

Putting the Public into Public Radio: Web 2.0 Interactivity and RNZ National

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Abstract

A new relationship paradigm is forming between public radio and its audience, due to the introduction of Web 2.0 technology that allows for the audience to interact easily with the broadcaster, from the platform of their choice. This paradigm contrasts with the traditional model of public broadcasting which provided the audience with a one-way media experience. New Zealand public service broadcaster RNZ National was used as a case study for this research project. Using grounded theory methodology the phenomenon of audience interactivity on public radio was studied from both sides of the microphone meaning that programme makers were interviewed and the contributions by listeners were analysed. Feedback content (comments contributed and read on-air) was recorded across most day-parts. News stories and interviews, as well as the comments of hosts and other listeners, acted as prompts, motivating the audience to engage with the broadcaster. Those topics with an emotional relevance to the audience attracted the most response. RNZ National staff responsible for the creation of content were surveyed for their views on the role of audience interactivity. All staff expressed the view that feedback is now an important component of the network's content. The number of comments broadcast indicates that Web 2.0's interactive technology has been readily adopted by the audience. The conversational tone of much feedback suggests that the audience perceive the host as a friend, and that their interactivity is a communication taking place within a relationship. By incorporating audience interactivity into its programme content, RNZ National has put the public into New Zealand public radio.

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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 acknowledgments), 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:

Name:

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Ethics Approval

This research has obtained ethical approval 15/367 from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 20 October 2015.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to answer the question: in what ways has interactivity, enabled by Web 2.0 technology changed the relationship between a public service radio network and its audience? Audience interactivity has been part of radio from its earliest days but the form it has taken has changed over the years as new technologies and practices have been adopted by radio broadcasters. Over the last 15 years the Web 2.0 environment has expanded the concept of interactivity, giving more opportunity for radio audiences to ‘have their say’. Listeners can now respond to content in written form across several platforms and hear their responses read within minutes of its delivery. Web 2.0 interactivity gives immediate ‘voice’ to an audience and contributes to a mediated public sphere. This is important because this could be seen as going against the traditional notion of public service broadcasting (PSB).

Many radio scholars have pointed out that PSB is founded on notions of one-way communication. Hendy (2013) states that the term PSB implies “cultural elites, social engineering, top down media” (p.1) and Gauntlett (2011) has described it as “sit back and be told” media (p.9). Coleman (2004) states that PSB is associated with “a tendency ... to speak without being required to listen” (p.93). These descriptions could be seen as excluding the idea of interactive content. However, Scannell (1996) offers an alternative view; that public radio should pursue the goals of inclusiveness. Enli (2008) suggests this is already occurring with some PSB programming utilizing multiplatform technology and incorporating listener participation. New Zealand public radio broadcaster RNZ National (formerly Radio New Zealand National) falls into this category. It has been incorporating Web 2.0 audience interactivity into its programme content since the early 2000s (Producer A, personal communication, November 10, 2015; NZ Listener, 2001, 2003). Using content analysis, this study will examine the interactive content as broadcast on the network and will survey RNZ National producers and hosts to gain their perspectives on the effect the inclusion of audience interactivity has had on the relationship between RNZ National and its listeners.

New Zealand radio listeners are well served. The Radio Communications Act 1989 and the Broadcasting Act 1989 made New Zealand “arguably the most deregulated media environment in the world” (Shanahan, 2000), as well as being one of the most competitive

markets (Shanahan & Duignan, 2005, p.19). The number of allocated radio frequencies rose from under 100, pre-deregulation, to over 800 by 2004 (Shanahan & Duignan, 2005). The New Zealand radio listener can choose from a rich variety of programming including the popular commercial music and talk formats, *iwi* radio (Māori tribal stations), ethnic, religious, access and community stations. Two networks, Radio Live owned by Mediaworks, and Newstalk ZB owned by New Zealand Music and Entertainment (NZME), dominate the commercial talk radio genre.

Within this crowded radio landscape, RNZ is New Zealand's only public broadcaster. It comprises four networks: RNZ Concert (a fine music network), RNZ International which provides a news and current affairs service to the Pacific Islands, an AM network which relays Parliamentary proceedings and RNZ National, the case study for this research project. RNZ National describes its programme content as news and current affairs, documentaries and features, drama and music (RNZ, 2016a). The Nielsen All NZ Radio Survey for the fourth quarter of 2015, the most recent survey available at the time of writing, shows that RNZ National has a weekly cumulative audience of 488,000, or 14% of the 15+ audience making it the second most popular station nationwide. Its share of 10.3% places it first among all stations in New Zealand (among people 15+) (RNZ, 2016b). It can be seen from these figures, that despite considerable competition, New Zealand's public radio broadcaster performs well in the national marketplace.

RNZ is a crown entity funded by the New Zealand taxpayer via New Zealand on Air, a government broadcast funding agency. RNZ is required to adhere to the principles and objectives of the *Radio New Zealand Charter*, which is revised every five years. The latest revisioning occurred in April 2016 (RNZ, 2016c). The new charter, as it relates to content, states that RNZ's "purpose" is to reflect that "freedom of thought and expression are foundations of democratic society ... and as a public service broadcaster [RNZ] plays an essential role in exercising these freedoms". Under 5(c) and (d) of "delivery", RNZ must "endeavour" to provide a public radio service that is: "challenging, innovative and engaging" and to "foster critical thought and informed and wide-ranging debate" (RNZ, 2016c). As part of this study, I will examine how content generated by audience interactivity on RNZ National contributes to these goals.

Reflecting the Web 2.0 environment, RNZ states that the new charter will reflect their "role as a modern public service broadcaster ... [and it will] meet the demands of

audiences beyond the traditional radio listener, extending our reach to those choosing to use smartphones, tablets and other devices anywhere and at any time” (Bagge, 2016). Under 8B4(c) it includes reference to “delivery platforms”, a term not used in the previous charter. Under 5(n) the charter states that RNZ must endeavour to “take advantage of the most effective means of delivery”. This recognition of the importance of multi-platform delivery was also highlighted when Radio New Zealand changed its branding to ‘RNZ’ in 2015. In an interview on his own network at the time of the change, RNZ Chief Executive Paul Thompson described it as a reflection that the former Radio New Zealand was now a multi-platform broadcaster and that, as a medium, radio “was no longer the only show in town” (RNZ, 2015). The adoption of the RNZ acronym, he said, reflected a similar move by other public broadcasters including ABC (Australia) and NPR in the United States, and for the same reason: “to illustrate what they do, not just on radio”. He stated that RNZ was changing “because our audiences are changing” (RNZ, 2015). In stating this, Thompson was acknowledging the new “centre stage” (Bird, 2011, p.503) role played by the audience in public radio broadcasting internationally. The changes made to the Radio New Zealand charter¹ show that RNZ is now following this trend.

Recognition of the role of the radio audience underpins some of the earliest literature on radio and interactivity. Dramatist Bertolt Brecht’s statement that radio would be “the finest possible communication ... if it knew how to receive as well as transmit ... how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship” (Brecht, 1993, p.15) is often quoted (Hendy, 2000; Hutchby, 1996, 2006; Griffen-Foley, 2010; Lacey, 2013; Levin & Jennings, 2008; Mowitt, 2011). Brecht wanted to make “artistic action” relevant and useful for the audience (Glahn, 2014, p.7). In his 1932 document *Radio as an Apparatus of Communication*, Brecht suggested that radio, a “stripling” (p.15) form of one-sided technology should concentrate on “communication” rather than just “distribution” (p.15). Brecht made the important distinction between the concepts of communication (two-way) and delivery (one-way) at an early stage of radio, when its potential as a medium was still to be fully developed. In this he appears to be calling for programming that allowed a broadcaster and listener to interact. Brecht’s contemporary and close friend, the philosopher Walter Benjamin, also discussed ways in which ways the listener could be more involved in the broadcasting process. Levin and Jennings (2008) refer to his vision for a two-way exchange as “the Brechtian refunctioning of an

¹ Despite the rebranding to RNZ, the name of the charter remains as the Radio New Zealand Charter.

entire medium” (p.349). Benjamin, a “principal commentator ... on [the] new media forms” emerging from Europe at that time (Jennings, Doherty & Levin, 2008, p. 4), stated that “it is in the spirit of radio” that as many people as possible get the opportunity to be heard (Benjamin, 2008, p.391). The political context in which Brecht and Benjamin were calling for the audience to be heard is important. Issues of freedom of speech were in the spotlight in their homeland of Germany in 1932; in January 1933, Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. Benjamin suggested that by creating a closer connection with an audience, by “appealing to them [the listeners] as experts”, the radio industry would not only improve its programme content but would attract more listeners (Benjamin, 2008, p.392). Brecht and Benjamin envisaged content that gave listeners a ‘voice’, turning radio from a one-way broadcaster into a two-way, interactive medium.

Giving voice to the audience was the aim of two enterprising radio hosts who in 1932 dangled a microphone out of the window of their Houston radio studio and on live radio proceeded to ask passers-by for their opinions of current events (Loviglio, 2002, Simmons, 2009). *Vox Pop* was the first programme to be comprised wholly of the public’s voices and opinions (Loviglio, 2002). It is relevant to this study in two ways. Not only was it an early example of how content generated by the audience could be used as programme material, but also its longevity as a programme (16 years), indicates that its interactive content was popular with listeners. Loviglio states that *Vox Pop* contributed to the creation of “one of broadcasting’s most enduring figures, the man in the street” (p.94).

“The man in the street” was also the subject of one of the earliest recorded events of audience interactivity in New Zealand. In 1927, five years prior to Brecht’s and Benjamin’s call for the public to play a greater role in broadcasting, 1YA (Auckland) radio announcer John Prentice, invited callers to use their telephones to ask him questions on international issues.

The station’s telephones were so arranged that the voice of the questioner went on the air as well as the answer by Mr Prentice. As a result the atmosphere of a ‘round the table’ chat was conveyed to listeners (Downes & Harcourt, 1976, p.30).

New Zealand Radio magazine noted “the possibilities of wireless broadcasting in assisting the man on the street to have a general knowledge of international events” that this concept would offer (*New Zealand Radio* as cited by Downes and Harcourt, 1976, p. 30). Downes and Harcourt state “There, in essence, was what became known in radio 50 years later as the ‘talkback programme’”; the potential for the public to directly contribute to the on-air output of public radio had been recognised and acted on. Technologically,

Prentice's experiment can be seen as innovative. However, critical assessment would note that unlike talkback, which allows the audience to express opinions, the listeners in this case were seeking answers from a presumably informed host. To paraphrase Gauntlett (2011, p.9), in the tradition of public service radio, they were "being told" rather than doing the telling.

The early years of radio were also marked by the importance of the written letter (Simmons, 2009). Simmons' study of radio fan mail from American archives lists the key reasons for writing: to express an opinion, to correct errors in content, to make a personal connection with the host and to request content. In New Zealand, Radio Broadcasting Company² listeners interacted with their favourite on-air host by writing letters with messages and requests for birthday greetings. In 1930 the resignation of 2YA children's programme host Aunt Gwen prompted "a flood of letters and gifts" from her listeners (Willis, 2008, p. 37). Young listeners to the 4YA *Children's Hour* could expect to hear their name read out on their birthday and this could include instructions such as "Bruce, if you follow the string tied to the wash-house door you will find a surprise in the garden" (Webster, 2000, p.31). Aunt Daisy (real name, Maud Ruby Basham) who broadcast from 1930 to 1963 (Downes, 2012), was receiving letters from listeners as early as 1931 (Downes & Harcourt, 1976). 26 years later, her biographer Fry (1957) noted that daily mail was still arriving for her at the radio station. The Reverend Colin Scrimgeour, an important and popular figure in the establishment of commercial radio in New Zealand in the 1930s and 1940s (see below), received so much fan mail that it took 12 typists to keep up with the replies (Renwick, 2011). Simmons (2009) cites Bogart's 1949 study of fan mail that found that it allowed an audience to "talk back, by which communication can resume its two-way flow ... It is a way by which the listener can participate more fully in the experience of 'listening'" (p. 449). Auckland station 1ZB opened in October 1936 and within six weeks was receiving 2,000 cards or letters every day. A talent quest on the station attracted 20,000 votes. The 'Happiness Club' attracted 13,000 members, and letters "filled a daily session" (Downes & Harcourt, 1976, p.103). Bogart (as cited by Simmons, 2000) stated "the person who writes a fan letter is impelled by the notion that his action is serving some useful or important end" (p. 449)

² The Radio Broadcasting Company of New Zealand (RBC) was formed in 1925 when the government came to an arrangement with private operators to provide state controlled radio in the four main centres (Downes & Harcourt, 1976; Day, 1994)

Writing a letter to a radio station to request a song or recorded item continued to be a popular form of audience participation as recently as the 1980s. As a radio programmer on *The Tonight Show*³ in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I compiled a weekly request programme, reading each letter to determine the two key elements integral to each request: the song, and the name of the requester. The playing of the song was just as important as making the listener feel he or she were a participant in the programme. As a child in the 1960s I listened to and participated in the Radio Northland *Junior Request Session* on Sunday mornings, and in the 1970s, as a teenager, to *Choice of the People* on Saturday evening. I recall my own excitement as a young listener on hearing my name read out. I felt included. Scannell (1996) writes that as a radio listener “I am not an eavesdropper ... *I am spoken to*. (p.13, emphasis author’s own). Douglas (1999) writes of the deliberately inclusive language used by the DJs (disc jockeys) of the 1950s and 1960s. “‘I’ the DJ try to deliver what ‘you’ the audience like or request ... implying that ‘I’ the DJ know and care about ‘you’” (p.230). Within this form of interactivity, the listener becomes a “distinct, unique individual” (p.230). Live performances including church services, community ‘sing-alongs’ and dance bands, broadcast from studios or external venues, were also early forms of audience interactivity (Downs and Harcourt, 1936). In 1931, the Reverend Scrimgeour (also known as Scrim or Uncle Scrim) began broadcasting to a live audience from his ‘radio church’, the non-denominational Fellowship of the Friendly Road, on privately owned station 1ZR (Renwick, 2011). Its popularity was confirmed when the owners were forced to sell the station and 7,000 congregants attended the meeting that followed (Edwards, 1971)⁴.

Yet another example of interactivity was the live radio quiz show such as the popular 1950s programme *It’s in the Bag*, hosted by Selwyn Toogood (Phillips, J., 2016). In the live environment of the quiz show, the audience could take part on two levels. Quiz participants were chosen from the audience, while the remaining audience participated through their laughter and applause. Loviglio (2002) notes that in 1930s America quiz shows asked questions of “‘spectacular unimportance’ to the men and women who build America” (p.91), once again referencing the relationship between the media and the ‘average citizen’, the ‘man in the street’. It is interesting to note that the notion of a

³ A daily evening networked programme made by the formerly commercial Radio New Zealand.

⁴ The phrase: the ‘man on the street’, is mentioned several times in this study in relation to various texts. It is worth noting that Scrim, in reaching out to his audience, used the phrase as the title of his Sunday evening broadcasts in depression-era New Zealand (Renwick, 2011, Edwards, 1971, Downes & Harcourt, 1976)

relationship between the average citizen and broadcaster was not a theme echoed in the running of the BBC, the public service broadcasting model on which New Zealand's first government run broadcaster, the RBC, was based (Day, 1994). Scannell (1990) refers to a 1923 BBC broadcasting committee report in which the chairman describes broadcasting as a public utility and states 'the control of such a potential power over public opinion and the life of the nation ought to remain with the state' (Sykes as cited in Scannell, 1990, p.12). Scannell (1996) states that the BBC "particularly in the era of its monopoly, was suffused with an assumption of knowing better than its listeners what they wanted or needed" (p. 11). Such an attitude precluded the need for input from, or interaction with, the audience that the BBC and other public broadcasters were ostensibly there to serve.

