness lie. No need, be it ever so small, should be neglected. Deserving of the best, Baby should always be given the highest in quality procurable. A few of the requirements so needed are given below:

Clearskin Soap 1/- per tab; 2/9 per box.
Zena Baby Soap, 9d tab.
Feeding Bottles, from 6d
Teats, all fresh stock, 6d
Dusting Powder, all brands.
Olive Oil, best quality, 1/
Baby Bets, brush, comb and Powder Box.
Teething Powders, 1/3.
Cough Linctus, 1/6 & 2/6
Nurse Murray's Mother's Friend, 2/-.
Best Castor Oil, 1/-.

HAROLD MENZIES
CHEMIST AND BOOKSELLER
BANK STREET. WHANGAREI

CREATE THE HOME BEAUTIFUL!
WITH ARTISTIC WALLPAPER

NOW OBTAINABLE IN AN ARRAY OF CHARMING COLOURS AND BEAUTIFUL DESIGNS.

WE WILL ADVISE YOU WHEN SELECTING THAT WALLPAPER WHICH MUST BE IN TONE WITH THE FURNISHINGS OF ANY PARTICULAR ROOM

OUR PRICES ARE KEEN, TOO.

WE INVITE YOU TO INSPECT, & DO NOT PRESS YOU TO BUY

STOCKS OF PAINTS, VARNISHES, STAINS, COLOURS IN OIL, BRUSHES, ETC., IN GREAT VARIETY.

W. E. WOOD
OIL AND COLOUR MERCHANT
BANK STREET, WHANGAREI. PHONE 208.

"NORTHERN ADVOCATE" SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Delivered by Runner Boys: 9d per week; 9/9 per quarter; 36/- per year, in advance. Posted: 12/6 per quarter: £2/5/- per year, in advance.

SPORTING

TROTTING DATES.

Methven T.C.—Oct. 5.
Waikato T.C.—Oct. 12.
Northland T.C.—October 19th
New Brighton T.C.—Oct. 19.
Greymouth T.C.—Oct. 25, 26.
Auckland T.C.—Oct. 26, 28.
Oamaru T.C.—Oct. 28.
Wellington T.C.—Nov. 2.
N.Z. Metropolitan T.C.—Nov. 12, 14, 16
Otahuhu T.C.—Nov. 20, 23.
Forbury Park T.C.—Nov. 27, 30.
Nelson T.C.—Dec. 5, 7.
New Brighton T.C.—Dec. 14.
Ashburton T.C.—Dec. 26.
Gore T.C.—Dec. 26.
Westport T.C.—Dec. 26, 27.
South Wairarapa T.C.—Dec. 26, 28.
Auckland T.C.—December 27, 28, 31.
Winton T.C.—Dec. 28.
Inanahua T.C.—Dec. 30.

GERALDINE RACES.

SPRINT TO SILVER CUP.

FAVOURITE WINS HACK EVENT.

(Per Press Association.—Copyright.)
ORARI, This Day.

The remaining events on the first day of the Geraldine Racing Club meeting resulted as follows:—

Geraldine Trot, of 120 sovs; one mile and a half.—(6) Tortmea, scr, 1; (1) Llewellyn, scr, 2; (8) Jeanette Lecando, scr, 3. Mac Locanda was scratched. Won by four lengths, 6 yards between second and third horses. Time—3.47 3-5.

Squatters' Handicap, of 110 sovs; six furlongs.—(8) Silver Cord, 7.9, 1; (7) Arch Arrow, 7.2, 2; (3) Bulolo, 7.0, 3. All started. Won by a neck, three lengths between second and third horses. Time—1.15 3-5.

Ruahupuka Hack, of 110 sovs; seven furlongs.—(1) Glenseavan 8.1, 1; (3) Mount Bon 7.6, 2; (4) Sailing Home 7.0, 3. Hushdone and Morian Wee scratched. Won by half a length, third horse neck further away. Time 1.29 4-5.

Orari Trot, of 115 sovs; one mile and a quarter.—(8) Royal Silk, scr, 1; (4) Silver Sea Boyds, 2; (9) Gay Dee ver, scr, 3. Dixie Thorpe, Brook Point ce, Little Victor, Tama and Francis Gr Nelson were scratched. Won by two lengths, three lengths between second and third horses. Time—3.1 3-5.

Belfield Handicap, of £20 sovs; one mile.—(2) Narrative, 7.5, 1; (3) Mesbo, 7.5, 2; (6) Chickwheat, 7.7, 3. Also started: Honeycombe, 7.13, Nicompoop, 7.8, Gold Brick, 7.5, Don Jon 7.2. Won by a short head. Time—1.45

HAWKE'S BAY RACES.

TOMORROW'S FIELDS.

(By "Spotter.")

The Hawke's Bay Jockey Club's spring meeting will be held at Hastings tomorrow, and the undernoted horses should run prominently in the events set opposite their names:—

Tomoana Hurdles.—Hard Gold, Jeu and Royal Elm.

Trial Stakes.—Head Swung, Tea Taste and Trisogine.

Ormondy Hack.—Clever, Masher, Arrowhead.

Hawke's Bay Guineas.—Hunting Cry, Air Laddie, Romdehay.

Spring Handicap.—Blimp, Kick Off, King's Jest.

Nursery Handicap.—Simba, Chrysology, Sea Scout.

Plumero Hack.—Benera, Sylvan Bell, Repay.

Flying Handicap.—Huikai, Royal Lineage, Plumerton.

INTERMEDIATE CREDITS

EXTENSION OF FACILITIES.

(Per Press Association.—Copyright.)
CHRISTCHURCH, This Day.

At the monthly meeting of the Rural Intermediate Credits Board last month, there were considered proposals submitted by the Commissioner, Mr MacDonald, for the introduction of a system to meet the needs of farmers, such as sheep farms and those engaged in mixed farming, whose requirements fluctuated according to the various seasons of the year.

Under the system outlined, provision would be made for approving limits proportionate to the value of a borrower's live and dead stock, and, if necessary, collateral security, up to which he would be entitled to receive advances as and when he required money to meet current outgoings.

The proposals received the general approval of the board in principle, but members thought it desirable to submit them to district boards and co-operative rural intermediate credit associations throughout the Dominion in order that they might be fully apprised of the system and have an opportunity of submitting suggestions as to the procedure necessary to put the proposals into effect.

The various comments by district board members and the directors of co-operative rural intermediate credit associations were considered by the board at its meeting this week, and effect will be given to a number of suggestions made.

This extension of facilities is of particular interest in view of the proposal now under consideration to increase the maximum for individual loans to £2000.

Small tin of Shaldah's Egg Preservative preserves 15 dozen eggs. Keeps perfectly. Obtainable all stores.

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

[Our columns are open to the public for the discussion of matters of public concern. We invite correspondence, but do not identify ourselves with the views expressed by our correspondents. Letters must be written in ink and on one side of the paper only. The real name and address of the writer must be attached to a letter, not necessarily for publication, but as a mark of good faith.—Ed.]

PALESTINE AND THE JEWS.

(To the Editor.)

Sir,—I have from time to time read the letters of our esteemed fellow townsman, Mr K. R. Macdonald, and could almost wish his obvious sincerity might have its due reward in a general acceptance of his theories. But my sincere respect for Mr Macdonald does not mitigate my conviction that his Biblical notions are pretty small potatoes. How any thinking man can in this day accept the utterances of the old Hebrew Prophets as Divinely inspired is a puzzle to me. The ancient Hebrews, according to Dean Milman, were a people "mad with egotistical conceit," and that this is so ought to be readily apparent from an unprejudiced reading of their words. The Prophets were men of their time, profoundly ignorant of the nature of the Universe and of Man. The Prophet sought to unify the people as a nation and he pictured the Restoration of their national symbol, the Temple, and themselves, as a remarkable, victorious and unified people. This was done in various ways according to no proper and definite plan or detailed scheme. Their prophecies were almost totally of local colour and contemporary significance. At times they took a long shot and speculated concerning the future. But obviously they were the men of their time with all contemporary limitations. I can't find in the Bible one word or hint about Britain, Russia or Germany. To do so I would have to imitate the stage conjurer who takes out of the hat the very rabbit he has put into it. This sort of thing is not only out of date but is very unachievous. If a man believes war is inevitable, and world peace in our time contrary to a Divine plan of the ages, or only to be achieved after Armageddon and the Second Coming, then he will not assist the growth of a real international peace sentiment and will possibly oppose it. And so this sort of thing becomes a very real barrier to human progress. Mr Macdonald speaks of the 6000 years of the world's troubled history. The world has been troubled for longer than that. Why, the Chinese have written history dating back over 9000 years, and long before that man lived and fought and assiduously developed the arts and the industries. Let anyone interested in these matters begin by studying the history and composition of the Bible, and New Testament by competent modern scholars, and not mere orthodox commentators, and he will soon be able to estimate the value of Mr Macdonald's methods of interpretation accurately. The ancients knew about the future history of man just what you and I know—almost nothing. I am, etc.,

SCRIBE.

MASSEY COLLEGE

MEETING OF COUNCIL.

SATISFACTORY PROGRESS REPORTED.

(Per Press Association.—Copyright.)
PALMERSTON N., This Day.

At a meeting of the Massey Agricultural College Council, Messrs Hall (Christchurch) and Perry (Masterton) took their seats for the first time, the former replacing Mr Rodger, of Tapanui, who has retired, and the latter filling the vacancy caused by the death of Sir J. G. Wilson.

Mr Scrivenger, soil chemist, reported that top-dressing experiments on grass land were being carried out this season to a larger extent than those of last year. One hundred acres were being used for definite experiments.

Mr Kissling, poultry instructor, reported that the public were taking an interest in this section. Several gifts had been made.

Professor Peren reported that a meeting of the Plan Research Committee was held in Wellington and he read a report given by Dr Yeates on the general progress of selections and breeding. Particular attention was given to the fibre testings and yellow leaf work carried out by Mr Meadows, of the college staff. A sum of £25 had been granted by the committee for manure in connection with yellow leaf work. Flax growers in several districts had set aside areas of about two acres for experiments. The sum of £75 had also been granted to enable experiments in connection with the yellow leaf disease to be extended. Dr Marsden would finalise them.

Now is the Time to "Smarten Up" .. Your Hands and Feet ..

It is interesting to know that we have just Opened several New Lines in Our Glove and Hosiery Department.

SMART FABRIC GLOVES, with Fancy Turnover Tops, in Fawns, Greys, Champ, Black and several New Shades. Selling at 1/11 and 2/11. Worth Double.
SILK AND ART SILK GLOVES Stocked in New Shades. Only Guaranteed Makes kept in stock.
We have a Large Assortment of Kayser Duplex Leatherette Gloves, with Dome and Gauntlet Tops, all at 4/11. Worth 7/11. Shades: Nude, Arab, Mocha, Beige, Grey, Light Rosewood, etc.
KID GLOVES.—Several New Lines have just come to hand in nice Plump Skins, at 10/6, 11/6, 12/6, 13/6. All sizes. In Fawns, Champ, Tan, Brown, Grey, etc. Make your selection now—you are sure of satisfaction.

OUR GREAT HOSIERY TURNOVER enables us to carry an Extra Large Stock of the Best Makes. We have several numbers in Kayser, Phoenix, Gold Star, Bond's, and several Continental Lines to offer from 1/11 to 17/6 per pair. In Lotus, Hoggar, Nutone, Chalet, Chaire, Neptune, Champ, Venus, etc.

Just Opened New Lines of TENNIS OVER-SOX, Cream and White, with Smart Fancy Tops.

Call and Inspect the New Ranges of CHILDREN'S SOCKS, in Cotton, Silk, and Art Silk, with New Designs, Fancy Tops. All Sizes. Assorted Colours.

BELTS are Being Worn. We have several New Shades and Styles, in Suede and Fancy Leather Lines.

NEW STOCKS of LACES AND INSERTIONS. Also Lace and Silk Neckwear, Tubular Bows, Wide-end Ties, Scarves and Squares.

"CURITY" ABSORBENT BUTTER AND CHEESE CLOTH. New 5-Yard Pack, tidy and easy to keep clean.

WE ARE SOLE AGENTS FOR McCALL'S PATTERNS AND MAGAZINES

R. G. HOSKING The "VERIBEST" Draper and Outfitter
CAMERON AND BANK STREETS - WHANGAREI

OTHERS APPRECIATE US

PRAISE FROM DARGAVILLE.

Under the heading of "Beautifying Whangarei" the following is contributed to the "North Auckland News":—

"Whangarei is rapidly developing into a city, and those who were privileged to witness the football on Saturday could not help but admire the beautiful environment of the town. A trip out into the suburbs to view the flower gardens, now a blaze of colour, was a delight in itself. Later in the evening, as the electric lights lighted the landscape, the scene was a veritable one.

"Not having electricity in Dargaville, we are inclined to think that all we has to do is to switch on the car ent and the kettle boils; but appar ently it is not so. A party of local florists after the match motored into the suburbs to have their tea by the roadside. Thinking to save time and the trouble of "boiling the billy" one of the party called at a nice-looking home surrounded with beautiful gardens and lawns (a motor car in the garage), and asked the lady of the house if she could let them have some boiling water. 'Oh, I'm sorry,' she said, 'we haven't a stove, only an electric stove, and that is out.' Quite different was the experience of another party who called at a street shop in lower Cameron Street and asked if their kettle was boiling, as they wanted to make a cup of tea. The proprietor of the shop said, 'The urn is not boiling, but if you come along in a few minutes it will be, and if you want any cups I can lend you some.'"

YES, SIR, EVERY TIME.

"When I have a cough or cold I take Pulmonas. Yes, sir, every time. Take a cough or cold in time and it doesn't last long. Pulmonas are soothing, healing, vaporising pastilles that relieve coughs, colds, sore throats, bronchitis, asthma and lung troubles. Yes, sir, every time." 1/6 and 2/6, chemists and stores.

SPRING SUITS
Styles and Prices for all

There's a Smart Suit priced within the means of every pocket. The patterns and styles give a range that provides a choice to meet the approval of every desire. Whether single or double-breasted the cut is the very latest.

Our Tailored Suits are guaranteed to please the most fastidiously dressed, and the Ready-mades we can assure will give entire satisfaction—long and serviceable wear.

Tailor-Made
Hand-made throughout. finest finish, silk lined, etc.
PRICED FROM
£9/9/-

Made-to-Measure
Finished off by hand. Silk-lined. Hand made buttonholes, hand-stitched edges, etc.
PRICES FROM
£6/15/-

Ready-Made
Latest styles, S.B. and D.B. backs. Wide trousers, etc. Prices to Suit All.

Sole District Agents for *Sincerity Suits* A suit fit for every figure, in a range of 57 Sizes.

Ken. Kelly
Cameron St., Whangarei

The "Northern Advocate"

Is the means by which your requirements can be made known daily to the people within a wide radius of Whangarei and the "want" columns never escape attention.

Write your advertisement on this form and send it to the "Northern Advocate" office. You can be assured that it will come within the personal touch of at least 16,000 people.

"ADVOCATE" ADVERTISEMENTS COMMAND BEST RESULTS

ADVERTISEMENT ORDER FORM

Prepaid Rates.—16 words, 1/-, 3 consecutive insertions 2/6; 24 words 1/6, 3 consecutive insertions 4/-. Extra words 1d per insertion.

Write in form below name and address or nom-de-plume required and include these words in making up the charge.

The Manager, "NORTHERN ADVOCATE," WHANGAREI
Please insert the above in the "Northern Advocate."
Number of Insertions .....
Postal Notes s. d.
Stamps Enclosed .....
Signature .....
Address .....
Further Scale of Charges on Application.

There is a long tradition of the use of mass media by working class people wanting to express opinions (Day, 1994; Loviglio, 2012). From early 1933, Aotearoa New Zealand broadcaster Colin Scrimgeour used his *Man on the Street* programme, under the auspices of a religious broadcast, to vent the social and financial frustrations facing the average person in the midst of the Great Depression (Day, 1994). Loviglio (2012, p.91) writes that the voices of 'average' Americans were heard in *Vox Pop*, a 1930s radio programme described earlier in this thesis. Turner (2009) notes that when talkback was introduced, the radio industry 'broke with generations of media convention' by allowing the opinions of the 'average person' to be aired. Bodey (2007) quotes the producer of Australia's first talkback programme in 1967, John Brennan:

> I've always called it God's great equaliser ... [it was] a huge up-yours to the media which had been been looking down its nose at the average person, telling what to think, and how to think (para 4).[73]

In today's digital environment, the facility to share opinions is available to most strands of society via social media. This section analyses how listeners perceive the role of opinion within the talkback format. It will also reveal that these perceptions differ from that held by industry.

Talkback is a ritual with its own protocols and norms. The expression of opinion is at the heart of that ritual and it is this that generates debate (Adams & Burton, 1997; Douglas, 1999, 2002; Francis, 2002; Levin, 1987; Turner, 2001, 2006, 2009). Earlier in this chapter I use the analogy of a letters to the editor section in a newspaper as an early (and contemporary) form of talkback. Retired radio network owner and manager Derek Lowe analogises talkback as a mediated version of the town hall platform (D. Lowe, personal communication, November 26, 2018). Andrew Dickens (host) sees the format as a contemporary speakers' corner (A. Dickens, personal communication, December 4, 2019). Former sports radio host Kieran Smyth comments that listeners like to hear opinion, because they like to react.

> Whereas, if you try and please all the people and just paint it all with one big happy colour, it's boring (K. Smyth, personal communication, November 16, 2018).

[73] Bodey's phrase 'God's great equaliser' has been cited as 'God's great leveller' by Hanson-Easey and Augoustinos (2017) and Turner (2009).

In order to generate engagement with callers and to maintain listener interest, no one opinion should be seen to be irrefutable. To do so would stifle the debate and reaction that comprises talkback content.

> [Debate] can promote more participation by people who go: 'can't believe what Fred just said before … I can't believe Fred had that opinion' (Smyth, host).

Hosts Dickens and Karyn Hay both warn of the lack of veracity of opinion expressed on talkback, terming it 'often wildly inaccurate' (Dickens) and, the somewhat milder: 'misinformation'.

> Somebody will ring in and state something as a fact when it is blatantly incorrect. Hosts do it as well … And that in turn influences the callers and they add to that misinformation until you get an entirely different story from the one that's actually the truth (K. Hay, personal communication, January 28, 2019).

Hay's use of the term 'misinformation' implies that listeners expect talkback to be correct in the same way that there is an expectation that a news bulletin will present only the facts. I suggest that where once this may have been the case, today's talkback listeners do not expect this. In their 1997 study of political talkback listeners, Hofstetter and Gianos found that politically engaged listeners were 'ideologically indiscriminate' (p.513). Their interest in politics overtook any ideological or philosophical concerns with the host's views.

A listener's reasons for choosing to listen to opinions and debate can be explained by their acceptance of talkback as a mediated form of polyphony, as defined in Section 2.1. Lacey (2013a) describes a 'polyphonic truth … a truth that is capable of accommodating a plurality of potentially discordant voices' (p.176). In much the same way, the views of a talkback host and talkback caller may differ from each other and may in turn differ from the views of other callers. In this way talkback ceases to be perceived as a source of fact because it does not need to be. Instead it is a source of truths as perceived by different people and those listening can choose their own truth.

The convenor of Lacey's 'potentially discordant voices' is the opinionated talkback host.

> You've got to have the guts of your convictions and it comes across in your voice on the radio that you're quite passionate about a situation that you're putting on the table (J. Tamihere, personal communication, September 24, 2018).

Gibbs (2001) writes that when strong opinions are expressed in the mass media, their impact is amplified, 'inciting shame, igniting rage, exciting fear' (p.2). Talkback is a perfect example

of this phenomenon. The opinions of the host (and callers) become robust and take on a new authority when broadcast, encouraging strong reactions from both sides of a debate. Host Miles Davis believes that this is a necessary component of talkback.

> Polarising is a good thing to do … if everyone likes you there's something wrong (M. Davis, personal communication, September 11, 2018).

Hay (host) acknowleges that other hosts openly nurture debate:

> Some of those hosts love that. They don't mind it at all. They're in there for a shit fight basically.

In her own case, however, Hay refutes this practice.

> That's not how I operate … if something is blatantly wrong, I want to correct it. It's misinformation and a lot of that is broadcast on talkback … Somebody will ring in and state something as a fact when it is blatantly incorrect. Hosts do it as well. I've heard this hundreds of times - when the host has been completely and totally incorrect.

There are indications that Hay's approach is being adopted by more broadcasters internationally. The 'shit fight' era, the era of the populist, highly opinionated host, may be ending, or at least losing some of its bombast. American shock jock supremo Howard Stern's apology to those he may have offended is covered earlier in this thesis in Section 2.5. However, there are two further reasons for this possible trend, neither of which signal that empathy is on the rise. American programming consultants quoted in *Variety* magazine (Moreau, 2019) suggest that the shock jock genre is losing its appeal simply because it is no longer considered shocking. The use of language, once considered outrageous on radio, is now the norm on daytime TV shows. One consultant suggests that in the era of President Trump, offending people is the new normal.

> In an era when there is daily news about the president of the United States [saying] that he is such a celebrity that he can feel free to grab a woman's most private parts, shock radio has become reality …

Another consultant cited by Moreau suggests it is the Trump factor:

> Donald Trump is the 'shock jock in chief.' No DJ has the ability to provide the daily surprises, attacks, and other mischief the president does. You can't out-shock Trump (ibid). [74]

The second reason cited by industry consultants is the concern that causing offence to their audiences or advertisers could prove costly to radio companies through legal action (ibid).

[74] Former Newstalk ZB 8.30 a.m. to midday host Leighton Smith says, 'thanks to Donald Trump' those light days when producers and hosts find it difficult to find topics to generate good calls: 'don't exist anymore' (L. Smith, personal communication, February 19, 2019).

In the Aotearoa New Zealand market, Newstalk ZB, the most successful of the talkback networks, also appears to be reviewing its policy of running the conservative, populist brand of talkback that has been the hallmark of some hosts, particularly in the 9 a.m. to midday morning daypart. Leighton Smith (a 30-year veteran of the slot) was 'considered by some to be right of Ghengis Kahn' (Francis, 2002, p.62). Heather du Plessis-Allan, who hosted 9 a.m. to midday in Wellington until the end of 2019 is described by Newstalk ZB's own marketing as 'assertive, direct and opinionated' (NZME, 2020c). Smith retired from the 9 a.m. to midday talkback programme at the end of 2018, while in 2019 du Plessis-Allan was moved to the (networked) 4 p.m. to 7p.m. drivetime daypart (talk not talkback) left vacant by the retirement of another populist host Larry Williams, who has been described as 'quite hard right' (Braae, 2019). While Williams was not a talkback host, he is mentioned here as his whose world view was also associated with the Newstalk ZB brand. With Smith's retirement and du Plessis-Allan's shift to Drivetime, the 9 a.m. to midday talkback slot was networked and former night-time host Kerre McIvor was given the role. McIvor's style is significantly more centrist than both Smith's and du Plessis Allan's. Her on-air style is described in station marketing material as the noticeably less partisan 'energetic' (NZME, 2020d). Some see this as a move to the ideological left with one digital messager calling her a 'communist lesbian'.

In yet another move away from populist rhetoric on the Newstalk ZB network, in July 2019, former music radio hosts Simon Barnett and Phil Gifford took over the 1 to 4 p.m. daypart.[75] Gifford, a former sports broadcaster and journalist, and Barnett who falls into the 'good guy/family man' category of radio personality, are marketed as 'great company and a fresh perspective' (NZME, 2020e). Typical of the topics discussed is 'do you leave your car unlocked when you go to the service station counter to pay for petrol?' (*Simon Barnett and Phil Gifford Afternoons,* February 5, 2020, [Radio broadcast] Newstalk ZB). Newstalk ZB evening host Marcus Lush also falls into the more centrist, less controversial category.[76] Station marketing describes him as having a 'sharp wit, depth of knowledge and crazy idiosyncrasies …' (NZME, 2020f). Carolyn Leaney, producer of Leighton Smith's programme describes Lush's style:

> Marcus did an amazing couple of hours yesterday on how best to get rid of mosquitoes as only Marcus could … Every day he does something so crazy. I think, I so wish I'd have thought

[75] The midday to 4 p.m. slot comprises a news summary from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m., and talkback from 1 p.m.to 4 p.m.
[76] An exception to this was a debate on the pronunciation of te reo Māori (the Māori language) on Lush's programme in October 2019. See Section 4.3.

> of that. It was so crazy - how to make buttermilk bread and you have to listen because it's so insane. But can you imagine Leighton doing that? Absolutely not (C. Leaney, personal communication, February 19, 2019)

The centrist style of McIvor, Barnett, Gifford and Lush, apparent in both their network's marketing, and on the air, is in sharp contrast with Smith, du Plessis-Allan and Williams.

The changes at Newstalk ZB are possibly a commercially driven response to a global trend of shifting audience attitudes regarding what social behaviour is acceptable. Gender and race equity-based movements such as the #MeToo movement have brought about a change in audience values. In September 2019, after negative reaction from more than 80 advertisers, controversial Australian talkback host Alan Jones apologised for saying that Aotearoa New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern should have a sock 'shoved down her throat' for her comments on climate change (Sydney Morning Herald, 2019).[77] In 2019 the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA) ruled that Newstalk ZB should apologise for a 2018 statement made by host Heather de Plessis-Allan (mentioned above) in which she referred to Pacific Islands (sic) as leeches. (This ruling and the criteria applied by the BSA are discussed later in this section). Where once Jones' and du Plessi-Allan's comment might have been seen as amusing rant, quickly forgotten, a society less forgiving of such statements may be calling time on what can now be seen, to paraphrase Douglas (1999), as both a male and female hysteric.

Whatever the ideology of the host, according to McGregor (1996), talkback *callers* want to have their views endorsed by the host and callers, and may choose a station specifically to hear a host who they feel certain will agree with them. Former Newstalk ZB manager Bill Francis believe that some *listeners* are hoping for the same reaction:

> The people who listen to talk back are often there to have their views confirmed or re-confirmed. So, they will go searching to have that happen (B. Francis, personal communication, October 30, 2018).

Producer Jeremy Parkinson agrees:

> As a listener you're going to have your views reflected. And that's reassuring. So, you're gonna keep listening. You know you're going to hear that person you don't agree with. But the next person you will, and you'll go that's who I am. That, that's me. Whether I'm saying it or not, I think that's what it is (J. Parkinson, personal communication, April 2, 2019).

[77] Jones retired from 2GB in May 2020 citing ill health (Ryan, 2020).

However, some callers are deliberately seeking disagreement.

> And then there are the others who are natural disagreers with anything that's happening and want to, want to butt up against someone and, and educate them in their theories (Francis, management).
>
> People listen and they just want to hear their view. They want to hear reinforcement ... people like hearing people say something they [agree with] but strangely enough they get more stimulated when people say something that they disagree with (Davis, host).

This highlights another aspect of talkback: the comfort of consistency and issues of trust between host and listener.

> [The listener] likes to be consistently annoyed, you know that, it's like a comfort (Parkinson, producer)

Parkinson suggests that listeners trust that the ideology of the host is genuine. It is this known quantity that keeps them listening. Without it, the host is 'outed as a fraud' and listeners will turn off.

> It doesn't matter whether you're [the host] left, or whether you're right] ... you've got to have consistency of opinions which means you can't just say anything for effect because you're going to be seen as inconsistent over a period of time.

Overnight talkback host Tony Amos says it is very important that hosts 'maintain [their] position unless you declare that you've changed'. He gives the example of a listener who challenged his political persuasion at election time (every three years in Aotearoa New Zealand):

> They'll remember from three years ago: 'you said you voted Labour, but [this time] you've voted for your [National MP]' (T. Amos, personal communication, October 5, 2018).

Listener F comments on the consistency of conservative former Newstalk ZB talkback host Leighton Smith.

> He can be very polarising ... [but] I know what he stands for. And I do like that conviction (Listener F, personal communication, September 10, 2018).[78]

Consistency is valued even when a listener's ideologies differ. In this case when a listener expects to hear their views denigrated.

> It's an affirmation of your own opinion, being able to say to yourself if you're listening 'Oh what a load of rubbish, that person's an idiot' (Hay, host)

Hay is suggesting that listeners who are ideologically opposed can still find talkback engaging. This is because the listener, knowing a host's world view by reputation or from previous

[78] While Smith retired from Newstalk ZB in December 2018 after 30 years as host of this daypart, some participants in this study refer to him as a current host, because their interviews were conducted prior to his retirement.

listening experience, sees the fact that they disagree as a positive endorsement of themselves and their own values. I have termed this 'contrary vindication' because it vindicates the listener's view: 'because I do not like/agree with this person's politics/views, I *want* them to disagree with me'. On occasions, when the listener feels their views have not only been refuted, but also mocked, they can 'enjoy' their indignation without public humiliation.

Even if a listener's views are challenged by the host or other callers, Lacey encourages them to keep an open mind as listening is an important and transformative part of the communication process.

> [Listeners] hold the responsibility not to close their ears to expressions of opinions with which they might not agree, and, by extension, to ensure that the whole spectrum of opinion gets to be heard (Lacey, 2013a, p.177).

She speaks up for those who listen to views that differ from their own, or their social group's, that they should not be seen as 'abandon[ing] one's sense of self' (p.178).

> Listening to another is not necessarily to silence one's inner voice in order to hear the external world, but to modify and switch the focus from one to the other. Speaker and listener are mutually interdependent' (p.178).

Two listener participants in particular explained why they listen to content that they do not agree with. Stevens (host), speaking as a talkback listener, says he listens to talkback for the same reason that he watches *Fox News*:

> I want to see what the enemy is talking about and I try to listen to their arguments and see how valid they are … maybe [it] stews me up and makes me think of the contrary argument. Maybe that's why people like it, you see, because it stimulates their thinking – challenges their thinking (E. Stevens, personal communication, November 29, 2018).

Listener C works in pastoral care with teenagers and describes herself as a social democrat with liberal, left-leaning ideologies. Despite this she listened regularly to Newstalk ZB's 8.30 a.m. to midday host Leighton Smith, a conservative, populist host (now retired). Like Stevens (host), Listener C is motivated by the wish to 'know your enemy'.

> I like listening to it because it is the other extreme of me … I think it informs me, educates me, maybe to think about things I haven't really thought about before … listening to what the opposition or the opposite are, the opposite of how I think it is, makes me feel more comfortable with it (Listener C, personal communication, September 9, 2018).

Both Stevens (host) and Listener C appear to be motivated by the desire to understand the thought processes that have created views that are contrary to their own; a wish to understand 'the enemy'. By listening they are not abandoning their sense of self (Lacey, 2013a). Indeed, their motivation to listen to opposing opinions would appear to strengthen

their own views. Earlier, in the context of tap-listening and as compared with 'listening-in', I quoted Lacey's definition of 'listening-out', which is waiting to hear something of interest. In her chapter on the ethics of listening, Lacey adds a further definition, which can be seen in the context of Listener C and Stevens's (host) listening behaviour and their desire to keep an open mind. She writes that listening-out 'is the practice of being open to the multiplicity of texts and voices and thinking' (p.198).

What some listeners see as opposing views and ideologies, others see as diversity of opinon. Listener A spoke of Leighton Smith in quite different terms from Listener C above.

> What I like about him is he reflects the diversity of opinions For example on climate change, everyone knows he is a disbeliever of it but he does often put other people on who are not and they argue and have a go but at least he gives them a chance.

The opportunity to hear a wide range of opinions on a single issue was seen as a positive aspect by listeners.

> Like the teachers' strike. I mean I listened to that yesterday and there was all sorts of opinions – you know, really interesting (Listener A).
>
> It's what's happening in the news at the time and I'm interested in the perspective. Sometimes I'm just interested in a more right-wing perspective on something – like there might be a Trump issue or ... something to do with government politics here, and I'm just thinking, I can imagine what they're saying. Am I right? Am I? I just dip in to see – it's a subject – it's a subject driven thing (Listener L, personal communication, August 28, 2018).
>
> It's just interesting to see how diverse people are. And every now and again you'll get one and you'll think: yeah, that's really good and they you'll think, ooh (Listener F).
>
> I am interested in other people's perspectives and I try to stay balanced. It's that desire to stay well informed myself so that I can have reasoned conversations (Listener L).

Agreement with the host or caller is not a prerequisite for listeners.

> I don't necessarily have to agree with what's been discussed. And I think it does create some thought and processes in my own mind … gives me something to chew over (Listener D, personal communication, November 8, 2018).
>
> It's interesting to hear some of the others you know, I mean, I have a particular way of looking at things so it's actually quite interesting to hear these other people giving their opinions, and I'm there thinking, you know they're so one-sided, when in reality I probably am too (Listener E).

Industry participants in this study agree that listeners are motivated by the desire to hear what others are thinking on a particular topic even if they disagree with it.

> It's mentally stimulating, people enjoy it. People like listening to it to disagree, as much to agree (Davis, host).

However, some industry participants believe this desire takes on the characteristics of what Parkinson (producer) refers to as hate-listening, and believe that listeners are actively seeking moral outrage.

> It's an early form of that thing on *Twitter*, where everyone is looking for reasons to be morally outraged. For some reason it satisfies the human psyche or whatever, that we can be really indignant about something because … it backs up our strength of our own convictions. Sometimes it's the only passion some people get in their lives, hating somebody else [who] was saying something … eventually they'll get bored with it or they'll turn around and actually start liking. They'll keep listening anyway (Davis, host).
>
> Many people will listen to people they dislike intensely, just to find out what they're thinking and saying (Hay, host).
>
> What I've found is that people will take a dislike to you, there'll be an instant one for whatever reason, and they'll continue, and listen to find things that you say that justify their hatred of you (Davis, host).
>
> People like opinion because they like to react, whereas if you just try and please all the people and just paint it all with one big happy colour, it's boring … it's not just what the host is saying: 'I can't believe Fred had that opinion' (Smyth, host).

The language used here by industry participants regarding those who disagree conjures up the caricatured image of the angry talkback listener: 'hatred', 'dislike intensely', 'indignant'.This contrasts with the somewhat milder language used by former host Stevens and Listener C above in describing their reaction to hearing opposing views. Their respective reactions to hearing opposing world views are: 'maybe stews me up' and 'the other extreme of me'.

Whatever their reaction, listeners are aware that they are being drawn in, but they are engaged by the content and will keep listening.

> I know when sometimes I'm listening to them and I'm getting frustrated and then I'll think, I'll listen a bit longer. It sort of drags you in a little bit more (Listener F).

Extending time spent listening (TSL) is significant to a commercial broadcaster.

> It's like being hooked into a drug, really. You can't let it go because you still want to hear what's going to happen next. Is someone actually going to come in and shoot this host down with their theory, or idea or their viewpoint? … That keeps them listening (Francis, management).

To keep listeners 'hooked', a metaphor used by two other industry participants, the industry uses opinionated caller and host content as bait.

> I think talkback for those inclined to listen to it, can beome quite addictive (Lowe, management).
>
> People are addicted to talkback and they need it (Dickens, host).

Addictive engagement occurs even though listeners are aware that what they are listening to may not be accurate. Listener L admits to becoming frustrated with some of the opinions expressed on talkback but she delineates between opinion (unreliable) and information (reliable in some cases). She gives credibility to information from talkback callers who ring with 'hard news', for example road closures in an emergency. But she sees those who call with opinions particularly on social issues as being unreliable.

> I think they give a distorted opinion because of, so many of the people who are ringing up (Listener L).

While Listener D's expectations of credibility of the information are equally low, he does not appear to expect it, nor does it deter him from listening

> I wouldn't place my life on the dependability of, um, say numeric data that's given by someone calling in, because I think that quite a number of people are calling in because they're a bit hot under the collar about a given topic.

Other listeners regard opinions heard on talkback as neither correct nor incorect, but as layers of information that make up their overall view. This can be seen as an example of Bakhtin's view of a dialogic relationship in which multiple voices and opinions are heard yet, 'they do not argue with each other in any way' (Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984, p.293)

> You almost get to expand the knowledge a little bit of what is happening. But also you get the sort of, get the opportunity to form your own opinion base often as well. I think it just helps promote that a little bit more. Because ... there's a little bit more opinion on talkback radio, as opposed to news where it should be absolutely facts, facts, facts … It sort of helps hearing a, sort of, a whole wide range of opinions, sort of, helps me become better informed and maybe form my own opinion as well… just feels like I'm better educated on the issue (Listener N, personal communication, October 19, 2018).

Another listener said she took particular notice if the caller had experience or could demonstrate that they were well informed on a topic.

> You may get more insight into what's happening than if you're just listening to the news, you know, because you get all sort of people ringing and some may be quite well connected and know quite a bit more than what we're hearing through the official channels (Listener J).

From time to time a caller will express opinions or experiences that the host suspects the listening audience may disagree with. Davis (host) said he felt a responsibility towards these callers.

> Now if I, even if I think they're talking bollocks, I say, yeah OK, so I can see your point there. What about? Have you considered this or that? And then leave them with dignity.

However, even when a caller is particularly controversial and the host is certain that listeners will disagree with them, Davis says they (the listeners) have an awareness of the imbalance of power and they do not wish to see callers denigrated.

> Because even if the listener hates what that person's saying … they're representing them. You, as the host, are in a position of power as far as they're concerned, with all the buttons. You've got the thing, you've got experience. You shouldn't be demeaning and denigrating people. Even if a person can't stand what they're saying … you're liable to alienate people, and really, it's just common decency (Davis, host)

Tamihere (host) agrees and refers to a national stereotype.

> Kiwis don't like people being put down, but they don't mind people being put down with humour.

Another talkback stereotype is the regular caller. This is the seemingly alone or lonely person seeking a para-social relationship with the host (Horton & Wohl, 1956). However, an extended period of listening suggests that it is not an accurate description of the regular caller. The regular caller is more confident and appears to fall into two categories: the performer and the attention seeker. They are often identifiable by their voice and the manner in which the host responds to them, often greeting them as an old friend. The performer is descriptive rather than controversial. For example, Shirley the early-rising Waikato farmer who describes the crispness of a winter's morning and how the 4am milking went. Post-Shirley calls to the programme by other callers are often positive and suggest that for the listener, the word-picture she paints of her rural idyll are appreciated and add to the sense of community experienced by listeners. Hay (host) believes some regular callers can provide interesting and relevant content.

> There are some regular callers that are so charming and wonderful that you feel like you're just catching up with their lives. Because it's like a family. I had a regular caller, Olive … She was, and still is no doubt, a very interesting, erudite woman who had great opinions, but also we liked to find out what she had done for the day.

The attention seeking category of regular caller wants to contribute to the debate and their views can be anticipated. When asked for his opinion on this cohort, Listener N says it depends on the caller.

> It can sometimes depend who they are It's like sometimes, oh no, here we go with Brian again.

Smyth (host) agrees:

> I think there are the ones who annoy people. But you kind of listen anyway. But you just go: 'oh no, not Fred again'.

This suggests that in order to immerse themselves in what they hear, listeners want to hear content that piques their interest, perhaps challenges them. An articulate regular caller with a fresh perspective may provide that. Alternatively, knowing the caller's world view from hearing them previously, the listener may find them predictable and therefore of little listening value.

When asked for their views on the value of regular callers, three producer/manager participants all began by offering a positive view of regular callers before moving on to the negative aspects.

> It just depends on their quality. Some might have something interesting and so on, but if they are very regular callers, then their propensity to bore the pants off the audience would be fairly strong (Francis, management).
>
> There were some callers who were stimulating and good. The occasional caller we would have, I would think, you know, [could] just about be a talkback host. There were other callers who just drove you insane (Lowe, management).
>
> We've had some gorgeous people who phoned … but I was very determined that they, it wasn't going to sound like we're just regurgitating a dozen calls … [it] does not make for interesting radio (Leaney, producer).

These responses reflect Turner et al.'s (2006) assertion that callers, even those who call regularly, cannot easily be categorised.

> Talkback radio is not a homogenous format, and there are significant differences between individual instances: the behaviour and feel of the host, their relation [sic] with the listeners and callers, the story selection and topic agenda, and the specific reasons why listeners call in (p.116).

Some hosts felt able to judge what aspect of the regular callers appealed, or not, to listeners.

> The callers that are know-alls and blowhards – the listeners don't like. They don't, they really don't. They like hearing regular callers who are upbeat or informative or may, if you're running a commentary on something that's happened with a little bit of intellect applied to it perhaps … but they don't like people who consider themselves the experts … That's when I get abusive texts … for allowing that dickhead to go on (Amos, host).

Tamihere (host) believes that talkback listeners are intuitive and can discern the intent of a regular caller.

> People only like listening to regular callers that test the water, they don't like wankers that ring up just for company.

In 'testing the water', talkback radio content is likely to test the boundaries; these are formally set by the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA), albeit with considerable lee-way for the talkback format. For example, in a 2015 ruling, (not upheld) the BSA stated:

> The host sometimes uses extravagant language and intentionally 'goes over the top'. This [talkback] is territory where excessive language and inappropriate comments are often heard

> from listeners calling in and sometimes from the radio host (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2015)

An review of the *Decisions* page on the BSA website shows that most complaints are dismissed (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2020). As a result, when a case is upheld it becomes a news story in itself (*NZ Herald*, 2019b; *NZ Herald*, 2019a). The 2019 case, *Day & Moss and NZME Radio Ltd*, concerned Newstalk ZB talkback host Heather du Plessis-Allan who used the word 'leeches' to describe the Pacific Islands [sic].

> I mean, it's the Pacific Islands. What are we going to get out of them? They are nothing but leeches on us (Heather du Plessis-Allan, September 4, 2018, [Radio broadcast] Newstalk ZB Wellington).

The complainants said that the term 'leeches' was actually a reference to the people of the Pacific Islands and was derogatory. Seven days later, du Plessis-Allan defended this statement on air insisting that she was referring to the islands not the people.

> What I said was 'Nauru is a hellhole'. Factually correct. And I also said the Pacific Islands don't matter because they are leeches who want our money. Well, *Twitter* has blown up (Heather du Plessis-Allan, September 11, 2018, [Radio broadcast] Newstalk ZB Wellington).

This backtrack, including the contestable phrase 'factually correct', was not accepted by the BSA. They found that this defence only 'inflamed' the situation (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2019b). Du Plessis-Allan was censured, and her employer, New Zealand Media and Entertainment (NZME) was fined $3000 (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2019b).[79] Despite upholding the complaint, the BSA's decision included the following:

> We recognise that talkback radio is a robust, opinionated environment designed to cultivate discussion and debate of controversial ideas and opinions (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2019b).

Politics and its personalities provide regular fodder for talkback callers.

> The government's done something or the opposition opposed something ... it's not necessarily economics or social things (Listener M).

Lowe (management) and Francis (management) agree:

> The talk back audiences are big into politics. (Francis).
>
> Well, politics was always pretty good … If you take away religion or politics that's basically talkback down the drain. (Lowe).

However, this may not be recognised by a younger audience (under 35) who may show little interest until they are directly affected. This could contribute to talkback's audience skew

[79] Following the leeches complaint and ruling against her, Heather du Plessis-Allan's audience share for the first ratings period following the comments showed an increase of 3.5% (GFK, 2019).

towards older listeners as shown in Figure 1.1. Despite its popularity, Francis sounds a note of caution on the over-reliance on politics to generate content.

> The thing that you have to be careful with … is overdoing it. And you'll see in audience research that for instance, around election time, that talk stations can start to burn off their listeners because there's just too much of it and people get sick of it.

As the TV ONE programmer for Television New Zealand during the 1990 and 1993 general elections, I can confirm audiences for political debate can wane. Television audience ratings were taken every quarter-hour, allowing programmers to track the audience as they either turned their televisions on, off, or moved to another channel. Political debates, even leaders' debates, were known to show significant declines across the hour. I suggest that that was because there were few surprises expected. The views of the politicians[80] were known from the outset and it was an unlikely forum for new announcements that would have a significant impact on the life of the average person.

Personal relevance is a key motivation for listeners. It foregrounds the content and engages the listener. A member of Listener E's family has been affected by Alzheimer's Disease.

> I listen to something like that [Alzheimers] because I can relate to it … the most enjoyment I get out, are the things that actually do relate to the things that have happened to me.
>
> If it's a subject that I know about [secondary education]. So when they're debating cannabis [use by young people]. And I know through school what it does and people go, oh no it's not a bad drug. I get very annoyed (Listener F).

One participant said her attention was caught because they recognised the caller's voice.

> I've heard some people where I'm acting for [them, in a legal capacity] and they've rung up [talkback] … and as soon as the voice comes on, it's like, oh no, I know this person (Listener K, personal communication, January 22, 2018).

Listener D invests in properties both in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas, and therefore foregrounds content that includes:

> Overseas actions, activities or events that would impact on, say, the Kiwi dollar. The performance of our high export companies … political performance, political issues.

A lack of relevance (to him) has the opposite effect.

> I really don't need to know if, you know, somebody is having a spat with their neighbour or something like that. Why that ever makes air-time I'm blowed if I know, it has no relevance, … I've no interest and I'm not listening to talkback for that level of entertainment I suppose. (Listener D, personal communication, September 2, 2018)

Listener D's dismissal of those who would be interested in neighbourly spats is indicative of how listeners apply their own judgements to talkback listening behaviours. Host Karyn Hay

[80] In both elections: Jim Bolger (National) and Mike Moore (Labour).

echoes retired manager, Francis in his observation that listeners seek information on social issues that 'most of us have in common, like food and housing and the price of petrol'. The strongest responses from callers (the response from listeners cannot be qualitatively evaluated) come from the human condition, or as host Amos refers to it, the human predicament.

In conclusion, both cohorts of participants acknowledge hearing other people's opinions as a motivator for a listening audience. It delivers fresh perspectives, new information and entertainment for the listeners. Strength of opinion and consistency of host ideology are still important components of the format, even though this appears to be moving towards a less confrontational style. As well as providing a saleable audience for the commercially driven talk radio industry, listeners who listen, consider and assess the perspectives of callers, are contributing to the public sphere. Indeed, without a receptive audience the notion of the public sphere as a democratic arena ceases to operate (Lacey, 2013a).

4.3 Talkback through the lens of te ao Māori (the Māori world view)

Te reo Māori (the Māori language) and te ao Māori (the Māori world view) are rarely heard on mainstream talkback. What started possibly as a well-meaning attempt at representing te ao Māori on Newstalk ZB in October 2019, ended as a challenge to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi). Marcus Lush, host of the network's weekday evening talkback programme, corrected a caller's pronunciation of Māori place names.[81] The caller, 'Caller A' objected to being corrected. A short time later another caller ('Caller B') was put to air, presumably after the standard screening process, defending Caller A.

> *Caller B:* Oh-pah-ho (*Opoho*)… is pronounced Oh-pah-ho. It's called the Ty-ree (*Taieri*) Plains and nobody will change that.
> *Marcus:* So, so you want to continue pronouncing it wrongly?
> *Caller B*: No, I'm not pronouncing it wrongly … You need to learn how to pronounce these places down here.
> *Marcus*: Who do you think named those places?
> *Caller B*: Oh, I couldn't care less … that's the way that they are pronounced.
> *(Alves, 2019*; *Marcus Lush Nights*, October 24, 2020, [Radio broadcast] Newstalk ZB).

[81] Since the 1970s, te reo Māori, the language of Māori, has gone through a renaissance of interest, albeit gradual (Roy, 2018).

In the context of what the BSA describe as a 'robust opinionated environment', the editorial decision (not necessarily made by Lush) to put Caller B to air was valid. Lush's response that Māori place names should be said correctly, suggests that he is a strong advocate of te reo Māori. However, a Māori world view offers a different perspective. In Aotearoa New Zealand, te reo Māori is a taonga (treasure) protected under Article 2 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Waitangi Tribunal, 2020) In its landmark 1986 ruling on the use and preservation of te reo Māori, the Waitangi Tribunal[82] reported:

> The evidence and argument have made it clear to us that by the Treaty the Crown did promise to recognise and protect the language and that that promise has not been kept. The 'guarantee' in the Treaty requires affirmative action to protect and sustain the language, not a passive obligation to tolerate its existence and certainly not a right to deny its use in any place.[83]

Newstalk ZB can be seen to have ignored the Tribunal finding that te reo should be protected and sustained. Putting Caller A to air was possibly inadvertent; her reason for calling and her stance on the incorrect use of te reo may not have been known. However, by putting Caller B to air, knowing in advance due to the screening process that the caller supported the incorrect pronunciation of te reo Māori, the station was promoting debate on an issue that is not up for debate; the value of te reo Māori is immutable. Newstalk ZB's commodification of the value of te reo Māori to generate listenership and publicity could be seen as offensive to some people. In the days following, the *NZ Herald* ran a story: 'Newstalk ZB's Marcus Lush shuts down woman who insists on mispronouncing Māori place names' (Alves, 2019). The *NZ Herald* and Newstalk ZB, are both owned by media conglomerate NZME.

This is not the first time that NZME has faced issues regarding the correct pronunciation of te reo Māori. In 2016, in an article on the online news site *The Spinoff*, radio host Alex Behan reported that he was instructed to pronounce the name of NZME-owned radio station Radio Hauraki incorrectly by NZME management (Behan, 2016a). The station takes its name from the Hauraki Gulf, the body of water through which the Radio Hauraki pirates sailed their boat

[82] 'The Waitangi Tribunal is a standing commission of inquiry. It makes recommendations on claims brought by Māori relating to legislation, policies, actions or omissions of the Crown that are alleged to breach the promises made in the Treaty of Waitangi.' (Department of Justice, 2020a)

[83] The report continues: 'it is, after all, the first language of the country, the language of the original inhabitants and the language in which the first signed copy of the Treaty was written. But educational policy over many years and the effect of the media in using almost nothing but English has swamped the Māori language and done it great harm (Department of Justice, 1986)

to get to international waters in 1966 (Pauling, 2014b). It is also the name of a rohe (area) south of Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland). Since the radio station's inception in the 1960s, its name had been pronounced incorrectly as 'Howracky'. The correct te reo Māori pronunciation of Hauraki, which Beehan wanted to use, is (using English pronounation as a guide): *Hau* as in toe, and *raki* as in narky. Beehan implies in his article that the signing of his employment contract with the station was incumbent on his agreement to continue to pronounce the name incorrectly, because the pronounciation of 'Howracky' was part of the station's branding. According to his article, he was told by NZME management that 'not everyone is as broad-minded as you'. The implication is that being broad-minded is outside the norm of New Zealanders (or perhaps Radio Hauraki listeners) and this excuses the acceptance of incorrect pronunciation of one of Aotearoa New Zealand's three official languages. Further, it implies that it is acceptable for corporate Aotearoa New Zealand (in this case NZME) to see it as an option rather than a requirement of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (as specified by the Waitangi Tribunal). Behan's article in *The Spinoff* received 20,000 hits and 137 shares. As a result, NZME management backed down and the name is now said correctly, or at least attempted (Behan, 2016b).

Rather than taking the moral high ground over their rival's back down, a week later, prompted by the Radio Hauraki story, media company Stuff published an op-ed piece which in the context of the debate over 'Hauraki' could be seen as tone deaf. The writer, Derek Burrows, questioned the media's pronunciation of his home town in the South Island, Timaru: 'Television broadcasters also believe we live in Teemaaru rather than the universally used Tim-a-ru' (Burrows, 2016). Here Burrows application of 'universally used' implies that it is acceptable. These three examples provide evidence that there is lack of representation of te ao Māori within Aotearoa New Zealand mainstream media (including talkback radio) and that decolonisation of the media is a work in progress.

Radio Live midday to 3 p.m. host, between 2006 and 2013, Tamihere (host) has strong views on the lack of Māori representation within mainstream talkback.[84] Tamihere, a politician, co-hosted the programme with Willie Jackson, broadcaster and politician..

[84] While it is not possible to quantify how many talkback hosts are Māori, it is possible to hear in talkback discourse that the Māori world view is rarely represented.

> Us natives were kept in an unusual timeslot - we weren't allowed to be unleashed on the great unknowing, on better hours like morning show [9 a.m. to midday] or the drive show [usually 4 to 7 p.m.] because we were carefully compartmentalised. The natives, you can't trust the natives with anything . The ability to build that market wasn't provided to us or granted to us. In fact we're, we're still the only Māori mainstream couple that have ever been on it. That says a lot about, people call it these days in a nice way, they call it unconscious bias, it's conscious discrimination.

This statement must be seen in context as Tamihere and Jackson's show was cancelled following their comments on a controversial police investigation; the hosts were seen to be victim blaming (Dougan, 2013).

This study was unable to access quantitative data on the number of talkback listeners who identify as Māori. However, two listener participants who identify as Māori contributed to this study. Both said that they listen to mainstream talkback. Listener H listens regularly to Lush and Newstalk ZB morning host Kerre McIvor. She says she identifies with the latter's personality.

> She seems like a real middle class New Zealander, you know? Semi-conservative but with left leanings like myself and shoots from the lip (Listener H, personal communication, October 20, 2017).

Listener B says she listens because it is important to hear what is going on, and what people in general are thinking. She suggests that if you're a 'sensitive Māori', you may find talkback offensive. She listens she says because 'You can't live in a false world' (Listener B, personal communication, November 30, 2017)

4.4 The talkback host: 'Damned know-all'

The talkback host is central to the performance that is talkback. The tone and style they choose to use can vary considerably. Some use a rhetorical style, some use humour, others use a style best described as intimate empathy. Agreement with the host is not a prerequisite for the listener. Instead, as mentioned above, it may act as an incentive to disagree. One listener participant described Newstalk ZB host Leighton Smith as 'self-righteous', 'arrogant', 'rude' and 'a damned know-all' but admitted that he listened to him. Leaney (producer) suggests that the engagment level of an issue comes back to the host and the perceived expectations of the listeners:

> Because Leighton [Smith, former morning host on Newstalk ZB] always wanted to tackle the grittier news and current affairs-based topics, that, whenever he perhaps started talking

> about the price of fish or something, which would be extremely appropriate in another programme or in another day-part, then they felt aggrieved, because they weren't getting what they tuned in for.

The value that the broadcaster places on the host's ability to attract new listeners and retain the loyalty of existing ones can be seen in eponymously named dayparts on some stations, for example: *Marcus Lush Nights* (Newstalk ZB) and *Magic Mornings with Peter Williams* (Magic Talk).

A successful talkback host turns a one-to-many mass communication into a one-to-one message received and valued by an individual listener: 'I am spoken to' (Scannell, 1996, p.13). This is as much about involvement as a sense of location. In the case of talkback, while the listener is not actually part of the two-way conversation between host and caller, the important role of the host and producer is to *add* the listener to the conversation. In this way, the listener becomes the third party, the interested friend standing next to them, to contribute their thoughts, even if it is just in their own mind. Importantly, the listener, who is cognitively aware that they are part of what Scannell calls the 'collective' (p.13), should still be made to feel that they are *there*. As a listener to talkback, I want to be made to feel that I am in the room with those who are talking.

If the host (and producer) can achieve this sense of inclusivity for their listener, we can say that talkback falls into the category of causal listening, that is, listening for a reason (Chion, 2012). However, the question remains: is the host the reason, or is it the media environment? Section 2.5 discusses how radio studies texts differ as to whether it is the host or the station that provides the greater influence on listening behaviour. Is it the radio station and its identity, the tone of the host (his or her voice) and what it represents to the listener, or could it be both? Listener participants in this study were asked which of these factors motivated their choice of content. Some listeners support Hendy's (2000) view that they listened to a station rather than the host:

> It [their radio] is just on [Newstalk] ZB, even though I know, Pacific, or what it is now [Radio Live, now Magic Talk] has got some really good hosts … it's just ZB or nothing. It's just like that now (Listener F).

> I only listen really to Radio Live or National [public service broadcaster, RNZ National]. So in the afternoon, for instance, Radio Live … but sometimes if its hideously boring or whatever I switch over and listen to Jesse [Mulligan, on RNZ National] (Listener J).

One listener mentioned several names; however, all were from one station (Newstalk ZB):

> If I do get to listen in the afternoon it's Kerre Woodham [Kerre McIvor] and her friend - I think his name is Mark [Dye][85] … And then I listen to Marcus Lush in the evenings and I also listen to what's his name? Leighton Smith. I really do not like Leighton Smith and I actually hate listening to the sound of his voice but he's always on the station that I listen to. And then I also listen to Tony Veitch who I also don't really like, but there we go (Listener H).

Others mentioned both.

> It's mainly the station because I'm lazy and I don't like changing stations ... Leighton Smith, I listen to him in the mornings (Listener K).
>
> At night I would pick the host which is Marcus Lush, but generally the station. I tend to go to Radio Sport first and then if I'm not interested in what they're talking about, or I don't like the host, maybe I might go and look for another station (Listener M).

The use of 'pick' by Listener M and 'ZB or nothing' by Listener F indicate a deliberate choice to meet a recreational listening need. Listener K's description of her choice as 'lazy' may have been a defensive response indicating that she does not agree with Leighton Smith's conservative views but chooses to listen to him anyway. One listener said that on those occasions when he has changed stations because the host annoys him or 'gets things completely wrong', he comes back to his station of choice because:

> They sort of reflect my interests and they reflect some of the opinions I have. But I like the other, the other contrary opinions as well, and that're really why I listen to talkback because I like to get a wide range of views (Listener A).

The responses suggest that the talkback listener is influenced by three factors at the moment of choice.

1. Their previous listening experiences; their level of engagement when listening to a particular host, even if they disagree with them.
2. The type of listening experience they are seeking: foreground, background, information seeking.
3. The parameters of their listening; for example, they may be in a car that can only get a certain station.

The response from industry participants also varied. Stevens (host) believes the answer has changed over time. His view concurs with Francis (2002) and Barnett and Morrison (1989):

> I think possibly nowadays it's certainly the host I would say. In the old days there was a feeling … of belonging to a community. So you were either Radio Pacific people or you were ZB

[85] At the time of the interview, Kerre McIvor was hosting a lunch time daypart on Newstalk ZB, shared with another host Mark Dye. She has since moved to the 9 a.m. to midday daypart. McIvor's maiden name is Woodham.

> people, people in Auckland. There was a sort of loyalty to the station almost. But nowadays I think people just listen in wherever they can. [You] get people listening to both or even talking to both stations y'know.

Francis (management) believes one leads to another.

> Generally, it will be a station that they identify with, but on the other hand if you're in a car, you know the mobility of radio remains still so important. You can, if you don't like something, you can instantly go to the next channel … I mean, the success of say a Newstalk ZB format … has been based on a lineup of quality hosts which reflect quite a balance of styles … and so a listener can say, yeah, I get a good variety of viewpoints … and I'm happy to stay with that. And generally, they become very loyal to a station, and that follows on that they become very loyal to the hosts. So it's hard to separate the two.

Leaney (producer) believes listeners build a loyalty to a station.

> I think the station's got a lot to do with it because, you know. With the changes in other radio stations at the moment, and hosts coming and going in other arenas, you know, you wonder whether people might be wandering off [from the other stations]. You know, people are very loyal to radio stations.

The language used by industry differs markedly from listeners here. Most noticeably the use of 'loyalty' by industry participants. Loyalty is their perception of a listener's choice. Listeners, meanwhile, are simply choosing content based on their needs.

When asked the 'host or station' question, former Radio Pacific manager and programme director Derek Lowe replied:

> Both. But I think there's a habit ... They go onto a station and tend to lock on to it. It's very hard to change people.

Lowe (management) tells how he used high profile hosts such as journalist and former politician and broadcaster Pam Corkery and former Aotearoa New Zealand Prime Minister Rob Muldoon in the 1990s to 'jolt' potential listeners away from his rival station Newstalk ZB. However, he appears to agree with Leaney (producer) and favour the station as being a bigger influence

> So you do put in hosts that you hope people will … they will be so larger than life, ... they [the listeners] might change the station. That's a big challenge.

The implication of these varied responses is that the comfort of consistency mentioned earlier by Parkinson (producer) applies to the choice of host or the station as much as it does to the content they produce.