The next significant marker in the history of audience interaction on New Zealand radio was the introduction of regular talkback radio on October 4, 1965⁵. The programme was aimed specifically at the stay-at-home housewife (Kelso, 1980). In 1967 the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC) experimented with an early evening interview and talkback programme called *Party Line*, hosted by presenter Paddy O'Donnell whose style was based on Australian talkback host John Laws (Francis 2002). By the 1970s talkback programming aimed at a wider audience featured in the schedules of Radio Windy in Wellington and Radio i in Auckland. Radio Pacific, also in Auckland, adopted a talkback format in 1984 (Francis, 2002). In 1987, 1ZB in Auckland switched to a newstalk format (Francis, 2006). Francis (2002), writing on talkback radio in New Zealand, suggests that as a genre, it can be framed either as "a symbol of democracy and media responsiveness" or "an index of social alienation and media manipulation" (p.96). Turner (2009) points out that in its infancy, talkback on Australian radio broke with "generations of media convention" (p.415) by giving the "enduring figure" mentioned earlier, 'the man on the street', a voice. However, he states that since then, on many occasions the hosts have "deliberately set out to be 'bad' – to shock, to provoke and to insult" and to turn "confrontations" into entertainment (p.416). Levin (1987) refers to talkback as "the province of the proletarian discontent" (p.xiii). Douglas (2002) refers to talkback's anti-feminism nature and the "male hysteric" it created on American radio in the 1980s (p.486). Despite this, or because of it, talkback became an increasingly popular radio format for a number of reasons (Chignall, 2009). First, it could be networked easily,

⁵ Turner (2007) cites 1967 as the year regular talkback began in Australia while in the USA, Romney (2014) tells of KFI (Los Angeles) host Ben Hunter who encouraged listeners to call his night time programme to discuss current events in the late 1950s.

thereby amortising the costs of production and a popular host. Second, technology allowed producer and host to communicate easily during the production process and finally Chignall suggests that by this time, particularly in America, the audience were wanting to have their voice heard on issues that effected them. Talkback's popularity could also be attributed to its immediacy. Prior to the arrival of Web 2.0 technology (discussed below), it was the only form of radio interactivity (other than having a live audience in the studio) that provided this advantage. While a seemingly 'open-to-all' process, talkback content goes through a strict gatekeeping process. Francis (2002) describes it as "weed[ing] out nutters, drunks, repeat callers, those that can't string two words together ... [and] whingers" (p.102). Gatekeeping by ideology is addressed by McGregor (1996) who found that a "community of likeness" exists (p.29) particularly in political talkback. A host attracts listeners with the same ideology (McGregor, 1996) which implies that those with opposing views are less likely to call.

As discussed, talkback was only one genre of interactivity available to radio stations up until the end of the millennium on. In the case of RNZ National, letters and off-air phone-calls provided interactive audience content for RNZ National up until that time. (Producer A, personal communication, November 10, 2015). Tim Berners-Lee developed the World Wide Web (Web 1.0) in 1989, but Web 2.0 offered enhanced possibilities of collaboration and interactivity (Flew, 2008). Charles (2012) describes it as "the interactive incarnation of the internet" (p.8). As it pertains to interactivity, "the quality of participation increases as the numbers participating increase" (Flew, 2008, p.17). Hendy (2013) compares the development of the Web 2.0 environment to Gutenberg's invention of the printing press (p.108). Web 2.0 technology allows for listeners to comment, with relative immediacy, on what is being broadcast at any one time through email, SMS, and social networking (SNS) posts including Facebook and Twitter. In 2006, *Time* magazine, in their Person of the Year edition, described Web 2.0 as a "massive social experiment". The magazine famously named their Person of the Year 2006 as "You" for "seizing the reins of the global media". The magazine congratulated the audience for their willingness to contribute their time at no cost and in doing so "beating the pros at their own game" (Grossman, 2006). The magazine noted that it was the collective nature of the contributions on the World Wide Web that made a difference. In essence the magazine was acknowledging the growing influence of the interactive audience.

RNZ was an early adopter of interactive technology as can be seen in radio programme listings beginning in mid-2001. The *New Zealand Listener* magazine⁶ of July 28, 2001 included, for the first time, an email address for RNZ National (at that time known as National Radio) listeners, under the listing for a Saturday morning segment called *You Ask the Questions* (NZ Listener, 2001). Also debuting in that edition was a website address for recipes, presumably for the cooking segment also listed. Over the following 18 months, the number of email addresses used within the network's listings grew. The January 20, 2003 edition of the magazine included, for the first time email addresses for all three key live-talk and interview morning programmes on Saturday mornings, Sunday mornings and *Nine to Noon* (Monday to Friday) (NZ Listener, 2003). Radio listings for commercial networks Newstalk ZB and Radio Live did not include emails or websites at that time. Producer A tells of an "unofficial trial" on RNZ National in "2005/2006" in which listeners texts were read out within the *All Night* programme (midnight – 6am) (personal communication, November 10, 2015). The positive reaction from listeners led to texts being used more widely. The use of emails as content followed which led to the inclusion of content from social media sites Facebook and Twitter (Manager A, personal communication, November 12, 2015). Today audience interactivity in live-talk programmes features across all day-parts of RNZ, between interviews and stories, and often leading up to the hourly news bulletins.

RNZ National refers to the audience interactivity it broadcasts as 'feedback'. For this research project, feedback is defined as the edited, filtered end-product of audience interactivity that the listeners hear. The source of feedback is the 'raw' interactivity as sent by the audience, using SMS, email or social media posts. I have chosen to label this source material, as reactive audience interactivity (RAI). This differentiates it from the end product, feedback, and also highlights its key feature – it is a reaction to what has been broadcast. This study will look at what motivates a listener to react, to put their feelings into a message and send it to a public broadcaster knowing it will be broadcast.

This study is important as it examines the changing face of public service radio, a genre of radio that is, by definition, "publicly accountable" (Hendy, 2013, p.130) and the new terms used to define evolving forms of PSB. This research project will begin by reviewing the literature on radio interactivity and public radio (chapter two). Chapter three outlines

⁶ New Zealand's long running weekly radio and television listings magazine.

the methodologies used in this study. The reasons for choosing both a case study and survey methods of research will be outlined. The methodology chapter will also explain the choice of grounded theory as the theoretical framework for this study. In chapter four, the data analysis and findings of this study will be broken down into a content analysis of the recorded content from RNZ National, and a thematic analysis of the survey of RNZ National staff. The findings of the content analysis will reveal the popular topics of feedback and possible motivations for participants to interact. It will also discuss the language used in the feedback and the feedback process. The thematic analysis will examine the views of RNZ National staff on what Web 2.0 interactivity has contributed to RNZ National as a public broadcaster. Chapter five will summarise the conclusions that can be made from this study and suggest further areas of research.

2. Literature Review

2.0 Chapter Introduction

Radio's formative role in mass media culture and its ability to adapt to consumer needs and trends have made it a popular topic of media studies scholarship. Its current role in the Web 2.0 environment has been the focus of scholarship by Bird (2011), Bonet, Ferna and Ribes (2011), Bonini (2014), Bonini and Sellas (2014), Enli (2008), Ewart and Ames (2016), Gillman (2007), Hendy (2013), Jakubowicz (2006, 2007), Jedzejewski (2014), Kung (2002), and others. This aim of this research paper is to narrow the focus and look at how a public radio broadcaster and its audience have adapted to the new technology and how this may have changed the relationship between the two. As New Zealand broadcaster RNZ National is used as the case study, I will begin by reviewing the literature on New Zealand's radio system. I will then discuss the scholarship on the nature of public broadcasting, the impact of new media and what it means for both content producers and listeners, and the role of the radio gatekeeper in a participatory culture.

2.1 The New Zealand Texts

Much of the New Zealand literature on radio comprises personal memoirs and histories of broadcasting institutions or personalities. Former broadcasters Peter Downes and Peter Harcourt's *Voices in the Air* (1976) documents the history of the first 50 years of radio in New Zealand. The story of the influential and charismatic Reverend Colin Scrimgeour, an important figure in the formation of commercial radio in New Zealand is told in two texts: *Scrim, The Man With a Mike*, (Renwick, 2011), and *Scrim, Radio Rebel in Retrospect* (Edwards, 1971). *The Aunt Daisy Story* (Fry, 1957) profiles one of New Zealand's famous radio personalities. In *Inside Talk Radio* (2002) and *ZB, The Voice of an Iconic Radio Station* (2006) former talk radio manager Bill Francis writes of the history and success of the talkback format in New Zealand. Memoirs include autobiographies by talk and talkback presenters Paul Holmes, *Holmes* (1999), *Leighton Smith: Beyond the Microphone* (2013), and Doreen Kelso, *Person to Person with Doreen* (1980). Blackburn (2007) and Gifford (2006) tell the story of the Radio Hauraki pirates and the beginnings of private radio in New Zealand.

Media historian Patrick Day's two texts *The Radio Years* (1994) and *Voice and Vision* (2000) are the most scholarly of the New Zealand literature on radio. They provide a

comprehensive history of the institutional and political processes that shaped the first 90 years of New Zealand radio history. The first volume begins with Hertz's experiment in 1888 confirming the theory that electro-magnetic waves exist, and covers the development of radio broadcasting in New Zealand until the late 1940s and the first experimental television broadcasts. Day's second volume charts the changing structure of state owned broadcasting in New Zealand from 1950 until the end of the millennium including the sale of the commercial arm of Radio New Zealand in 1996 leaving the non-commercial arm, now known as RNZ, as New Zealand's public radio broadcaster. Day also writes of the first example of regularly scheduled audience interactivity in New Zealand in 1965, *Person to Person*, hosted by Doreen Kelso, as mentioned above. *The Great New Zealand Radio Experiment* (Shanahan & Neill, eds, 2005) is an important text as it covers a defining period in New Zealand radio history from 1989 to 2004 in which the country became "arguably the most deregulated media environment in the world" (p.17). As it pertains to public broadcaster Radio New Zealand (as it was known then) this era is described as having "all the elements of an 'upstairs -downstairs' drama" (Zanker & Pauling, 2005) as issues with funding and management came to the fore. In his chapter on entrepreneurship in commercial radio, Johnston (2005) predicts that the next "wave of innovation" (p 65) may be concerned with content, and the business models used by radio.

The content of political talkback radio is the subject of McGregor's (1996) study, *The Rhetoric of Political Talkback Radio in New Zealand: Combustion or Coherence?* She uses Aristotle's notion of rhetorical proof to establish the level of rationality offered by talkback callers, and framing theory to study the quality of argument put forward by callers and salience of the topics discussed. McGregor finds that, in the main, those who are likely to take part in this form of audience interactivity are likely to choose to listen and respond to radio hosts who they perceive as having a similar ideology. Both Francis (2002) and McGregor (1996) provide important commentary on the levels and types of relationships that New Zealand audiences have with talk radio. It is a relationship that mirrors the talk radio experience in similar societies around the world including Britain, Australia and North America. Most of the texts mentioned here discuss the development and dynamics of that relationship in a general radio context. The particular focus of this study will be the relationship that exists between public radio and its audience.

2.2 The Nature of Public Service Broadcasting

Much of the scholarship on public service radio is included within studies and texts on public service broadcasting as an overall concept. Hendy's (2013) *Public Service Broadcasting* is both a history and a contemporary evaluation of an institution originally formulated as what he describes as a "middle-class desire to improve the less fortunate" (p.7). The text looks at the origins of public service broadcasting (PSB) from a British perspective and provides an indepth analysis of its principles, its ethos and its future. Hendy's view of PSB is at odds with Tracey (1998) who predicted the demise of PSB, and Shirky (2010) who, while saving most of his pessimism for television, sees little room for PSB in an era of new media. Hendy takes a positive view of the future of PSB and cites the BBC's investment in digital radio technology in the mid-1990s as an example. Hendy also notes that not only have both public service radio and television⁷ survived a digital onslaught, both media are now using the Web 2.0 to enhance their listeners' and viewers' experience. He describes PSB as being in "surprisingly robust form" (p.127).

The attitude of broadcaster to audience is discussed in the literature on PSB. Day (1994, p.3) uses the term "one-way". Hendy (2013, p.7) and Jones, (2009, p.201) use "paternalism". In writing on the attitude of the BBC in the "paradigms of the past" (p.201), Jones (2009) describes a one-to-many broadcast environment; the [BBC] broadcasters chose what the audiences could and could not see and listen to (p.201). Enli (2008) uses the term 'ambivalent' to describe the relationship (p. 107) and notes that this is at odds with those who compare PSB to the public sphere, a public space ideal where discourse can take place free of political or economic influence. Coleman (2004) is critical of PSB's "tendency ... to transmit without receiving, to speak without being required to listen" (p.93). Referring to media audiences in general, Gauntlett (2011) states that twentieth century audiences experienced "the era of 'sit back and be told' media" (p.9). Hendy (2013) suggests that the term PSB "speaks of ... cultural elites and top down media" (p.1). However, he takes a cautiously positive view that the concept of a public broadcaster "hasn't been disappearing so much as being re-invented – as a bottom-up phenomenon" (p.109).

Moe (2010) suggests that greater audience participation is the answer to those who criticise PSB for its failure to serve the public. He takes this further, suggesting that it is

⁷ Unlike Australia and Britain, New Zealand does not have a government funded public television service.

the job of the media to actively encourage this public participation. However, McChesney (1997), an advocate for the public to become more aware and engaged in the political economy of media (Schwartz, 2014), warns that in the United States “media corporations ... make unusually powerful adversaries for proponents of media reform”. He attributes this not only to their economic and political power, but also because they have the ability to “control the media that must provide much of the information citizens need to evaluate media conduct” (p.7-8). McChesney makes a veiled reference to public service broadcasting when, in discussing the public sphere, he suggests that if “the state or business or some combination of the two” take control of the participatory aspect, the public sphere loses its capacity to operate democratically (p.10). He cites the media in the United States where he claims commercial interests dominate.

A common theme in the scholarship is that with the advent of Web 2.0 technology, PSB, including radio, should reflect the expansion of its reach and rebrand itself by replacing the word ‘broadcasting’ with something more appropriate. Radio began as wireless telegraphy, a form of one-way communication, (Day, 1994, Lacey, 2013). The term ‘broadcasting’ has a rural provenance and refers to the open-handed distribution of seeds on to the ground. (Day, 1994). When radio’s signal began to be dispersed “to all and sundry” the term ‘broadcasting’ was used to describe the process (Day, 1994, p.1). Bonet, Ferna and Ribes (2011, p.177) and Jakubowicz (2007 p.39) suggests replacing public service broadcasting with public service *media*.⁸ Jakubowicz believes this places the public “as an active partner rather than ... a passive receiver” (p.44). Hendy (2013) also posits public service *media* as well as public service *communication* (p.106). Jones (2009) agrees with the communication label (p.204). She believes the growth of internet interaction moves PSB away from the “one-to-many” to a “many-to-many” and a “many-to-one” interactive model (p.206). Another label is public service *interactivity* as suggested by Bracken and Balfour (2004); this once again reflects the move towards a more dynamic relationship with the audience. Jones (2009) states that *PSB 2.0* can be used to describe PSB in the age of the internet (p. 205)

2.3 New Media and its Meaning

The body of literature on the impact of new technology and its contribution to audience interactivity is large. The terms for the new environment created by technology, including

⁸ All italics in this paragraph have been added to indicate new labels.

'new media', 'interactive', 'the Web 2.0 environment' and 'participatory culture' are used almost interchangeably in scholarship to refer to a new paradigm for both broadcasters and audience. Jenkins (1991) uses the term "participatory culture" media in his work on audience interactivity: *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. This, along with *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (Jenkins, 2006) have become important texts in new media studies. Jenkins states that audiences are arming themselves with new technologies and locating themselves "at the intersection of old and new media" and "demanding the right to participate" (Jenkins, 2006, p.24). Jones (2009) states that the Web 2.0 environment encompasses "new interactive web services and possibilities characterised by the freedom to share media content and to participate in its production" (p.205). Gauntlett (2011) provides a communal gardening analogy to explain the Web 2.0 environment: people tending one shared garden rather than working on individual plots (p.5). He notes the ease of use of Web 2.0 technology and how that enables people to exchange learning, to share resources and to collaborate on projects (p.12-13). Jenkins (2006) states:

We are in a critical moment of transition during which the old rules are open to change ... The question is whether the public is ready to push for greater participation or willing to settle for the same old relations to mass media (p.254).

Jenkins view of broadcast media as being at a critical juncture is echoed by Hammer and Gulyas (2013) in relation to PSB. They describe public service media [sic] as being "at a crossroads" in terms of "what [content] means in the digital age" (p.vii). Jenkins points to the normalising of audience participation within the media and notes that the focus is no longer on whether it is occurring, but on "the terms of our participation" (p.257). He asserts that accommodating the interests of the audience is one way in which the media industry is able to compete for audience. The new found power of the participant is a common theme in the literature on participatory culture and social media. In his text *Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age*, Clay Shirky (2010) labels the media model in which content producers were considered the professionals, and the consumers as merely the amateurs, the "twentieth century model" (p.42).

Fuchs (2014) writes that in an information society, power can be defined by the amount of influence a person can have on that society. Jenkins (2007) points to the "new kind of cultural power emerging as fans bond together within larger communities, pool their information, shape each other's opinions, and develop a greater self-consciousness about

their shared agendas and common interests” (pp.362-63). Shirky (2010) agrees with this concept of power in numbers. He describes any media to which the public have open access as a resource that can be used to coordinate a mass response. He describes media communication methods, such as movies or books, as using “one-way public media” and a phone call as a two-way private media. He suggests that participatory culture offers a third option in which “media can now slide from one to the other” (pp.55-56). There appears to be a consensus amongst scholars that the era of participatory culture, and with it a new era of ‘participant power’, is here to stay; “the many wresting power from the few” (Van Dijck, p.41). As it relates to PSB and radio specifically, “the few” are the broadcasters.

Some scholars have considered the drawbacks of participatory culture for broadcasters and journalists. Shirky (2010) writes that some in this profession are alarmed at the amount of citizen journalism now available. Hendy (2013) notes the struggle between broadcasters who follow the new media ethos of participatory culture, and those who prefer the old media concept of public service. He asks should public service take the form of giving the public what they ask for, or should the decision on content remain with the broadcasters themselves to decide on behalf of the public? Digital technology has given those who use media a “more prominent position” (Moe, 2010, p.99) and “new feedback opportunities” (Enli, 2008, p.106). Fuchs (2014) writes of the negative aspects of the corporatisation of the media: “An Internet that is dominated by corporations ... can never, in the theory of participatory democracy be participatory and the cultural expressions of it cannot be expressions of participation” (p.65). The ‘downside’ of participatory culture as discussed in the literature would appear to be focussed on the concept of trust. The question is asked: can ‘amateurs’ and those with corporate interests be trusted with the job of creating content, and can the public be trusted to distinguish between what is credible content and what is not.

The literature on the advantages of interactivity is, in the main, focused on its democratising possibilities. In writing on the potential for radio to become more democratised in the Web 2.0 environment, Hendy (2000) stresses the two-way nature of the medium and that “all radio adopts the language of democracy” (p.196). In talk formats generally, radio allows people a voice and access to those with influence and power via talkback programmes. He notes, without actually indicating agreement, that critics of talk

radio point to its tendency to trivialise important issues through its “simplistic and fleeting attentions” (p.196). However, he suggests that radio performs two democratic functions. The first of these is to provide a form of public sphere by mediating the views of the listener, and second to provide an outlet for those who may have difficulty finding expression in other media (p.196). American public radio host Diane Rehm suggests that talkback radio is “the epitome of participatory democracy in the electronic age” (Rehm,1993, p.70). She believes that hearing others voice an opinion that concurs with their own gives people the encouragement and justification to contribute and become an active listener. She refers to it in her title as chatting “over the electronic back fence” (Rehm, 1993). She notes that some politicians and journalists are learning to listen to what is being said in these particular public spheres.

Coleman (2004) states that new media is highly likely to “invigorate” democracy (p.92) and that media producers must look to interactivity with citizens rather than falling back on interviewing regular spokespeople to provide commentary on specific subjects. Washbourne (2010) discusses the theme of democracy as it affects all media and suggests that if media audiences are connected to public life and provided with wide ranging and accurate information about public life, the media moves toward a democratic ideal. McChesney (1997) suggests that a democracy can work at its best if there is: “an effective system of political communication, broadly construed, that informs and engages the citizenry, drawing people meaningfully into the polity” (p.5). Hendy (2013) looks to the new digital public space as a place where information becomes knowledge for many. Jakubowicz (2006) states that the “digital space is a public space, an increasingly important part of the wider public realm” (pp.13-14). While scholars would appear to agree on the democratising impact of new media, it is the role that the audience plays in the digital space that divides media scholars.

Futurist Alvin Toffler (1980) recognised the changing role of the audience in his text *The Third Wave*. In the following description of how the media space was evolving, he could be describing Jenkins’ (2006) participatory culture: “smaller de-massified groups receive and send large amounts of their own imagery to one another. As the entire society shifts toward Third Wave diversity, the new media reflect and accelerate the process” (Toffler, 1980, p.181). He suggested a new term to describe the members of those groups: “prosumers”, the result of the “healing of the historic breach between consumer and producer” (p.27). Bruns (2006) coined another portmanteau term to describe the morphing of user

and producer: the 'produser'. He suggests that as the term produser becomes more accepted and utilised, it could inspire citizens to become more active in their pursuit of democracy (p.7). Bird, (2011), Fuchs (2014), Jones (2009), Jenkins (2006) also refer to produsers in their work. Bruns states that there is a move away from passive engagement by media audiences to the active and interactive (p.7). Bird (2011) writes "the once despised fan has moved to centre stage" (p.503), and cites Rosen's phrase to describe them: "the people formerly known as the audience" (p.511). Bird (2011) states that that not all media users should be considered produsers, "unless we regard every Twitter and Facebook update as an act of creativity" (p.512). Shirky (2010) asserts that in the digital media paradigm, audiences can now "create value for one another" (p.42).

However, there are critical responses to this concept of the citizen-journalist or citizen-producer. Key among them is the notion that citizens, possibly unwittingly, are providing unpaid labour to an already wealthy media industry. (Fuchs, 2014) states that this commodifies users. Carr (2006) agrees and refers to this free labour as "digital sharecropping" and notes that for the platform owner, the Web 2.0 environment provides "an incredibly efficient mechanism to harvest the economic value of the free labour provided by the very many ... into the hands of the very few" (para 1). Shirky (2010) takes the opposing view and suggests that those who are providing the free labour are not concerned about the lack of remuneration for their efforts. He writes that this may be because the motivation of the participator to contribute to a digital platform is not fiscal but more a desire to be part of a community. Shirky suggests that professional content creators who complain about digital sharecropping are doing so because they feel threatened by the competition provided by the amateur creatives. In his text *Public Service Broadcasting*, Hendy (2013) questions the quality of information provided by produsers or citizen-journalism, and cites Andrew Keen, one of the "pioneering proponents of this 'declinist school'" (p.119). In Keen's (2007) text *The Cult of the Amateur* he is particularly critical of amateur involvement in the creation of news content as he believes that unlike trained journalists and producers, 'amateurs' with no editorial oversight, may produce material that is false and lacking in depth. Two key themes appear in the scholarship opposing the use of citizens as content creators: the exploitation of the citizens and the potential for poor quality journalism and content.

The impact of the new media environment specifically on PSB is the subject of Kung's (2002) work. Key findings from this are the notion of the new found power of the

consumer as regards who creates the content, the move away from the one-to-many model to a two-way model, and the moving target that is the definition of 'quality' programme content. Kung notes that where the label of 'quality' was once used to describe "intellectual and artistic merit", in the new media era, the label is now used for content that is new and fresh. Kung references Marshall McLuhan (1964) in noting that under the old media model, it was the message not the medium that counted (p.7). Under the new media model however, it is both message and medium that count.

While Kung (2002) addresses the effect of new technology on PSB content, Hendy (2013) addresses its effect on radio as a mass communicator and its transition into the digital public space. In essence, Hendy believes it is an easy fit. He cites radio's qualities of mobility, its immediacy and its ability to communicate on a one-to-one basis. Thompson (2011) speaks of radio's "intrinsic resilience in the digital environment" (para.14). "Resilience" is also a quality cited by Oliveira, Stachyra and Starky, 2014 (p.iii) as being inherent to radio. Geller (2011) points to accessibility through the array of portable interactive devices now available, while Lindgren and Phillips see radio's versatility as the reason radio has been able to reinvent itself to make the most of the Web 2.0 environment. Jedrzejewski (2014) sees new media technology as a determining factor in how radio develops as a medium. Bonet, Ferna and Ribes (2011) discuss this issue specifically in relation to public service radio but note that in undergoing the transition it must do so without abandoning its main remit as a public service broadcaster. In his work on PBS, Jakubowicz (2006) states that new digital technologies within the BBC can better serve their public remit. He provides the example of the remit to "encourage participation in public debate" and how new media will make this easier. RNZ's Chief Executive Paul Thompson asserts: "Radio is ... standing up better to the disruptions than other forms of media" (Grieve, 2015). Jones (2009) states that a public service broadcaster who does not use new media to place the active audience "at its centre" will not succeed (p.187). The scholarship appears to agree that the marriage of radio and new media was not only inevitable if radio was to survive as a medium, but that the union has been a success.

An indication of this success can be seen in another theme in the literature on interactivity: the amount of time people spend 'with' media. Deuze (2004) states that it is now greater than at any time in the past (p.124). However, being 'with' media does not necessarily constitute interactivity. An accurate estimation of the percentage of active versus non-

active listeners has eluded media scholars. Arthur's (2006) 'rule of thumb' makes an attempt. This states that out of 100 people who may be online at any one time, 89 will view content, 10 people will interact with it in some way, but only one will actually create content. However, these figures refer to 2006 online activity, specifically *YouTube*, and cannot be seen as a valid empirical study of active versus non-active audiences. Online interactivity such as uploading material to *YouTube* does not necessitate the uploader to 'perform' live on-air, or divulge opinions and identity in the way that calling a radio talkback show does. Shirky (2010) and others discuss active audiences from the 'why' perspective rather than the 'how many' perspective. Shirky suggests that due to technological change, people have a great deal more spare time than they used to, the 'cognitive surplus' referred to in his title. He looks at ways in which this surplus is used particularly in digital participatory activities such as social media. In Robins and Lozano (2010) a survey of listeners to American public broadcaster NPR's programme *Weekend Edition* looks at how listeners use social media to enhance their listening experience. Amongst the key findings is that those who followed *Weekend Edition* on social media feel a "closer connection" to the hosts and to the NPR community.

Connection with host and community is a theme noted by Turkle (2011) who suggests that a "digital connection [offers] the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship ... we'd rather text than talk" (p.1). Reflecting Shirky's (2010) earlier comment that active listeners are not motivated by financial gain, Gauntlett (2011) suggests that instead, active audiences participate because they want to be acknowledged as being part of a community of like-minded people. Gillman (2007) finds that the reasons that people call talkback radio include "genuinely seeking information", for company, and since the events of September 11 2001, "to make sense of their world" (p. 186). She notes that the use of new technology will allow callers to "push agendas" and that in the interactive age, audience participation will become "an ever more critical element of media content and use" (p.195). Lacey (2013) refers to the desire by active audiences to be part of a real-time conversation with others, and like Hendy (2000), notes the role played by emails, 'tweets' and SMS in achieving this (p. 49). Ewart and Ames' (2016) study of talkback listeners uses focus group methodology to look at why listeners choose email or SMS for communicating, over making a phone call to the station. The findings include that these methods of interaction are easy to use, they are accessible and, as they are not time dependent (there is no 'hold the line caller'); it is easier to interact. The

authors find that SMS and emails are now “largely accepted as regular methods of contributing” with talkback programmes (pp.91-92).

The literature indicates that modes of audience interactivity expanded from emails and SMS in the 2000s, to social media across all radio format genre around 2010. Early forms of social media are described by Hendy (2000) as “Internet discussion forums” (p. 195). The use of social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook and Twitter begin around 2010 (Berry, 2014; Bonini, 2014; Bonini & Sellas, 2014; Freeman, Klapczynski & Wood, 2012; Hendy, 2013; Lacey, 2013; Robins & Lozano, 2010; Rooke & Odame, 2013). Berry notes that in the radio production process, social media is becoming an important and necessary tool. Far from being seen as a rival to radio, it should instead be seen as complementary: a “tool to extend and enhance radio experiences” (p.11). Bonini (2014) describes social media as an “umbilical cord”, acting as a connection between listeners and producers, even after the radio has been turned off (p.82). In his comparative study of three radio stations (one music and two talk stations), he finds that in the multi-platform environment, participants are possibly producing more content than ever. “On the SNS stage everyone, radio makers and listeners alike, is able to perform, to take part, to alternatively play the role of the actor (contributing content) and of the audience (contributing comments and likes)” (p.82). Continuing his theatrical analogy, he plots the use of social media as content. Initially it is used to promote a story or segment (Act One). The audience interact while the show is live (Act Two), and then continue to interact when it is finished (Act Three).

Bonini and Sellas’ (2014) study of the use of social networking site Twitter finds that it is “one of the best new [social] media for drawing back the audience from the internet to radio and to improve the engagement with listeners” (p.125). They suggest that in the age of social media the concept of participation should be considered a principle of public service radio. However, Bonini and Sellas also note that Twitter’s main advantage is its “potential for connecting not for broadcasting” (p.144). Bonini (2014) and Bonini and Sellas (2014) are important to this study as they are both relatively recent, and they examine the use of the two key social media sites, Facebook and Twitter, sites used by RNZ National as interactive platforms. Also, in the case of Bonini and Sellas (2014), the subjects are public radio stations.

2.4 Gatekeeping in a Participatory Culture

In a participatory culture where Toffler's "de-massified groups" (Toffler, 1980, p.181), are receiving and sending communications to each other, and in the case of this study, to a publicly owned radio network, a form of gatekeeping is inevitable and necessary. The question remains however: how rigidly should the gate be monitored? This topic has been addressed by a number of writers. Hendy (2013) Shirkey (2010), Bonini (2014) and Bird (2011) discuss the role of the gatekeeper in the media in general and in the context of PSB. Hendy (2013) questions what the editorial and ethical gatekeeping protocols are for public service broadcasters when presented with 'user-generated content' or, in a news-specific environment, citizen-journalism. From an editorial perspective, he expresses concern as to whether the material submitted through new media is being checked for credibility and authenticity. He refers to those broadcasters in a gatekeeping role as the "new priesthood" and notes that what makes it to air, "is still concentrated in relatively few hands" (p.70). From an ethical perspective Hendy questions what it is that motivates the decision-making processes of the gatekeepers, that is the producers of the programmes in which audience participation is an integral part of the content, and asks if their decisions are made in the context of a collective culture. He notes that the fact that the power is still held by a relative few somewhat nullifies the democratising influence of wider access for participants through technological advances (p.70). Bonini (2014) defines the role of the producer-gatekeeper when sourcing material from social media as one in which content is provided by a few and transformed into a communication applicable to many. In this way it is transformed into mass media.