One aspect of host choice not mentioned either by listener or industry participants, was host gender. This could be attributed to a lack of choice. In the 1920s, radio's first decade, women were not heard on the air as it was assumed that listeners would consider that women's

voices did not hold enough authority (Day, 1994). However, from the 1930s to today, Aotearoa New Zealand has a significant history of strong female radio presenters in *talk radio* roles including (among many) Jessica Weddell, Maggie Barry, Kim Hill, Kathryn Ryan, Kerre McIvor, Pam Corkery and Karyn Hay[86], and Maud Basham (Aunt Daisy). However, the number of women hosting issue-based *talkback* roles in the recent past, or currently, are few; they include three of those mentioned above - Hay, McIvor and Corkery - as well as Heather du Plessis-Allan. At the time of writing this thesis, of the eight *talkback* slots (as distinct from *talk radio* dayparts) on Newstalk ZB and Magic Talk combined, only one is hosted by a woman (Kerre McIvor on Newstalk ZB's 9 a.m. to midday slot).

In 2014, ABC Australia media commentator Clementine Ford commented on the lack of women in talkback radio in her country. She noted that within the eight largest talkback stations in Australia, 17 out of 140 presenters were women (Ford, 2014). She commented on 2GB (a popular commercial newstalk station): '2GB's programming schedule seems designed for an audience comprised of people who have never encountered a woman (or a person of colour) in their life.' Turner (2009) also observes that talkback hosts are usually men. Francis (2006) writes that when 1ZB was re-branded as Newstalk ZB on 16 March, 1987, it began with an all-male line-up. Alice Worsley, who had hosted the 9am to midday slot (considered second only to breakfast as a prime hosting role) had already lost her place to Leighton Smith in October 1985.

Gender bias in radio and television in Aotearoa New Zealand, for both on-air and off-air staff mirrors the international experience.[87] In the early 1980s, as a radio producer, I asked my programme director about the lack of female presenters for female audiences and was told that as women were the predominant audience between 9 a.m. to midday, a male host was more appropriate, preferably one that sounded like 'a good lay'. This attitude was not exclusive to Aotearoa New Zealand. In the 1960's when British DJ Annie Nightingale asked the BBC why Radio 1 was 'an all male enclave', the reply was in much the same vein: 'DJ's are

[86] Karyn Hay was interviewed for this study.

[87] In 1984, at the age of 25 I became the producer of Radio New Zealand's (RNZ) Tonight Show. The role was upgraded to programme director and as such, I was the only woman programme director in RNZ. In my first year in the job my salary was lower than my male programme assistant. In the second year, I was paid the same as my programme assistant. When I challenged this inequity, a senior manager (a woman) offered the defence that my salary was good 'for a girl your age'.

husband substitutes for housewives' (Sherwin, 2017)[88]. Reflecting opinion from 40 years earlier, Nightingale was told that women's voices lacked authority. These opinions did not always come from men in broadcasting. The late Angela D'Audney, a well-known radio and television personality in Aotearoa New Zealand, began her broadcasting career in 1962 in what was then the NZBC (incorporating both radio and television). One of her roles was as a television continuity announcer, introducing programmes in much the same way that radio DJs introduced songs. In 1973 she became the first female newsreader on regional news programme *Look North* and went on to present national news and current affairs programmes. D'Audney recalls that at the time 3ZB radio announcer and *Thursday* magazine columnist Sharon Crosbie[89] wrote: 'I feel it is incongruous to have a continuity girl in a cocktail dress and hairdo saying that a typhoon has just killed 50 people … a woman's voice, although it can be clear and straightforward, doesn't have the weight to say something serious' (D'Audney & Pellegrino, 2001).

Figure 1.3 in Chapter 1 shows a clear 50/50 male/female audience split for the two major talkback networks, yet the on-air host gender imbalance remains, particularly in talkback radio. It is difficult to see this as anything but a bias by broadcast management towards male presenters. I attribute a lack of comment from participants on gender preferences when choosing a talkback host to the lack of representation.

4.5 What liveness brings to talkback

> *I have a friend who I'm in touch with in Christchurch at the moment, who has a friend in the emergency department. And she is saying, or he is saying, that they are expecting 30 to 50 casualties … so people have a reason to be worried (Caller,* March 15, 2019, [Radio Broadcast] Newstalk ZB).

Talkback is live because it has to be. Phone calls and digital content (emails and texts) are live responses to the issue under discussion at that time.[90] Both listener and industry cohorts recognise it as an important component of the format, but this awareness takes different forms. *Liveness* is the value placed on being live. If the listener is requiring the most up to date version of 'now' that there is, then liveness gives talkback (and other live broadcast formats)

[88] Nightingale went on to be Radio 1's first female DJ.
[89] Crosbie went on to be chief executive of public service broadcaster Radio Aotearoa New Zealand.
[90] The term live is used in the knowledge that most talkback programmes internationally use a seven-second (or similar) delay when putting calls to air.

an advantage over talk products such as podcasts. If it is live, they can be assured that nothing has happened that they do not know about. Liveness is recognised as an important concept in media studies (Crisell, 2012; Ong, 2012; Scannell 2013). Scannell and Ong note the temporal, perishable nature of sound and Crisell refers to it as a 'co-presence in time' (p.14).

Crisell describes liveness as an 'unexpectedly complicated' phenomenon in broadcasting terms because it is often located within a schedule of content that is not live.

> The awkwardness of the concept of liveness might therefore encourage us to define broadcasting in terms of certain of its other characteristics (p.3)

Lacey (2013), citing Cantrill and Allport (1935), adds that liveness gives radio 'its own peculiar access to 'the real'' (p.100). 'Complicated', 'awkward' and 'peculiar' may explain why it is rarely mentioned in relation to talkback in media literature. Crisell cites two advantages of liveness: immediacy as mentioned above, and the perception, that if it is live, it is likely to be the truth. Immediacy and authenticity are two of the four findings in regard to liveness of this study. Additionally, this research project finds that liveness brings access to information in an emergency, and finally, liveness provides the notion of simultaneity of experience. Just as Benedict Anderson's (1983) newspaper readers experienced a sense of community with other readers, talkback listeners have an affinity with others based on a synchronous listening experience. This section begins by backgrounding the role liveness has played in the development of radio from its first decade in the 1920s when radio was live out of necessity not choice.

Auslander (1999) notes that before the arrival of recording technology, all communication on radio was live; liveness was the norm and therefore not acknowledged as a characteristic (p.54). It was a distribution rather than storage system.

> Where print, film and phonography captured cultural realities for posterity, radio lived in the moment. Once the radio waves had ebbed away, they left no trace, save in the memory of the listener (Lacey, 2013a, p.100).

This contributed to radio's 'transitoriness' and 'now-ness' (Cantril and Allport, 1935, cited by Lacey, 2013a, p.100). In the 1920s, radio content was predominantly live, comprising host continuity, talks, live performances both from within the studio and local venues, and sports commentaries (Day, 1994, Downes & Harcourt, 1976). The recorded music played on the

gramophone was also in essence, live, because it was delivered via microphone.[91] Liveness was written into government regulation, which dictated that 75% of material broadcast was from other than pre-recorded material (Day, 1994).[92] Significant events were covered live if possible. This included the coverage of an address by Antartic explorer Admiral Byrd to school children in 1930.[93] Initial coverage of the Napier Earthquake of 1931[94] was not possible (on broadcast radio) due to the level of destruction. Instead, ham radio operators working with navy vessel HMS Veronica provided a vital communications link (Dougherty, 1997, Downes & Harcourt, 1976). The one exception to this came from 320 kilometres away, in Wellington, where morning personality Aunt Daisy was on the phone.[95]

> Other people froze with horror or dived for shelter in a doorway. Not Aunt Daisy. 'Oh dear, there seems to be an earthquake' she said brightly – and carried on her conversation unrattled (p.62).

The following description by Downes and Harcourt (1976) of the broadcast response following the Napier Earthquake, could be a description of radio's response to the two Christchurch earthquakes of 4 September, 2010, and 22 February, 2011.

> Stations cleared the air for official bulletins, news despatches, requests for help in tracing missing people, and lists of casualties. Few radio sets could have been silent, few listeners not have shared the anxiety, the relief and the sense of national calamity (p.60)

Lacey (2013a) notes that in the 1930s, 'liveness was equated with participation' (p.101). Further, liveness on radio was privileged over recorded content as the sound was authentic and therefore 'truly democratic' (p. 102).

Authenticity, however, gave way to convenience when recording techniques were developed. (Gripsrud, 1998). The first pre-recorded radio programmes on 33 1/3-rpm discs arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1931 (Day, 1994). From the 1940s to the 1970s, pre-recorded comedies, dramas, soaps, and information programmes, either recorded locally or imported from overseas, made up a considerable part of the radio schedule. Lacey (2013a) states that

[91] The only way to capture and broadcast the music played on the wind-up gramophone was to place a microphone over the horn of the machine. (Day, 1994). Downes and Harcourt (1976) tell the story of early 1920s Wellington broadcaster A.J.H. McLay who uttered a 'short, vocal and unparliamentary' (p.15) phrase when the spring on the gramophone broke as it was being wound up. In 1930 the four stations of Aotearoa New Zealands Radio Broadcasting Company were fitted with turntables with electric pickups replacing the need for a live microphone for broadcasting music (Day, 1994).

[92] From the 1920s to the mid 1930s, there was more live music performed in the studio, than recorded (Hoar, 2018).

[93] This broadcast is described by Downes and Harcourt (1976) as an historic 'first' as Byrd's speech, originating in 4YA Dunedin was relayed live, not just to Aotearoa New Zealand audiences but to Australia and on to a radio station in New York state. Scores of school children were taken to Kilburnie Stadium in Wellington to listen to the broadcast (p.56).

[94] On 3 February, 1931 a 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit the Hawke's Bay region of Aotearoa New Zealand, causing devastation in the cities of Napier and Hastings; it became known as the Napier Earthquake (McSaveney, 2017a).

[95] Aunt Daisy (Maud Basham), was a much loved morning radio personality from 1936 to 1963 (Pauling, 2014b).

liveness, as a construct, had more to do with early broadcasters' awareness of the average household routine and scheduling to allow for that, rather than the notion of whether to use pre-recorded material or not (p.101/102).[96] After all, as Crisell (2012) states: recording is simply a way 'of defying the passage of time by capturing an event' (p.18). In this Crisell reminds us that what is now recorded, was once live.

The accommodating of listener routines by broadcasters continues today. Listeners to dayparts that coincide with commuting (weekday breakfast and late afternoon), rely on time dependent information such as traffic and weather reports. As a result these dayparts are broadcast live. Listeners to non-commuting dayparts are less reliant on this information, so the continuity and music can be pre-recorded and compiled ready for broadcast. However, they are recorded 'as live', that is, the broadcaster wants to give the impression that they are live. This common broadcasting term acknowledges that even the perception of liveness is valued.[97]

Ong (2012) writes of the valued 'special relationship' that exists in human consciousness between sound and time (p.31/32). What is expressed live, once uttered, is gone. This aspect provides the difference between how radio (specifically talkback radio) differs from broadcast television and digital platforms. Broadcast television content and streamed programming can be timeshifted via on-demand portals, or recorded, and replayed and freeze framed. A digital media user can pause on a *Facebook* message that has just been posted, to digest it fully before responding or moving on to the next. As Ong points out, however, audio cannot be paused or freeze framed, and then replayed. A sound paused equals no sound. Talkback radio listeners are not known to record, pause and replay. They are not interested in what a caller said yesterday or even an hour ago. Talkback *contributors* may refer to what was said earlier, but talkback *listeners* want to hear what the current phone or digital contributor is saying now, and the countering of it that follows.

[96] In the 1960s my mother would have her morning tea at 10 a.m. while she listened to Australian soap opera *Dr Paul* (subtitle: 'A story of human conflict'). At 4 p.m. she did the family's ironing while listening to BBC radio drama *The Archers*.
[97] Possibly the most famous 'as live' broadcast was Orson Welles' 1938 production of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* as part of an anthology called *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*. Welles dropped breaking news stories of an alien attack into a 'live' musical performance. Listeners who had not heard the introduction to the play, believed that America was under attack and took to the streets of New York in panic.

Industry recognises and values the liveness of talkback.

> Hugely, massively … and therefore talkback has always got a place (Amos, host)
>
> [It] is why I don't think ... talkback radio will ever die (Leaney, producer)

They see it as a key component of the format.

> The live aspect is all about is the ability to hear something, process it, form an opinion, and express an opinion, and get the fallout from that opinion (Parkinson, producer).

To listener participants however, the live nature of talkback appears to be a given. When prompted on the concept of liveness Listener J responded:

> That's something I've never really thought about. I mean, I've just sort of accepted that it's happening now.

While the concept is not mentioned specifically by listeners as a reason to listen, when asked how important it is that talkback is live, Listener N said:

> Very important, it's probably the reason why I listen to it.

When asked why she would choose talkback over something pre-recorded Listener K shared:

> It's instant, so it's current, everything is current that you're learning, that you're listening to.

This research project finds that instantaneity is one of the four characteristics that the concept of liveness brings to talkback. The others are: information during emergencies and major news events, authenticity, and a sense of simultaneity when listening. The first three of these are covered in the following sections, while the latter will be covered in Section 4.7.

4.5.1 Instantaneity

In 1968, only one year after the start of talkback in Australia, media industry publication *B & T*[98] noted the attraction of 'instantaneity' to both talkback listeners and advertisers (*B & T*, 1968, p.14 as cited by Tebbutt, 2006). Tebbutt defines instantaneity in this context as the 'point at which attention is held and a listener ... is at their most responsive' (p.859). Armstrong and Rubin (1989), writing in a pre-digital environment, stated that talk radio was one of the few examples of media that utilised 'spontaneous interaction' (p.92). Gripsrud (1998), writing on live television, defines liveness as 'immediacy' (p.19). Holmes (2019) states that as people of all ages now time-shift, only television sport[99] (for its live-action) and those programmes that require instantaneity in the form of audience interactivity are likely to be

[98] Broadcast and Television

[99] Holmes (2019) writes on the demise of broadcast television, specifically the ABC, Australia's public service broadcaster.

watched live on broadcast television. The latter includes political debates that invite viewer feedback, and voting on reality programmes.

Hay (host) values what she refers to as immediacy.

> It's the most immediate way to get news or information out, or to help people. There's no other way that is quicker. Newspapers are way behind the eight ball ... radio is immediate, you can open your mouth and speak, nothing is going to beat that.

Smyth (host) stresses the temporal nature of talkback.

> [Talkback is] acutely topical ... Talkback's now and if you miss it, you've missed it'

Hendy (2013) comments on the importance of immediacy to radio in general. 'If we miss this moment? Well too bad' (p.123). While the ability to go back and listen again is now an unwritten 'right' of all media consumers, he says that radio 'still speaks the language of liveness. So it still offers a kind of *eventfulness*' (ibid, emphasis by Hendy).

The concern that you may miss out on hearing something that will influence decisions or place you in an advantageous situation encourages listening. The fear of missing out (or FOMO as it is popularly known) is described as 'a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent' (Przbyviski et al., 2013, p.1). It is often connected with the motivations of social media followers with liveness adding the notion that the reward is a necessity (Es & Keilbach, 2018).

In this regard, building on Adams and Burton (1997) and Crisell's (2002) acknowledgement of talkback as one of the first forms of mass interactive communication, Francis (retired management) describes talkback as the 'precursor' of instant reaction on social media while Parkinson (producer) asserts that talkback was 'social media long before social media existed'. The parallels between talkback listening and social media 'lurking' (following without contributing) are discussed further in Section 4.9.

4.5.2 Liveness in emergencies and major news events

Major news events can be motivating factors for talkback listeners. However, not all will generate calls and content.

> Something like September 11 you think might be that. But it isn't going to be because what can you say? … It's a thing that happened (Parkinson, producer).

However, if the 'thing' that happened has a local angle or impacts a local community, the context changes and offers a different reason to listen: information. It may be life-saving information or just curiosity. People may listen because they are personally and directly affected by it, or they are close to someone who is. Alternatively, it may have no impact on them, but they are curious to learn what is happening in a place they are familiar with. In both cases liveness gives the event a characteristic Scannell (1996, p.90) describes as an 'aura'. Hay (host) notes the importance of liveness during these significant events:

> [For] those who want to keep up with news and current affairs, which often unfolds in real time on talk radio. That's not something you get on a music station or even Radio New Zealand[100] … on talk radio it's an ongoing real-time broadcast. That's quite compelling for people who want to keep up with real-time news and events, and not just hear about them in the bulletin at the top of the hour.

This type of content provides memorable listening not just for talkback listeners but for all listeners and in time can become part of the radio cultural archive. It is content that falls into the 'I remember where I was when I heard/saw/read' category of media experience. It also acts as a source of information for those directly involved in an emergency. Callers become citizen journalists providing help and advice, and a community is formed as the event unfolds (Ewart & Dekker, 2013). Two case studies of emergencies that unfolded live on talkback radio are used here to demonstrate the role of liveness in these situations. They differ in their nature, one being a natural disaster, the other an act of terrorism, but both are examples of how liveness enhances talkback content and foregrounds listening behaviour.[101]

The first of these, a catastrophic earthquake, occurred in Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand on 22 February, 2011. One hundred and eighty-five people were killed, many were injured and thousands of homes were destroyed. At the time many people were unable to contact loved ones because communication services were disrupted.[102] Host Karyn Hay was at work that afternoon preparing for her evening shift when calls started coming in from listeners:

> They'll be the first people to tell you about a disaster like that, and they'll constantly update you as to what is going on ... on air it's an immediate call … you suddenly realise you've got an emergency on your hand …

[100] RNZ is a public service broadcaster.
[101] The COVID-19 crisis during 2020 was highly significant but was not an instantaneous, contained event that can be said to have unfolded in real time and, for that reason, is not included here as a case study.
[102] The 2011 earthquake is described as an aftershock to an earthquake that occurred four months earlier in September 2010. There was only one fatality in the initial earthquake, a heart attack, which may have been attributable to the event (McSaveney, 2017b).

Hay recalls that due to the 'huge problems with telecommunication', people were 'desperately phoning in, trying to get in touch with loved ones'. While not generally considered as best practice on radio, once on air, Hay decided to break protocol and broadcast personal phone numbers.

> I had teenagers who were desperate to find their parents, or husbands and wives or children, people desperate to find out what happened to their families. And I started giving out phone numbers on air because it was too important not to. And I remember the programme director at the time came running into the studio and said, 'This is not a bring-and-buy sale. Don't give out phone numbers' and I just ignored him. [103] I was momentarily angry, but I ignored him because I knew that the situation was far more important than that.

Hay continued to broadcast phone numbers through the night. She believes the station, Radio Live, provided an important link for listeners wanting help.

> That's one of the most compelling things about talk radio, it has the ability to be on the ground and in touch with people.

Hay's use of 'immediate', 'emergency', 'desperately', 'too important not to' speaks to the essence of liveness and what it brings to broadcasts of events such as this. In this instance, Radio Live and other stations, became a communications hub for listeners. This response from an audience suggests that in some situations the act of listening takes on a new purpose. Radio becomes a one-to-one medium to turn to, an entity concerned with their wellbeing and, in some cases, survival.

The second case study also occurred in Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand. On 15 March, 2019, a lone gunman entered two mosques near the central city, firing on those inside. Fifty-one people died and there were many injuries. The event was deemed to be an act of terrorism and headlined television news channels internationally. Host Andrew Dickens broke the news of the event to his Newstalk ZB listeners at 2.07 p.m. Between 2.07 and 4 p.m., 24 talkback callers (not journalists) who found themselves unwittingly close to the area were put to air to tell what they were seeing and hearing. While authorities and local journalists were able to add some details via the network's newsroom,[104] the bulk of the information provided to listeners in the first two hours of the news event breaking came from live phone calls to

[103] An exception to the 'don't give out personal phone number' protocol is a programme segment called *Buy, Sell and Exchange* still run on some radio stations such as 1XX Whakatane and Radio Dunedin. Listeners go on-air and verbally list an item, giving their personal phone numbers in order to set up a potential trade.

[104] According to Dickens, the three journalists in the Newstalk ZB Christchurch newsroom were out of the office covering other events at the time the news broke.

the station. This distinction between the coverage that callers and journalists were able to provide reflects the findings of Ewart and Dekker (2013).

A transcript of all calls received between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. is shown in Appendix C.[105] It includes the following:

> 2.08 p.m.
>
> *Ron*: … I can see police with guns. I say to everybody, all the cars on Blenheim Road, stay away from the area right now, this is quite massive.
>
> 2.22 p.m.
> *Craig:*… it's just bedlam out here. Looks as though it must be a serious incident ... So it looks as though we may have a terrorist attack here …
>
> 2.33 p.m.
> *David*: My daughter's phoned me and is under a desk right now with friends and a teacher … They don't know, you know, what, what is going on, and what the risks are …

As with the giving out of phone numbers live during the Christchurch earthquake, liveness is not without its risks. Dickens, who was interviewed for this thesis noted:

> There were a lot of other calls didn't make it to air because, yeah, because we couldn't really ... They were so ... We thought they were so wild and crazy and speculative.

Having established that the calls were not speculative, his producer had to decide what calls to put to air:

> He's been doing it for 30 years. He listens. He listens to hear if they're crazy or not. He'll do a quick pre-interview: what are we saying? … What have you seen? Are you sure you saw it? All those sorts of things. And then he makes a gut call about whether the person is reliable enough ... And then you make a call all the way through the call about whether this person is crazy or not.

A call from 'James' at 3.34 p.m. was the first to mention the live-streaming of the event, an aspect that added a new mediated dynamic to the event and resonated internationally. It would become arguably one of the most discussed aspects of the event. The resonance of James's call can be seen when placed in the context of what other information had been released at that time. Prior to this call going to air, Newstalk ZB listeners had learned that a gunman was on the loose in the inner Christchurch area, possibly near a mosque, and that six people had been taken to hospital. Two calls based on hearsay from hospital contacts had speculated high casualty numbers of up to 50 people. James' description confirmed that this

[105] Edit points are marked with an ellipsis, otherwise it is as broadcast.

last speculation was likely to be accurate. The existence of the live-stream material was substantiated with a further five calls.

The callers' descriptions provided remarkable coverage of the event. They were accidental citizen journalists describing their observations and thoughts in layperson's terms which added to its impact. For listeners, including myself, the broadcast was memorable, disturbing and compelling. As the magnitude of the event unfolded and more callers (rather than journalists) were put to air, I experienced the sense of being part of a simultaneous listening community. As with Anderson's (1983), newspaper reader, I was aware that I was one of many, in this case listening to something unique. Douglas (1999) notes that:

> Orality fosters a strong collective sensibility ... the act of listening simultaneously to spoken words, forms hearers into a group (p.29)

In this case, the grim nature of the content added voyeuristic motivation to listen.

> They [the listeners] become an aggregate entity – an audience – and whether or not they all agree with or like what they hear, they are unified around that common experience (ibid).

While not a typical example of talkback content the programme I listened to that day is an example of how the act of listening can be an immersive experience, with the listener being taken 'below, beyond, behind or inside' the event. (Carlyle & Lane, 2013. p.9). Liveness heightens the sense of 'being there' in the moment.

4.5.3 Authenticity

Crisell (2012) notes that liveness in broadcasting also brings authenticity and a sense of honesty. Earlier in this section Lacey (2013a) attributes radio's ability to be 'truly democratic' (p.102) to its authenticity. She suggests that live (in contrast to pre-recorded) is more likely to be the truth. It may be a chaotic and unpredictable truth, as occurred in Christchurch, but live radio provides structure (p.102). Ewart and Dekker (2013, p.365) state that in emergency situations the citizen journalists calling talkback want to communicate with audiences that they can identify with. However, they suggest that some callers may seek to 'actively subvert' the lines of communication being employed by authorities. In this way, talkback's liveness may act as a challenge to 'normative models of communication' (p.365) in emergencies. (There is no record of this occurring in the 2019 incident in Christchurch.)

Gripsrud (1998) suggests that liveness is not just an 'aesthetic' value but an 'ideological' one (p.19), and notes the effort that goes into producing it, describing it as an '*effect*, not necessarily as a *fact*' (p.19, emphasis by Gripsrud). He notes that in television, liveness is equated with content that is 'not staged' and therefore the truth. He cites Brecht (1932:1993), who believed that to reveal the technical machinations required to stage a play would strip the 'illusion of reality' and would instead cause the audience to focus more on the 'constructedness' of the performance (p.19).[106] Es and Keilbach's (2018) work on live television states that liveness adds tension to a broadcast as the producers seek to balance 'freedom, chaos and control' (p.1). It is this fine line between chaos and control that implies an authentic representation of events.

As a listener to Newstalk ZB on the afternoon of 15 March, 2019, while I could not be certain that the callers were correct in all details, as a listener I did not doubt their authenticity; I believed what they reported. Liveness brought a sense of validation to the listening experience. This came from four elements: the credibility of the source,[107] the numbers of calls with a similar narrative, the information available on other news platforms and finally, the unconstructed nature of the commentary from the callers. It was a mediated reality and I was aware of being part of a national, if not international community, sharing the experience as it happened, live.

In conclusion, liveness is one of talkback's most powerful attributes, while being one of its most overlooked. Without liveness, talkback becomes a pre-arranged, pre-recorded, curated and edited talk programme; a podcast. Liveness gives listeners assurance that they are up to date on where public opinion sits on controversial issues. Liveness and mobility give radio in general the ability to react instantaneously to unfolding events, offering as-it-happens coverage, as well as offering genuine aid to those who need it in cases of emergencies. It provides the talkback listener with the sense of being part of a simultaneous listening

[106] Brecht's view was adopted by my station manager at Radio Northland in 1976. He admonished a host who had apologised to her listeners because her turntable had stopped mid-song. Her misdemenour was not that she had apologised, but that she has used the word 'turntable'.

[107] As a former talkback producer I understood that the screening process of the citizen journalists would have been rigorous. A major newstalk network is unlikely to risk its credibility by putting calls of this ilk to air without being as certain as it could be, that they were authentic. Additionally, Newstalk ZB is part of NZME and therefore share a newsroom with Aotearoa New Zealand's largest newspaper, the *NZ Herald*, giving more credence to the source.

experience. Liveness brings authenticity to the listening experience. Whether it is the personal experience of one caller or the highly subjective view of another, the listener must feel that both are authentically held in order for that listener to be engaged.

4.6 Digital engagement: 'Bam! Did it!'

From the 1960s to the early 2000s, talkback content was reliant solely on telephone technology.[108] Telephone callers to talkback were and are aware that they are expected to 'perform' on air (O'Sullivan, 2005). Moreover, 'listeners are aware of talkback as performance' (Ewart & Ames, 2016, p.97). There is an 'institutional expectation' that those who choose to participate will 'measure up' (Brand & Scannell, 1991, p.224). Industry recognises that this can be a daunting prospect for those wanting to express an opinion.

> They listen and they've got an opinion and ringing up is a frightening thing to do. You [the listener] gotta hang on the end of the line, your heart is beating. It's a performance (Davis, Host).
>
> It takes a lot of courage to ring into a talkback station (Hay, Host).
>
> They've been listening and for whatever reason they choose not to make a call and it's usually … about courage (Amos, Host).

Eleven out of 13 listener participants said they had never called talkback. Their reasons included a lack of confidence (Listener E), they did not wish to be identified (Listener C, Listener K), and too shy (Listener B). One listener said he had 'never seen myself as a caller' (Listener N). This comment speaks to the perception of talkback callers by listeners, which is discussed in Section 5.2 . Of the other two listeners, Listener H said she had called once when drunk, while the other had called talkback approximately 30 years ago. The latter added:

> I simply can't be bothered sitting around, waiting to get on air (Listener M).

The requirement to perform and the risk of being identified fell away during the first decade of the the twenty-first century with the arrival of Web 2.0 technology, and digitalisation. Brennen and Kreiss (2016) define digitalisation as the 'structuring of many and diverse domains of social life around digital communications and media infrastructures' (p.560). As well as the voices of phone caller, listeners now 'heard' mediated voices: emails, texts and

[108] Gould (2009) notes two other forms of interaction, the letter and from the early 1980s, the fax. However, a letter does not provide an instantaneous response, and from personal experience, fax machines are too noisy and prone to running out of paper at inconvenient times. So while I acknowlege both of these, as a source of interactive content, I have set them aside for this study.

later social media posts, read by the host. Broadcasters welcomed the opportunities it afforded (Oliviera et al., 2014) and the 'shape and function' (Gould, 2009, p.95) of audience participation in media changed. Listeners meanwhile, adjusted their foregrounding capacity to accommodate new, pithier content packaged in unfamiliar wrapping.

As a motivation to listen, the use of digital content falls into the same category as liveness when looking for a response from listeners: it is a given. It was not offered as a reason to listen by any listener participant. However, when prompted they acknowledged it as a positive aspect.

> I always listen to the texts/emails that are read out … The good thing about texts is they normally get to the point quickly whereas some listeners drone on for quite a while before getting, finally, to the interesting part (Listener J).
>
> I am aware that they are part of the programme and make a point of listening to them when the host reads them out (Listener F).
>
> I listen to the emails and texts that are read out by the host and accept that they are another valid way of listeners being able to express their views (Listener K).

Digital content has widened the nature of contributing to talkback and therefore the number of opinions expressed. Prior to the use of digital messages in talkback,[109] the number of unique voices (that is, the number of calls put to air) heard in an average hour of talkback was governed by the premise of an average duration of three minutes per phone call.[110] Added to this was the advertising and editorial component from the host. In the digitalised environment, the number of voices heard has tripled if not quadrupled. Overnight host Amos says he might get 30 to 40 calls a night, but twice that number of text messages. Dickens admits that the addition of digital content has 'diluted the phone calls' but improved the content.

> In terms of the actual amount of content and individual ideas and viewpoints that we get on air, it's increased it greatly. So instead of anywhere between five and 13 callers in the conversation, we'll have now five to 13 callers *and* also another 20 texters or email who also added to the conversation. So the conversation has ended up being much larger … 20 or 30 people as opposed to 10 (Dickens, host).

[109] Industry participants were unable to provide a specific year as to when digital interactivity, emails and texts began to be used regularly within talkback in Aotearoa New Zealand. The common response was mid-2000s. One indicator (albeit not on a talkback station) is that RNZ National (Aotearoa New Zealand's talk-based public service broadcaster) ran an 'unofficial trial' of adding text content to the midnight to dawn programme in either 2005 or 2006, (Sinton, 2016)

[110] The protocol of keeping the duration of talkback calls to the length of the average song, approximately three minutes, is mentioned by Francis (management), Stevens (host) and Parkinson (producer).