Bird (2011) describes the power of the media gatekeeper as "the power to inscribe privileged representations of the world that place constraints on actual audience practices, and may actually shape those practices" (p.508). If this is correct, this challenges and perhaps neutralises the democratising contribution attributed earlier to new media technology. Coleman and Ross (2002) state that while the participant may have been invited to take part in a programme, they are still required to follow the rules as laid down by the broadcaster. Douglas (2002), Jenkins (2006) and Coleman (2004) discuss the sometimes questionable nature of material offered up by contributing participants, and by implication, put the case for the gatekeeper. Jenkins (2006) states "When people take media into their own hands, the results can be wonderfully creative; they can also be bad news for all" (p.17). Hendy (2013) sums up the role of the gatekeeper; he describes it as a no-win task. He points out that audience on the left of the political spectrum will

consider the educated, middle-class producer/gatekeepers too far to the right, while those on the political right will consider the same producers as “progressive or permissive” (p.71). Tracey (2015) takes a functionalist view; he states that *someone* has to take the role of gatekeeper (emphasis mine). Whatever the stance of the gatekeeper, whether to censor, or ‘liven’ up content, their role is an ongoing requirement in most media environments, and particularly applicable to public service broadcasters such as RNZ National.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This literature review has surveyed New Zealand and international work on the role of audience interactivity in the media in general and radio in particular, the nature of PSB, the dynamics of the medium and its audience, and the role Web 2.0 technology has played in the significant reworking of this relationship. Madsen (2014) likens this reworking to a “life raft” ... [a] “bridge from an older world of culture, taken in its broadest sense, to a new one which is more characterised by information” (p.46). Hendy (2013) states that “fewer and fewer of us are likely to see any point at all in having other people ‘dictate’ what we watch and hear” (p.107). In the early 1930s both Brecht and Benjamin envisaged a world where technology allowed for the space between broadcasters and audience to be minimised (Brecht, 1993; Benjamin (2008). As technology developed, the literature became more specific on the possibilities of ‘closing the gap’, for example Jenkins’ (1991) *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* and *Convergence Culture* (2006). By the early 2000s Web 2.0 technology was becoming available and audience interactivity (not just radio talkback) expanded in scope and possibilities. From 2010 onwards, the literature on interactivity includes discussion on the contribution of specific SNS sites on media content particularly the work of Bonini (2014), Bonini and Sellas (2014) and Ewart and Ames (2016).

However, gaps in the scholarship remain. While audience ratings provide some statistical evidence of the audience’s reaction to the inclusion of interactivity, there does not appear to be an up-close analysis of the impact that the inclusion of the feedback form of interactivity, enabled by Web 2.0 technology, has had on the relationship between public service radio and the public service radio audience. Writing of public service media in general, Bonini and Sellas ask whether it will “embrace more connective practices” in the future (p.144). Ewart and Ames, (2016) note: “there is much more work to be undertaken on the topic of non-verbal contributions to talkback radio, particularly with the increasing

use of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter” p.91-92). Questions such as what motivates a public service radio audience to interact, and which topics more likely than others to spark a reaction, remain to be answered.

3. Methodology

3.0 Chapter Introduction

This study examines the phenomenon of the use of interactive content on public radio and its effect on the connective tissue linking public radio and its audience. In choosing a research design model, I looked for studies with a similar focus. The evolving nature of new media technology deemed it important that they be as current as possible. Bonini (2014), and Bonini and Sellas (2014) focus on the effect of social media on radio content and its audience. Using three radio station case studies, Bonini (2014) analyses the relationship between Facebook and the audience, while Bonini and Sellas (2014) apply a content analysis to study the suitability of Twitter as a “public service medium”. Both inform the research design of this study. Public radio network, RNZ National was chosen as a case study. Grounded theory (GT), an inductive theoretical approach was used to generate theory from the analyses, for reasons set out in 3.4.

This chapter will cover:

1. The triangulation of measures process: the both sides of the microphone approach.
2. A case study strategy: why it was chosen.
3. Data collection and the relevance of the time period.
4. Grounded theory: a background to this theoretical approach, why it was chosen and how it will be applied to this study.
5. Assumptions made by the researcher.
6. The limitations of this study.

3.1 The Triangulation Process: Capturing Both Sides of the Microphone

Neuman (2011) states that more is learnt by viewing a subject from “multiple perspectives”, than by employing a single view (p.164). This process, known as triangulation, adds to the accuracy of a study; it can reduce limitations that may have arisen in the research design and will produce a “fuller picture” (p.165). This strategy helps the researcher “zero in on social phenomena” (McIntyre, 2005, p.124). There are four types of triangulation: measures, observers, theory and method (Neuman, 2011, p.164). This study will use a triangulation of measures to provide the perspective from ‘both sides of the microphone’ comprising the content heard by the listener (recorded data), and the perspective of those producing the content (production staff and on-air

hosts).

3.2 The Case Study Strategy

The case study method is used in a variety of research projects to add to the sum of knowledge of various phenomena arising in social, political, economics, organisational and other related settings (Yin, 2003, p.1). It is a method that gives researchers the ability to look at the “holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p. 2). Yin provides a two-part technical definition of a case study. In the following, I apply this definition to the focus of my study to explain my choice of this research method. Part one of this definition states:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that:

- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
- The boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident (p.13).

Yin goes on to suggest that the case study method is applicable if context is something that a researcher specifically wishes to use because it is “highly pertinent” to the study (p.13). I suggest that the public radio context of RNZ National is indeed “highly pertinent” to this study. Reactive Audience Interactivity (RAI), defined in this study as an almost instantaneous response to broadcast content, was previously only found on commercial radio in the form of talkback in the New Zealand market. However, audience interaction has now been incorporated, as ‘feedback’ read by the host, into a public radio context. This move towards incorporating listeners’ opinions and observations can be seen as a departure from public radio’s previous cultural identity which was, to paraphrase Day, 1994, (p.3), a broadcaster that spoke while audiences listened.

Part two of Yin’s technical definition of a case study refers to the triangulation process mentioned earlier. A case study “relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (p.14). Yin states that a case study “comprises an all-encompassing method”; it is not one part of a strategy – it *is* the strategy. Yin calls it a “comprehensive research strategy” (p.14).

3.3 Research Design

Figure 3.1 shows the research design for this study. The key elements in the design were the choice of RNZ National as a case study, the decision to collect both recorded content

and a RNZ National staff survey, and finally the choice of grounded theory as a theoretical framework. Approval to survey selected staff member was sought and gained from RNZ National and the survey design was submitted and approved. Ethics approval from Auckland University of Technology was granted and the data collection process began. Data set A comprised recorded content from RNZ National throughout September 2015. The reason behind this choice of time frame is explained in 3.4.4. This data was transcribed and coded as per the GT approach. Data set B was collected from the four staff members between October and December 2015. This data was thematically coded. Throughout the coding process, ‘theoretical sensitivity’ was applied as explained in 3.5.7, and also during this time the step known as ‘writing memos’, as described in 3.5.4, took place. On completion of coding, the findings were integrated allowing for theory to be generated.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Introduction to Data Collection Process

Data Set A comprises recordings of feedback broadcast on RNZ National. It will be analysed using a content analysis. Content analysis is described as a ‘nonreactive’ method of analysis because the creators of the material do not anticipate that their material (in this case, what is being broadcast) will become part of a research project and therefore do not change their patterns of behaviour (Neuman, 2011). Silverman (2005) points to content analysis being an “accepted method of textual investigation, particularly in the field of mass communications” (p.123).

Data set B comprises the perspectives and insights of the hosts and production staff at the ‘frontline’ of producing on-air content collected using the survey research method. A thematic analysis was applied to this data. Neuman (2011) suggests that in order to recognize the themes, and by implication produce a worthwhile thematic analysis, the researcher requires four key abilities. The first is to recognise patterns that present within the data. In response to this, I observed that the words “community”, “immediacy”, “involvement” and “relevance” appear regularly in the responses provided by RNZ National staff. The second ability is to think in terms of “systems and concepts” (p. 512). This can be seen in the categorization of themes defined in 3.5.8. The third and fourth requirements respectively are that the researcher must have an indepth understanding of the

subject, and must also possess “relevant information” on the topic (p.512). My media background and academic study, as outlined in 3.5.7 (theoretical sensitivity) meets these requirements.

3.4.2 Data Set A: On-air Recordings

On-air data collection occurred throughout September 2015. All day-parts of RNZ National (except midnight to 5am) were recorded on a mobile phone using an inbuilt FM receiver. This material was transferred from the phone to a hard drive for secure storage. A content analysis was undertaken following the nine key elements of a GT research design (see 3.5.2 – 3.5.10). In total, 114 hours of RNZ National were recorded. The data was coded in two ways: by topic and by tone of the comment.

The list of topics as seen in full in Appendix A can best be described as eclectic. They include ‘hard’ news topics such as the detainment of New Zealanders in Australian detention centres, Auckland’s housing crisis, and ‘light’ stories such as the All Black’s prospects for the Rugby World Cup 2015. Every topic covered was noted, quantified and rated in terms of popularity as a feedback topic. By doing this I sought to learn if there were topical ‘hot buttons’ that attracted more feedback than others. The tone of the comment was coded and categorised as ‘general’, ‘light-hearted’ or ‘adding information’. I wished to learn if the style of the feedback discourse generated by RAI was the result of variables such as day-part, host or the topic itself. The data was also coded and categorised according to topic source. These categories were: news and current affairs, feature story or interview, and pre-selected listener interviews.

3.4.3 Data Set B: RNZ National Staff Survey

This data set comprised a survey of four RNZ National staff conducted from October to December 2015. The survey method was chosen for this stage of the study as it allows a researcher to gain information about aspects that are not observable, such as attitudes (McIntyre, 2005). The survey was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire sent to two hosts, one producer and the programme manager responsible for overseeing the daily output of all programmes on RNZ National. (See Appendix C for survey script). It was important to include both on-air hosts and production staff in the survey to provide

different perspectives. While obviously complementary, the roles of the producer and host are clearly delineated in an on-air studio environment. The producer fulfils the organisational role and is usually invisible to the audience. The host is the 'front of house' – the person with whom the listener connects. Three of the four survey participants act as frontline gatekeepers. The questionnaire was approved by RNZ National management, and following this, the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee. All questions were open-ended in order to elicit a range of responses. Participants were given the choice of a face-to-face interview with myself, based on the survey questions, or an emailed questionnaire. All four RNZ National staff took the latter choice; they gave the reason that the email process would allow them time to consider the questions and their responses.

3.4.4 Time Period Selection

When selecting an appropriate time period for data set A, three criteria were considered in order that the findings of this study could be considered valid. Broadly speaking, validity applies if the researcher is seen to be correctly measuring what needs to be measured to achieve the purpose of the study (McIntyre, 2005, Neuman, 2011). The first of these criteria was to decide on a time period duration that would provide a representative sample of on-air data. If the time period was too short, the findings may not be seen as valid. The second of the criteria was that the time period chosen would include (as much as it is possible to predict what will become a topic of national importance) issues or events that would create interest amongst a national audience. Topics of national interest that were known about and could be predicted as sources of public debate and interest were the imminent vote for a new New Zealand flag and the beginning of Rugby World Cup 2015 of which New Zealand was the current holder. The third criterion was the choice of a time period in which regular lifestyle patterns for a listening audience could be seen to apply. The latter particularly refers to the avoidance of school or extended public holidays. The validity of a study that takes place over holiday periods such as Christmas or Easter when listening habits change, could be challenged. September 2015 fit, in the main, these criteria. A month was seen as providing a representative sample of on-air material in order to make generalisations in the findings valid. There are no New Zealand public

holidays of any kind in September and school holidays in 2015 did not begin until September 28th.

3.5 The Grounded Theory Approach

3.5.1 Introduction to the Grounded Theory Approach

American researchers and academics Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss are credited with ‘discovering’ grounded theory (GT) (Birks & Mills, 2015). Their 1967 text *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* posited the notion that research design should allow for new theory to be generated, as well as the testing of existing theories. This approach resonated with a growing number of researchers and became a popular research tool. In essence, grounded theory builds a theory from the ground up. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe it as a “method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived theory about a phenomenon” (p.24).

GT became the subject of debate in the early 1990s when the originating partnership of Glaser and Strauss suffered a fracture due to differences in their perspectives (Birks & Mills, 2015, Glaser, 1992). Despite the differences, GT continues to be an approach that is widely used (Neuman, 2011). Two key elements of GT stand out as differentiating it from other theoretical approaches and make it appropriate for this study. First, there is the role of the researcher. GT uses “the perspective and ... the context of those who experience it ... [it is] directly abstracted from, or grounded in data generated and collected by the researcher” (Birks & Mills, 2015, pp.16-17). The other differentiating element is noted by Glaser (1992) who writes that the grounded theorist as compared with other theorists, deals with an “area of interest” not a problem (p.22). Problems may arise out of the data but initially “he [the researcher] moves in with the abstract wonderment of what is going on that is an issue and how it is handled” (p.22). The use of audience interactivity on RNZ National does not, per se, present as a problem. However it is an “area of interest” to me as a researcher and I am interested in issues such as changing cultural identities, and the role of the gatekeeper. For this reason, and those stated earlier, GT appears to be the best approach for this study.

Birks and Mills (2015) state that there are nine essential steps required to produce

an integrated GT study. Some of these are by definition, consecutive, for example initial coding followed by intermediate coding. Others such as ‘writing memos’ and ‘theoretical sensitivity’ are concurrent and occur throughout the process.

3.5.2 Initial Coding and Categorisation of Data

This is the first step of data analysis. Key words and concepts are identified and labeled either as a category, or as an in vivo code, being a label generated from the words of a participant that encapsulate a concept or aspect arising from the data (King, 2016). This process was applied to both data sets. Coding of data set A was more complex because, as noted earlier, the data included a wide range of topics. Initial coding produced three categories: the topic, the tone of the comment and the source of the topic. The views and perspectives of the four survey participants in data set B, were coded by theme e.g. ‘sense of community’. Seven themes were identified (see 3.5.8).

3.5.3 Concurrent Data Generation, or Collection and Analysis

This second step is fundamental to a GT study and differentiates it from other methods. An “initially purposive sample” (Birks & Mills, 2015, p.11) is collected, coded and analysed before the next data set is collected. Once this is done, the process is repeated. For this study, it was applied to the collection of on-air data. This initial analysis of the first data confirmed that RAI was indeed an integral component of RNZ National and from a practical perspective for the transcriber, served to highlight the most likely times within each hour that would provide more RAI, such as between interviews and before a news bulletin.

3.5.4 Writing Memos

This step in the process could also be called ‘taking notes’ and, as mentioned, is a concurrent process throughout the analysis. It can be described as the most naturally occurring of all the steps as a researcher will be noting thoughts as they code data. Birks and Mills (2015) suggest that these notes may transform into findings, and should never be thrown away. I made notes of incidents that particular illustrated a point as I read the survey responses (data set B) and transcribed the on-air data (data set A) On occasion an illustration could be used several times to make a point, however, Glaser and Strauss (2008) disagree with this. They state that writing

memos forces the researcher to use an incident only once as an illustration and suggest using it for the most important (p. 108). An example of this would be the several memos I made noting that RAI appears to create a community of listeners who can benefit from shared information. The first of these memos was in response to data from September 16 when the audience provided each other with tips on how to deal with windscreen washers at intersections⁹ and again this was noted on September 24 when listeners contacted RNZ National to report a number of small earthquakes in regional New Zealand. I noted the concept again in data set B, when Manager A mentions the “community of listeners” (personal communication, November 12, 2015) that formed in reaction to the major earthquakes that hit Christchurch in 2010 and 2011.

3.5.5 Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is essentially a process used by researchers to provide material for the next step. It is defined as the “identifying and pursuing [of] clues” (Birks & Mills, 2015, p.181). The researcher collects, codes and analyses the data providing a closer look at the categories arising from the initial analysis. This provides more data for particular categories, allowing for even more insight (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/1999). This process also allows for changes to categories if required (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). An example of theoretical sampling in the coding of the on-air material occurred in the ‘tone of comment’ analysis. Initial coding produced categories with working titles such as ‘agree with host’ and ‘disagree with host’. However, as the data collection reached its second quartile it became apparent that there was little to be gained from delineating between agreement and disagreement as that simply reflected the world-view of a listener on any one day. As such they were coded as ‘General Comment’. The number of listeners who were contributing expert or experiential knowledge was significant and as a result these contributions were coded into their own category. The contribution of listeners who felt inspired to comment on lighter topics or express their amusement was coded as ‘lighthearted’. The differentials in the categories are important as each category speaks of a different motivation to contribute and in the case of the lighthearted comments, the listener’s perception of a friendly

⁹ Windscreen washers have become something of a urban phenomena in New Zealand. They approach cars paused at busy intersections and wash their windscreens in return for money. On occasions this occurs without the driver’s permission and therefore payment becomes an issue.

relationship with the host.

3.5.6 Constant Comparative Analysis

This stage of the process connects with step 2, the concurrent data collection and analysis. GT is an inductive process in which theory is built out of the data collected. Part of this inductive process is the use of abduction, in which a researcher places data in multiple theoretical frameworks and tests the viability of each framework by asking “what-if?” (Neuman, 2011, p.112). Neuman likens the process to solving a crime, in which a detective may place the known clues (data) into a variety of alternative scenarios to test their viability. “Considering alternative scenarios give the same observations new meanings” (p.112). In this study I noted the breadth of the range of topics covered in the RAI broadcast, and also that the nature of comments could range from the very serious:

My teenage daughter overdosed on paracetamol. Fortunately we realised what happened and managed to get her to hospital in time for an antidote ... They [paracetamol] are readily available and highly toxic. (*Nine to Noon*, September 15)

to the very lighthearted:

What kind of message are the Muppets sending now that Kermit’s dating a skinny pig? Jim Henson must be doing somersaults. (*Afternoons* September 4).

In response to this finding, I considered the variables that could affect the type of comment and the nature of the comment submitted by listeners. I considered independent variables such as the day-part, the style of programme (news/current affairs/general interest) or the style of the host. Using the abductive process I was able to test for relationships between host and topic, host and nature of comment, day-part and topic, day-part and nature of comment. For example, the feedback in *Afternoons* (weekdays, 1-4pm) is noticeably more ‘chatty’ and informal than the feedback on *Morning Report* (weekdays, 6-9am).

3.5.7 Theoretical Sensitivity

This step, which also occurs concurrently throughout the GT process, allows for the researcher’s own experience or knowledge of a specific arena to contribute to the analysis. There are differing views on this approach. Glaser and Strauss (2008) require the researcher to use their “personal and temperamental bent” and to apply their “theoretical insight” (p.46). Glaser (1992) publishing on his own however, does not place the same emphasis on this step as Strauss; his chapter on theoretical

sensitivity is subtitled “The Drift into Preconception” (p.49) and he considers that using theoretical sensitivity can result in “forcing the data” (p.51). Birks and Mills (2015) promote the use of theoretical sensitivity stating: “Researchers are a sum of all they have experienced” (p.12). I come to this study with an extensive background in media including talkback radio production in a commercial environment, as well as subsequent tertiary study of social sciences and communication studies. For his reason I have chosen to include theoretical sensitivity as a step in my analysis of this GT study.

3.5.8. Intermediate Coding

There are two sub-stages of intermediate coding. First, subcategories, (of which there may be many) are collapsed to create fewer but broader categories. The second stage is to begin linking these categories. Birks and Mills (2015, p.12) identify axial coding as the most “advanced form” of intermediate coding. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define this form of coding as “a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding by making connections between [and within] categories’ ... while elevating the level of conceptual analysis” (p.95). Birks and Mills see this definition as an acknowledgement that patterns will begin to emerge as categories are more clearly defined. In this study, survey responses from data set B were categorised into themes in the initial coding:

1. *Relationship with broadcaster*
2. *Sense of Community*
3. *Sense of Involvement*
4. *Relevance of content*
5. *Speed of reaction*
6. *Functions as a tool in an emergency*
7. *Adds diversity*

The intermediate coding process then looked for commonality of purpose and concept in the sub-categories and collapsed them into four substantive themes:

1. *The audience want to be involved and want to contribute (1,2,3,6)*
2. *Interactive audience content benefits RNZ National programme content (3,4,6,7)*
3. *Accessibility to new media technology is key (3,5,6)*

4. The one-to-many model of the audience/broadcaster relationship is no longer relevant (1,3)

Unlike the thematic analysis applied to data set B, which allows for the intermediate coding process described, the categories for data set A are captured in the initial coding and the ‘collapsing’ process is not relevant.

3.5.9 Identifying a Core Category

The core category is defined as “the central phenomenon around which all the other categories are integrated” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.116) and can be seen as the central hub through which all the categories and subcategories are linked by a “frequently occurring variable” (Birks & Mills, 2015, p.98). This important step allows the researcher to limit any subsequent collection of data to the subcategories that have been identified as ‘coming under’ the core category (Birks & Mills, 2015). In this way the identification of a core category saves the researcher valuable coding and analysis time. In this study the core category can be identified as ‘Feedback, as sourced from RAI, is a key component of public radio content’.

3.5.10 Advanced Coding and Theoretical Integration

The theoretical integration of the key categories and concepts arising from a study should provide a “comprehensive explanation” of the phenomena being studied (Birks & Mills, 2015). This integration of data analysis from both sides of the microphone can be seen as the culmination of the triangulation of measures process. The themes arising from the integration of both sets of data are:

1. A portion of the public radio audience appear to appreciate their new “centre stage” location (Bird, 2011, p.503), actively expressing their opinion or adding knowledge in reaction to content they have heard.
2. A new relationship between public radio and its audience has emerged as the result of the availability and accessibility of new media technologies.
3. Public radio benefits from audience interactivity. It is able to tap into a source of free, entertaining, pertinent on-air content while also directing audience to their other broadcast platforms.

3.5.11 Generating Theory

The systematic inductive approach as set out above should lead the researcher to the generation of a comprehensive grounded theory. As a result, the phenomenon at the heart of the study should become clearer using this grounded theory. (Birks & Mills, 2015). Neuman (2011) states that the theory should be “faithful to the evidence” (p.71). In this case, the study has found that audience interactivity on public radio is a mutually beneficial process bringing together a willing, active audience and a broadcaster taking advantage of new media technologies to add to its content.

3.6 Assumptions

As discussed earlier, the researcher’s experience and ‘theoretical sensitivities’ in a GT research project can inform the basis of a study (Birks & Mills, 2015). My prior media experience has led me to make the following assumptions:

1. Prior to the availability of Web 2.0 technology, public radio in New Zealand fit the one-to-many model of communication.
2. RAI, being the more immediate form of interactivity is traditionally associated with commercial radio networks and talkback radio.
3. Feedback as presented on RNZ National is the representation of a listener’s words as read by the host, and may lose some of the nuance of its commercial cousin, talkback radio.
4. The percentage of active listeners, listeners who contribute rather than just listen, will be the same as those contributing to commercial radio.
5. The most popular topics in terms of attracting audience response will be those that the audience can relate to on an emotional level.
6. Producers and hosts become gatekeepers.

3.7 Limitations

There were a number of limitations on this study:

1. The data set of on-air recordings does not cover every hour, on every day of September 2015. I considered it possible to capture the essence of audience interactivity within programme content by recording a few hours each day from a range of day-parts.
2. A comparative longitudinal study of RNZ National content was not possible, as by definition, the pre-Web 2.0 environment only allowed for letters and faxes;

these do not contain the elements of reactivity, immediacy and relevance of feedback

3. It is not possible to undertake a discourse analysis of the feedback as a reflection of what was communicated as the contributions are edited by the gatekeepers before broadcast and there is no way of knowing to what extent this has occurred. In some cases, especially when an informed expert is contributing, the communications are read seemingly in full, however this is rare.

3.8 Chapter Summary

In order to answer the research question: *in what ways has interactivity enabled by Web 2.0 technology, changed the relationship between a public service radio network and its audience*, it was decided that just examining the interactive content would not provide the full picture. Instead a triangulated approach was taken in order to study the topic from both sides of the microphone, these being the content produced, and those producing it. RNZ National was chosen as an appropriate case study because it appears to have adopted Web 2.0 technology from the early 2000s and continues to embrace the multi-platform environment as can be seen from the recently updated Radio New Zealand charter (RNZ, 2016c). The effect of interactivity as generated by new technology on public radio on its audience is still a relatively new topic of research, which lends itself to the GT approach of building new theory on the phenomenon, from the ground up.

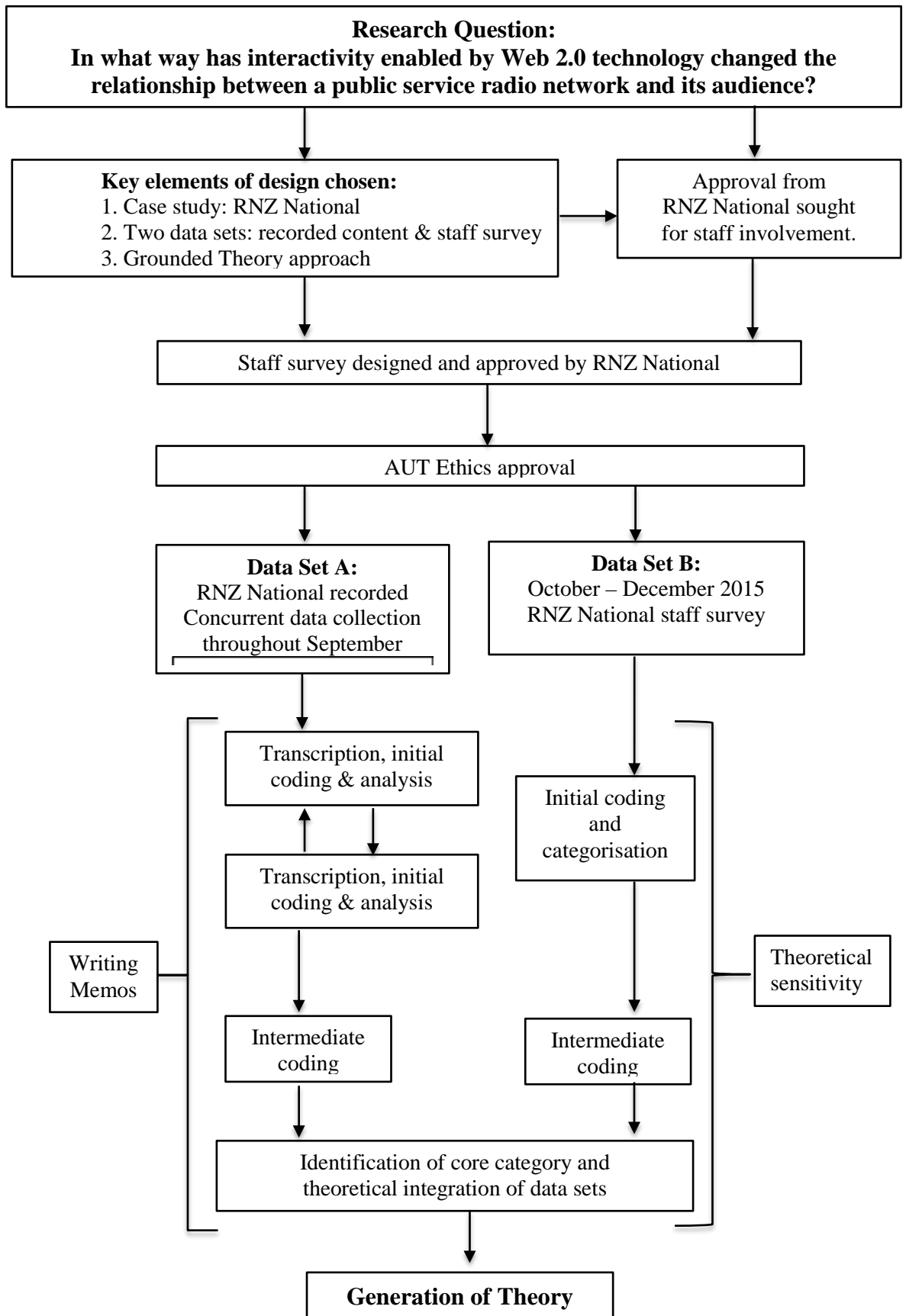


Figure 3.1: Research Design

4. Analysis and Findings

4.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will begin by looking at the findings of this study regarding the key features of feedback, the form of audience activity used by RNZ National in which pertinent comments sent by listeners are read out by the host. The topics that attracted the most comment will be identified, as will some motivating factors for participants, along with the role emotional relevance plays in encouraging interactivity between RNZ National and its listeners. The topic source, delivery style and the role of the gatekeeper will be analysed. The findings of the RNZ National staff on the role of the audience and impact of new technologies on the institution will be discussed. One of the limitations of this study is that there is no way of knowing, how many communications were received by the broadcaster at source during the period of recording, or what percentage of these were used as feedback. For this reason, this part of the analysis does not purport to be a statistically accurate record of audience reaction to, or interest in, a particular topic. However, I draw on my own experience and made the assumption that the producer and host working together, as described by Producer A (personal communication, November 10, 2015), will decide that the amount of feedback broadcast on a particular topic, should be relative to the amount of audience reaction it generated at source.

The chapter also includes a breakdown of what news stories, interview topics or content prompted the most response during September 2015. The content of the feedback, as quoted in this analysis, is as it was read on-air and transcribed. It is not necessarily a reflection of the original wording of the message as received by RNZ National. The source of the communication: SMS, email or social networking sites (SNS) site, used in each unique instance of feedback was not always identified by the host, so a breakdown by platform genre was not possible. While many posts were made to RNZ National's *Facebook* page over the month of September 2015, I have used just one example of a thread of comments from the page (Figure 4.2) to demonstrate the type of Reactive Audience Interactivity (RAI) posted.