Because they are edited, digital contributions are likely to be much shorter than a phone call. The agenda of a digital caller can be represented by the host in the 10 to 20 seconds it takes to read out the key points made in the message. The brevity of this means that messages are often (but not always) packaged together into a multi-message bundle. The following bundle of messages as read out by Kerry McIvor on her 9 a.m. to midday programme on Newstalk ZB, represents the thoughts of four different and consecutively numbered digital callers; it was read in 40 seconds:

> *[1]* Herman says: Kerre, by focusing on things like hate speech, Jacinda's once again demonstrating clearly she's not qualified to run Aotearoa Inc. The business that sustains us all. She's using her time to line up that U.N. job. *[2]* You want to hear people say something nice about our PM or anything really? Best find a new station to work at says Matt. *[3]* You think she has the best intentions? That's because you're a lefty spin doctor. (Kerre): Really? A leftie spin … I'm way too old, and way too mortgaged to be a lefty spin doctor. *[4]* Kerre, our PM needs to develop some realism along with her idealism if she's planning policy regarding the Internet says Yvonne. (*Kerre McIvor Mornings*, 24 April 2019, [Radio broadcast] Newstalk ZB).

The equivalent number of messages (with advertising added between calls) would have taken up to 20 to 30 minutes of the hour if broadcast as phone calls. This example highlights another positive aspect of digital content for the listener. It gives the host more opportunity to editorialise and provide entertaining commentary. The following segment, part of a debate on ethnic diversity and quotas in the police force, also from *Kerre McIvor Mornings*, is another example.

> *[McIvor reading text]* Silly Kerre - your communism is showing again. You cannot have quotas, and the best. You need to try harder. *[McIvor editorial]* **'**Communism' - that silly old man that called me a communist lesbian. The two worst things he could think of to call a woman: 'communist lesbian'. As I said, there's empirical evidence up and down the country to prove I'm a hearty heterosexual (*Kerre McIvor Mornings*, 24 April 2019, [Radio broadcast] Newstalk ZB).

But does more necessarily mean better? Smith (host) and his producer, Leaney, say it does.

> Intelligent people don't want to sit round on a phone all day waiting for their turn ... the e-mails were more intelligent … they were well reasoned, well thought out (Smith, host).
>
> While the calls kept coming all the time … the meat came from those people who would put pen to paper because they were more able to, sort of, reason an argument' (Leaney, producer).

Martin (2006) writes that the use digital technology has given participants in interactivity more control over their engagement. Dickens (host) agrees and values the material he finds on social media.

> Social media, like *Facebook* or *Twitter* is actually quite a benefit because that tends to be people who think a bit more deeply about things than your texters, and [they] write longer and more reasoned opinions. And they're quite good to steal and read out and put into the conversation as well, because a lot of times they say things better in that than they do, they can verbally.

Dickens' reference to 'stealing' content from social media implies that he locates himself as a broadcaster, separate from the digital media arena.

Further, the authority of the contributor's views are likely to benefit from the host's delivery.

> I think it comes down to how we deliver them. … if we just read them out, sort of dead pan – there's nothing to them … I bring them into my conversation … that's enhancing, that's much better than just reading them out cold (Amos, host).

Smith (host) notes the difference in the tone of emails compared with texts. He says emails were more likely to contribute useful information, while texts were often 'crass' and 'vulgar', and used to send 'a one-liner that they [the contributor] thought was funny'. He says they were 'a favourite form of attack' [on him]. Davis (host) notes that texts attacking the host can be used to their advantage by generating a sympathetic reaction from callers.

> I quite liked the abusive ones [as] it gives you an opportunity to say 'oh no, really? How and why on earth would you think of that? .. feigned hurt ...' The next 10 calls will be 'don't listen to them' and they all come to your defence (Davis, host).

This manipulation of digital content or the use of fictitious texts to generate content is common practice according to industry participants (Smyth, host; Miles, host; Francis, managment). They (and Listener J) observed that some hosts strategically avoided reading out particular messages.

> Some of them must be quite direct, as often the host decides not to read one out (Listener J).

Francis (management) and Dickens (host) spoke of hosts choosing only the digital content that supported their viewpoint while Davis (host) said he knew of hosts who made up texts in order to incite debate.[111]

Ewart and Ames (2016) note the convenience of processing digital contributions. From a producer's point of view, emails and texts are a source of content that can be easily screened, edited and injected into the programme. The active audience member meanwhile, can contribute from any location with an internet connnection on a range of devices.

[111] As a former talkback producer, I can confirm that the use of fictitious interactivity to generate real interactivity is not a recent phenomenon.

> It's not always possible for a listener to respond with a voice call. That would be especially true for someone who is at work and doesn't have time to be in a holding queue, but still feels strongly enough about a given topic to go to the bother of making contact with the station (Listener D).

Ease of contribution is particularly important in times of emergency where information from listeners can fulfil an important role; this is discussed earlier in Section 4.5.2.

Engaging the host via a digital platform also takes away the potential of conflict or humiliation.

> People who might have called now will text because there's no fear in that of being, making a fool of yourself or having your argument disproved ... It's one-way. Bam! I did it (Dickens, host).
>
> You want to put your opinion out there, but not necessarily go through the hassle of having your opinion tested by another person (Listener H).
>
> They can say stuff without being challenged in a conversation ... I mean I might challenge it when I read it out on air and other people may as well. But they can have their say without interruption (Amos, host).

Digital platforms preserves anonymity if the digital caller wishes. Listener C is an example of someone who is a listener but had texted on one occasion. She has a distinctive accent which, while not uncommon in Aotearoa New Zealand, stands out in the relatively small Auckland market.

> Because my accent is so recognisable ... I don't want to make enemies or political enemies amongst my own friends (Listener C).
>
> The anonymity, if you like, of being able to send a text message without exposing themselves to the world, is safe for them (Amos, host).

The digital option is ideal for the listener like Listener C who feels strongly on an issue and believes they have something of value to contribute.

> The text, that gives … them an opportunity to contribute, put their view across (Davis, host).
>
> If the person wants to put their viewpoint which may be different to the other callers … a text is good, or if the person knows the viewpoint of the host or bias of host, then texts are a good option (Listener F).

While the use of digital content has made for more varied and interesting content for listeners, its incorporation into that content can be confusing to the ear. The voice of the digital caller is that of the host, and is heard as part of the host's discourse. As a result, it is not always clear to the listener where individual messages begin and end. This occurs in the example used earlier; the first three of the four digital messages from Herman, Matt and an unnamed digital caller, were read back-to-back by host Kerre McIvor. This confusion can also

occur in the hosted transition from phone call to digital message. In the following example from a debate on the cost of dental health, McIvor ends a phone call from 'Richard' before moving directly on to digital correspondence (beginning 'my dentist'), from a digital caller clearly envious of his dentist's lifestyle:

> Yep, no, I agree with you. Thank you very much Richard. My dentist only works part of the year, holidays overseas and skis during the winter. He has jet-skis, vintage cars, speedboat and art collection and secondary school children (*Kerre McIvor Mornings*, March 4 2019 [Radio broadcast] Newstalk ZB,)

At first hearing (and reading) this discourse, the listener can be forgiven for thinking that the part-time dentist referred to is McIvor's dentist and that these are her observations. Parkinson (producer) is one who thinks this style of delivering digital content is confusing, and has a solution. He suggests that digital messages used within talkback, should be read by another person. A clearly different voice, with different intonation, possibly a different gender, would foreground digital content for listeners adding not just clarity but nuance to the content.

Parkinson (producer) questions the use of digital content in talkback in general. He believes it removes the human element from talkback.

> You're allowing people to text in a very short anonymous conversation, y'know, a sentence or two. A couple of points, that just doesn't work for me ... If you've got someone reading a text or reading an email, that's not a conversation, that's a statement.

Tamihere (host) agrees. He contends that a message read out by a host will never provide what the voice of the writer can communicate.

> Because it's about the voice, that's what the talk is, talk is the voice ... you don't know someone's sentiments by reading out a text message ... if I read out the talk that mightn't have been said in that vein. So there are inflections in speech. There's a little twist at the end, there's the giggle ... you can't get that out of an email ... or out of a text'.

Listener E says she has become more aware of the use of digital content since the departure of the 'old brigade'.[112]

> It seems the younger announcers are all into it. I feel it is a generational move. I prefer someone to speak on air rather than to sit behind a computer (Listener E, personal communication, November 9, 2017)

[112] Here Listener F is referring to the departure of Leighton Smith from Newstalk ZB at the end of 2018.

In a telephone conversation, the voice at the other end is talking specifically to me. It is a voice with a distinct electronic sound; markedly different from a voice heard in person which may be heard by others. The electronically distorted telephone voice of the talkback caller, despite the awareness of its mediation, is associated with one-to-one communication. When heard as part of talkback content as per the examples above, the telephone voice is more recognisable as content, (and therefore foregrounded by the listener), than if the same message is read out by the host.

In conclusion, there are valid arguments for and against the use of digital content in talkback. However, its use is now an established element of the format. Prior to the use of digital content, talkback relied on a small cohort of phone contributors, and a larger than life host to fill the editorial gaps and maintain the entertainment value. Digitalisation has widened the 'participatory scope' (Ewart & Ames, 2016, p.93) for active audience members, and listeners. While in time the method of presentation may change as Parkinson (producer) suggests, it will continue to be an integral part of not just talkback, but many formats, including non-talkback talk-based radio formats (for example public broadcaster RNZ National) and chat-based radio.[113] For talk (but not talkback) networks such as RNZ National, digital content redefines their relationship with their audience from one-to-many to one-to-one (Sinton, 2018). For talkback radio listeners, digital content enhances the listening experience as more opinions, and more diverse opinions, are added to traditional telephone interactivity. Furthermore, in reading out the messages, the host takes on the persona of those who have sent them, adding clarity, authority, humour, maybe pathos, all of which contribute to the appeal of the content as heard by the listener.

4.7 Talkback as companion: 'Acquaintances I listen to'

> *What we want from broadcast liveness, then, is essentially the co-presence of other humans, either as objects of interest in themselves or as a way of making what is non-human intelligible and interesting to us ... our love of liveness is essentially a desire for the company of other humans (Crisell, 2012).*

[113] A form of talk interaction comprising light-hearted chat and relying on banter and humour between caller and host (Ames, 2016).

In Section 4.5, liveness is presented as a fundamental, albeit often overlooked, element of talkback. Crisell's quote above links liveness with the human desire for companionship. Those who look for companionship in the media, and in particular talkback, have been caricatured in popular culture. The stereotype of the lonely listener is found in Horton and Wohl's (1956) study of the para-social relationship between media personae (host) and the radio listener or television viewer. The Horton and Wohl study does not imply that para-social relationships are born of social inadequacy. However, it does acknowledge that the relationship is one-sided where the host becomes 'counsellor' and 'comforter' to a needy member of the audience (p.217), implying an imbalance of power.[114] Spangardt et al. (2016) also discuss para-social relationships between radio presenter and listener.

Ewart's (2011b) study of the 'under-appreciated role of talkback radio in Australia' finds that talkback offers companionship, friendship and genuine comfort to those who are feeling lonely. She cites one participant whose husband and son had died within six months of each other: 'If it hadn't have been for talkback radio I would have died.' (p.231). Davis (host) recognises the important role talkback can play in some listeners' lives.

> I think a lot of hosts … miss the point of the fact that you are building a relationship and that people, if they listen to you regularly, build up an idea of you, they build up a friendship and for a lot of people, it's some of the only communication or company they they're getting – really the social value of talkback is, I think, it is totally under estimated, I really do.

Ewart also found that there was a gender bias in this form of 'comfort- listening' with women particularly finding companionship in late-night talkback when they had trouble sleeping.[115] Listener F and Listener J both said that they listen to talkback late at night. However, Listener F contrasts her reasons for listening with what she perceives as the reasons for others to listen or call:

> I think I just enjoy listening to the other people. Almost like, like these other people want to connect – where for me, they are just, they are just people. They're not gonna be my friend – they're acquaintances that I listen to.

[114] As I have done throughout this thesis, I sought to clarify whether Horton and Wohl are referring to those who take part, or those who watch or listen. This was not clear as they use the generic term 'audience'.

[115] Evidence shows that insomnia is a common issue for peri and post-menopausal women. The Sleep Foundation report that 61% of post-menopausal women experience the symptons of insomnia (Sleep Foundation, n.d.). The Australasian Menopause Society state that 40 to 60% of perimenopausal and postmenopausal women experience sleeping disorders (Australasian Menopause Society, n.d.). A 2005 study of sleep quality showed that 33 to 51% of women experience a significant increase in sleep disturbance in their mid-life years, a time when they are likely to be entering menopause (Hsu & Lin, 2005, p. 153)

Here Listener F hints that Horton and Wohl's para-social imbalance applies to the callers but not to her as a listener. Instead she is the bystander in the room, happy to listen and not take part.

For listener participants in this study, talkback listening is a pastime rather than a lifeline (as implied in the example of the woman experiencing grief, cited by Ewart above).

> I also remember when my kids were little and I'd be up in the middle of the night breastfeeding and you know I'd just turn it on to get some adult conversation, oh not conversation, but company (Listener K).
>
> It's almost company you know. And, and, you do get to know these people (Listener J).

The reference to 'company' by these listeners suggests a pleasant listening experience rather than a need. Leaney (producer), in this case speaking as a listener, talked of the engagement that comes from hearing other voices.

> If you're alive you like … you like hearing somebody talking to you, or across you to somebody else in a room … To me it's absolutely human nature. I love to listen to it, because it gets your own grey matter going as well … it gets you thinking about the subject as well. But I guess that's why, it's what I live for. I love listening to people.

Dickens (host) describes talkback as 'instant rapport'. Hosts Amos and Smyth also spoke of the listening experience as normal and companionable.

> It's companionship for a start. Most people like to hear people's voices … people's voices give us comfort. And reassurance. I work primarily at night-time and especially then. And people like to hear the thoughts and opinions of others too (Amos, host).
>
> I used to say to people who go, talk about talkback as though there's some weird tribe out there called talkback people. And I used to say: all it is … is the amplification of conversation in most bars. All it is, is giving the people the ability to say what they said at a bar last night or say to people round the watercooler … or in any social situation … I think it's simply that (Smyth, host).

A common metaphor used in academic texts and also by participants in this study is the talkback programme as a home within a neighbourhood. People chat to each other 'over the backyard fence' (Rehm, 1993, p.63; Turner et al., 2006, p.109; Smith [host]). It is, as Perse and Butler (2005) describe, enriching. There is a sense of belonging:

> You become part of the family … they're like friends of yours because they've listened to you for years, so you know, you're in their house. It's like chatting to your neighbours (Davis, host).

However, using the same metaphor, Davis says if the neighbourhood chat turns ugly, it can evoke strong emotions.

> People are listening on the radio, they're in their front room, their bathroom, their car. If some idiot came into my house and started giving opinions, I'd be angry with him as well.

Note that in this quote, Davis readily refers to the opinionated caller as 'him'.

Amos (host) uses a maritime analogy to describe the nature of trust between listener and host:

> We're invited into a listener's mind through their ears … My job is to get a connection between their brain and their heart. And if I can get that – it's called emotion. But if I can get that, we're away. We're at full sail and we're steaming out into the ocean and we can go anywhere ... If I have a listener that can engage, or I can engage with them in that manner, they will come with me through, they will trust me as a skipper.

Francis (management) suggest that this type of engagement is why radio has remained so popular.

> The reason I believe that radio has continued to do so well is that people can engage with a person whether they talk to him, talk to that person or just listen. They have a connection with that person.

Talkback, as with all audio media, has tap listening properties, foregrounding and backgrounding itself according to the listener's interest and other activities being undertaken. Some listeners leave the radio on all the time for 'companionship, distraction or emotional involvement' (p. 125). Others 'turn on, dip in, turn off, several times a day' (Hendy, 2000, p.130).

> A lot of the times for instance, in the morning, I put the radio on, but I'm actually reading the paper. It's not that often that I'm actually just sitting with the radio, listening, just to the radio. In the middle of the night, you know I'm not doing anything else, but even when I'm upstairs I'm actually working. But I've still got the radio on … you're still listening to it and then if something really interesting comes on, you stop, you know, and make sure I don't miss it (Listener J).

Listener F echoes Hendy in describing her listening behaviours.

> Tune in tune out, turn it off, turn it to music, it's just very, very uncomplicated because it is always there … it's there, background noise, while I'm cooking … I was doing my bills the other day … I can even go online, do my e-mails and listen.

Listener and industry participants in this study spoke of their simultaneous listening experience, their 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983):

> When you're watching TV ... watching movies these days, you can watch anything you want at any time, wherever you want, but there's something ... about listening to something at the same time as everyone else is (Listener H).
>
> There's beauty about sitting nonchalantly in your car or your house, or your tractor – you'd be surprised how many farmers out on the farm listen to us (Tamihere, host).

Lowe (management) suggests that listeners find comfort in the communality of the shared experience.

> It's why people still go to the movies and go to concerts even though everything's on telly and you don't need to do that anymore. You go because I think that human nature is such that there's still some comfort in … being part of the group and talkback was just another form of that.

This aspect of talkback, in which people listen to feel part of a community, can be seen as counter-intuitive, as talkback is often, by choice, listened to when the listener is alone.

> Talkback, very much, is one person listening at a time … doesn't work very well with a whole roomful of people … It's usually one person, and if two people do it, the wife will be sleeping and the husband will have the earphones in his ears … and that's one person concentrating (Stevens, host).

As such, talkback listening is an individual act in the company of others.

> Just recently I heard, there's another guy, Cameron I think, he said, oh yeah, I want to say hello to all these other people who were listeners but they're talkers [callers] as well though, and I thought: oh yeah, that's interesting, they've got this little network of regulars (Listener J).

Night-time listening, particularly, engenders a sense of community in listeners, but also a sense of being able to share something intimate in callers. Davis (host) talks of calls received from people who had been sexually abused, and on another occasion a man who had witnessed atrocities in World War 2 (these calls are discussed in more detail in Section 4.8).

> The things you can learn from people that way, and it makes them feel good, and it helps the rest of the audience to learn something as well, and we're all sharing that experience.

In his time as a night-time talkback host, Stevens says he nurtured the sense of community and sociability among his night-time listeners; he describes his listeners and callers as belonging to a 'virtual' club.[116] Night-time listening 'evokes a spiritual, almost telepathic contact across space and time, a reassurance that we are not alone in the void' (Douglas, 1999, p.40). In the absence of other sensory stimulation, radio listening in the dark nurtures the use of the listener's imagination, creating 'detailed tableaux' and 'a primal experience fusing pleasure, activity and desire' (Douglas 1999, p.29). Hendy (2010) describes night-time listening as a 'qualitatively different kind of "media consumption"' to listening in daylight

[116] In the case of Stevens's listeners, the virtual became the real: 'They [his listeners] sometimes used to have meetings … there'd be about two or three or four hundred people would turn up'. This echoes early experiments in talkback in the mid 1930s in the United States when listener phone calls were put to air from 'remotes sites where they [listeners] had gathered to listen' to NBC programme *America's Town Meeting of the Air* (Halper, 2009, p.12).

(p.215). In using 'darkness as a window to invisible worlds' (p.228) listening becomes more intense (p.215).

Listener J describes her experience, listening to late night talkback:

> … like even in the middle of the night when I'm listening. You know sometimes the guy [host] will say, 'Oh where are you'. He says, 'oh, I'm a, you know I'm a truckie, and I've just left Hamilton and the weather's - oh really bad' and even I find that quite interesting. And I think you know, oh so the weather's really bad in Hamilton.

Listeners indulge in comfort listening, contrasting their own situations, with others in the listening community who are in more challenging environments.[117] The attraction of talkback listening at night is apparent in the GFK audience ratings. In S1,2020, audience share figures show that at night listeners are more likely to choose talkback over other formats than they are during the day. Newstalk ZB's share of the available audience rises from 8.7% in the 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. daypart to 18.6% from 7 p.m. to midnight, and even further to 32.6% in the midnight to 6 a.m. daypart (overnight). These figures are double and quadruple their nearest rivals respectively. This preference particularly in the overnight daypart does not appear to be indicative of host preference, since the number of people listening to Newstalk ZB drops, but the share of those who *are* listening almost doubles (GFK, 2020b).

In conclusion, despite academic research from the 1970s and 1980s indicating that talkback is only used by those who are lonely and those who see talkback as a surrogate companion, listener participants in this study did not fit this stereotype. Listeners may listen on their own, but this does not mean that they are lonely. They feel no pressure to contribute; an awareness of others listening is enough. If they feel that they are a part of a community, they are. They enjoy the 'we-feeling' (Hendy, 2013, p.123) that comes from the knowledge that they are part of a simultaneous listening community. Female participants were more likely than male participants to comment on talkback as companionship. This may be a reflection of a gender difference in how it is perceived or a reluctance on behalf of male listeners to give talkback that label. Talkback is often used in tap-listening mode. Listeners use it as ambient

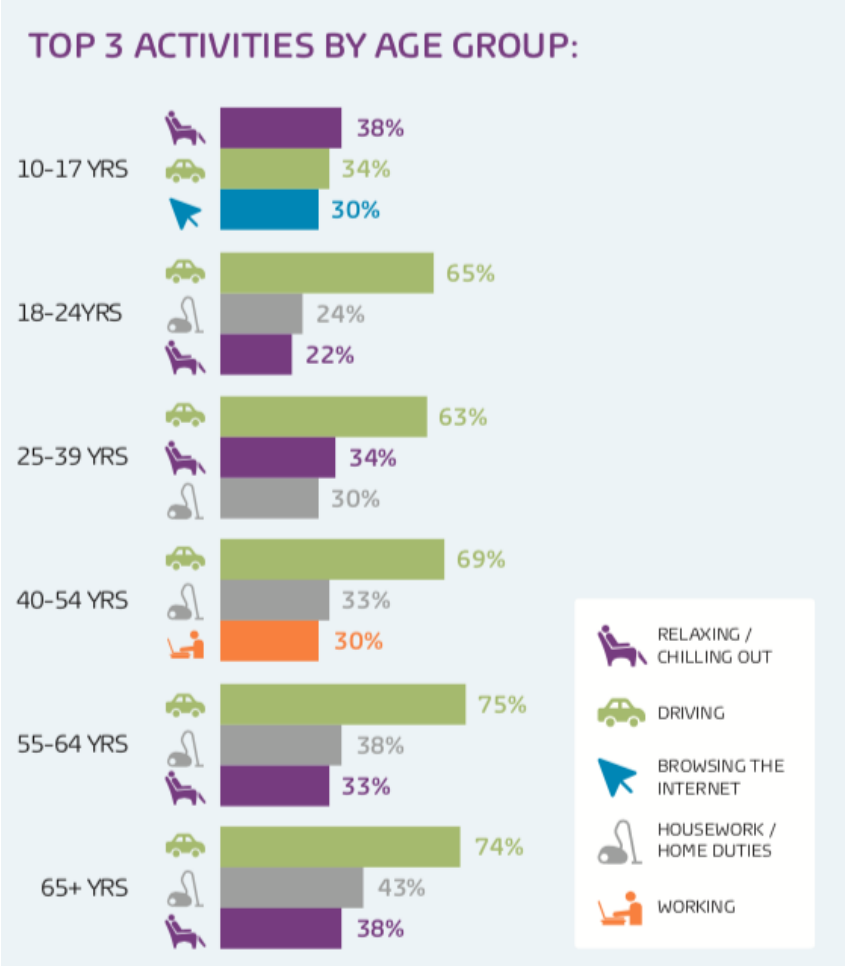
[117] The BBC's *Shipping Forecast* which is broadcast three times per day, is an example of comfort listening. The forecast is known to attract hundreds of thousands of UK listeners, most of whom have no practical use for the information. Hendy (2010) cites a *Telegraph* television critic who describes listening to the *Shipping Forecast* at night*:* '[the] promise' of hearing about a gale at sea with 'the bed-clothes pulled high and the radio turned low'' (p.222). *Guardian* television reviewer Stefan Collini observes that the *Shipping Forecast* has transformed from an instrumental programme to a 'purely aesthetic phenomenon' (Collini, 2007; Crawford, 2012).

background while undertaking other tasks, and paying attention when an issue of interest to them attracts their attention. In essence, the use of talkback radio should be reframed as an accompaniment to everyday life rather than companionship, which comes with connotations of low social capital.

4.8 Talkback as soundtrack

Talkback, like other radio formats, podcasts and music, can provide a soundtrack to activities. Crisell (1994) describes radio as a 'blind medium'. We cannot see its messages, we can only hear them. 'It is from [this] that all radio's other distinctive qualities … ultimately derive' (p.3). With only their sense of hearing engaged, listeners are free to undertake a range of other activities.

Figure 4.2: *Top 3 activities undertaken while listening to the radio.*



Note: From *GFK Radio Insights What Drives Listeners to Radio* (GFK, 2017).

Figure 4.2 shows GFK's 2017 analysis of activities undertaken while radio listening. In all age demographics 18+, driving is the dominant activity, with a minimum of 63% (25-39) and a maximum of 75% (55-64) of listeners driving while listening to the radio. Bobbitt (2010) quotes media researchers that the majority of talkback listening occurs while at work, or driving.

> Mobility for radio remains one of its major strengths particularly, but also you know out in the garden, whatever (Francis, management).
>
> Portability and its immediacy are its two strongest features (Lowe, management).

The two age demographics most likely to be listening while driving (55-64 and 65+) align with Newstalk ZB's listener profile of older listeners 55+.[118] Former producer of the Leighton Smith show on Newstalk ZB (8.30 a.m. to midday) Leaney says that business people on the move made up a big portion of their audience.

Several participants in this study spoke of why they listened to talkback while driving. Listener H describes the enjoyment of listening to evening talkback in her car (Douglas, 1999, p.22, called it the 'zen'):

> When I'm driving in the car … that's when it usually is, you know it's one thing to have music on. But I feel like it's much more soothing to have a voice, and quiet, in the car. So one example is whenever I'm driving to pick up [husband] from one of his gigs in the city … you know it's the evening and it's late, so I'm wanting to wind down and so instead of having some loud music, it will be just be Marcus Lush [Newstalk ZB evening host] and his soft voice … so it's very calming (Listener H, personal communication, October 20, 2017).

Listener J describes listening to talkback while driving:

> I guess it's like just having someone sitting next to you and talking.

Listener D and Listener J both say they prefer to listen to talkback while driving but this is more likely to occur when they are on their own. On one occasion Listener K found talkback too engaging while driving.

> It was really on-point and interesting, and I went through a red light!

Listener D and Listener C say that driving is the only time they listen to talkback.

> I listen to talkback while I'm driving … so I would, ordinarily, I'd listen to it three times a week (Listener D).
>
> I only listen to it when I drive - and so it depends on how much I have to drive for work (Listener C).

[118] In S1,2020, the station with the highest share of commercial radio listeners aged 55-74 was Newstalk ZB (21%). Newstalk ZB had the second highest share of commercial radio listeners aged 45-64 (11.9%)

The choice of talkback by default while driving due to limited band width in Japanese imported cars is unique to the Auckland market and is covered in Section 1.5. Listener C is one of those who initially had little choice but:

> I have bought a new radio but I haven't installed it yet. It's one of those things on my to-do list but in the meantime. It's funny, I've started to listen to it more and more and now I've had conversations with different people about it.

Listener E listens while preparing food in the kitchen.

> You know – it's so quiet. So I have the radio on. Now I could have music on or whatever, but you know, if I'm working in the kitchen it's like at four o'clock, if I'm getting dinner ready or something like that, I have it on.

But like Listener J when driving, Listener E chooses to listen alone.

> Because [husband] doesn't like any noise. And um, you know he likes to sit there and read the paper, no sound, you know?

Speaking generally, radio as a medium provides a soundtrack to life. It can provide company, or a companionable background ambience. Its flexibility, increasing with every new device introduced, 'reinforces its appeal to the imagination' (Crisell, 1994, p.11). Talkback radio specifically adds a live commentary to the everyday, a commentary that can be set aside or foregrounded at the listener's will, keeping them in touch with current opinions and events.

4.9 Talkback: Reality radio

Talkback allows listeners to indulge in what Francis (2002) calls 'sheer, unadulterated voyeurism' (p.96). Just as reality television satiates audience needs, so can talkback (Baruh (2010). Baruh states that media audiences make their selection of mediated forms based on 'social, psychological, and biological needs'. He normalises 'common voyeurism' as a 'relatively stable personality trait' (p.207). Industry participants in this study readily identified the voyeuristic aspects of talkback and its attraction to listeners. Davis (host) uses the visual metaphor of the nosy neighbour, peering through the curtains when the neighbours are having a 'set to' to describe the talkback listener.

> That sort of voyeurism, of someone else having a good old argument – if you see the neighbours having a go at each other [you] might go: 'oh [just] the neighbours'. But half of you is listening (Davis, host)

However, conflict is not the only reason to twitch the curtains.

> You like to hear what the hubbub is, the gossip, and the communality. It's a sharing of information. It is gossip to a certain degree. It is a chance to actually listen in on in-depth conversations, amongst others, without ever being seen without necessarily yourself having

> to be involved … We are all people-watchers and we like to watch other people's behaviour and either laugh at it or admire it, or ridicule it or be entertained by it (Dickens, host)
>
> It absolutely is … smirking at someone or going 'oh, did you just hear that? … It is a great form of voyeurism (Hay, host).

Stevens (host) suggests that talkback is a contemporary version of eavesdropping on a party line. However, unlike listening-in to a call intended for a neighbour, he says talkback is legitimate: 'you're not cheating'. Dickens (host) agrees that the sense of eavesdropping adds to the appeal.

> So we like listening to other people talking, particularly if they don't know we're listening. So you almost feel like you're being let in on a secret in a way, or you're, you're hearing stuff you wouldn't have heard normally.

This sense of 'being let in on a secret' contributes to the inclusive nature of talkback. Even as a silent listener, I want to feel that I am part of the conversation and that 'I am spoken to' (Scannell, 1996).