4.1 Data Collection

Two sets of data were collected for this study. Data Set A comprises recordings of 114 hours of RNZ National content recorded in September 2015. The content covered most

day-parts: 6 to 9am, 9am to midday, 1 to 4pm, 4 to 5pm, 7pm to midnight (weekdays), and 8am to midday, Saturdays and 7am to midday, Sundays. For the purposes of this study, the name of the programme rather than the day-part will be used (see Appendix B for day-part times and programme titles). All day-parts featured live talk content and included feedback. Feedback is the reading-out of the RAI received by the broadcaster in emails, mobile phone texts, or on SNS, in reaction to broadcast content. A total of 359 unique samples of feedback were noted within the recorded data. These were transcribed and the coding and categorisation took place as described in the Methodology chapter. The initial coding categorised the feedback by topic. In keeping with the Grounded Theory (GT) approach, intermediate coding was used to unpack the topic category by topic source (for example news story or feature interview) and by day-part.

Data set B is comprised of the responses from a survey of four RNZ National staff: a producer of a high profile weekday programme, a manager responsible for the production of live talk programmes on RNZ National, and two of the network's weekday hosts. In this analysis they shall be referred to respectively as Producer A and Manager A, Host A, and Host B. The decision to survey both producers and hosts is based on my radio production experience. Radio hosts are the 'faces' of a broadcaster whose primary role is to present content to the standard set by the network or radio station. They are usually also involved in the content selection process and this is the case at RNZ National. The radio producer's role is to manage the delivery of content to the presenter from source. Bonini (2014) states that in the age of social media, the radio producer, is the "translator" who connects two worlds of "niches and mass culture ... delving into niches and re-emerging with a little treasure trove that can be used productively" (p.76). Producer A's description of the role reflects this analogy. Listener participation allows the producer to "raise issues and ask questions we might not have thought of". This particularly applies when the participant is "directly affected" by the topic and brings new knowledge (personal communication, November 10, 2015). While the producer remains, for the most part, anonymous, and their role unseen, the host's identity is known to the public and their performance is permanently up for critical appraisal by the audience. The views and priorities of the two craft groups will therefore differ, and as a result both were surveyed for this study

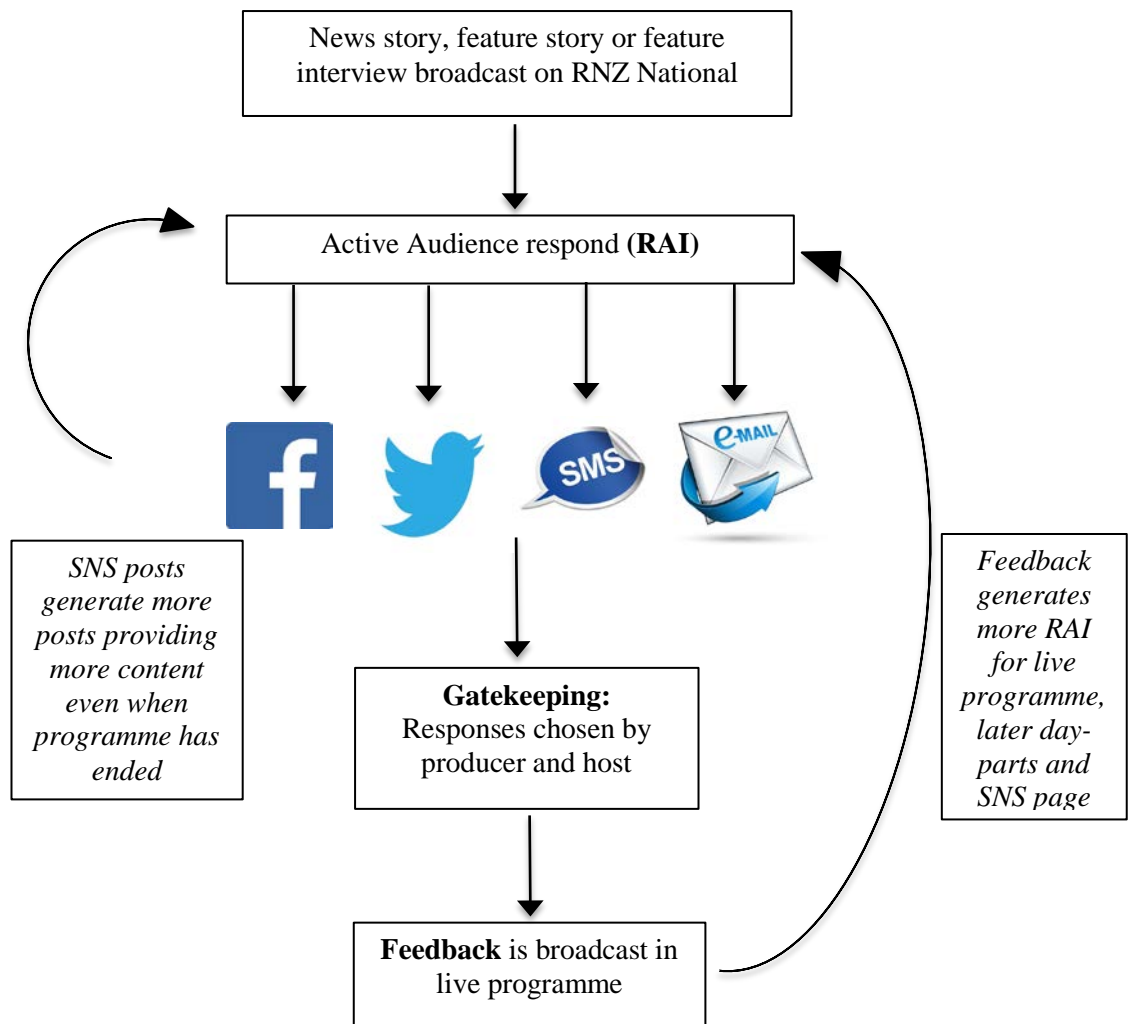
Each staff member was sent the same questionnaire with 14 open-ended questions. These were designed to elicit perspectives on the role of audience interactivity on RNZ National including the network's relationship with its audience, the impact of new technology on content, and the gatekeeping process. (See Appendix C for full survey text). The survey uses the term "audience participation" to describe listener interactivity. This appears, from the replies to the survey, to be clearly understood by the survey participants. For this reason, "participation" in relation to audience activity is used interchangeably with "interactivity" in this chapter.

4.2 Feedback: Key Features

Feedback is RAI in broadcast form. It is a form of audience interaction that requires the participant to send their message in written form, as opposed to talkback which requires the participant to more actively engage with the broadcaster on-air. Feedback is sent to RNZ National by email, SMS or on social media sites, and chosen by RNZ National producers and hosts to "add to the discussion or topic" (Producer A, personal communication, November 10, 2015). It can vary considerably in length. Feedback can be seen as one of the manifestations of the new status given to the active audience in the Web 2.0 environment. Bonini (2014, p.83) and Bird (2011, p 503) refer to this new status as the audience member taking "centre stage" position. Feedback possesses elements that, while not necessarily unique to radio, have contributed to a new paradigm in the relationship between broadcaster and audience. Bonini finds that social media has "shortened the distance" (p.75) between radio and its listeners. Bonini and Sellas's (2014) study of Twitter as a public service medium include the finding that new multi-platform technology may cause public radio operators to "change their relationships with their listeners" (p.127). The key features of feedback and the feedback process are as follows.

4.2.1: Ease of Contribution

Contributing feedback is easy in the Web 2.0 environment. A listener sends an SMS message from a mobile phone, or by email, or posts on social media. Ewart (2016) notes that "ease of use" is a contributing factor when a listener chooses to text a talkback programme (p.98). The SMS text, email or post is viewed by the gatekeepers and incorporated into broadcast content. The ease of delivery is important to note as it contributes to the speed of delivery (see 4.2.2). Figure 4.1 shows the feedback gathering and distribution process.



*Figure 4.1
Feedback Contribution Process on RNZ National*

4.2.2 The Currency of Immediacy

Up until the early to mid-2000s, audience interactivity occurred using phone calls, letters and faxed messages. These were used by listeners to express their reactions to content or to request content. RNZ National “was previously restricted to handling audience connection through phone calls off-air and the ancient art of letter writing” (Manager A, personal communication, November 12, 2015). From data set A it is apparent that the feedback content is a response to an item that the participant has just heard, or heard relatively recently. This highlights a key feature of audience interactivity in the Web 2.0 environment - the speed at which the listeners can react and their reaction can be received. The new media platforms, the “technological implants on the body of the radio medium” (Bonini, 2014, p.74), have added immediacy to the feedback process. For active listeners

this means that they may hear their comments read-out on-air within a short time from sending. For those not participating, the non-active listener, immediacy brings topicality which makes the programme more interesting. In the context of an emergency, this topicality takes on a new importance as demonstrated during the major 2010 and 2011 earthquakes in Christchurch. Those affected by the earthquake could listen to RNZ National and be informed by SMS updates provided by other audience members. As well, those who sent texts could be contacted by the host or producer for further information if required (Manager A, personal communication, November 12, 2015).

4.2.3 Feedback Provides Programme Content

This study shows that RAI, fine-tuned and filtered into feedback form, provides a regular stream of on-air programme content for broadcasters. Feedback featured in all recorded day-parts of data set A, usually between programme segments such as interviews or news items. It was often used leading up to hourly news bulletins where, given its known quantity in terms of duration, appeared to allow the hosts to ‘time-out’ accurately to the hour. Multi-platform technology allows listeners to be able to listen and respond from home, from work, in the car, bus or train providing even more opportunity for interactivity. The volume of RAI that results provides producers and hosts with a wide choice of material from which to choose feedback content. The Facebook example shown in Figure 4.2 shows that 653 posts were made on RNZ’s National’s Facebook page on September 4, on just one thread of the debate on a new New Zealand flag.

4.2.4 Unused RAI Provides Content for SNS: ‘A Comment on a Comment’

RAI contributed by SMS and email can only be seen by the broadcasters and if unused, will remain unheard and unseen. However, RAI contributed on SNS is not only available to the broadcasters, it is also seen by the audience. It provides a source of on-air feedback as well as being content for their *Facebook* and *Twitter* social media pages. Even if the content is unused on-air, as long as it meets the required criteria¹⁰ it remains on the sites. This non-broadcast aspect of new media

¹⁰ Postings on RNZ National Facebook and Twitter sites are monitored by the network’s engagement team. Material that does not fit within the community guidelines, for example bad language is removed (Manager A, personal communication, July 1, 2016).

interactivity introduces a new dynamic to the relationship between broadcaster and audience, the forming of communities. Listeners, using the broadcaster's platform may "bypass the centre, in other words, the radio programme itself, and communicate to "create new links" with each other (Bonini, 2011, p.75). Many postings feature emotive and direct language, which appear to incite other participants to post their agreement, disagreement, or interact by adding the "like" symbol. As can be seen in Figure 4.2, some posts are not on a topic, they may instead be 'a comment on a comment'.



Figure 4.2
Some of the 653 responses to the NZ flag debate posted on
RNZ National's Facebook page, September 4, 2015 (RNZ National, 2015)

4.2.5 Feedback is a Cross Promotional Tool and is not Time Dependent

RNZ National host or hosts use feedback to encourage listeners to contribute further feedback.

Last word at the moment to MD¹¹. She says good-on John Key agreeing to take more Syrian refugees, however the root of the problem is war. The USA needs to stop aggression and supplying weapons to the Middle East. We'd love to hear

¹¹ Names used in full on-air have been abbreviated

your views on the stories we run. If you want to get in touch with us, you can do on @enzedmorningreport on twitter, morningreport@Radioenzed.co.nz on email, and if you want to text us, the number is 2101 (September 7, 2015)

The cross promotion evident in the quote above, highlights another important feature of feedback and audience interactivity in general, it is not time dependent. “The programme keeps on living [sic] when the presenter switches off the microphone” (Bonini, 2014, p 79). Hosts encourage audience to continue to contribute comment on a particular topic, even when the programme has finished. This generates content for the following hour, day-part or even the next day. This is a useful feature for an organisation with limited resources and budget.

4.2.6 The Gatekeeping Process and the Feedback/Talkback Divide

Producer A (personal communication, November 10, 2015) describes the gatekeeping process for the feedback broadcast on RNZ National. Once the raw RAI is received (see Figure 4.1), the selection is “merit-based”; the criteria being the contribution it makes to the ongoing discussion and how it fits into the “flow of the conversation”. Manager A stated that the producers and hosts are looking for “quality intelligent contributions” that are relevant to the discussion and add balance (personal communication, November 12, 2015).

The feedback form of on-air participation, as opposed to talkback, allows complete control of what is broadcast through the gatekeeping process. A talkback radio host and producer cannot be absolutely certain of what the participant will say, although it is standard practice for the producer to vet calls to talkback programmes and use a time delay of several seconds when putting talkback participants to air (Ahern, 2011). Feedback, however, is filtered; the contribution is preselected and the participant’s words read by the host. Some participants are aware of the gatekeeping process and the requirements of the radio station, and tailor their communications to fit. These contributors know that their emails need to be concise in order to make it through the gate-keeping process (Ewart & Ames, 2016).

Whereas a listener to talkback will hear the participant’s tone or emotion in their spoken words, feedback collected for this study, was delivered by the host with clarity and emphasis where required, but other than the instance quoted below, no obvious emotional tone was applied. Feedback on RNZ National is read by the

host in the knowledge that the listener is likely to hear it. For this reason, the host would wish to represent the listener's perspective as accurately as possible. The one captured instance of a host appearing to add an editorial tone was as follows:

Julie says why are sanctifying Nixon? He was a scurrilous monster whose record in Vietnam alone speaks for itself ... I don't think we were sanctifying him Julie, um, but anyway, to understand is to forgive in your book is it? (*Saturday Morning*, September 5, 2015).

Ewart and Ames (2016) found that some participants are aware that different presenters may have different approaches to their emails and believe that a host's view could influence the selection of those to be read. However, in the main, RNZ National hosts were careful to represent the tone of the communication as intended.

In balancing the advantages and disadvantages of the feedback interactivity versus talkback interactivity, a lack of audience 'voice' may be seen as a disadvantage. However, it can be seen that the ability of the host and producer to control the content tone and duration of the feedback is a distinct advantage to RNZ National. This is particularly so as RNZ National is a public broadcaster, subject to standards set by the Radio New Zealand Charter as discussed in Chapter 1. Additionally, like all radio stations in New Zealand, RNZ National is subject to the Broadcasting Standards Authority. This includes the requirement to maintain "current norms of good taste and decency" (Broadcasting Standards Authority, 2016). The audience may also perceive an advantage in written feedback over spoken talkback. Gillman (2007) notes that some listeners wish to engage, but prefer to write than call. These preferences are discussed further in 4.5.

4.3 Feedback Topics

4.3.1 Most Popular Topics

Data Set A was coded and categorised to assess the most popular topics of feedback (See Table 4.1) during September 2015. The topic that attracted the highest incidence of feedback (26 unique comments broadcast across the month) was a news story concerning the detainment of New Zealanders in Australian Detention Centres¹² Listener responses indicated the strong beliefs and disagreements aroused by this topic.