The ability of the host to draw intimate discourse out of callers is key to the listener's experience. A three-way relationship builds as the experiences of the caller, extricated by the host, form an image in the listener's imagination. This is particularly so in late-night talkback when there are fewer auditory and visual distractions for the listener.

> I did six hours once on sexual abuse overnight on [Newstalk] ZB. I had a 70-year-old woman who hadn't told anyone in her family ... A six foot nine Māori truck driver, who was in his 40s, had been abused when he was nine, rang up (Davis, host)

In another example, Davis tells of a regular caller, Eddie, of whom little was known except that he was 'an old Dutch guy'. He had been banned by other hosts because he was 'crazy'. One night Davis asked about Eddie's background in an attempt to understand his world view.

> I said, Eddie, how old are you now? And he said I'm 70. And I said you would have been living in Holland during the war wouldn't you? … He said when he was 13 he was in his village in Holland and the resistance, the Dutch resistance, blew up a German munitions dump ... He was riding his bike. He said on the other side of the railway tracks they lined up 50 of the locals and shot them.

This confronting and sad revelation brings another aspect to talkback listening: identifying with the caller and their experience. While few callers would have witnessed the horror of an execution as recalled by Eddie, most listeners, especially in the targeted 50 plus demographic, are likely to have experienced trauma at some stage of their lives. They may have heard similar stories from older relatives or friends who have experienced war and social upheaval.

Therefore, they are likely to feel empathetic towards the caller. The listener is made to feel that something very personal has been disclosed to them; they are 'in the room'.

In another example of disclosure, after months of calling to Amos' (host) overnight programme, one caller revealed that she was transgender.

> She lives with her dad. And now she talks about it very confidently and happily. And took dad out to buy some dresses. And how difficult that was for dad … I mean, for her, it's wonderful that she's got this vehicle that she can talk about herself. Because she's told us, she hasn't been able to talk about it at school. You know, it's difficult there ... living ... near Hawera, small community. She can go on the radio now and be .... she's now got the confidence cos she trusts me.

Amos goes on to describe the reaction from listeners who heard this and responded by text or email.

> Other listeners just love it you know, they just love it, it's remarkable. Even some of my red-neck men who text in ... they've, it's opened a world to them that they hadn't dared looked through that window before you know?

This kind of disclosure could be uncomfortable for some people to hear, particularly so if listened to in the company of others. However because listening to talkback, especially late at night, is likely to be done alone, it allows the listener to absorb what they are hearing, to look into a new world as suggested by Amos and perhaps empathise, without feeling judged by others. These kinds of disclosures take on nuances of an intimacy that would be hard to replicate in the daytime when media listening competes with other aspects of a listener's life. O'Keefe (2006) calls it 'pseudo-intimacy' (p.90) She suggests that in order for callers to share what are sometimes strikingly frank disclosures, they must have a 'sense of security that those who are listening are 'friends'' (p.92).

Listening but not calling is a characteristic of talkback that mirrors social media. The social media equivalent of listening and not contributing is 'lurking', defined in this context as those who follow others on sites such as *Facebook*, without posting (Crawford, 2009, 2012; Edelmann, 2013). The phrase 'long time lurker, first time poster', a pop culture reference to talk radio, is commonly used on social media news and discussion site Reddit (Reddit, 2020). The label 'lurking' is another example of applying negative connotations to a passive participant an aspect of listening discussed in Section 2.2 of this thesis. Terms such as 'faceless' or 'gullible' are questioned by Lacey (2013a, p.185). Crawford (2009, 2012) Edelmann (2013) and Lee et al. (2006) agree that those who follow social media but do not

post online are still participating. According to Crawford, lurkers 'directly contribute to the community by acting as a gathered audience: neither agreeing not disagreeing, but listening, (even if distractedly)' (2009, p.527). Edelmann states that lurkers can still contribute to a virtual community's cultural capital by passing on the information they learn to others online. Lacey describes talkback's passive listeners as being part of the communication process. Crawford (2009) describes lurking or, as she calls it, 'online listening', as a 'significant practice of intimacy, connection, obligation and participation' (p.527).

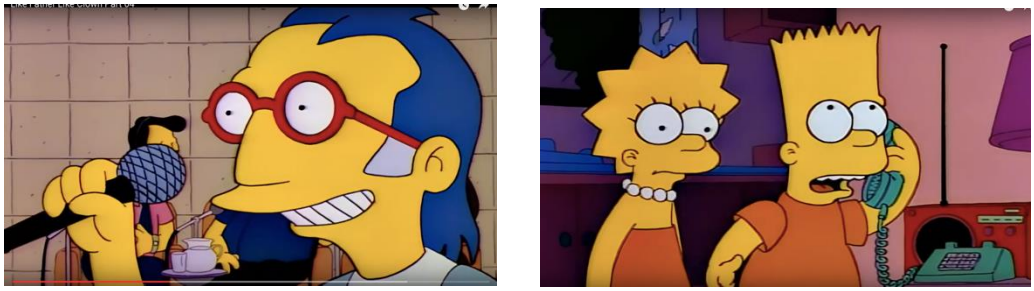
Those who 'speak' online are aware of those who log in to read their contributions (Lee et al. 2006). Online 'listeners' create a 'mode of receptiveness' and this acts as encouragement to others (Crawford, 2009, p.527). As with online speakers, and as discussed on page 116, regarding telephone versus digital callers, most talkback telephone callers will be aware of the need to perform. Follow-up callers or those sending messages digitally comment on the performance of earlier callers and it is likely that listeners make similar judgements. These comments create talkback's own 'mode of receptiveness' and encourage other callers to ring and tell of their own experiences.

In conclusion, talkback listeners, like reality television viewers and social media lurkers are voyeurs of content that at times may be surprising and salacious, or both. The listener gets gratuitous satisfaction from perceiving themselves as accidental observers of intimate disclosures. Further, as Crisell (1994) points out, they can take pleasure from their own anonymity, despite having a front row seat for revelation and confrontation. Talkback is reality radio. It is screened and curated but also unscripted and unpredictable giving it the 'pulling power' to engage and excite listeners (Francis, 2002, p.96).

4.10 The Stigma: 'I don't actually know anyone who's ever admitted to listening to it'

To some, talkback radio is an object of derision, the home of the 'long-time listener, first-time caller' as caricatured by Bart Simpson in the episode of *The Simpsons* shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Excerpt from *The Simpsons,* Season 3, Episode 41*: Like Father, Like Clown.*



Host: And in order to keep our broadcasting licence, we devote Sunday night dead time to public service shows of limited appeal. In that spirit we bring you 'Gabbing about God' sponsored by Ace Religious Supply where they say 'if we don't got it, it ain't holy'. Our next caller is a young boy from right here in Springfield.

Bart: Hello my name is Demitri and I'm a first time caller long time listener'

Note. From Kogan & Wolodarsky (1991)

The host's reference to the use of the 'Sunday night dead time' slot to fulfil licence requirements establishes its low cultural status. The academic stigma attached to talkback is discussed in Section 2.7. Turner (2007) notes:

> ... it has become almost routine to consign the whole of talkback radio to the populist, 'tabloid' end of the media spectrum — as therefore not worthy of close attention (p.74).

Horton and Wohl's (1956) study, which described a potentially unhealthy para-social relationship between caller and host, only boosted the acceptance of the stereotype. Hofstetter et al. (1994) called for a revision of this stereotype, challenging the view that talkback promoted 'social and political alienation' (p.477).

However, expectations can become entrenched; it can be difficult for products to move up or down a cultural status ladder as perceived by both academia and audience. An example of this is the differing public perceptions of commercially driven Newstalk ZB and non-commercial RNZ National (a public service broadcaster). Newstalk ZB and RNZ are Aotearoa New Zealand's oldest, most established broadcasters.[119] Newstalk ZB attracts high audience numbers and is commercially successful, while non-commercial RNZ National markets itself as a broadcaster of 'quality news, journalism, information and music' (RNZ, 2019a) with

[119] Up until 1996, they were owned and operated by the one crown-owned broadcaster, Radio New Zealand (RNZ)

attitudinal research describing it as 'highly regarded' (Colmar Brunton, 2019). Despite the difference, the tone and language of on-air contributions can be similar as the first of these two on-air examples show.

> *(Phone call):* Jacinda is naive, dumb and I'd say completely out of her depth[120] … She'd do anything to keep power and she would sell her bloody grandmother I reckon (*Kerre McIvor Mornings*, April 18, 2019 [Radio broadcast] Newstalk ZB).
>
> *(Text or email):* How come the government can't deport a racist? Who is running this country? New Zealand is turning into a PC nightmare. Throw this piece of vermin out now *Morning Report*, September 16, 2015 [Radio broadcast] RNZ National).

The phrases 'PC nightmare' and 'throw this piece of vermin out' would not sound out of place within the rhetoric expressed in an opinionated, commercial talkback programme. Yet it was read out as feedback by the host of *Morning Report*, RNZ National's highly regarded morning news programme. Figure 4.4 shows feedback on RNZ National's Facebook page. The strong (and in one case violent) opinions were in response to Aotearoa New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Adern's speech to the United Nations in September 2019. This is language that would be more associated with right-wing populism than the social media platform of a public service broadcaster.

Figure 4.4: *RNZ National Facebook page, 26 September, 2019* [121]

[120] Jacinda Adern, Prime Minister of Aotearoa New Zealand

[121] 'Cindy' is a nickname for Aotearoa New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Adern, most likely to be used by non-supporters (Desmarais, 2020). 'Greta' is a reference to Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg. Surnames of contributors have been blocked out for privacy reasons.

The implication of this comparison is that stigmatisation of media products occurs due to perception of their status, not the reality of their audience engagement. Class-consciousness as an aspect of media choice is recognised by Hall (1980) in his Encoding/decoding model of communication covered in Section 2.3.[122] It can be seen that stigma is more likely to be attached to a commercial entity measured by audience ratings and corporate earnings than a non-commercial entity measured by cultural status, whether applied academically or by listeners.

The listeners who participated in this study observed that the stigma applies to those who listen and those who call the programme.

> I don't actually know anyone who's ever admitted to listening to it [talkback] to tell you the truth (Listener M).
>
> I certainly judge other people [callers]. I certainly do. I certainly put them in a box instantly (Listener L).
>
> I can't say that 100% of people who ring up are thick and don't know what they're talking about. But the vast majority I would say are a certain type of people (Listener M).

Despite this, they continue to listen, although they are pejorative about their own listening and prefer that people don't know of their 'habit'.

> That's why I thought Mum and Dad were stupid [for listening to talkback] so totally understand why people think I'm stupid (Listener F).
>
> My mother-in-law used to listen to, must have been Radio Pacific … and the rest of the family would be really down on her … like it was equivalent to getting your information from the Woman's Weekly, you know, because of the type of people who would ring up, low IQs (Listener J).

For Listener D it is the choice of topic. He says while he enjoys hearing about property investment and finance, he is dimissive about those who would listen to topics such as neighbourhood disputes. He says he listens to more talkback as he gets older which he describes as 'a bit sad'. His statement is worded as an admission of a negative act, rather than an observation about normal age-related changes in media listening habits. In his analysis of stigma in popular culture, Lopes (2006) states that stigma 'elicits defensive claims, [and] stigma management' (p.392). This can be seen in the self-deprecating use of 'sad' by Listener

[122] Hall's theory is developed from the work of Parkin (Parkin, 1972 cited by Hutchby, 2006, pp 8-9).

D and 'silly' by Listener F. Smyth (host) suggests that some of those who criticise talkback are actually 'closet-queen listeners'.

> A lot of people will say to me 'how do you put up with those idiots? Fuck, all those idiots that ring up'. But, if you ... ask them about listening, or expose them to listening, they get really sort of 'no, don't be stupid, not me, I'm not, I'm better than that' ... There's people out there who hate, they kind of hate themselves for listening, and they'd rather you didn't know

Stigma is attached to talkback by those who either don't listen or don't wish it to be known by others that they listen. Two listener participants said they would be unlikely to listen to talkback in their car if they had a passenger.

> ... people think I'm silly ... a lot of people don't understand talkback so I wouldn't subject them to that (Listener G, personal communication, January 16, 2019).
>
> Talkback drives other people nuts (Listener J).

Despite choosing not to let people know of their listening behaviour, awareness of stigma does not act as a barrier or reason not to listen. Listeners continue actively 'engaging analytically and politically with the plurality of the world' (Lacey (2013a, p. 176).

4.11 Talkback listening on targeted stations

Most talkback listening in Aotearoa New Zealand is to national networks Newstalk ZB and Magic Talk, with talkback featuring in 62.5% to 75% of their weekday format; the percentage varies based on the start and end times of allocated dayparts. But talkback also features as a programme element on individual stations targeting specific communities.[123] Irregularity of inclusion and the relatively small amount of time allocated are distinguishing features of talkback on these targeted stations. In some cases, for example Radio Tarana (aimed at Aotearoa New Zealand's Indian community), talkback is inserted 'where and when needed' (P. Rekha, personal communication, February 26, 2020). Iwi radio stations spoken to for this study said that like Radio Tarana, talkback is run when it is appropriate because of recent local events, but generally it is not a regular part of the station's format. One exception is Radio Ngati Pōrou (from the East Cape of Aotearoa New Zealand's North Island). The station features a bi-monthly talkback programme in which members of the community are invited to ring and talk to the local mayor (D. Rogers, personal communication, March 2, 2020).

[123] The Radio Bureau classifies these stations as either 'independent' or 'ethnic/iwi' (The Radio Bureau, 2020f).

Station manager Trina Koroheke of Radio Tainui (broadcasting in the Waikato area of the North Island) said that the lack of talkback as a regular feature on the station was due to the lack of a suitable host (T. Koroheke, personal communication, February 28, 2020). Christian radio station Rhema has a weekly two hour talkback slot, from 7 to 9 p.m. (*Talk Sessions*) on Sunday nights (Rhema Media, 2020b).

Targeted stations exist to cater for specific communities and interests. As a result, their talkback content is by definition, more focused. Topics are chosen specifically to engage their minority audiences.

> We [Radio Tarana] only pick topics which appeal to our audience … Social, religious, anything to do with back home (India, Fiji, Pakistan) and political topics work better (Rekha, management and host).
>
> The Christian angle is unique to the *Talk Sessions* style of talkback [on Rhema] … we do cover topics that are in news headlines but they always have a faith angle … Halloween, Kanye West, healing, euthanasia, vaccinations, coping with grief and loss … have all been popular (N. Ashcroft, personal communication, March, 4, 2020).

The sense of having a direct connection with community influencers is important for these listeners.

> It's the only opportunity they get to talk directly to the mayor; our people like to talk straight to the horse (Rogers, management and host).
>
> Very important for the Indian community because being new to this country they must know they have a voice (Rekha, management and host)

As with talkback on the larger networks, host Nerida Ashcroft from Rhema believes that her listeners listen to gather information and opinions from others.

> They may have an opinion on it, or they're listening to help them form an opinion … Listeners get to hear what other Christian listeners think about a particular topic [but] … to hear a variety of thoughts from people outside of your usual friend group is challenging and helpful (Ashcroft, host).

However, Rhema differs from mainstream stations in its use of controversial material in order to get a response believing its Christian audience would reject it.

> Neither of us [Ashcroft and co-host Andrew Curtis] wants to create a show that is seen to be divisive.

Radio Sport talkback, which closed in April 2020 due to financial pressure attributed to COVID-19, was by definition also aimed at a specific community of listeners.

> So the sports talkback … attracts younger male listeners and that's their audience. It's not huge – it's, it's enough to drive a radio station and make money on it (Francis, management).

> I mean a lot, lots of my friends used to listen to Radio Sport. Just because they're similar to me, in that they like sport. Other talkbacks, not so much, I wouldn't think (Listener N, aged late 20s).
>
> Oh, name a sport I'm not interested in. All sport … Oh, netball. That's bad I know. No, all sport. I'm interested in all sport (Listener G).

One reason could be that Radio Sport was less analytical than other general talkback content. Francis (management) calls it 'a bit more fluffy' and gives an example:

> What a shocking game he [Sonny Bill Williams] had last week or whatever, rather than a great deal of in-depth analysis or discussion about why is the New Zealand Rugby Union such a poorly run organisation or something, you know.

Davis (host) and Lowe (management) agree.

> It's all about sport and doesn't carry over into, into politics (D. Lowe, personal communication, November 26, 2018)
>
> Sport's often black or white. It is quite a simple format. To do sports talkback is very easy as far as I'm concerned if you're passionate about sport. We're going to have an opinion on something - it doesn't take much thinking about, if you've grown up with a certain bias that is built in ... [compared with general talkback] sport is a lot simpler (M. Davis, personal communication, September 11, 2018).

These responses imply that listeners to sports talkback, who were predominantly male, find the content to be more entertaining than informing, unlike listeners to mainstream talkback who informed this researcher that they value the informative aspect of talkback. This study is unable to say if this is due to the sports talk audience being male or simply a reflection that sport is a form of entertainment.

As with other talk and talkback networks, texts, emails and social media posts were used on Radio Sport. Radio Tarana and Rhema also use them in their talkback programmes to enhance content however, both agree with Parkinson (producer) and Tamihere (host) that listeners were more likely to be engaged by the voice of the caller.

> Definitely callers [to Rhema] sound better, there is flexibility to go off topic and chat about something else, to also hear the heart of what someone is saying and to hear emotion in their voices which can't be heard in a text. (Ashcroft, host).

Iwi radio station, Radio Ngati Pōrou chooses to only interact by phone calls (no texts or emails) in its bi-monthly interaction with the local mayor. In this approach talkback can be likened to

the traditional Māori practice of airing views on the marae,[124] in particular, issues affecting the community.

> People care more about the roads and economy than anything else. We always get calls about drains broken, rubbish and the like, but for the most part it is about our state highway and its condition and the barriers it creates for the local economy (Rogers, management and host).

The role of the talkback host and callers can be likened to those who speak on the marae (*kaikōrero*),[125] while talkback listeners are like those attending the hui to hear the *kōrero* (discussion).

> They definitely like to hear the voice of the person. Hearing other people often prompts more calls.

The targeted stations interviewed for this study broadcast to communities of listeners rather than a demographic based on age or socioeconomic circumstances. The findings reflect in part the findings of data collected from listeners to mainstream stations. The communities seek information and opinions that have a direct social or economic relevance to them. An area of difference however, is that targeted listening sits at the 'concentrated' end of Hendy's (2000) listening continuum. This contrasts with listeners to mainstream talkback who are more likely to move back and forth along the continuum between tap and concentrated listening.

4.11 Summary

This chapter has analysed characteristics of talkback content and how they contribute to talkback's appeal to the listener. It is this appeal that some people, including academics, find curious. However, the significant audience ratings talkback attracts, survey after survey, confirms its popularity. From both listeners and industry cohorts, we learn that people listen to hear opinions and information. Listeners may not agree with the opinions they hear, but it gives them the opportunity to learn what some in their community (both local and national) are thinking. Talkback, with its parrying of views, is a form of entertainment that can easily accompany other activities in the same manner as social media. The current nature and relevance of the content highlights a key but overlooked characteristic of talkback, that it is live. Unlike talk radio which is pre-arranged, talkback can surprise both listeners and host with

[124] Marae are the physical and geographical centres of traditional Māori communities and the place where 'Māori kinship groups' come together to meet for a wide variety of occasions (Higgins & Moorfield, 2004, p.73).
[125] Usually there are several speakers, and on most marae only men are allowed to speak.

revealing and sometimes emotionally touching content. At times the latter can be seen as voyeuristic but it is 'legal' voyeurism. The number and range of opinions on talkback has doubled, even tripled due to the use of digital content in the form of texts and emails, adding to its appeal.

The following chapter synthesises findings from the data analysis with listening theory and media listening theory. This theoretical integration and the identification of the core category or categories is the final step in the Grounded Theory framework. In the Methodology chapter, I note that the concept of a core category varies. For this research project, I consider Clarke's pluralised concept of a core category, 'multiple possible social processes, and sub-processes' as the most appropriate to this research project (Clarke, 2005, as cited by Birks and Mills, 2015, p.87). The categories or processes covered in Chapter 5 build on existing theory and reconceptualise the talkback listener.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

The truth of living in the world must be a polyphonic truth (Lacey, 2013a, p.176)

5.1 Introduction

Listening is a deeply personal activity. While others may hear what you hear, your interpretation of it is unique and produces behaviours unique to you. You may hear, or you may listen; in either case, sound will elicit a reponse of some kind. It may be turning down the volume of something you don't want to hear, or turning it up to listen closer. The goal of this qualitative research project has been to learn about listening behaviours associated with talkback radio. In a digital environment with so many options, why are listeners choosing to listen to talkback radio? What is it that they are hearing? The findings of this study focus on listening behaviours as they relate to characteristics of the talkback format such as liveness, and talkback as an accompaniment.

Listening behaviours and listener ideologies in relation to talkback radio differ from those exhibited by callers. This is a key finding of this study. Accordingly, listeners and callers are commonly referred to by the generic term 'audience' in talkback literature; they are are perceived as one cohort. I suggest that this has at times clouded the focus of some earlier studies. 'Is the political talk audience the peripheral, docile, alienated group that previous studies have suggested?' (Hofstetter et al., 1994). Findings on the motivations of the talkback caller are at times incorrectly cut and pasted on to the listener. For example, the assumption that by choosing talkback the listener is giving tacit approval of the populist views of the callers. This study finds that listeners' motivations are unique to listeners apart from two aspects. These are the desire for companionship, and the wish to have their views vindicated, positively, or by contrary vindication (p.85).[126] The concept of contrary vindication applies to listeners who feel reassured if their host of choice (albeit with whom they usually disagree), takes a contrary view to their own. This speaks to the aspect of the stigma associated with talkback radio.

[126] In Sinton (2018) I found that those who interacted via texts or emails with RNZ National did so to express an opinion, to add or correct information or to be entertainining. This finding, while using different methodology, concurs with Ewart and Ames (2016)

Stigma is one of the factors differentiating listeners and caller. Ward (2002) and Turner (2007) discuss the stigma within academia: the 'offhanded denigration of the 'popular'' (Turner, 2007, p.74). Within the talkback listening community the stigma is directed towards callers. Regular talkback listeners interviewed for this study looked down on talkback callers and their opinions. One participant referred to callers as 'a bit thick' and 'a certain type' (Listener M, personal communication, August 19, 2018). Another said she readily judged talkback callers, putting them 'in a box' (Listener L, personal communication, August 28, 2018). It can be assumed that those who call talkback are, by their actions, not concerned about being heard. Listeners are aware that the same stigma could be applied to them and in some cases would prefer people not to know of their 'habit'. Two listeners said they would be unlikely to listen to talkback in their car if they had a passenger (Listener J, personal communication, September 28, 2018; Listener F, personal communication, September 10, 2018). Listener D described his talkback listening as 'sad' (personal communication, September 2, 2018) and Listener F described it as 'a bit silly'. Lacey (2013a) disagrees with any denigration of the listening process. She considers that listeners are 'engaging analytically and politically with the plurality of the world' (p. 176). While both talkback callers and listeners can therefore be considered active in the interactive process, in the case of the caller, this is an overt action, while for listeners it is covert (albeit, not passive). For this reason, this study finds that in seeking talkback listener motivation, caller motivation should be set aside as a reference point.

5.2 Not the Nine O'clock News, but maybe a sports game? Talkback as entertainment

Talkback is not a news bulletin. It is information and debate presented as entertainment with the listener asking themselves: 'what's going to happen on-air next?' (Francis, 2002, p.96).. Turner (2009) describes talkback content as 'a form of entertainment that mimics the forms and practices of journalism but which performs quite different social and political functions' (p.411) including 'the sharing of gossip, opinion, and local concerns' (p.416). While listeners may listen for information they are also listening to be entertained. Bates and Ferri's (2010)

definition of entertainment as: 'an experience of spectatorship more than participation' is particularly applicable to talkback.

While spectatorship is generally a passive act, it includes 'the entertainment value of emotional involvement' (Bates and Ferri, 2010, p.15). They give the example of the emotional involvement experienced when watching a sports game in which one side is pitched against another. What will happen next, who will make a run for the line, who will evade the opposition? Talkback hosts and most callers know their positions and the rules of the game. The competition can be between host and caller, or caller and caller. Meanwhile, the listener has an expectation of being entertained or absorbed as they sit back and listen to the debate. It can be addictive with the listener holding on to see what happens next, increasing time spent listening (TSL). The question about who will win though is a point of difference from a sports game. In sport, unless there is a draw, there is a winner. This does not apply to talkback radio. In talkback the final score is purely in the eyes (and ears) of the listener due to the concept of contrary vindication. They will either have their opinions vindicated by a host and caller whose views they agree with or, if they disagree, they can attribute that to the ignorance of the host or callers, or both. This study finds that listeners find engagement in the dialectic.

> What's heard is somehow real, the voices and sounds of people alive, though invisible – at that moment of hearing ... Our contact with them is emotional, as well as intellectual (Hendy, 2013, p.123).

They can become consumed by what they are hearing, not wanting to turn off the car's engine or move to another room away from the radio.

Talkback as a form of media evokes strong opinions from those who do and those who do not (or say they do not) listen. Critics of talkback question why a listener would choose to listen to content with which they disagree including views that are often strongly expressed. Adams and Burton (1997), describe talkback content as 'sleaze and hypocrisy', 'bombast and bigotry' (pp.25-26).[127] McGregor (1996) points out the negative nature of talkback content due to the dominance of 'problematic situations' (p.32). Listener L described talkback content as 'unreliable' and 'distorted'. Griffen-Foley's (2009) example of Australian talkback host John

[127] Despite this, Adams and Burton acknowledge talkback's appeal to listeners: 'audiences cling to talkback like mussels to the pier' (p.26).

Laws' use of hearsay to create a run on the St George Building Society in 1979 is a high-profile example of this.[128] However, as with all sound, listeners bring their own meaning (Gallagher (2013, p.42). Just as there is no final score in the sport of talkback, nor does it offer a final truth. Lacey's (2013a) and Bakhtin and Emerson's (1984) analogy of polyphony (two or more independent melodies heard simultaneously) is used earlier in this thesis to describe the validity of concurrent expressions of opinion. Talkback is a 'polyphonic truth', a truth containing a variety of 'potentially discordant voices' heard as one (Lacey, 2013a, p.176). Two opposing opinions can be expressed simultaneously but this does not necessarily mean that they oppose each other (Lacey, 2013; Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984)

This study adds nuance to Bobbitt's (2010) simple binary attribution of listening to pass time to listeners, and information-seeking to callers. Evidence from this study shows that listeners may have their own beliefs ('truths') but they will use talkback as a source of information and opinion. This will be added to what they already know, or have learned from other sources such as the internet. They see it as an opportunity to 'expand their knowledge' (Listener N. Personal Communication, October 19, 2018) and to get more 'insight' (Listener J). Talkback listeners spoken to for this study appear to heed Chion's (2012) warning to 'self-edit' what they hear (p.48).

Reliability of the information source is not a concern to listeners. They are aware of the polyphonic nature of the talkback text and are able to make their own judgements on discourse that challenges their own world view. They do not have to agree with or believe what they hear, but they do want to hear a diverse range of opinions. In some cases this is in order to understand 'the enemy' (E. Stevens, personal communication, November 29, 2018) and the thought patterns that create opposing ideologies. With this in mind, talkback listening should be seen as an active, transformative transaction that is part of the communication process (Lacey, 2013a).

5.3 Relatability: Direct and indirect

Findings from this study reflect Abercrombie and Longhurst's (1998) assertion that listeners

[128] See Section 2.2.

are motivated to listen if the debate includes issues they can relate to emotionally or intellectually. Building on that, this study finds that emotional or intellectual connection takes two forms: direct and indirect. Direct relatability applies if the listener has experience in or knowledge of an issue, and it is this that motivates them to listen. For example, Listener F, a former school teacher was motivated to listen closer when she heard debate about cannabis use and how it affects the minds of college-age teens. Indirect relatability is similar to emotional involvement, which Bates and Ferri (2010) list as one of the criteria for what constitutes 'entertainment'. Rather than an intellectual relevance based on knowledge or personal experience, listeners can relate to the topic emotionally.

An example of this is talkback content that followed the 2010 Pike River coal mine disaster, resulting in the deaths of 29 coal miners.[129] The decision not to launch a rescue attempt at the time, the allocation of blame, the poor working conditions and the funds allocated for a recovery programme were, and continue to be, contentious issues (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2020).[130] A listener would not need a working knowledge of the mining industry to understand and empathise with the expressions of grief and the anger at the lack of accountability. These are global themes when a disaster occurs. Another example, discussed in depth in Section 4.5.2 is the shooting of 51 people in Christchurch on 15 March, 2019. While listeners would be aware of terrorist attacks that have taken place in other countries, they are unlikely talkback topics in Aotearoa New Zealand. As Parkinson (producer) notes, the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001, despite being one of the defining events of the decade, was not itself an event that stimulated talkback. However, in the case of the March 2019 terrorist attack, the shooting occurred locally, and listeners could relate to the emotionally charged issues that were debated in the wake of the shootings. These included: gun control, access to social media and casual racism.

In 2020, the COVID-19 crisis became the most extreme example of a directly relatable topic. Unlike the Christchurch Earthquake or the Pike River disaster, COVID-19 affected most New

[129] On 19 November, 2010, an explosion occurred in the Pike River coal mine on the West Coast of Aotearoa New Zealand. Two men made it out of the mine, giving hope that the other 29 had survived, but no recovery was attempted for safety reasons. Further explosions a week later made it unlikely that there would be surviors and rescue attempts were abandoned by authorities. An enquiry into the disaster revealed poor safety standards and mismanagement (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2020)

[130] The cost of re-entering the collapsed mine to retrieve the bodies, to learn what caused the accident, and to prevent further accidents, was put at more than $50 million by the recovery agency in 2020 (Mills, 2020).

Zealanders socially and economically. Data collected from Newstalk ZB and Magic Talk content shows that this event and its impact on society was the single topic of talkback over the four weeks of Aotearoa New Zealand's most restrictive lockdown level (level 4) from 26 March to 27 April 2020. RNZ's National's programme *Media Watch* commented that it even became the main topic of sports talkback on NZME's Radio Sport (*Media Watch*, March 29, 2020 [Radio broadcast] RNZ National).