¹² On September 15 it was announced that 200 New Zealand citizens were being held in Australian Detention camps. They were among other non-Australian citizens who had spent more than a year in jail

Topic of feedback	Feedback Samples Broadcast	Day-part	Source
Detainment of New Zealanders in Australian detention centres	26 (Mass)	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs
The new New Zealand flag	16 (Mass)	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs
Bob Dylan concerts in New Zealand memories	12 (Mass)	<i>Afternoons</i>	Pre-selected interactive slot
Sexualisation of pop culture/sex trafficking	12 (Mass)	<i>Sunday Morning</i>	Feature story/ interview
Should New Zealand accept Syrian refugees?	12 (Mass)	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs
Compliments on music choice	11	All, except <i>Morning Report</i>	-
Gender Pay Gap	10	<i>Sunday Morning</i>	Feature story/ interview
Self-driving cars	10 (Mass)	<i>Sunday Morning</i>	Feature story/ interview
AgResearch redundancies ¹³	10 (Mass)	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	News/ current affairs
“Climate change refugee” deportation	9 (Mass)	<i>Morning Report</i> & <i>Nine to Noon</i>	News/ current affairs
Underpayment of beneficiaries	9	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs

Table 4.1
Most popular topics of Feedback on RNZ National, September 2015
(as recorded)

Note 1. A full breakdown of feedback topics can be seen in Appendix A.
Note 2. (Mass) indicates topics acknowledged by the host as receiving a mass response, in addition to the unique samples of feedback broadcast.

Some listeners emphatically agreed with the Australian government’s stance, and reduced the argument to a ‘don’t do the crime if you can’t do the time’ basis. Others were equally emphatic in their criticism of the detainments, with one listener referring to them as an “obscenity” (*Morning Report*, September 25). References were made in some feedback to Australia’s history as a convict settlement while others contributed more tangential comments, referring to Australia’s treatment of its indigenous people and one participant made a link to

and on release were sent to detention centres in Christmas Island, an Australian territory off the Indonesian coast, to await deportation. The conditions in the detention centres were reported to be very poor.

¹³ AgResearch is a New Zealand state owned research and development company serving New Zealand’s agriculture and biotechnology sectors

the New Zealand flag debate, questioning the flag's significance if "being a New Zealander means so little" (*Morning Report*, September 25), tying it to the second most popular topic. The reason for the high response to this topic can be attributed to the closeness of the two countries, geographically, geopolitically, economically, and in relation to social structures. Many New Zealanders have family or friends who are currently living, or have at one time lived in, Australia and would readily feel either empathy or antipathy towards the people concerned; both could prompt participation. This is an example of 'emotional relevance', which is discussed more fully in 4.6.

The second most 'popular' topic of feedback with 16 unique comments was another political news story: the new New Zealand flag debate.¹⁴ This topic featured on two dates: September 21 and September 24. On September 21 the catalyst for reaction was an interview with Prime Minister John Key in reference to an opinion poll on the subject. On this occasion, one listener described the Prime Minister's comments as "flabbergastingly [sic] revealing". On the second occasion, the catalyst was a sub-debate about a new entrant in the flag design referendum, the design that became known as Red Peak. On both occasions the discourse was passionate. Throughout the flag debate, three different motivations became apparent: a wish to keep the current flag, a wish to change it and a wish to express political views, using the flag debate as a conduit for comment about the personalities involved including the Prime Minister, John Key and New Zealand First Member of Parliament Ron Mark who argued against the Red Peak design.

BB has emailed in. The proposed new flag does not look like a Nazi sentry box design at all – he's responding to Ron Mark's criticism there – Bruce says it's the prow of a sunken ship sticking above the waterline. Maria has tweeted in, I'm so over this flag debate, it's time to decide, and another listener has sent us a text message this morning saying a national flag should be a unifying symbol, this process is a farce ...I think it's a bit rich for New Zealand First¹⁵ to say that red peak design is Nazi iconography (*Morning Report*, September 24).

This feedback sample indicates that the depth of emotion felt about the national flag debate was strong enough to motivate listeners to take time from their morning routines to communicate with the broadcaster.

¹⁴ At the time of data collection, two referenda were planned, the first for late 2015 and the second in early 2016. They were to decide respectively: if New Zealand was to change its flag, what should the new design look like, and having established an alternative design, should New Zealand change its flag?

¹⁵ A political party

An eclectic group of subjects shared the third highest incidence (12 unique comments) of topic: sexualized imagery in popular culture, the debate around admitting Syrian refugees to New Zealand, and reaction to a regular feature, *Great New Zealand Concert*, in which a pre-selected listener shared his experience of a 1978 Bob Dylan concert in New Zealand. The first of these three was an interview on *Sunday Morning*, September 13, with author and advocate for the rights of women and girls, Melinda Tankard Reist (Reist, 2016). Her interview concerned the negative impact of sexualized imagery in popular culture and its contribution to sex trafficking. Some challenged the feminist perspective applied to the subject:

She sounds like she is accusing every man. I may be precious but that's how it sounds to me.

No mention of boys or men as sex slaves. No mention of the responsibility of mothers or women in general.

Another listener had a positive reaction:

How refreshing to hear your speaker make all the links between child trafficking, the rape and sexualisation of children and the so called soft porn portrayed in numerous magazine articles.

The second of the third highest incidence of topic was debate on whether New Zealand should allow Syrian refugees, at that time entering Europe in significant numbers, to come to New Zealand. Once again the topic engendered heated debate.

It's funny how no one seems to be saying how many refugees the USA are taking bearing in mind, they initiated the whole problem with 30 years of economic sanctions in Libya and a war in Iraq.

Melissa's been in touch saying it's still isn't much though. We should be taking thousands now, not hundreds.

The third of these three topics was notably non-controversial. It comprised feedback from other listeners on Bob Dylan concerts they had attended both in New Zealand and overseas (September 29, 2015). Rehm (1995) observes that hearing other people comment on a topic, encourages listeners to contribute their own experiences or perspectives. The feedback in this case was, in the main, nostalgic reveries about the concert and the era.

Just got a message in from Bev who says that New Zealand were playing England at cricket at the time of the concert and English fast bowler Bob Willis who had added Dylan as his middle name was a huge fan and attended the show mid test match ... I was at the Dylan concert in 1978. I'd only been in NZ a few months, I was very close to the stage and a lot of people brought food with them including butter which struck me as odd says one texter. Another one says I hitched down from Kerikeri to see Bob Dylan, cos my van was repossessed. I sat next to the

guy who had repossessed it and we ended up becoming very good friends (*Afternoons*, September 29).

The discourse used in this and earlier feedback samples, is significant to this study as it goes to the core of the relationship between listener and broadcaster. It is the sort that might be used between friends sharing memories of an event. Rehm (1995) describes it as chatting over the “electronic backyard fence” (p. 69). The ‘banter’ that results indicates a looser, more informal one-to-one relationship between listener and host, contrasting with the traditional PSB one-to-many attitude as noted by Jones (2009), Coleman (2004), Hendy (2013) and Jenkins (2006). The fourth highest incidence of topic comprised 11 comments expressing enjoyment of the music being played at any one time.

Catherine has emailed. Right, you’ve done it again – boogie time before school pick-up time, thank you for playing the B52s from a grateful mum.

As with the response to the Bob Dylan concert memories, that a listener feels prompted to comment and compliment, speaks of the perception of a one-to-one relationship with the host. The strength of this relationship is heightened by new media technology that makes communicating with the broadcaster easy and almost immediate.

4.3.2 International Topics

RNZ National news bulletins and news programmes such as *Morning Report* covered a comprehensive range of both national and international stories. However, Table 4.1 shows that no purely international news stories featured amongst the most popular topics. The second most popular topic, the detainment of New Zealanders in Australian detention centres, had an international angle, but it was an essentially New Zealand news story. Another popular topic, the Syrian refugee crisis was clearly an international story, however it was given a local focus by the announcement by Prime Minister John Key on September 7 that New Zealand may increase their quota of refugees in order to allow more Syrians to immigrate to New Zealand. As can be seen in the full topic breakdown in Appendix A, only two purely international current news stories featured.¹⁶ These were the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the British Labour Party, announced on September 12 and the election of Malcolm Turnbull as Australian Prime Minister on September 14. From this it can be deduced that while stories

¹⁶ These are defined as stories about current news events as opposed to interviews with international guests.

such as these may be newsworthy from a journalistic sense, especially in their country of origin, they are perceived by listeners to have little effect on the day-to-day life of most New Zealanders. They evoked little reaction from an active audience, who appear instead to react to topics that have an emotive component that creates empathy, or a pragmatic response that sets out how it affects the listener directly. Emotional relevance of topics is discussed further in 4.6

4.3.3 Mass Responses

When applying a numerical breakdown to the topic data, there were several instances in which the host referred to a large number of audience responses. In some case this was done without singling one out for reading (see Ruby Wax comments below). For this reason a numerical count cannot be attributed to these samples. I have used the term ‘mass response’ to describe these instances. Some examples of this feedback are:

I’ve got lots and lots of feedback on Ruby Wax talking on mindfulness and depression (*Afternoons*, September 24).

... and a wonderful, wonderful load of responses from you, particularly regarding that interview with Melinda Tankard Reist (*Sunday Morning*, September 13).

Reports coming in of an earthquake on the East coast of the North Island and so far we’ve had reports of the quake being felt in Opotoki and Napier ... there’s quite a lot of activity on Twitter this morning ...” (*Morning Report*, September 24).

The mass responses are shown in Table 4.1 and Appendix A. They are relevant to this study as they indicate two factors regarding audience interaction: the interest levels in the particular topic and, more importantly, that large numbers of listeners are taking an interactive role and forming a relationship with RNZ National. Another example of a mass response can be seen by the number of posts on the RNZ National *Facebook* page shown in Figure 4.2.

4.4 Topic Source and Tone of Feedback

The most popular feedback topics as shown in Table 4.1 were also coded and categorised by the originating item. These categories were news or current affairs stories, feature interviews, or miscellaneous items such as prerecorded or pre-selected programme segments. For example, the source of feedback on the new New Zealand flag was ongoing news coverage of the imminent referendum. The source of feedback on the sexualisation of women and children in pop culture was a feature interview with activist Melinda

Tankard Reist. Of the feedback received on the 10 most popular topics, 65% of feedback broadcast was a reaction to a news and current event story. Only 17% of feedback was a reaction to a feature interview and the remaining 18% was in response to miscellaneous sources. This finding may reflect the high percentage of news content on RNZ National.

The strongest feedback reaction to a news or current event appears to be when the story is first 'breaking', or a fresh opinion or development has been aired for the first time. As expected, feedback segments on *Morning Report*, a weekday news programme, were predominantly reactions to news events covered in that morning's programme. Feedback in other day-parts reflected the content of their programmes. *Nine to Noon* also covered current news stories but in a more in-depth way with extended interviews. The programme also featured interviews with visiting authors, experts or academics, sparking reaction from listeners. *Afternoons* featured some current affairs interviews but covered lifestyle and entertainment topics as well, with audience interactivity included throughout the programme. *Saturday Morning* and *Sunday Morning*, both magazine-style programmes, also attracted feedback in response to their feature interviews.

The tone of feedback discourse and the manner in which it was delivered differed between day-parts. A two-handed approach in which hosts alternated the delivery of each piece of feedback, was often used in *Morning Report*. This gave the content a sense of urgency and focus. The strong tone of the feedback, despite not being delivered in the contributor's voice, was still 'heard'. This is demonstrated in this exchange between *Morning Report* hosts on September 7.

Susie Ferguson (SF): We've been getting an awful lot of feedback coming in on John Key's announcement that New Zealand will be taking in hundreds of refugees.

Guyon Espinar (GE): AH has emailed in saying too little too late, a drop in the ocean and a folly in the long term. These refugees will only be a benefit to New Zealand. Annie says, many of them are educated, all of them will be grateful, whether they are migrant or refugee.

SF: Peter has texted, 2101, saying let's wait until the Middle East countries start accepting these refugees or does their human rights record prevent them acting humanely?

GE: DB says the refugee issue needs stats to inform it. Do they make good citizens or not? Once that is known, then the correct policy is a no-brainer.

SF: JM's been in contact saying took him long enough, I think we should be taking as many as we can.

In this example we can see the hosts taking roles in a virtual conversation constructed from the audience. They are enacting the debate.

On *Nine to Noon*, *Saturday Morning* and *Sunday Morning*, the topic was often an event or circumstance that had been known about for some time, or the experiences of the guest. As such, it was not ‘breaking news’, and, as a result, the audience discourse was likely to be less reactive. Outside of *Morning Report* the feedback was often longer and more considered in its tone, such as this reaction to an interview with feminist and author Melinda Tankard Reist.

A somewhat irritated Tim, writes. Wallace, I, and several of my daughters are dedicated *Game of Throne* fans, both in novel form and of the TV series. The assertion that it is heavy on violence against women i.e. the inference is that the tale is mostly about violence against women, is clearly made by someone who has never watched it, as the vast bulk of the ceaseless and appalling violence is man-to-man. I am aware that I may be trying to defend the indefensible here but certainly my daughters are clever, articulate women with their own clearly formed opinions, and they consider the series to be as enthralling as I do. Commentary by your contributor Melinda Tankard Reist serves to demean their abilities and is more than patronising in effect. That’s Tim’s point of view there (*Sunday Morning*, September 13).

The longer duration of this sample of feedback was possibly due to the length of the RAI received but also a reflection of the magazine style of the programme. It could also have been an editorial decision by the producer and host as they considered it likely to prompt further reaction. Host A notes that the active audience can “provide story, ideas, opinions we can in turn seek other opinions on” (personal communication, December 19, 2015).

The feedback content on *Afternoons* (weekdays) was noticeably more relaxed in its tone, in keeping with the context of the programme. Lifestyle topics such as travel, music and food were often featured and these attracted RAI. The feedback also included examples of listeners ‘speaking’ to other listeners in their discourse.

“I remember my Dad taking me down to a massive slot car set up very close to Manners Street in Wellington in the 1960. Can anyone else remember that – or help out – what was it called? Where was it exactly? There must have been 12 or more parallel tracks says Mike. It was bewildering – was that my car that had spun off, or someone else’s? It was usually mine” (*Afternoons*, September 18).

This example of feedback is significant because the listener does not refer his query to the host Jesse Mulligan, but appeals directly to other members of the listening audience, the recurring ‘community of listeners’ theme discussed in 4.7. This type of feedback occurred in other programmes that had a more relaxed style of content.

Another aspect of *Afternoons* feedback is the active role played by the host (in this instance, Jesse Mulligan) in what can almost be seen as a ‘conversation’ between the host and three listeners, albeit delivered by the single voice of the host:

Hi, says Mary (**participant 1**). On our last trip to Cambodia we ate lots of local food including crickets in garlic and chilli, deep fried tarantulas, silkworms, scorpions and water bugs. **Host:** *Jeez, you’re keen Mary. I did them as kebabs in the tourist restaurants.* **Host:** *I don’t know if I could face a tarantula or many of those things, Mary. I’m impressed.*

Insects aren’t animals **Host:** *that’s right. A weta is just a walking, eating, mating and reproducing carrot. Hilarious, the absurd connotations, or contortions, some vegetarians go through to get some animal protein says one text (**participant 2**).*

Hi Jessie (**participant 3**). I’ve got a container of mealworms growing in the cupboard for me to eat. Just gently fry them and they taste like chicken skins says Mike. **Host:** *I think I’m going off this idea. (Afternoons, September 18).*

This sample of feedback is an example of the willingness of listeners to share information that simply ‘tells a story’ to the host and other listeners. Manager A states that the audience want to be “involved” with the content (personal communication, November, 12, 2015). Gillman (2007), writing on talkback radio, also uses the label “involved” (p. 193) to describe those participants who find the programme content, including other participant’s contributions, of interest and enjoy being part of the community of callers. As discussed in Chapter 1, engagement between radio host and listener is not a new concept, however in the context of public radio, this kind of neighbourly banter as described by Rehm (1995) can be seen as a new development in the relationship between the two parties.