Unlike previous emergencies in Aotearoa New Zealand such as the Christchurch Earthquake in 2011, COVID-19 was not localised, nor was it more prevalent in particular demographics. It had the potential to affect not just one sector of the community but every sector's health, income, family and social structures, personal security and personal liberty. The discourse over the first week of lockdown was wide ranging across several world views. Listeners tuning in could hear personal anecdotes, useful advice, not-so-useful advice, political commentary on Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's performance, concerns about the financial impact, clarification of restrictions and debate on the question: 'to nark, or not to nark'.

> On the subject of the dobbing-in, and the narking and the informing, it's got really nasty connotations hasn't it? 'Narking', like you're some kind of small-minded mean spirited soul. (*Kerre McIvor Mornings*, March 31, 2020 [Radio broadcast] Newstalk ZB).
>
> *(Reading text):* I live at the beach … yesterday there were eight cars parked in front of my house … This is a small community so if the virus comes here, it could spread really quickly … You keep saying 'dobber' – what should I do? Ignore them? I have tried to talk to them but they take absolutely no notice (*Kerre McIvor Mornings*, March 31, 2020 [Radio broadcast] Newstalk ZB).

This text and McIvor's comments are a contemporary echo of the 'Bash a Pom' campaign of the 1970s, mentioned in the history of talkback radio in Section 1.4.

Given the significance of the crisis and its dominance in the media, I collected qualitative data from existing listener participants in this study as suggested in the Grounded Theory (GT) process. This step, constant comparative analysis, encourages GT researchers to continue to collect data throughout the analysis process, including data on 'future incidents' (Birks & Mills, p.90) not foreseen at the beginning of the project. (This GT step is covered in more detail in the Methodology chapter.) Accordingly, Listener F and Listener J were interviewed on Day 3 of the Level 4 lockdown to learn about their listening behaviours during this time. Both said they listened more during this period and they described their mode of listening as

more intense. Both said they were foregrounding the content more than usual. Listener J and Listener F commented that they had 'become consumed' with talkback during the COVID-19 crisis.

> [I listened] More intently. Usually I switch in/out and it is background noise … the 'bubble isolation' means more free time so much more media consumption … sometimes talkback provides snapshot of the New Zealander viewpoint (Listener F). [131]

> I found I was glued to the radio … [I listened] To get as much information as I could about the situation. It was moving so fast … So, I didn't miss anything! I have a habit of having the radio on in the background and just listening intently when I pick up key words etc but I found I was glued to the radio – in fact, I had radios on in 3 rooms (Listener J).

They describe the content as both informative and entertaining.

> … sometimes they [callers] put on a positive spin, eg, how to occupy the day, acts of kindness, how they're helping their community etc, that is, giving practical suggestions (Listener F).

> For information at the moment. Although some of the callers are unintentionally entertaining (Listener J).

However, Listener F and Listener J disagreed on the reliability of the discourse they heard.

> Some callers are very well-read, up to date, and are impartial in dealing with topic and v informative … Some callers are v anxious, not totally aware of the details of lockdown and hone in on their own worries, ie can they leave the house? can they shop? don't understand 'the bubble'..... The presenter and/or other callers can give them reliable information and therefore reduce stress (Listener F).

> Not at all [reliable]. Unfortunately some [hosts] let their own political views take over. I don't think this is giving an unbiased view of the situation and I think now, more than ever, is the time to put aside their views and act responsibly … This is different from other disasters … We haven't been through anything like this before so it's hard to be an expert or even talk about a past experience. I would prefer to look at the offical website for reliable information (Listener J).

Both commented on the other aspect of talkback during the crisis, its capacity to provide companionship for those in lockdown.

> [It was] a bit like a mass counselling session for the listeners (Listener F).

> Talkback has always been good from a 'company' point of view but it's probably more important now, since we are so isolated (Listener J).

Their responses reflect two studies of media usage in the era of COVID-19. Nielsen (2020) found that 28% of people were listening to the radio more during the first quarter of 2020. NZ On Air's *Where are the Audiences 2020* survey revealed that while most radio networks are experiencing lower audience reach and time spent listening, two exceptions to this were

[131] The wording and grammar used in responses regarding the COVID-19 crisis differ a little from other participant data. This is because the responses to my questionnaire were provided by email due to the social distancing required in lockdown. Where necessary, punctuation has been added or altered slightly to add clarity.

RNZ National and Newstalk ZB both talk and information-based networks (NZ On Air, 2020a).[132] In a time of crisis, listeners are motivated to listen to talkback more, and listen more intently. They listen to hear how other people are coping in the lockdown and to hear what other people think of the decisions made by government and health officials that are directly impacting their lives. Talkback also provides companionship for listeners in lockdown on their own. The content during this time has benefitted from digital messages, possibly more than usual as the audience in general spend more time in front of a home computer. Findings from this study indicate that relatability, whether direct (COVID-19) or indirect (Pike River), is a motivation to listen.

5.4 Liveness: The unacknowledged motivator

Liveness is one of the most important characteristics of talkback while being one of the the most overlooked in talkback literature. Where liveness is acknowledged it is described variously as 'complicated' and 'awkward' (Crisell, 2012, p.3) and 'peculiar' (Cantrill and Allport, 1935 as cited by Lacey, 2013, p.100). One exception, Tebbut (2006a), refers specifically to talkback radio as making the most of 'the instant ... a point at which attention is held' (p.859). Other than Tebbut, the lack of acknowledgement of the role of liveness in talkback as a specific genre reflects that it is taken for granted, particularly by the listener. No listener participant in this study said they listen to talkback because it is live. However, when prompted, listeners acknowledged its importance with descriptions such as 'instant' and 'current' (Listener K, personal communication, January 22, 2018). Another said it was the main reason he listened (Listener N). Liveness brings four motivating attributes to talkback: authenticity, instantaneity, a lifeline in emergencies and companionship via simultaneous listening communities.

The first of these, authenticity, brings to radio what Crisell (2012) calls a sense of honesty to radio. Liveness assures a media audience that what they are hearing or seeing live is an accurate representation of events or views as presented by the contributor (Gripsrud, 1998).[133] Authenticity is important when a range of opinions are being expressed. The listener

[132] NZ On Air is an independent government funding agency for broadcasting and creative projects (NZ On Air 2020b).
[133] Authenticity and honesty are seen as distinct from factual content; as mentioned earlier in this chapter, talkback should not be seen as a news bulletin.

may disagree with these opinions, but if they believe that opinions are being delivered with conviction, they are more likely to stay listening. This has implications for those producing talkback as it talks to the importance of a host who sounds genuine, whatever his or her ideology.

The second attribute, instantaneity or immediacy, turns an audio moment into something of value; Hendy (2013) calls it 'eventfulness' (p.123). Smyth (host) echoes this: 'talkback's now and if you miss it, you've missed it' (K. Smyth, personal communication, November 16, 2018). Even though content can be made available via an on-demand platform,[134] logic suggests that the appeal of talkback wanes once it is broadcast, as the story develops further and earlier content becomes out of date. Scannell (2013) and Ong (2012) both note the temporal nature of sound, and this seems particularly applicable when it is information that is constantly being updated.

Talkback acts as a live conduit in emergency situations. As well as the COVID-19 crisis, Aotearoa New Zealand has experienced several localised major emergencies since 2010, including earthquakes and the 2019 mosque shooting in Christchurch. In these circumstances, talkback becomes an important source of information affecting personal safety and security to those who are directly affected. It is also a conduit for information for those outside the affected area who are concerned for friends or relatives in potential difficulty. Undeniably, emergency situations also offer audiences, an element of voyeurism. It is the human condition to want to observe and learn about significant events and an audience will go to the media to do this. This can be seen in talkback's coverage of the two significant events occurring in Christchurch in 2011 (earthquake) and in 2019 (the terrorist attack on two mosques). Coverage of these two events presents an argument for the value and credibility of talkback content in unfolding news events.

Liveness can give those listening alone a comforting sense of simultaneity. This property overlaps with the notion of talkback as companion, so this finding is discussed further in

[134] Newstalk ZB has an on-demand platform allowing listeners to hear all of the network's content for exactly one week post-transmission. I was unable to learn how many listeners use this site. Magic Talk also offers content on-demand but as at the time of writing, this only included talk radio segments rather then talkback.

Section 5.7. In summary, this study finds that liveness, a commodification of the state of being live, is a fundamental yet overlooked tenet of talkback. Talkback without liveness is a podcast. It is, according to Leaney (producer), the 'reason talkback will never die' (C. Leaney, personal communication, February 19, 2019).

5.5 Talkback: A multi-platform experience

The digitalisation of interactivity that occurred at the beginning of the twenty-first century allowed previously inactive audience members to participate in talkback via email, texts and social media posts. A previously silent section of the audience joined the debate, assured of anonymity. The development of the digital environment has been a double-edged sword for talkback broadcasters. Digital devices such as smart phones make it easier to for listeners to listen, easier for phone or digital callers to contribute and provide more content for the broadcaster. However, the same devices provide more competition for talkback from podcasts, internet radio and audio books.

A characteristic of the digital message, whether text, email or social media post is that when read by the host, it can take on the nuances of their presentation style. For example a message in support of Aotearoa New Zealand's Labour Prime Minister, Jacinda Adern may be delivered in a mocking tone by a right-wing, populist host, but framed as a message of support by a host with left-wing or centrist views. The host may editorialise between messages and at times it can be confusing as to whose opinion is being expressed. Host editorial can also be humorous and add entertainment value. Looking to the future, a potential outcome of the use of digital content on radio in general is increased competition from non-commercial talk-based networks. Public broadcaster RNZ National, once a bastion of the one-to-many style of content, now encourages its audience to interact, using their texts and emails to widen its appeal (Sinton, 2018). This material adds immediacy and enhances the content in much the same way that talkback uses liveness to its advantage. Not all industry participants were in favour of the use of digital content read by the host, as they felt it removes the human element. One felt that digital messages should be differentiated by a different voice. However, these views were in the minority. In the main, this study finds that talkback content has been enlivened by digital interactivity, making it more interesting and entertaining.

5.6 Companion or companionable? Enjoyment or requirement?

The role of talkback in providing companionship is covered extensively in talkback texts. Armstrong and Rubin (1989), Beirig and Dimmick (1979), Ewart (2011b), Tramer and Jeffres (1983) and Turow (1974) all discuss talkback as either a surrogate companion or the choice of those living on their own. Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that a Grounded Theory study should not only look to generate new theory but test existing ones. Accordingly, this study finds that companionship is indeed a motivating factor, but also that its role as a companion can be seen on a continuum. At one end, talkback offers a companionable ambience (an accompaniment to other activities) while at the other it is a surrogate companion playing an important therapeutic role and on which the listener can becomes reliant. Listeners spoken to for this study all sat at the *companionable* end of the continuum.

This finding concurs with Perse and Butler (2005) who describe talkback as enrichment rather than compensation. Listeners in this study talk of enjoying rather than needing the sounds of other voices in their living space. Listeners engage with talkback as background ambience, tuning in and out according to their interest in the topic, or their need to concentrate elsewhere (tap-listening). Talkback can be seen as sanctioned eavesdropping. Listeners are at times exposed to the intimate details and challenges of another's life, without taking on any of the accompanying anxieties. One industry participant likened it to a discussion that might be had around a bar, a water cooler or any social situation (Smyth, host). Listener F acknowledged the existence of a community of listeners but was pragmatic about its role in her listening enjoyment, describing them not as friends but 'acquaintances'. As with the notion of companionship, it is not necessarily a need, and does not imply that the listener is in some way socially deficient. It is simply an awareness that others are hearing what you are hearing, it is a shared experience. This study normalises the concept of enjoying the sound of other voices, of listening to debate, of learning new information and hearing fresh opinions, without having take part or having a physical presence. Talkback can be an informed and entertaining companion.

Chapter 6: Conclusion: Re-conceptualising the long-time listener

What we hear – what most of us want to hear – is a corridor through which the rest of the whole noisy, argumentative, fascinating, and sometimes yes, beautiful world passes before us' (Hendy 2013, p. 124)

This study has reconceptualised the talkback listening experience by setting the caller (the creator of most of the content) aside and instead concentrating on the listener and their motivations to listen. It calls for a rethink on the stereotype of the 'long-time listener, first time caller'. This person in-waiting, playing an inactive, non-contributing, passive role does not exist. Instead, the findings endorse the work of listening and radio scholars such as Kate Lacey, Kate Crawford, Susan Douglas, and David Hendy among others, in placing listeners in an active role in the listening transaction. They actively choose the station or host, foreground the cut and thrust of debate between host and caller, (and caller and caller) and participate cognitively in debate, either on their own or with others who may be listening with them. (Listening with others present was not the norm for listener participants in this study). All these choices are active responses to what they are hearing, and for this reason all media listeners can be seen as active.

The fact that so many listeners choose talkback radio demonstrates that talkback does not exist in a vacuum. It fulfils a need and a desire for information that exists in most societies, for information. In the first half of the twentieth century, letters to the editor sections in newspapers and magazines fulfilled this need. Using Hendy's imagery above, for the readers of the *Northern Advocate* in Whangarei, *The People's Column* was the corridor through which the world passed before them. In choosing to read the content, readers were not indicating agreement with my Great Uncle Joe or other contributors. Instead it provided an opportunity to learn what others were thinking on topics local, international, personal and economic. Talkback fulfils a similar role. The listeners who took part in this study are interested in what is happening in the world around them. As Perse and Butler (2005) found, talkback enriches their lives as they learn new information and enjoy the debate.

Participants from a range of socio-economic demographics, including high-functioning professionals, told this study they listen to talkback, even if they don't agree. Their awareness of current events and a natural curiousity draws them to listen to fresh opinions from outside

their regular world view. [135] This concurs with the findings of Armstrong and Rubin (1989), Perse and Butler (2005), Bobbitt (2010), Hofstetter et al. (1994) and Hofstetter and Gianos (1997). These studies, and it is hoped this thesis, will contribute to a move away from the stigmatised caricature of a socially inadequate talkback listener, listening only to a host with whom they share an ideology. The differentiation between listener and caller motivations is important. Armstrong and Rubin (1989), one of the studies that does differentiate, found that while *callers* are motivated by the possibility of a para-social relationship with the host (Horton & Wohl, 1956), *listeners* want to be informed and entertained.

This delineation should be a feature of future studies into the talkback format. The majority of studies to date have concentrated on callers: who are they, and what motivates them to call? Some texts bundle callers and listeners together as 'audience'. If listener behaviours are to be better understood, callers and listeners should be studied as separate entities. Furthermore, the term 'audience' requires definition, particularly now that the digital caller has joined in. Does 'audience' comprise listeners who never phone call, text or email? Does audience include listeners who only send texts and emails, and does it include the active phone callers? Each of these cohorts has a different motivation and should be studied accordingly. The focus of this study has been the listener who listens but has no desire to make a phone call to a talkback programme, albeit that some of the participants said they have occasionally texted or emailed. Another area requiring clarity for future study is the difference between talk radio and talkback radio. The former is one-way, the latter is interactive. They attract similar audiences, but the motivations are likely to differ as talk radio is reliant entirely on the personality of the host, together with the skill of the producer in sourcing interesting talk content. Talkback, by contrast, is reliant on both host and callers as providers of content.

Industry participants are divided on the future of talkback as a form of mass media.

> We thought years ago, I think at one point everybody wondered whether there was a future for talk radio. And now that conversation's never really had any more (Leaney, producer).

[135] The cohort of listeners for this study included a lawyer, retired maths teacher, property developer, sports journalist and corporate executive assistant.

Former Newstalk ZB manager Bill Francis (a participant in this study and author on talk radio) believes that talkback's future lies with the discovery of new host talent (Francis, 2002). Lowe (management) does not believe that talkback can survive in the face of digitalisation.

> I don't think there's a future for talkback to be honest, I mean, I think it is definitely a sunset industry … you know, *Facebook, Twitter,* podcasts, all of these, all the social media options that are available now. Probably we'll see the demise of the kind of talkback that I was involved with.

While pessimistic, Lowe's reference to competing media suggests an alternative and more optimistic perspective on the future of talkback. Rather than viewing mediated sound as a finite source of activity in which sources compete for the ear, I suggest that it can be seen as an ever-increasing resource. If there is more to listen to, more listening occurs, a portion of which will go towards talkback.

Lowe and Francis, both very experienced, now retired broadcasters, were generous in their contribution to this thesis. In section 3.7 I discuss the limitations that resulted from not being able to speak to those currently in senior management positions within the talkback industry. Approaches were made to New Zealand Media and Entertainment (NZME), Mediaworks and The Radio Bureau (TRB). These entities chose not to contribute to this study. This provides an opportunity for future research if talkback continues to grow in popularity albeit not necessarily under the label of talkback.

This is a likely outcome as the nature of interactivity on radio is changing. Using Herrera-Damas and Hermida's (2014) description of talkback: 'spontaneous interaction between two or more people at the same time' (p.482) as a generic definiton, I suggest that talkback now comes in three forms: talkback, feedback and chatback. Talkback is a popular commercial talk radio format in which views are aired via the telephone. Feedback is the airing of written interaction mostly in text and email form; it features within talkback but is also as an established, integral part of public broadcaster RNZ's content. Chatback is heard increasingly on music stations some aimed at a younger audience outside the demographics traditionally associated with talkback radio. In this paradigm, listeners to RNZ and any number of music stations in Aotearoa New Zealand can be categorised as talkback listeners.

Another possible future for talkback radio in the Aotearoa New Zealand market lies within RNZ National. RNZ's acceptance of interactivity in the form of feedback does suggest another

outcome. Australian public broadcaster ABC Radio includes talkback as part of its programme lineup (ABC, 2020). The emails and texts used every day in most live dayparts of RNZ National contain characteristics found in talkback: strong opinions, strong language, political debate and new information. While the move from feedback to talkback would be a relatively small step in a practical sense for the broadcaster, it would undoubtedly be a giant leap for some in the public service broadcasting audience, given the stigma attached to the talkback concept. However, such a move by RNZ National would open up a new audience for the network and for talkback as a format and should not be discounted.

I suggest the future of talkback is safe due to its inherent liveness which complements the instant gratification experienced by social media users. Talkback is now a multi-platform experience. The audience can listen while reading and maybe contributing to other media platforms online. Like social media, talkback provides instant feedback on current issues and an opportunity to learn someone else's innermost thoughts. The use of talkback-style segments as described in Section 1.3 in music-based radio content, and as 'chatback' above, accustoms a younger demographic to the concept of host-caller interactivity on radio. The potential future audience is part of a diffused audience, treating everyday life as a media performance, and may find a home with the talkback format as it follows the traditional demographic trend away from music stations. Bobbitt (2010) notes that the use of less conservative, younger hosts could enhance the appeal of talkback to a younger demographic. These listeners do not have to share the ideologies of the host or the callers; they are aware of the biases and nuances of talkback content. Nor do they rely on the veracity of what they hear. Just as it was on Doreen Kelso's *Telephone Time* in 1965 and Paddy O'Donnell's *Party Line* in 1968, the contemporary talkback listener is motivated by the desire to hear what other people are thinking, and the opportunity to embed their own opinions or perhaps change or adapt them. They use talkback as a recreational activity, as company, and as a background accompaniment to activities such as driving. One talkback programme can comprise several layers of world views on a single topic; it is a 'plurality of voices' (Lacey, 2013a, p.176). Like *The People's Column,* talkback content comprises opinions, information, advice, world views, debate, and personal anecdotes.

There is however a caveat on the optimism regarding the future of talkback expressed in the last paragraph. Lacey's 'plurality of voices' heard on the two major talkback networks, Newstalk ZB and Magic Talk, does little to reflect te ao Māori (the Māori world view). Talkback hosts on the two networks are predominantly if not solely Pākehā and calls inciting racist remarks are put to air intentionally. As well, the networks do not appear to be keeping up with the rate of change to a new Pākehā world view which (albeit slowly) is adapting to the social and cultural change occurring within Aotearoa New Zealand. This latter world view takes into account the requirements of Te Tiririt of Waitangi. It acknowledges the significant number of people of many ethnicities attending adult te reo classes. It notes the significance of the large number of children attending kohunga reo and kura kaupapa[136] who are the adult citizens of the future. This lack of awareness may prove to be audience-inhibiting as a more socially aware younger audience age and begin to sample talkback as a listening option. Without change, the next generation of potential talkback listeners may make different choices. There is space for further research into listening behaviours and an analysis of talkback content on targeted stations such as iwi radio, Christian radio stations and stations aimed at specific ethnic communities.

It is appropriate that I conclude this thesis by marrying the *ariā* (theory) of listening theorist Kate Lacey with the *whakaaro* (thoughts, ideas) of one of the listener participants in this study. Lacey's (2013a) *Listening Publics* has been a significant influence on this thesis. She suggests that listeners (in general) have an ethical obligation to listen-out for 'otherness, for opinions that challenge and clash with one's own, for voices that take one out of one's comfort zone' (p.195). This is exemplified by the listening behaviour of Listener C, a youth worker in her 30s, and outside the age profile of most talkback listeners. Despite this, she listens to talkback radio because it is:

> The other extreme of me … I think it informs me, educates me, maybe to think about things I haven't really thought about before … listening to … the opposite of how I think it is, makes me feel more comfortable with it (Listener C, personal communication, September 9, 2018).

In this way, talkback is a perfect example of Chion's (2012) causal listening. The listener is listening for a reason. They listen to hear a polyphonic discourse: several truths expressed at

[136] Kōhanga Reo and kura kaupapa are respectively Māori language pre-schools, and primary schools in which the pupils are immersed in tikanga Māori and te reo Māori.

one time, neither right nor wrong, and curated by a broadcaster into a single slice of entertaining listening content.

References

ABC. (2020). *What are the contact details for the ABC*. Retrieved from ABC: https://help.abc.net.au/hc/en-us/articles/360001150496-What-are-the-contact-details-for-the-ABC-

Abercrombie, N., & Longhurst, B. (1998). *Audiences.* London, England: Sage.

Achté, A. (2013). *New tricks for an old pony: Is it essential for speech radio programmes to utilise social media in order to stay relevant to the audience?* Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

Adams, P., & Burton, L. (1997). *Talkback: Emperors of air.* Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Alves, V. (2019, October 24). *Newstalk ZB's Marcus Lush shuts down woman who insists on mispronouncing Māori place names*. Retrieved from NZ Herald: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12279927

Ames, K. (2016). Talk vs chat-based radio. *The Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media, 14*(2), 177-191.

Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism.* London, England: Verso.

Armstrong, C. B., & Rubin, A. M. (1989). Talk radio as interpersonal communication. *Journal of Communication, 39*(2), 84-94.

Arnheim, R. (1936). *Radio.* London, England: Faber & Faber Ltd.

Attali, J. (2012). Noise: The political economy of music. In J. Sterne (Ed.), *The sound studies reader* (pp. 29-39). New York, NY: Routledge.

Auslander, P. (1999). *Liveness: Performance in a mediated culture.* London, England: Routledge.

Australasian Menopause Society. (n.d.). *Good night's sleep complicated by menopause*. Retrieved from Australasian Menopause Society: https://www.menopause.org.au/hp/studies-published/1540-good-night-s-sleep-complicated-by-menopause

Automobile Association. (2019, July). *Auckland Congestion Report 2018.* Retrieved from aa.co.nz: https://www.aa.co.nz/assets/Congestion-Monitoring-Collateral/AA-Auckland-Congestion-Report-2018-FINAL.pdf

Bakhtin, M., & Emerson, C. (1984). *Problems of Dostoevskys poetics.* Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minneapolis Press.

Barnett, S., & Morrison, D. (1989). *The listener speaks: The radio audience and the future of radio.* London, England: HMSO.

Baruh, L. (2010). Mediated voyeurism and the guilty pleasure of consuming reality television. *Media Psychology, 13*(3), 201-221.

Bates, S., & Ferri, A. J. (2010). What's entertainment? Notes toward a definition. *Studies in Popular Culture, 33*(1), 1-20.

Behan, A. (2016a, July 28). *Don't rock the boat: the real reason Radio Hauraki refuses to pronounce its own name right*. Retrieved from The Spinoff: https://thespinoff.co.nz/media/28-07-2016/dont-rock-the-boat-the-reason-radio-hauraki-refuses-to-pronounce-its-own-name-right/

Behan, A. (2016b, July 30). *Good news! Looks like Radio Hauraki has figured out how to pronounce its own name*. Retrieved from The Spinoff: https://thespinoff.co.nz/featured/30-07-2016/good-news-looks-like-radio-hauraki-has-figured-out-how-to-pronounce-its-own-name/

Berland, J. (2012). Contradicting media: Towards a political phenomenology of listening. In J. Sterne (Ed.), *The sound studies reader* (pp. 40-47). New York, NY: Routledge.

Bierig, J., & Dimmick, J. (1979). The late night radio talk show as interpersonal communication. *Journalism Quarterly, 56*(1), 92-96.

Birks, M., & Mills, J. (2015). *Grounded theory: A practical guide* (2nd Edition ed.). London, England: Sage.

Biswas, A. (2013). Listening as feeling. In A. Carlyle, & C. Lane (Eds.), *On listening* (pp. 192-195). Axminster, England: Uniformbooks.

Blundell, K. (2009, September 1). *Renowned radio veteran Paddy O'Donnell dies*. Retrieved 2019, from Stuff: http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/2724195/Renowned-radio-veteran-Paddy-O-Donnell-dies

Bobbitt, R. (2010). *Us against them: The political culture of talk radio.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Bodey, M. (2007, April 19). Four decades of 'God's great equaliser'. *The Australian*, p. Para. 4.

Boni, D. D. (2000, June 30). *Birthday heralds changes for Radio Pacific*. Retrieved from nzherald.co.nz: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=10856

Bonini, T., & Sellas, T. (2014). Twitter as a public service medium? A content analysis of Radio RAI and RNE. *Communication and society, 27*(2), 125-146.

Boyatsis, R. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: thematic analysis and code development.* Sage.

Braae, A. (2019, April 19). *Newstalk ZB's unsentimantal giant signs off with a tear in his eye*. Retrieved from The Spinoff: https://thespinoff.co.nz/media/19-04-2019/newstalk-zbs-unsentimental-giant-signs-off-with-a-tear-in-his-eye/

Brand, G., & Scannell, P. (1991). Talk, identity and performance. In P. Scannell (Ed.), *Broadcast talk* (pp. 201-226). London, England: Sage.

Brauer, K. (2010). Social capital, Definition of. In H. Angier, & S. Toepler (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of civil society.* New York, NY: Springer.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77-101.

Brecht, B. (1932:1993). The radio as an apparatus of communication. In N. S. (Ed.), *Radiotext(e)* (pp. 15-17). New York, NY: Semiotext(e).

Brennen, J. S., & Kreiss, D. (2016). Digitalisation. In K. Jensen, & R. T. Craig (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of communication theory and philosophy* (pp. 556-566). Malden, MA: Wiley & Son.

Broadcasting Standards Authority. (2011). *Matters of opinion: Expectations and Perceptions of standards in talkback radio.* Retrieved from bsa.govt.nz: https://www.bsa.govt.nz/research-and-reports/research/all-research/matters-of-opinion-expectations-and-perceptions-of-standards-in-talkback-radio-2011/#searched-for-Expectations+and+Perceptions

Broadcasting Standards Authority. (2015). *BSA Decisions: Parlane & Wilson and Mediaworks Radio Ltd - 2015-009*. Retrieved from bsa.govt.nz: https://www.bsa.govt.nz/decisions/all-decisions/parlane-and-wilson-and-mediaworks-radio-ltd-2015-009/#searched-for-plunket

Broadcasting Standards Authority. (2018). *The importance of context: Acceptibility across scenarios.* Retrieved from www.bsa.govt.nz:

https://www.bsa.govt.nz/oldsite/Final_Report_-_Language_That_May_Offend_in_Broadcasting_2018.pdf

Broadcasting Standards Authority. (2019a). *About Us*. Retrieved from www.bsa.govt.nz: https://bsa.govt.nz/about-us/what-we-do/

Broadcasting Standards Authority. (2019b). *BSA Decision: Day & Moss & NZME Radio Ltd - 2018-090*. Retrieved from BSA: Broadcasting Standards Authority: https://www.bsa.govt.nz/decisions/all-decisions/day-and-moss-and-nzme-radio-ltd-2018-090-2-april-2019

Broadcasting Standards Authority. (2020). *Decisions*. Retrieved from BSA: https://www.bsa.govt.nz/decisions/

Brooker, W., & Jermyn, D. (2003). Introduction. In W. Brooker, & D. Jermyn (Eds.), *The audience studies reader* (pp. 1-4). London, England: Psychology Press.

Burrows, D. (2016, August 2). *Wait ... how do you pronounce that name?* Retrieved from Stuff.co.nz: https://www.stuff.co.nz/timaru-herald/opinion/82721082/wait--how-do-you-pronounce-that-name

Butsch, R. (2008). *The citizen audience: Crowds, publics and individuals.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Carey, J. W. (2009). *Communication as culture: Essays on media and society (2nd ed.)* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Carlyle, A., & Lane, C. (2013). Introduction: On listening. In A. Carlyle, & C. Lane (Eds.), *On listening* (pp. 9-10). London, England: Uniform Books.

Castells, M. (2007). Communication, power and counter-power in the network society. *International Journal of Communication, 1* , 238-266.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: a practical guide through qualitative analysis.* Sage.

Chion, M. (2012). The three listening modes. In J. Sterne (Ed.), *The sound studies reader* (pp. 48-53). New York, NY: Routledge.

Christiansen, S., Lindsay, C., Matika, C., Kapeli, S., Steiner-Fox, H., Newton , H., . . . Dutt, S. (2016). *Regional commute times for adult New Zealanders, 2015.* NZAVS Policy Brief, 4.

Cleave, L. (2002, February 6). *Obituary: Angela D'Audney*. Retrieved from nz.herald.co.nz: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=888678

Collini, S. (2007, September 22). *Mainly fair, moderate or good*. Retrieved from theGuardian.com: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/sep/22/radio.bbc

Colmar Brunton. (2019, August). *RNZ Value Indices Report.* Retrieved from rnz.co.nz: https://www.rnz.co.nz/about/audience-research

Crawford, K. (2009). Following you: Disciplines of listening in social media. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies, 23*(4), 525-535.

Crawford, K. (2012). Listening, not lurking: The neglected form of participation. In L. Hjorth, A. Lasen, & L.-M. Claire (Eds.), *Cultures of participation* (pp. 63-76). Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.

Credo. (2018). Alexander Graham Bell. *Gale Biographies: Popular people*. Cengage.

Crisell, A. (1994). *Understanding radio* (2nd ed.). London, England: Methuen.

Crisell, A. (2002). *An introductory history of British broadcasting* (Putanga 2nd). New York, NY: Routledge.

Crisell, A. (2012). *Liveness and recording in the media.* New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Crook, T. (1998). *The history and development of independent radio journalism in Britain.* London, England: Routledge.

D'Audney, A., & Pellegrino, N. (2001). *Angela: A wonderful life.* Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin Books.

Day, P. (1994). *The radio years: A history of broadcasting in New Zealand* (Vol. 1). Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press.

Day, P. (2000). *Voice and vision: A history of broadcasting in New Zealand* (Vol. 2). Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press.

DeBlasio, A., & Epstein, M. (n.d.). *Bakhtin, Mikhail*. Retrieved from Filosofia: An encylopedia of Russian thought: http://filosofia.dickinson.edu/encyclopedia/bakhtin-mikhail/

Department of Justice. (1986). *Report of The Waitangi Tribunal on The Te Reo Maori Claim.* Retrieved from Justice.govt.nz: https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_68482156/Report%20on%20the%20Te%20Reo%20Maori%20Claim%20W.pdf

Department of Justice. (2020a). *About the Waitangi Tribunal*. Retrieved from Waitangi Tribunal: https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/about-waitangi-tribunal/

Department of Justice. (2020b). *Learn about the justice system: Treaty of Waitangi*. Retrieved from justice.govt.nz: https://www.justice.govt.nz/about/learn-about-the-

justice-system/how-the-justice-system-works/the-basis-for-all-law/treaty-of-waitangi/

Desmarais, F. (2020, September 7). *Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on Matariki, child poverty and being called 'Cindy'*. Retrieved from nzherald.co.nz: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12362963

Dougan, P. (2013, November 13). *Jackson, Tamihere apologise after 'Roast Busters' interview*. Retrieved from nzherald.co.nz: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11152447

Dougherty, I. (1997). *Ham shacks, brass punders & rag chewers.* Wellington, New Zealand.

Douglas, J. (2008, July 23). *Johnny Douglas - lecture to the New Zealand broadcasting school, part 2*. Retrieved February 2018, from YouTube: https://youtu.be/pb7yZ61lEcw

Douglas, S. J. (1999). *Listening in: Radio and the American imagination.* Minneaopolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Douglas, S. J. (2002). Letting the boys be boys: Talk radio, male hysteria, and political discourse in the 1980s. In M. Hilmes, & J. Loviglio (Eds.), *Radio reader: Essays in the cultural history of radio* (pp. 485-504). New York, NY: Routledge.

Downes, P., & Harcourt, P. (1976). *Voices in the air.* Wellington, New Zealand: Methuen.

Edelmann, N. (2013). Reviewing the definitions of 'Lurkers" and some implications for online research. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking, 9*(16).

Erlmann, V. (2005). But what of the ethnographic ear? Anthropology, sound and the senses. In V. E. (Ed.), & V. Erlmann (Ed.), *Hearing cultures: Essays on sound, listening and modernity* (pp. 1-20). New York, NY: Berg.

Es, K. v., & Keilbach, J. (2018, July). *Keeping up the live: Recorded television as live experience.* Retrieved from VIEW: Journal of European Television History & Culture, volume 7: https://www.viewjournal.eu/articles/10.18146/2213-0969.2018.jethc142/

Ewart, J. (2009). *Talkback Radio: An emotional homeland and heartland: A study of some Australian talkback radio audiences.* Retrieved from Reporting Diversity: http://www.reportingdiversity.org.au/docs/Talkbackradioreport.pdf

Ewart, J. (2011a). Ordinary people and the political pull of talkback radio. *Communication, Politics and Culture, 44*(1), 92-109.

Ewart, J. (2011b). Therapist, companion, and friend: the under-appreciated role of talkback radio in Australia. *Journal of Radio and Audio Media, 18*(2), 231-245.

Ewart, J., & Ames, K. (2016). Talking text: Exploring SMS and e-mail use by Australian talkback radio listeners. *The Radio Journal - International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media, 14*(1), 91-106.

Ewart, J., & Dekker, S. (2013). Radio, someone still loves you! Talkback radio and community emergence during disasters. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies, 27*(3), 365-381.

Fiske, J. (2013). Moments of television: Neither the text nor the audience. In E. Seiter, H. Borchers, G. Kreutzner, & E.-M. Warth (Eds.), *Remote control* (pp. 56-78). London, England: Routledge.

Fitzgerald, R., & Housley, W. (2007, February). Talkback, community and the public sphere. *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy*, 150-163.

Fitzgerald, R., & Thornborrow, J. (2017). 'I'm a scouser': Membership categories and political geography in the 2015 UK Electiion Call phone-in. *Journal of Language and Politics, 16*(1), 40-58.

Ford, C. (2014, March 14). *Male privilege extends beyong the airwaves*. Retrieved from ABC News: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-14/ford-male-privilege-extends-beyond-the-airwaves/5321558

Francis, B. (2002). *Inside Talk Radio.* Wellington, New Zealand: Darius.

Francis, B. (2006). *ZB: The voice of iconic radio station.* Auckland, New Zealand: Harper Collins.

Gallagher, M. (2013). Listening, meaning and power. In A. Carlyle, & C. Lane (Eds.), *On listening* (pp. 41-44). Axminster, England: Uniformbooks.

Gerrard, S. (2013). The great British music hall: Its importance to British culture and 'The Trivial'. *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research, 5*, 488-513.

GFK. (2017). *Radio insights: What drives listeners to radio?* Retrieved from GFK.com: https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2405078/cms-pdfs/fileadmin/user_upload/dyna_content/au/documents/press_releases/gfk_radio_insights_listening_drivers_final.pdf

GFK. (2019). *Radio audience measurement (Reports archive): NZ survey summary reports*. Retrieved from gfk.com: https://www.gfk.com/insights/radio-audience-measurement-reports-archive-1?hsLang=en

GFK. (2020a, April 5). *Understanding the radio ratings*. Retrieved from gfk.com: https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2405078/cms-pdfs/fileadmin/user_upload/dyna_content/nz/documents/resources/2020/gfk_new_zealand_ram_toolkit_2020_updated.pdf

GFK. (2020b, April). *Radio audience measurement: Commercial survey summary reports*. Retrieved from gfk.com: https://www.gfk.com/en-nz/insights/report/radio-audience-measurement/

GFK. (2020c). *2020 Radio ratings tool kit*. Retrieved from GFK.com: https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2405078/cms-pdfs/fileadmin/user_upload/dyna_content/nz/documents/resources/2020/gfk_new_zealand_ram_toolkit_2020_updated.pdf

Gibbs, A. (2001, December). Contagious feelings: Pauline Hanson and the epidemiology of affect. *Australian Humanities Review*(24).

Gifford, P. (2009, November 18). *Bickerstaff set rules for sports talk on radio*. Retrieved from stuff.co.nz: http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-star-times/sport/3048700/Bickerstaff-set-rules-for-sports-talk-on-radio

Gillman, S. (2007). 'Stay on the line ..' An analysis of callers to talkback radio in Australia. *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy*, 186-196.

Glaser, B. G. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis.* Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* New Brunswick, Canada: Aldine Transactions.

Goldstein, H. (1940). Reading and listening comprehension at various controlled rates. *Teachers College Contribution to Education*(821), 1.

Gould, L. (2007, February). Cash and controversy: A short history of commercial talkback radio. *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture and Policy, 122*, 81-95.

Gould, L. (2009, May). Beyond media 'platforms'? Talkback, radio, technology and audience. *Media International Australia*.

Griffen-Foley, B. (2009). *Changing stations: The story of Australian commercial radio.* Sydney, Australia: UNSW Press.

Griffen-Foley, B. (2010, November). Voices of the people: Audience participation in radio. *Media International Australia*, 5-20.

Gripsrud, J. (1998). Television, Broadcasting, Flow: Key Metaphors in TV Theory. In C. Geraghty, & D. Lusted (Eds.), *The television studies book* (pp. 17-32). New York, NY: Hodder.

Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language* (pp. 128-138). London, England: Routledge.

Hall, S. (1990). The rediscovery of 'ideology'; return of the repressed in media studies. In T. Bennett, J. Curran, M. Gurevitch, & J. Wollacott (Eds.), *Culture, society and the media* (pp. 52-85). New York, NY: Routledge.

Halper, D. L. (2009). *Icons of talk: The media mouths that changed America.* Westport, MA: Greenwood Press.

Hanson-Easey, S., & Augoustinos, M. (2017). God's great leveller: Talkback radio as qualitative data. In V. Braun, V. Clarke, & D. Gray (Eds.), *Collecting qualitative data: A practical guide to textual, media and virtual techniques* (pp. 144-165). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1996). *Being and time: A translation of Sein and Zeit.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Hendy, D. (2000). *Radio in the global age.* Cambridge, England: Polity.

Hendy, D. (2010). Listening in the dark: Night-time radio and a 'deep history' of media. *Media History, 16*(2), 215-232.

Hendy, D. (2013). The undercoat of life - Listening to radio. In A. Carlyle, & C. Lane (Eds.), *On listening* (pp. 122-124). Axminster, England: Uniformbooks.

Herbst, S. (1995). On electronic public space: Talk shows in theoretical perspective. *Political Communication, 12*, 263-274.

Herrera-Damas, S., & Hermida, A. (2014). Tweeting but not talking: The missing element in talk radio's institutional use of Twitter. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 58*(4), 481-500.

Higgins, R., & Moorfield, J. (2004). Ngā tikanga o te marae: Māori practices. In T. Ka'ai, J. C. Moorfield, M. P. Reilly, & S. Mosley (Eds.), *Ki te whaiao: An introduction to Māori culture and society* (pp. 73-84). Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson.

Hilmes, M. (2012). Radio and the imagined community. In J. Sterne, *The sound studies reader* (pp. 351-362). New York, NY: Routledge.

Hilmes, M., & Loviglio, J. (2002). *Radio reader: Essays in the cultural history of radio.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Hoar, P. (2018). *The World's Din.* Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago University Press.

Hofstetter, C. R., & Gianos, C. L. (1997). Political talk radio: Actions speak louder than words. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 41*(4), 501-515.

Hofstetter, C. R., Donovan, M. C., Klauber, M. R., Cole, A., Huie, C. J., & Yuasa, T. (1994, June). Political talk radio: A sterotype reconsidered. *Political Research Quarterly, 47*(2), 467-479.

Hoggart, R. (1962). *The uses of literacy:Aspects of working class life with special reference to publications and entertainments.* Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.

Hollander, B. A. (1996). Talk radio: Predictors of use and effects on attitudes about government. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 73*(1), 102-113.

Holmes, J. (2019). *On Aunty.* Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Publishing.

Horton, D., & Wohl, R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *Psychiatry, 19*, 215-216.

Hsu, H.-C., & Lin, M.-H. (2005). Exploring quality of sleep and its related factors among menopausal women. *Journal of Nursing Research, 13*(2).

Hutchby, I. (1991). The organization of talk on talk radio. In P. Scannell, & P. Scannell (Ed.), *Broadcast talk* (pp. 119-137). London, England: Sage.

Hutchby, I. (2001). 'Witnessing': The use of first-hand knowledge in legitimating lay opinions on talk radio. *Discourse Studies, 3*(4), 481-497.

Hutchby, I. (2006). *Media talk: Conversation analysis and the study of broadcasting.* Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.

Inthorn, Sanna (2020). Listening while doing things: Radio, gender and older women. *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 18(2), p211-226.

Johnston, S. (2016). *The birth of talkback radio in New Zealand*. (NZBC) Retrieved from Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision: https://ngataonga.org.nz/blog/nz-history/the-birth-of-talkback-radio-in-new-zealand/

Jourdain, R. (1997). *Music, the brain and ecstasy.* New York, NY: William Morrow.

Ka'ai, T., & Higgins, R. (2004). Te ao Māori: Māori world view. In T. Ka'ai, J. C. Moorfield, M. P. Reilly, & S. Mosley (Eds.), *Ki te whaiao: An introduction to Māori culture and society* (pp. 13-25). Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson.

Katz, E. (1959). Mass Communications research and the study of popular culture: An editorial note on a possible future for this journal. *Studies in Public Communication, 2*, 1-6.

Kelso, D. (1980). *Person to person with Doreen.* Wellington, New Zealand: Mallinson Rendel.

King, M. (2003). *The Penguin history of New Zealand.* Auckland, New Zealand: Penguin.

Kitchener, C. (2018, May 5). *Why do so few women write Letters to the Editor?* Retrieved from The Atlantic: https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/05/why-do-so-few-women-write-letters-to-the-editor/559736/

Kogan, R., (2019, May 14). *Howard Stern talks about life, death, Donald Trump - and why he can't stand his old narcissm.* Retrieved from: https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/ct-ae-best-of-howard-stern-interviews-kogan-sidewalks-0519-story.html

Kogan, J., & Wolodarsky, W. 2019(1991, October 24). Like father, like clown (Television broadcast). *The Simpsons*. New York, NY: Twentieth Century Fox. Retrieved from Yarn: https://getyarn.io/video/a1013ef9-4fed-4b57-a3a7-b8e9e412bec4

Kyto, M. (2013). Sound diary Istanbul: Acoustemological musings from the field. In A. Carlyle, & C. Lane (Eds.), *On Listening* (pp. 79-82). Axminster, England: Uniformbooks.

Lacey, K. (2000). Towards a periodization of listening: Radio and modern life. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 3*(2), 279-288.

Lacey, K. (2006). The invention of a listening public: Radio and its audiences. In M. Butler, K. Führer, & C. Ross (Eds.), *Mass media, culture and society in twentieth century Germany* (pp. 61-79). London, England: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lacey, K. (2013a). *Listening publics: The politics and experience of listening in the media age.* Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Lacey, K. (2013b). Listening overlooked: An audit of listening as a category in the public sphere. In M. (. Bull, *Sound studies: Critical concepts in media and cultural studies* (pp. 38-54). New York, NY: Routlege.

Lacey, K. (2014). Smart radio and audio apps: the politics and paradoxes of listening to (anti-) social media. *Australian Journalism Review, 36*(2), 77-90.

Lee, C. (2005). The "two-sided" Medium. *Metro Magazine*(155).

Lee, Y., Chen, F., & Jiang, H. (2006). Lurking as participation: A community perspective n lurkers' identity and negotiability. *Making a difference: Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Learning Sciences* (wh. 404-410). Bloomington.

Levin, D. (1993). *Modernity and the hegemony of vision.* Berkley, CA: University of California.

Levin, M. B. (1987). *Talk radio and the American dream.* New York, NY: Lexington Books.

Levitin, D. J. (2016). *Weaponized lies: How to think critically in the post-truth era.* New York, NY: Dutton.

Lindgren, M. (2019, May 13). *'Howard Stern comes again' gives a glimpse of a kinder, gentler shock jock*. Retrieved from Washington Post: https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/howard-stern-comes-again-gives-a-glimpse-of-a-kinder-gentler-shock-jock/2019/05/10/d531f0bc-7356-11e9-9f06-5fc2ee80027a_story.html?utm_term=.7fa822ef23f0

Lindgren, M., & Phillips, G. (2014). Radio reinvented: The enduring appeal of audio in the digital age. *Australian Journalism Review, 36*(2), 5-9.

Lopes, P. (2006). Culture and stigma: Popular culture and the case of comic books. *Sociological Forum, 21*(3).

Loviglio, J., (2012). Vox pop: Network radio and the voice of the people. In M. Hilmes, & J. Loviglio (Eds.), *Radio reader: Essays in the cultural history of radio* (pp.89-112). New York, NY: Routledge

Marchese, D. (2019, May 9). *Howard Stern says he has changed. How much?* Retrieved from The New York Times: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/05/09/magazine/howard-stern-change.html

Moorfield, John C. (n.d.) *Māori Dictionary.* Retrieved from: https://maoridictionary.co.nz

Martin, F. (2006). New media, new audiences. In S. Cunningham, & G. Turner (Eds.), *The media and communications in Australia* (pp. 315-328). Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Martin, M. (2012). Gender and early telephone culture. In J. Sterne (Ed.), *The sound studies reader* (pp. 336-350). New York, NY: Routledge.

Maslow, A. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370-396.

Massarelli, V. (2005). Listening to radio talk shows: An Italian perspective. In S. Healy, B. Berryman, & D. Goodman (Eds.), *Radio in the world: Papers from the 2005 Melbourne Radio Conference* (pp. 77-88). Melbourne, Australia: RMIT Publishing.

McConnell, G. (2018, November 29). *Peter Williams is the first confirmed host of hybrid radio station Magic Talk*. Retrieved from Stuff: https://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/tv-radio/108961177/peter-williams-is-the-first-confirmed-host-of-hybrid-radio-station-magic-talk

Mccorkle, B. (2016, June). Fandom's new frontier: Star Trek in the concert hall. *Journal of Fandom Studies, 4*(2), 175-192.

McGregor, J. (1996). The rhetoric of political talkback in New Zealand: Combustion or coherence. *Australian Journal of Communication, 23*(2).

McIntyre, L. J. (2005). *Need to know: Social science research methods.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

McLuhan, M. (1964a). Radio the tribal drum. *Communication Review, 12*(2), 133-145.

McLuhan, M. (1964b). *Understanding media: The extension of man.* London, England: Routledge.

McQuail, D. (2013). The media audience: A brief biography - stages of growth or paradigm change. *The Communication Review, 16*, 9-20.

McRobbie, A. (1994). *Postmodernism and popular culture.* London, England: Routledge.

McSaveney, E. (2017a). *Historic earthquakes - The 1931 Hawkes Bay earthquake*. Retrieved from Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand: https://teara.govt.nz/en/historic-earthquakes/page-6

McSaveney, E. (2017b). *The 2011 Christchurch earthquake*. Retrieved from Te Ara: https://teara.govt.nz/en/historic-earthquakes/page-13

Mediaworks Radio. (2020, February 22). *Shows - Talk*. Retrieved from Magic: https://www.magic.co.nz/home/shows.html

Meehan, E. (1993). Commodity audience, actual Audience, the blindspot debate:. In J. Wasko, V. Mosco, & M. Pendakur (Eds.), *Illuminating the blindspots: Essays honoring Dallas W. Smythe* (pp. 378-400). New Jersey, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Mills, L. (2020, March 18). *Pike River mine tunnel re-entry cost doubles to over $50m*. Retrieved from Otago Daily Times: https://www.odt.co.nz/regions/west-coast/pike-river-mine-tunnel-re-entry-cost-doubles-over-

50m#:~:text=The%20cost%20of%20recovering%20the,set%20aside%20as%20a%20contingency.

Ministry for Culture and Heritage. (2020, September 17). *Pike River mind explosion kills 29.* Retrieved from NZ History.govt.nz: https://nzhistory.govt.nz/pike-river-mine-explosion-kills-29

Ministy for Culture and Heritage. (2018, July 10). *Sinking the Rainbow Warrior*. Retrieved from https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/nuclear-free-new-zealand/rainbow-warrior,

Ministry of Transport. (2020, August 6). *Quarterly fleet statistics (Data tables) - January to March 2020 update*. Retrieved from Minstry of Transport: https://www.transport.govt.nz/mot-resources/vehicle-fleet-statistics/quarterly-fleet-statistics-data-tables-january-to-march-2020-update/

Mollgaard, M. (2015). *Powerful music: Media, culture and the 'third-way' in New Zealand: A grounded theory analysis of Kiwi FM.* Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University of Technology. Retrieved from https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/9285

Moores, S. (1993). *Interpreting audiences: The ethnography of media consumption.* London, England: Sage Publications.

Moorfield, J. (n.d.). *Māori dictionary*. Retrieved from Maori Dictionary.co.nz: https://maoridictionary.co.nz/

Moreau, J. (2019, May). *Is radio's shock jock era over? Execs and pundits weigh in.* Retrieved from Variety.com: https://variety.com/2019/music/news/shock-jock-howard-stern-radio-1203222902/

Neuman, W. L. (2011). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches (7th Edition).* Boston, MA: Pearson.

Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision. (n.d.). *Person to person. 1965-10-04*. Retrieved from Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision: https://www.ngataonga.org.nz/collections/catalogue/catalogue-item?record_id=223585

Nichols, R. G. (1948:2009). Factors in listening comprehension. *Communications Monographs, 15*(2), 154-163.

Nielsen. (2018). *Celebrating 95 years of innovation*. Retrieved from nielsen.com: https://sites.nielsen.com/timelines/our-history/

Nielsen. (2020, March 26). *Radio is 'comfort food' as media consumption rises amid COVID-19 pandemic.* Retrieved from nielsen.com: https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/media/

NZ Herald. (1927, May 12). A Novelty at 1YA. *New Zealand Herald*, p. 17.

NZ Herald. (2018, November 15). *MediaWorks expected to reveal radical changes to RadioLIVE*. Retrieved from NZherald.co.nz: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=12160594

NZ Herald. (2019a, January 14). *Listen live: Kerre McIvor Mornings debuts on Newstalk ZB*. Retrieved from nzherald.co.nz: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12189866

NZ Herald. (2019b, April 4). *Heather du-Plessis-Allan censured by Broadcasting Standards Authority over Pacific Island 'leeches' claim*. Retrieved from nzherald.co.nz: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=12219199

NZ Listener. (1967, March 27). Television listings. *NZ Listener*.

NZ Listener. (1968a, February 5). Radio listings. *NZ. Listener*.

NZ Listener. (1968b, April 5). Radio listings. *NZ Listener*.

NZ Listener. (1968c, November 15). Radio listings. *NZ Listener*.

NZ Listener. (1974, April). Television listings. *NZ Listener*. Retrieved from N.

NZ On Air. (2020a, September 1). *Where are the audiences? 2020*. Retrieved from NZ On Air: https://www.nzonair.govt.nz/news/challenging-times-for-local-media-as-global-digital-offerings-lure-audiences/

NZ On Air. (2020b). *About*. Retrieved from NZ On Air: https://www.nzonair.govt.nz/about/

NZBC. (1965). *Telephone Time.* Retrieved from Nga Taonga Sound and Vision: https://ngataonga.org.nz/blog/nz-history/the-birth-of-talkback-radio-in-new-zealand/

NZME. (2020a, June 8). *Fletch, Vaughan & Megan podcast*. Retrieved from zmonline.com: https://www.zmonline.com/shows/fletch-vaughan-megan/podcasts/fletch-vaughan-megan-podcast-8th-june-2020 (53.00)

NZME. (2020b, February 22). *On air schedule*. Retrieved from Newstalk ZB: https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/on-air/

NZME. (2020c). *On air: Heather du Plessis-Allan Drive*. Retrieved from Newstalk ZB: https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/on-air/heather-du-plessis-allan-drive/

NZME. (2020d). *On air: Kerre McIvor Mornings*. Retrieved from Newstalk ZB: https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/on-air/heather-du-plessis-allan-drive/

NZME. (2020e). *On air: Simon Barnett and Phil Gifford Afternoons*. Retrieved from Newstalk ZB: https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/on-air/simon-barnett-and-phil-gifford-afternoons/

NZME. (2020f). *On air: Marcus Lush Evenings*. Retrieved from Newstalk ZB: https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/on-air/marcus-lush-nights/

NZME. (n.d.). *Listen: Merv Smith's last show on air*. Retrieved from Newstalk ZB: https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/on-demand/audio/listen-merv-smiths-last-show-on-air

O'Keefe, A. (2006). *Investigating media discourse.* Oxford, England.

Oliveira, M., Stachyra, G., & Starkey, G. (2014). Introduction. In M. Oliveira, G. Stachyra, & G. Starkey (Eds.), *Radio: The resilient medium: Papers from the third conference of the ECREA Radio Research Section* (pp. iii-vi). Sunderland, England: University of Sunderland.

Ong, W. (2012). *Orality and literacy: 30th anniversary edition.* Oxford, England: Routledge.

O'Sullivan, S. (2005). "The whole nation is listening to you': The presentation of the self on a tabloid talk radio show. *Media Culture & Society, 27*(5), 719-738.

Otago Daily Times. (1921, August 23). Wireless wonders. *Otago Daily times*, p. 2.

Pauling, B. (2014a). *Radio - A turning point for radio – the legacy of the 1960s*. Retrieved January 2018, from Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of New Zealand: http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/radio/page-4

Pauling, B. (2014b). *Radio: The golden age of radio, 1936 to 1960*. Retrieved from Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of New Zealand: https://teara.govt.nz/en/radio/page-3

Pauling, B. (2014c). *Gordon Dryden, talkback radio pioneer of the 1970s*. Retrieved from Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand: http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/photograph/42812/gordon-dryden-talkback-radio-pioneer-of-the-1970s

Pérez, H. (2019). On Jon Snow's death: Plot twist and global fandom in Game of Thrones. *Culture & Psychology, 2019*, DOI: 10.1177/1354067X19845062.

Perkins, J. (1996). *Resounding radio*. Retrieved from RNZ National: https://www.radionz.co.nz/collections/resounding-radio/contents

Perse, E. M., & Butler, J. S. (2005). Call-in talk radio: Compensation or enrichment. *Journal of Radio Studies, 12*(2), 204-222.

Peters, J. D. (2006). Media as conversation, conversation as media. In J. Curran, & D. Morley (Eds.), *Media and cultural theory* (pp. 115-126). New York, NY: Routledge.

Peters, J. D. (2010). Broadcasting and schizophrenia. *Media, Culture and Society, 32*(1), 123-140.

Phalen, W. J. (2014). *How the Telegraph Changed the World.* Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company.

Phillips, J. (2015, August 1). *History of immigration - Many leave, fewer arrive: 1975-1991*. Retrieved from Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand: http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/history-of-immigration/page-16

Portela, P. (2011). Portugese internet radio from 2006 to 2009:Technical readiness and openness to interaction. In A. S. Gazi (Ed.), *Radio content in the digital age: The evolution of a sound medium* (pp. 49-59). Bristol, England: Intellect.

Przbyviski, A. K., Muravama, K., DeHaan, C. R., & Gladwell, V. (2013). Motivational, emotional, and behavioural correlates of missing out. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*(4), 1841-1848.

Pullar-Strecker, T. (2020, March 30). *NZ Herald owner confirms closure of Radio Sport*. Retrieved from stuff.co.nz: https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/120669523/nz-herald-owner-understood-to-be-discussing-job-losses?fbclid=IwAR3gNbjLo-QOKJuRWvdEEF-ugc852j7LF_qcf7J3qv671W9hKJAI910IOoI

Radio Announcer Guilty. (1981, March 14). *The Press*, p. 4.

Radio Broadcasters Association. (2020b). *Find a station*. Retrieved from Radio Broadcasters Association: https://www.rba.co.nz/find-a-station

Radioinfo. (2020, April 23). *Measuring cumulative audience*. Retrieved from radioinfo.com.au: https://radioinfo.com.au/news/measuring-cumulative-audience

Reddit. (2020). *Best results for 'long time lurker'*. Retrieved August 2020, from Reddit: https://www.reddit.com/search/?q=long%20time%20lurker

Rehm, D. (1993). Talking over America's electronic backyard fence. *Media Studies Journal, 7*(3), 63-69.

Rhema Media. (2020a). *How to tune in*. Retrieved from rhemamedia.co.nz: https://www.rhemamedia.co.nz/information/how-to-tune-in

Rhema Media. (2020b). *Talk sessions*. Retrieved from Rhema.co.nz: https://www.rhema.co.nz/shows/talk-sessions

RNZ. (2019a). *Media releases: Strong audiences for RNZ National*. Retrieved from rnz.co.nz: https://www.rnz.co.nz/media/138

RNZ. (2019b). *Continued audience growth for RNZ across all platforms*. Retrieved from RNZ: https://www.rnz.co.nz/media/146

RNZ National. (n.d.). *RNZ National [Facebook page]*. Retrieved 26 September 2019, from Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/RadioNewZealand

Romney, M. (2014). The voice in the night unheard of by scholars: Herb Jepko and the genesis of national talk radio. *Journal of Radio and Audio Media, 21*(2), 272-289.

Royal, T. A. (2005, February 8). *Pre-European society*. Retrieved from Te Ara: Encyclopedia of New Zealand: https://teara.govt.nz/en/maori/page-2

Ruddock, A. (2007). *Investigating audiences.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage .

Ryan, G., & Bernard, H. (2000). Data management and analysis methods. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 769-802). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ryan, P. (2020, May 13). *Alan Jones's retirement will spark mourning or celebration, depending on who you ask.* Retrieved from ABC News: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-12/alan-jones-retires-from-2gb-radio-breakfast-analysis/12238008

Scannell, P. (1991). Introduction: the relevance of talk. In P. Scannell (Ed.), *Broadcast Talk* (pp. 1-13). London, England: Sage.

Scannell, P. (1996). *Radio, television & modern life.* Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers.

Scannell, P. (2000). For-anyone-as-someone-structures. *Media, Culture and Society, 22*, 5-24.

Scannell, P. (2013). *Television and the meaning of 'live': An enquiry into the human situation.* Cambridge, England: Polity.

Shanahan, M. W. (2005). Trouble for talk-radio in New Zealand. In K. Neill, & M. Shanahan, *The great New Zealand radio experiment* (pp. 131-152). Southbank Victoria, Australia: Dunmore Press.

Shaw, A. (2017). Encoding and decoding affordances: Stuart Hall and interactive media technologies. *Media, Culture and Society, 39*(4), 592-602.

Sherwin, A. (2017, September 25). *inews.co.uk*. Retrieved from Annie Nightingale on Radio 1 sexism: 'BBC said DJs are husband substitutes for housewives': https://inews.co.uk/essentials/annie-nightingale-radio-1-bbc-said-djs-husband-substitutes-housewives-92801

Shrader, J. (2013). Folly of outrage: Talk radio's unethical and damaging business model. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 28*(4), 289-292.

Sidran, B. (1971). *Black talk.* New York, NY: De Capo Press.

Silverman, D. (2001). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction (2nd ed.).* London, England: Sage.

Sinton, M. (2016). *Putting the public into public radio: Web 2.0 Interactivity and RNZ National.* Retrieved from https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/10198

Sinton, M. (2018). No longer one-to-many: How Web 2.0 interactivity is changing public service radio's relationship with its audience. *Journal of Radio and Audio Media, 25*(1), 62-76.

Sleep Foundation. (n.d.). *Menopause and Sleep*. Retrieved from SleepFoundation.org: https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/menopause-and-sleep

Smith, L. (2013). *Leighton Smith: Beyond the microphone.* Auckland, New Zealand: Harper Collins.

Smith, S. (n.d.). *Gordon Dryden*. Retrieved 2019, from NZ on Screen: https://www.nzonscreen.com/profile/gordon-dryden/biography

Smythe, D. (1977). Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism. *Canadian Journal of Politcal and Social Theory, 1*(3), 1-27.

Spangardt, B., Ruth, N., & Schramm, H. (2016). "... And please visit our Facebook page too!" How radio presenters personalities influence listeners' interactions with radio stations. *Journal of Radio and Audio Media, 23*(1), 68-94.

Statistics New Zealand. (2017). *NZ internet is going mobile*. Retrieved from Stats NZ: https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/new-zealand-internet-is-going-mobile

Statistics New Zealand. (2020, October 8). *Population clock*. Retrieved from Stats NZ: https://www.stats.govt.nz/tools/population-clock

Sterne, J. (2012). Sonic Imaginations. In J. Sterne (Ed.), *Sound Studies Reader* (pp. 1-17). New York, NY: Routledge.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Strike Force Neil. (2006). *Cronulla riots: Review of the police response Vol.1.* NSW Police, Sydney.

Sullivan, J. L. (2013). *Media audiences: Effects, users, institutions and power.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Surlin, S. H. (1986). Uses of Jamaican talk radio. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 30*(4), 459-466.

Sydney Morning Herald. (2019, September 19). *'Accept my sincere apology': Shock jock Alan Jones' letter to PM Jacinda Ardern surfaces*. Retrieved from smh.com: https://www.stuff.co.nz/world/australia/115943370/accept-my-sincere-apology-shock-jock-alan-jones-letter-to-pm-jacinda-ardern-surfaces

Synnott, A. (1993). *The body social: Symbolism, self and society.* London, England: Routledge.

Taachi, J. A. (1997). *Radio sound as material culture in the home* [Doctoral dissertation: University College of London}

Tam, S. (2014, September 11). *5 Social media listening tools that every business should be using*. Retrieved February 2018, from Huffington Post: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/simon-young/5-social-media-listening-_b_5317531.html

Taonui, R. (2015, July 1). *Whakapapa - genealogy*. Retrieved from Te Ara: The Encylopedia of New Zealand: https://teara.govt.nz/en/whakapapa-genealogy/

Te Papa. (n.d.). *Māori musical instruments*. Retrieved from Te Papa: https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/discover-collections/read-watch-play/maori/maori-musical-instruments

Te Whakaruruhau o Te Reo Irirangi Māori. (2020). *Home page*. Retrieved from Irirangi.net: http://www.irirangi.net/home.aspx

Tebbutt, J. (2006). Imaginative demographics: The emergence of a radio talkback audience in Australia. *Media Culture and Society, 28(6)*, 857-882.

The Guardian. (2011). *Notes and queries*. Retrieved April 2020, from the guardian.com: https://www.theguardian.com/notesandqueries/query/0,5753,-23572,00.html

The People's Column. (1929, September 27). *The Northern Advocate*, p. 9.

The Radio Bureau. (2020a). *Glossary*. Retrieved from trb.co.nz: https://www.trb.co.nz/glossary

The Radio Bureau. (2020b). *Radio's place through the pandemic*. Retrieved from trb.co.nz: https://www.trb.co.nz/news/radios-place-through-the-pandemic

The Radio Bureau. (2020c). *National: All 10+*. Retrieved from trb.co.nz: https://www.trb.co.nz/radio-survey

The Radio Bureau. (2020d). *News: 3.3 Million Kiwis listening to commercial radio*. Retrieved from trb.co.nz: https://www.trb.co.nz/news/3-3-million-kiwis-listening

The Radio Bureau. (2020e). *Resources and Information: NZ radio station matrix*. Retrieved from trb.co.nz: https://www.trb.co.nz/resources-and-information

The Radio Bureau. (2020f). *Brand Profiles*. Retrieved from trb.co.nz: trb.co.nz/brand-profiles

Thorn, R. (1996, March). *Hearing is Believing.* Retrieved February 2018, from Sound Journal: https://web.archive.org/web/19991006003813/http://speke.ukc.ac.uk:80/sais/sound-journal/thorn981.html

Time Magazine. (1984, July 9). Why audiences love to hate them. *Time*, p. 80.

Tolson, A. (1991). Televised chat and the synthetic personality. In P. Scannell, *Broadcast Talk.* London, England: Sage.

Tomkins, S. (2008). *Affect imagery consciousness: the complete edition.* New York, NY: Springer.

Tramer, H., & Jeffres, L. W. (1983). Talk radio - Forum and companion. *Journal of Broadcasting, 27*, 297-300.

Turner, G. (2001). Ethics, entertainment, and the tabloid: The case of talkback radio in Australia. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies, 15*(3), 349-357.

Turner, G. (2007). Some things we should know about talkback radio. *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy*(122), 73-80.

Turner, G. (2009). Politics, radio and journalism in Australia: The influence of 'talkback'. *Journalism, 10*(4), 411-430.

Turner, G. (2010). *Ordinary people and the media: The demotic turn.* London, England: Sage.

Turner, G., Tomlinson, E., & Pearce, S. (2006). Talkback radio: Some notes on format, politics and influence. *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy*(118), 107-119.

Turow, J. (1974). Talkshow radio as interpersonal communication. *Journal of Broadcasting, 18*, 171-179.

Valkenburg, P. M., & Peter, J. (2013). Five challenges for the future of media-effects research. *International Journal of Communication, 7*, 197-215.

Venzo, P. (2008, January). Digital killed the radio star: The future of a medium. *Metro Magazine: Media & Education Magazine*(157), pp. 116-119.

Waitangi Tribunal. (2020, May 1). *Legislative references to the principles of the Treaty*. Retrieved from Waitangitribunal.govt: https://www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/WT-Principles-of-the-Treaty-of-Waitangi-as-expressed-by-the-Courts-and-the-Waitangi-Tribunal.pdf

Ward, I. (2002). Talkback radio, political communication and Australian politics. *Australian Journal of Communication, 29*(1), 21-38.

Washbourne, N. (2010). *Mediating politics: Newspapers, radio, television and the internet.* Maidenhead, England: McGraw Hill.

West, R., & Turner, L. H. (2010). *Introducing communication theory: Analysis and application.* Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Wilson, J. O., & McLintock, A. H. (1966). *Aotearoa*. Retrieved from An Encyclopedia of New Zealand 1966: https://teara.govt.nz/en/1966/aotearoa

Wilson, Z. (2018, July 23). *Active listening explains strong connection between over 65s and radio presenters*. Retrieved from Radio Today: http://radiotoday.com.au/active-listening-explains-strong-connection-to-presenters-for-over-65s/

Wolfenden, H. (2014). 'I know exactly who they are': Radio presenters' conceptions of audience. *The Radio Journal - International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media, 12*(1 & 2).

Wolff, M. (1985). The secret six-month project: Why Texas Instruments decided to put the first transistor radio on the market by Christmas 1954 and how it was accomplished. *IEEE Spectrum, 22*(12), 64-69.

World Health Organisation. (2020). *WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVD-19) Dashboard*. Retrieved October 2020, from who.int: covid19.who.int

Appendix A: Notes on Participants and Citations

This study features data from 29 participants. This comprises 13 listeners and 16 people with experience of the talkback radio sector whom I refer to as 'industry'. I set out to present the insights of both cohorts with as much clarity as possible in a readable style. In particular, the insights of the industry participants are contextualised by their specific craft within the industry (host, producer, or management) and for this reason their roles are noted.

This thesis uses APA in-text citations when an industry participant is quoted or paraphrased for the first time in a chapter; for example: *(K. Hay, personal communication, January 28, 2019)*. For each subsequent citation within that chapter they will be cited as: *Name (role)*, for example: *Hay (host), Parkinson (producer)* or *Francis (management).* This role description will be used whether currently applicable or not; some participants have moved to other media roles or have retired. Two industry participants, former Newstalk ZB Manager Bill Francis and former morning host Leighton Smith have both authored texts quoted in this thesis.

Listeners took part in this study on the basis of anonymity. The reasons for this are discussed in Section 3.2. Accordingly, listeners have been labelled Listener A, Listener B, etc. As with industry data, APA in-text citations will be applied when a listener participant is quoted or paraphrased for the first time in each chapter, for example: (Listener A, personal communication, August 19, 2018). For each subsequent citation within that chapter, they will be cited as Listener A, Listener B, etc.

To add context to listeners' views, the following provides their age group, gender, and societal role and employment:

Listener **A**: 70s, male, retired sales manager

Listener **B**: 40s, female, social worker

Listener **C**: 20s, female, programme co-ordinator for youth-focused charity

Listener **D**: 50s, male, property developer

Listener **E**: 60s, female, retired

Listener **F**: 60s, female, retired teacher

Listener **G:** 60s, male, property maintenance

Listener **H:** 30s, female, executive assistant

Listener **J:** 60s, female, copywriter

Listener **K:** 60s, female, lawyer

Listener **L:** 50s, female, television producer

Listener **M:** 60s, male, insurance agent

Listener **N:** 20s, male, sports journalist

Appendix B: Synthesis of participant data: Initial, intermediate and advanced coding

Initial coding identifies themes and concepts. These are direct quotes from the raw data.
Intermediate coding links initial themes and integrates them into subcategories.
Advanced coding identifies the core theme of each sub-category of intermediate coding.

Initial Coding	Intermediate Coding	**Advanced Coding (see Chapter 4)**
• *Anything less than a hard news story, I wouldn't call them reliable at all.* • *It has motivated me to look a bit deeper at things.* • *I don't necessarily have to agree with what's being discussed.* • *I'll listen to it then I'll make up my own mind.* • *You get the opportunity to form your own opinion base as well.* • *I want [to] see what the enemy is talking about.* • *It's an affirmation of your own opinion, being able to say to yourself if you're listening 'oh what a load of rubbish, that person's an idiot'.* • *I listen to something like that [Alzheimers] because I can relate to it.* • *If it's a subject that I know about … So when they're debating cannabis, and I know through school what it does… I get very annoyed.*	• Listeners recognise that talkback is opinion-heavy. • Reliability of information is not concerning. • Listeners want to hear other people's opinions to help them form their own world view. • Listeners don't have to agree with opinions expressed. • Sometimes listeners expect to disagree. • Listeners will choose to listen closer if they know about, or are interested in a particular topic. • It's easy to background content that doesn't interest them.	**Listeners can hear relevant, current opinion from the "average Joe/Josephine" in their own community. They will listen even if they disagree with what they hear.** **(See section 4.2)**

Initial Coding	Intermediate Coding	**Advanced Coding**
• *Don't listen to talkback if you're a sensitive Māori.* • *Can't live in a false world – important to hear what's going on and what people think.* • *People call it these days, in a nice way, they call it unconscious bias, it's conscious discrimination*	• Some content may be racist, but it's important to be aware of what is being said • Conscious discrimination • Commodification of casual racism	**Talkback content from a te ao Māori perspective (Māori world view)** **(See section 4.3)**
• *I might listen to him and then he does one of his bloody soliliquies – I turn off.* • *Polarising is a good thing to do.* • *The listener likes to be consistently annoyed … it's like a comfort.* • *It doesn't matter whether you're left or right, or whether you're right … you've got to have consistency of opinion.* • *Everyone is looking to be morally outraged.*	• A host's job is to polarise listeners • The host should be consistent in his/her opinions. • Industry promotes moral outrage	**The importance of the talkback host; do listeners listen for the host or the station?** **(See section 4.4)**
• *It's instant, so it's current, everything that is current that you're learning.* • *I make that conscious decision to do it [listen at times of emergency].* • *It's live, it's about what's happening now.* • *All the time, it's one of my major hobbies* [following news and current events]. • *Talkback's now and if you've missed it, you've missed it.* • *Portability and its immediacy are its two strongest features.*	• Listeners want to know about current events and emergencies that are happening now and what other people are thinking, now. • Liveness is taken for granted.	**The contribution of liveness to talkback.** **(See section 4.5)**

Initial Coding	Intermediate Coding	**Advanced Coding**
• *I always listen to the texts/emails that are read out … The good thing about texts is they normally get to the point quickly whereas some listeners drone on for quite a while before getting, finally, to the interesting part.*	• Digital content adds content and gives more people the opportunity to contribute.	**The contribution of digital content to talkback. (See section 4.6)**
• *These are their [callers] friends, and this is their world.* • *To engage with another person even if it's just in a listening mode.* • *To engage ... to be with other people, even if it's just audio.* • *They're not gonna be my friend – they're acquaintances I listen to.* • *[Talkback] had that club feeling of attending something that you belonged to.* • *All it is, is giving people the ability to say what they said at [the] bar last night or say to the people around the watercooler.*	• Talkback provides companionship. • Talkback attracts like-minded communities of listeners. • Talkback is like listening to a backyard or watercooler chat.	**Talkback provides companionship and access to a listening community. (See section 4.7)**
• *I listen to talkback while I'm driving.* • *Mobility for radio remains one of its major strengths … out in the garden, whatever.* • *If I'm getting dinner ready or something like that, I have it on.*	• Talkback can be used as an accompaniment to other activities. • Talkback can be taken anywhere because radio is portable.	**Talkback is used as an accompaniment or soundtrack. (See section 4.8)**

Initial Coding	Intermediate Coding	**Advanced Coding**
• *Never go past that the business that radio is in, is entertainment.* • *It's listening to a private conversation, except the person who has picked up the phone has made the decision that it's not private anymore.* • *You can't let it go, because you still want to hear what's going to happen next.* • *The strongest responses come from human predicament.*	• Talkback is entertainment based on voyeurism. • Talkback is like eavesdropping. • Talkback listeners are like social media lurkers.	**Talkback is voyeurism: reality radio.** **(See section 4.9)**
• *I think because talkback drives other people nuts.* • *I think .. those same people are closet-queen listeners. But if you ever accuse them of listening or ask them about listening … they get really sort of, not don't be stupid, not me … I'm better than that.* • *I can't say the 100% of people who ring up are thick and don't know what they're talking about, but the vast majority, I would say are a certain type of people.* • *The more you never ring, the more you don't want to ring.* • *It's not that I've got nothing to say, I don't know, it's almost like it's too public … can't take it back.*	• Listeners are aware of the stigma attached to talkback. • What listener participants think of talkback callers. • Why listeners wouldn't call.	**The stigma of talkback radio.** **(See section 4.10)**

Initial Coding	Intermediate Coding	**Advanced Coding**
• *We [Radio Tarana] only pick topics which appeal to our audience: social, religious, anything to do with back home.* • *They may have an opinion on it, or they're listening to help them form an opinion.* • *It's all about sport and it doesn't carry over into politics*	• Targeted stations exist to cater for specific communities and interests.	**Talkback listening on targeted stations** **(See section 4.11)**
• *It will always have a place.* • *It's all free, it'll never die because of that.* • *I don't think there's a future for talkback.* • *The general consensus is that talkback is on the wane.*	• Talkback has a future. • Talkback does not have a future.	**The future of talkback** **(see Chapter 6.)**

Appendix C: Transcript of Newstalk ZB, Monday 15 March, 2019

2.08 to 4 p.m.

The following is part of Data Set 3, edited transcripts of talkback content. This transcript includes the eye-witness accounts of talkback callers to Newstalk ZB who were in the vicinity of, or directly affected by the shootings at the Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand on 15 March 2019. The transcript covers the period from 2.07 to 4 p.m. on that day, with edit points for advertising and unrelated breaks shown with an ellipsis. The talkback callers' names are in italics to differentiate them from Newstalk ZB hosts and journalists. Segments of this transcript are used in Chapter 4.5.2 to demonstrate the importance of liveness in talkback.

The shooting began at the Al Noor Mosque at 1.40 p.m. The news broke on Newstalk ZB at 2.07 p.m. and host Andrew Dickens put the first call to air at 2.08 p.m.

2.08

> *Ron***:** I can see police with guns. I say to everybody, all the cars on Blenheim Road, stay away from the area right now, this is quite massive. There are ambulances ready to go. I've been told by a jogger who ran past that mosque that the incident's been happening at the mosque … starting to wonder what the heck is going on down here.
>
> Host*:* Are you undercover mate?
>
> *Ron:* I'm behind a large tree.

2.09:

> Host: You say, you say you've seen police with guns, I mean how large is the force that you see amassing there?
>
> *Ron:* Well about 12 police cars at the moment plus ambulances. Yeah. I've just seen, there's a lady, looks like she's from the mosque or whatever, she's just running to, to her family or whatever on the corner of Blenheim Rd and Deans Ave, um, yeah.

2.10:

Yani, a Christchurch City Councillor who had recently driven through the area, advises people to stay away.

2.12

Ron calls back to report the arrival of the Armed Offenders Squad (AOS).

2.14:

Nicki: On my way home and police cars surrounding the area and the Armed Offenders Squad had their guns out, they were sort of pointing at something, I'm not sure what, but they then all of a sudden, dozens of police cars turned up, so I thought get out of the way and I headed towards Brougham Street to get on the motorway to hit back out to Lincoln and it seemed to follow me. There were police cars all over the show there too, and they were, had their guns out again and were, I thought they were pointing at a sort of gold coloured Subaru because it looked like it had parked not very well on the side of the road, so they'd surrounded the car and were negotiating with whoever was in the car, not sure.

2.16

Mike: I'm on the corner of Moorehouse Avenue and Manchester Street and one of the, the AOS big black [unclear] things went tearing down, crossed over the median strip to get, to beat traffic. But there's this one of the cops hanging out the side with an AK47 or whatever it is he's using, and hanging out the side of the vehicle going down the middle of town.

Host**:** Yeah. Well okay. And whereabouts, where are they heading, what direction?

Mike: Well that's crazy cos, um, within the space of two minutes, there, there's four guys going, four cop cars going, going left on Moorhouse avenue and then equally there's a whole bunch going east, so I'm not quite sure which direction they're heading in.

2.20

Ron calls again with an update.

2.21

*Leslie**:*** Yes, I want to add to that. They're also in Linwood Avenue, they've got it blocked between Pages Road and Gloucester Street.

Host: OK.

Leslie: And they've [police] been pulling people out of a mosque like thing there, just by where the old KFC building is.

2.22

Craig: It's just bedlam out here. Looks as though it must be a serious incident. But, yeah, I've seen at least six ambulances going in and out of the scene, trying to get through the traffic. The police going through the scene and away from that scene in various directions and very high speed. So, it looks as though we may have a terrorist attack here.

(Craig's comment is the first mention of terrorism.)

2.23

Newstalk ZB Christchurch host Chris Lynch is interviewed. He quotes police asking people to stay away from the area and that Christchurch Girls High School is in lockdown.

2.25

Commercial break.

2.27

> *Daniel***:** I was coming down Aldwins Rd, passed by three police cars including one and an AOS vehicle on the wrong side of the road. And it looks like there's another event as the lady said a few minutes ago, down by the Shell service station in Linwood Ave where they've got that area blocked off. And there are police officers with [unclear] at the intersection.

2.28

Host reports six people taken to Christchurch Hospital, two with serious injuries.

2.30

Commercial break and news headlines. New information about the possible attendance of some members of the Bangladeshi Cricket Team at the Al Noor mosque.

2.33

> *David:* I've also got an office on Hagley Ave here in Christchurch. Hagley Ave is an area where there is a large pedestrian walkway. And what surprises me is that people are still casually walking along here with all these sirens, clearly not aware that the police are on the other side of the park attending this sad tragedy …
>
> *David*: I have a daughter who is … at Christchurch Girls High School. We automatically as parents receive texts to say that there's a lockdown, this is not, not a practice. My daughter's phoned me and is under a desk right now with friends and a teacher. Obviously there's so much uncertainty. They don't know you know what, what is going on, and what the risks are.

2.37

> *Chris:* Gidday mate … It is quite a situation. They've handcuffed some people and taken them away … We've found so many police with rifles and whatever you know you just don't know at the moment.

2.39

Commercial Break.

2.42
Interviews with Chris Lynch and Rachel Das from Newstalk ZB Christchurch. They advise that schools and council buildings in central Christchurch are in lockdown and that armed police are guarding the Christchuch Hospital emergency department.

2.44
Interview with cricket commentator Bryan Waddle who advises that the Bangladeshi cricket team is in lockdown at Hagley Oval (cricket ground).

2.48
Commercial Break.

2.50
Caller Mike tells of son's school in lockdown and police cars heading for the Port Hills (range of hills bordering Christchurch city).

2.51
Host reads digital message regarding international news coverage of shooting.

2.52
Caller *Arron* tells of picking up children from school and seeing circling helicopters.

2.53
Host precis of events and updates: 'We can confirm that a dead body has been seen by the Al Noor mosque, where this started'.

2.56
Host confirms that there have been two shooting events.

2.57
Commercial break.

3.00
News and sports news.

3.07
Host reads statement by Police Commissioner: 'a serious and evolving situation is in Christchurch with an active shooter'.

3.08

Paul rings from Timaru (165 km south of Christchurch) to say he has seen police cars and dog van driving rapidly out of Timaru towards Christchurch.

3.09
Report from Newstalk ZB Host Chris Lynch, reiterating known information.

3.11

Host*:* We're now joined by Murray. Murray, now you have a friend who's working at Christchurch Hospital. What are you hearing?

Murray: I have a friend who I'm in touch with in Christchurch at the moment who has a friend in the emergency department. And she is saying or he is saying that they are expecting 30 to 50 casualties, (pause) so people have a reason to be worried …

Host**:** All right Murray thank you so much. (Throws to caller Andy).

Andy: I'm at Papanui High School where I've got to pick up my granddaughter. There's probably 30 plus police cars surrounded this place and there's probably 40 or 50 Armed Offenders Squads [sic] walking around and going like ducks in order. Y'know, one in the front and all ducked down behind. So there's something going on …

3.14
Commercial break.

3.18

Host: I'm joined now by Kerry. Hello Kerry.

Kerry: Yeah, just agreeing on what somebody just told you earlier. I have a relative works at the hospital and overlooking the ambulance bay and they've seen over 30 ambulances come in so fast and even, with unfortunately children involved. So yeah.

*3.*20
Host update including: 'that the police have not confirmed any fatalities as yet'.

3.21
Commercial break.

3.23
Host update including unconfirmed report of seven deaths.

3.25
Mike describes school lockdown and helicopter hovering.

3.26

Host: A reporter from Newstalk ZB has talked to a couple of people who were inside the mosque when the shooting began. The pair were covered in blood and they also told them that a lot of people are dead. This is breaking news around the world and being covered on all major international global television networks at the moment. (Long pause) Newstalk ZB. This is a very, very sad story. I just had to take a break. This is a very, very sad day for Aotearoa New Zealand and for Christchurch at this moment.

3.28:
Local traffic report and commercial break.

3.30
News including use of talkback contributor *Kerry'*s information that the hospital is expecting 30-50 casualties.

3.34:

Host: Now over the course of this afternoon we've had the occasional text that has made some quite extraordinary claims. Text says apparently it was live streamed and the video has now been removed from *YouTube.* I'm joined now by James. Can you confirm that?

James: Yeah I got send a video through messenger via *YouTube* and it was a very, yeah it was on *YouTube* and it was very graphic. He had like a camera or some kind mounted to his gun and and walked, as the video followed him driving in his car and then entering the mosque and I couldn't watch anymore after that, it's too gruesome and hard to watch.

Host: I know a mosque representative has confirmed that there were 500 people there for those Friday prayers at 1.30. Did you see that when he entered the mosque.

James: When he entered the mosque, there were a couple of people in the corridor which he point-blank opened fire on. Then he proceeded to enter a room to the right and people were hiding in the corner and he could sort of open fire on them as well. It's hard to estimate how many people were in the corner but y'know, it wasn't pretty at all.

3.36:

Host: James, I thank you so much. Jane, welcome to the programme.

Jane: Hi there.

Host*:* Can you confirm the video too?

Jane: Yes, I've seen the video as well. It names the person who has streamed it, who I'm obviously not going to say but, um, and I can concur with your previous caller. It's a machine gun type gun. I don't know anything about guns either but there's clearly writing on the side of the gun and he's wearing a GoPro I would say.

Host*:* So, do you think the camera is actually attached to, like his head, or on to the butt of the gun.

Jane: It's on his head.

Host*:* Its on his head.

Jane: Yeah.

Host*:* So you're seeing it from the shooter's eye so to speak.

Jane: Yep, that's right.

Host*:* Well could you see the writing on the gun? Could you see what it said?

Jane: You could if I sort of paused, but it's pretty horrific. He does go in and do exactly what your previous caller said. People are trying to run and he's just shooting them down. Yeah, it's not good.

Host**:** How far did you watch through it?

Jane: The whole video's one, about, the whole video is one minute and 15 seconds. And I watched about half of it. It was all ...

Host*:* What was the reaction of the congregation?

Jane: Just people trying to run away. People lying on the ground and um, and yeah he's come from a driveway next door.

Host*:* Was there any indication on why he took this video. Was there any ...?

Jane: He doesn't speak. He just um, stands at the front door and starts shooting and then walks in room to room.

Host*:* Was there a title on the video or any manifesto in any way shape or form?

Jane: No title. It just says it was streamed from his GoPro and there's just writing on the, on the gun that you can see bits of, but people running and I would have thought there's at least 50 people that he shot.

3.38

Host interviews Newstalk ZB's parliamentary reporter Barry Soper who has viewed online video as described by callers *James* and *Jane.*

3.41

Commercial Break

3.44

Anthony confirms earlier report of police reinforcements being sent to Christchurch from Timaru.

3.46

*Dan***:** Gidday. Hey I've just spoken to a friend of mine who's a nurse in ah, Christchurch eh, and she reckons the ah, number of 50 isn't, isn't so far off at this point.

Host*:* And what do you mean number of 50 - 50 casualties?

*Dan***:** Yeah, yeah.

3.47

Shavaughn: The video has been posted online in multiple places. It's [unclear] deleted off *YouTube* but it did have the man's name, face and registration of his car, all in the video along with him. Um, he is shooting people which was not a nice sight to see.

Host*:* And you think it is of the incident today. It's not some other incident.

Shavaughn: I think it as of today. The date said that it was posted on the 14th of March. But it's definitely in Hagley Park. Um, and the reports that have come on off the news of names being written on the rifles and everything lines up with the video.

Host*:* Yes. And of course it is the 14th of March on the other side of the international dateline.

Shavaughn: Yes.

Host*:* It has been, you think it's been deleted now from *YouTube* but it's still in other channels.

Shavaughn: Yes. It's still up on *Twitter*. The link to it anyway and on *Facebook* as well.

Host: Who is disseminating this video?

Shavaughn: Um it's just been posted on multiple news posts all over *Twitter*, all over *Facebook.*

Host**:** Thank you Shavaughn. Harley, you've seen this as well.

Harley: Yes mate, it is horrible, it is horrible footage. And ah, he's using an AK 47, using like an F16, like a military-style weapon. It's got white writing all over it.

Host*:* How did you get to find it?

Harley: I've just left work and I've been following the story at work and a friend of mine just came up to me and said have you seen the new video that came out? And I said no, show me. And it's literally a guy rocking up in a Subaru legacy down a side street. He's got like a, kinda like a flashlight on the top of the gun kinda like they use in military to like, like confuse victims or whatever? Like the people? And so anyhow he's got full kitted up and like yeah has cameras mounted to his helmet, and ah yeah. It's gnarly footage man. Like he walks down the road and there would've been a handful of people who would have seen him walk up into the mosque and then he gunned down a person from the doorway and then walked through the room and then um, I'd say 10 people in one corner get gunned down and then another 10 in the opposite corner and it's horrible mate. And I just don't know how he got up so quick. If he's like done the runner and there's been such a quick response from the police. It was horrible …

3.51
Commercial Break

3.53

Host*:* I had a number of texts that people have seen this video … People are saying it is still available on the Internet right now. Richard, hello.

Richard: Yeah hi. I mean I've just been watching this video, um, and this guy was absolutely slaughtering the people. He went through and shot the dead people several times to make sure they were dead. Whoever, and then he's off driving around town shooting anybody he sees. No wonder the cops are out looking for him. He had heaps of gas in the boot of the car. Plenty of guns. All sorts of crap written all over the guns. Can't make out what it says. But whoever this guy is, I can fully understand why the cops are out looking for him real hard … He was just a horrible beast … This guy is, it's absolutely horrible. It's worse than anything I've ever seen.

Host*:* And he spread it to the world, he spread it to the world. I'm getting reports from people saying their relatives have been watching it on the Gold Coast. It has gone worldwide. There are reports that the man actually printed a manifesto 15 hours ago and posted it as well. In fact, Reid, you're about to tell us about that, aren't you, he, he posted a manifesto. Please don't name him by the way.

Reid: Hi, um, yeah. Not sure about the legitimate, legitimacy of it, but on *Twitter* apparently he has published, well people are reporting on *Twitter* and posting photos of the manifesto he published to explain why he carried out the attack. It sort of covers this sort of deluded idea that you know they're taking over New Zealand and he wants to stop them from taking over. Apparently he said he was born in Australia. Again it's, ah, you know. I'm not sure if it is legitimate or not, it's a long, a long piece.

Host**:** I have, I have, again sources that I can't confirm as yet, but we will and over the fullness of time, but I have heard that in his manifesto he said he doesn't mean to hurt police and in his manifesto he says if he lives he intends to plead not guilty in court.

*Reid***:** Well yeah just horrible news.

Host: Yeah. All right. Thank you mate. This is extremely sad day for this country and this country will be at the centre of world news today and for many days to come. Everywhere. This is not us.

ENDS