4.5 Listener Motivation

This section looks at what provides the motivation for a listener to become an active participant. Ewart and Ames’ (2016) findings are discussed here and are particularly relevant as their study is so recent. However, several aspects of their study differ from this research project and this must be taken into account. First, Ewart and Ames (2016) use focus groups of talk radio listeners as their methodology, whereas findings for this study are taken from a content analysis of recorded data, and a staff survey. Their study *only* looked at SMS and email engagement, not social media, and finally Ewart and Ames ask their focus group participants why they would choose to SMS or email *instead* of calling talkback radio. In this study, RNZ National listeners can *only* participate by SMS, email, or post on social media. Despite these differences, the findings regarding audience motivation in this study is much the same as in Ewart and Ames. In the content analysis of captured feedback for this study, the motivating reactions to content fall into three categories. These are expressing opinion (agreement or disagreement), adding

information that the listener considers important or missing, or, sharing a humorous comment or expressing enjoyment. From their focus group participants, Ewart and Ames (2016) find that the motivating factors behind audience participation fall into three similar categories: “to have their opinions heard, to entertain and to correct a point” (p. 99).

The most common of these motivations in this study is the desire by listeners to express their agreement or disagreement with a news story, a guest or even with other audience participants. The term ‘getting it off their chest’ would seem to apply:

No Chinese should be able to buy land in New Zealand until we can buy land in China (*Morning Report*, September 22).

I loathe what the rugby culture has become, a celebration of simplistic, mindless brutality (*Sunday Morning*, September 20).

It’s a gross anomaly that cars are allowed on any New Zealand beaches ... their presence degrades them for all other users (*Morning Report*, September 14).

This category of audience motivation with its strong opinions and use of emphatic language is similar to the tone of talkback radio in which some listeners set out to “provoke and to insult” Turner (2009). However, Host A states that on public broadcaster Radio New Zealand, RAI will not be chosen if it is “hostile ... or biased in a way that adds nothing to legitimate discussion ... there is no set criterion for choosing what to use, it’s always a judgement call” (personal communication, December 19, 2015). The motivation to express strong opinions is revisited in the next chapter on Emotional Relevance. Strong expressions of agreement, or disagreement can also be found in the pithy Facebook posts shown in Figure 4.2 on the new New Zealand flag debate on September 4, 2015.

Key¹⁷ is an immature cunning prat.

If you want the process to be respected, don’t select identical crap designs

Opinionated posts to SNS sites, while not always broadcast, may be rewarded with a ‘like’ (Facebook) or a ‘retweet’ (Twitter) by other participants. As discussed in 4.2.4 above, participants may begin as listeners but after being drawn to the broadcasters SNS site, they can “bypass” (Bonini, 2014, p.75) the broadcaster, and instead connect and communicate with others via the site. This adds a new dimension to RNZ’s role as public broadcaster and reflects the desire expressed in the 2016 Radio New Zealand charter to be “innovative” (RNZ, 2016c)

¹⁷ John Key, Prime Minister of New Zealand

A second motivation is the desire by the listener to add knowledge to a discussion, or to correct misinformation. Unlike agreement or disagreement, which can be seen as opinion, this category of adding information is underpinned with the participant's expertise, knowledge, experience and, possibly, ego. The following contribution added information to a discussion regarding an Auckland bar offering alcohol absorption as a safe method of alcohol consumption.

The alcohol's absorbed in the intestine and then it enters the bloodstream where the liver tries to remove it (*Afternoons*, September 4).

Some listeners wished to share personal experience to protect others from being affected:

My teenage daughter overdosed on Paracetamol. Fortunately we managed to get her to hospital in time for an antidote. She will have long-term effects and cannot have them anymore. They are readily available and highly toxic ... more awareness is definitely needed (*Nine to Noon*, September 15)

Another listener in this 'informing' category appeared to want to demonstrate that he was more informed on a subject than the host. This followed the playing of *Heart Full of Soul* by the 1960's group, The Yardbirds. The emphasis shown is as read by the host:

Howard says: the Yardbirds when they recorded that song did *not* have Eric Clapton in the line-up as you indicated. He left in March 1965 to join John Mayall and recommended his friend Jimmy Page to replace him. Page brought his pal Jeff Beck into the group. I believe they were the guitarists for that song, but *definitely* not Clapton, who wanted to play the blues, not pop (*Nights*, September 30)

In this one example "Howard" has corrected the host, shown his knowledge of popular music history, and in the final comment subtly implied the superiority of blues music over pop music.

The third motivating factor is the desire to share a humorous comment, a joke or an entertaining event with the host, or to express their own enjoyment of an item. This motivation implies that the listener experiences a rapport with the host and communicates with them as they would a friend.

Someone here has suggested the theme from the Archers as [the new national anthem] ... apparently Billy Connolly is a fan of that one (*Afternoons*, September 16).

Miriam gets on the comedy award shortlist with this: you kept asking Eric Roberts how to date a rock. I don't know, take him out for coffee or something (*Saturday Morning*, September 19).

An interview on the 2015 Rugby World Cup with former All Black, Anton Oliver, attracted a lot of comment expressing enjoyment of his perspective.

Gosh lots of feedback coming in for Anton. Best commentary, nice one Anton. Anton Oliver superb. Great to hear Anton Oliver this morning. Will be a regular podcast for this non-rugby literate listener, that's from Pip. Thanks for all your feedback (*Nine to Noon*, September 21).

As mentioned earlier, 11 individual samples of feedback expressed enjoyment of the music being played at any one time on RNZ National. This implies the perception by public radio listeners that their comments on something as personal as music tastes are welcome and will be acknowledged within the community of listeners.

Ewart and Ames (2016) find three further factors influencing participation in the feedback process. The first two are features of feedback as discussed in 4.2: ease of use, and speed of contribution. An email, SMS or social media post can be written and sent from a variety of devices, from many different locations, and sent or posted online within seconds. Third, they do not need to 'appear' or 'perform' to get their message heard. Unlike talkback, feedback does not require the participant to be that nervous 'first time caller'.

Ewart and Ames (2016) offer a summation of participant motivation: "There was a consistent view that participants wanted to hear (and state) different opinions and this was a reason for listening and making contact with different programmes" (p.99). This reflects the finding from Manager A in this study on the desire of the audience to contribute to the programme content.

"RNZ National's audience clearly and increasingly want to be involved with our on-air product, through intelligent comment on issues/guests/stories, texting, emailing a question for a guest currently on air, or respond [sic] in bulk when a host asks them for reaction to anything on air" (personal communication, November 12, 2015)

Ewart and Ames' (2016) study drilled down further into audience participation by looking at the reasons active listeners chose a written mode of participation, over making a phone call. While the phone call option is not part of this RNZ National study, I believe the findings can still inform the overarching topic of audience motivation and the perceived relationship an audience may have with a broadcaster. Ewart and Ames identified three key themes in the reasons for choosing either a written or unwritten mode: "performance", "context" and 'programme specificity" (p. 98). Performance was the dominant theme in why listeners chose either mode. Both parties displayed "an overt awareness of the medium as public entertainment". In choosing to call, one listener said they "got a buzz" from it and they did it because their friends "don't have the courage to ring up" (p. 100). Performance concerns influenced reasons to choose the written mode, including fear of embarrassment, the facility to edit their thoughts before communicating and possessing

English as a second language. Within the theme of “context”, ease of contribution of SMS and email was given as a reason for choosing not to phone. Context also included the flexibility to contribute when it suited them. The participant did not have to “wait on hold” and if they wished, they could contribute from their work place without their participation being ‘discovered’ by their employers (p. 98).

Some listeners were motivated in their choice of mode by programme specificity, being a wish to communicate with a specific programme and host. They chose the mode they considered to be the most suitable for contacting that programme. Ewart and Ames (2016) note that most participants who chose to write, preferred to do so by email rather than SMS. Gillman’s (2007) study of talkback audiences and their motivations for calling a programme, identifies “involved” participants who she describes as “dedicated radio listeners” who wish to be part of a community (p. 193) and “agenda” participants whose motivation is to use talkback for “facilitating public debate” (p. 194).

All these motivating factors allied with the technology now available to many listeners, appear to be changing the listener’s perception of the relationship they are able to have with a public radio broadcaster. From the feedback broadcast, it can be seen that they perceive it as a two-way relationship in which their comments are considered valid and welcome.

4.6 Emotional Relevance of Topic

The concept of the emotional relevance of a topic to a listener is, I believe, an important theme to be considered in this study. Producer A (personal communication, November 10, 2015) stated that the topics that attract more reaction than others are: “subjects that affect people’s lives” and that are “polarizing or controversial”. This is also apparent from the data, which indicates that the topics that generate most response are those that evoke strong emotions ranging from happiness to anger or sadness, and a strong desire to agree or disagree. The following example of feedback is typical of the anger expressed regarding the detention of New Zealanders in Australian detention centres:

You can sure as hell bet that if New Zealand sent 50 Australian detainees to the Chatham Islands in the dead of night, that Julie Bishop¹⁸ would have the New Zealand High Commissioner on the carpet for an urgent explanation (*Morning Report*, September 25).

Some topics invoked sad and concerned responses:

¹⁸ Australia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs

David says: I was saddened to hear the interview about experiment on animals ... I think this sort of research shows a total lack of empathy with animals and is a non-human behaviour that puts us at a lower level than animals which I find confusing (*Saturday Morning*, September 19).

Some audience members wished to share happy memories, such as this segment of feedback regarding a Bob Dylan concert at Western Springs, Auckland.

I was a Dylan fan as a child ... I asked to go to the concert for my 11th birthday ... I recall lying on a hill, staring at the stars, listening to my favourite, *Mr Tambourine Man* (*Afternoons*, September 29).

The correspondent's emotions can be 'heard' in the tone of the language they have used in these three examples: "sure as hell", "saddened to hear" and the imagery "lying on a hill, staring at the stars". The inclusion of emotive content such as this into a public radio context is a demonstration of Bonini and Sellas's (2014) findings that the new technological environment has in turn brought about a new relationship between public radio broadcasters and their listeners.

There are also topics that appear to evoke protective and proprietorial emotions in particular in regard to community, state and culture. The earlier quote in this section regarding the purchase of land in New Zealand by Chinese nationals falls into this category, as does the effect on New Zealand society of the arrival of Syrian refugees:

DB says the refugee issue needs stats to inform it. Do they make good citizens or not? Once that is known, then the correct policy is a no-brainer (*Morning Report*, September 7).

Similarly, this feedback on the possible deportation of a man convicted of rape, but claiming refugee status on the basis of climate change in his homeland:

How come the government can't deport a rapist? Who is running this country? New Zealand is turning into a PC nightmare. Throw this piece of vermin out now. (*Morning Report*, September 16)

While this sample was read by the host with little emphasis, the tone is apparent in the listener's choice of language. The dogma expressed around these topics is not unlike the style of discourse used in talkback radio. Ewart (2013) refers to the "divisive nature" of some talkback (p. 790). Flew's (2004) point that talkback has a tendency to offer presentation of simple answers to complex problems (p. 237), is particularly relevant to the examples above.

Some topics evoked an emotional response because they directly affect a listener's security, particularly financial. This feedback in response to a news story regarding university graduate pay scales is an example:

I struggled for the past year to find a job in anything to do with my education ... and I am now glad to have a job making \$19 an hour cutting down weeds (*Nine to Noon*, September 30).

The following feedback in response to a story on the lack of affordable homes in Auckland, also speaks to the listener's concern about financial security:

So Bill English¹⁹ wants to keep house prices high. Too bad for those who cannot afford to buy. Who thought the government wanted to help? (*Morning Report*, September 30)

The finding that emotional relevance is a motivating element for audience interactivity concurs with Francis (2002). He states that popular topics of the talkback genre of interactivity reflect the life-stages and experiences of the audience and include concerning issues such as children, health, education and mortgages. These broad topics can be seen to have the same characteristics as the feedback examples. They can be controversial, they can evoke emotive responses and they deal with issues such as community, personal and financial security. These personal shadings are a new factor in public radio and bring a new dynamic to the listening experience.

4.7 The “Right to Participate”: The View from Behind the Microphone

Jenkins (2006) states that consumers are recognizing that they have the “right to participate” (p. 24) and demanding, “media companies be more responsive to their tastes and interests” (p. 254). While Enli (2008) and Hendy (2013) both comment on the ambivalence shown by some public service broadcasters towards public involvement in content creation, this does not appear to be the case with RNZ National. All four staff survey participants noted the established, integral role that listeners' feedback now plays within RNZ National's programme content. Host A (personal communication, December 19, 2015) saw it as an important part of their programme and in particular saw interactivity as a way to widen the audience and make it accessible to as many people as possible: “a station for all New Zealanders”. Manager A stated that the RNZ National audience “clearly and increasingly want to be involved with our on air product” (personal communication, November 12, 2015).

All the survey participants saw feedback as a positive addition to the programmes they produced or hosted. Host A commented that it makes the programme sound “more relevant, more modern and more lively.” Host B (personal communication, November 23, 2015) stated that it adds colour and texture. Host B introduced the notion that

¹⁹ New Zealand's Minister of Finance

incorporating audience feedback into content can have an effect on the host – “it forces the host into adlib/natural mode and showcases their abilities to relate to humans”. Producer A and Host A both noted that interactivity can be a source of “fresh ideas” that the programme makers themselves, have not considered.

A critical perspective on the use of audience interactivity as content is the ideological concern that such contributions could be seen as “digital sharecropping”, Carr’s (2006) reference to the free labour providing content for digital platforms. RNZ National incorporates the freely provided creative product of an active audience in the content of most day-parts. However, Shirky (2010) counters Carr’s concern with the argument that those providing the labour do not seem to be objecting. He states that the digital sharecropping concept is a claim by media professionals “upset about competition from amateurs ... but amateur motivations differ...” (p. 57). He suggests that the contributors intend their contributions to be “acts of sharing not production” (p. 58). Another counter is that the interactive content, despite being considered a positive and important addition by the staff members surveyed, only constitutes approximately 1 to 3 minutes of each hour in which it is used.²⁰ For this reason it cannot be seen as ‘replacement’ content, but as complementary to programme content such as news stories or feature interviews to which it pertains. As such, in the context of public radio, it offers no advantage to the network; if it were removed, existing content would simply run longer by the required few minutes.

Hosts and producers appeared to be in no doubt about the positive impact of new technology. “I don’t think you can reflect the zeitgeist now without incorporating listener opinion” (Host A, personal communication, December 19, 2015). Producer A described it as a “useful tool to engage with our diverse audience” (personal communication, November 10, 2015). Manager A described this closer connection with the audience as not only a must for RNZ National, but something that the audience themselves have asked for (personal communication November 12, 2015). Host A described this audience as “... increasingly ‘owning’/ contributing to the media rather than being ‘broadcasted [sic] at’”. Manager A and Host A both mentioned the ‘community of listeners’, a concept also mentioned by Bonini (2014); Fitzgerald & Housley (2007); Gauntlett (2011) and Gillman (2007) in scholarship on audience participation. Bonini (2014) in writing of the active

²⁰ Data set A shows that feedback can be found in most, but not all hours. In most case it is used between items and leading up to the hourly news bulletin.

radio audience suggests that in the “age of Facebook” they “are no longer invisible and isolated ... [they are] linked together by broadcasting media” (p. 75).

The four participants acknowledged the importance of the gatekeeping role. Some scholars paint a relatively bleak picture of this role. “Media producers have the power to inscribe privileged representations of the world that place constraints on actual audience practices, and may actually shape those practices” (Bird, 2011, p.508). The power of the producer is echoed in Coleman’s (2004) description of the gatekeeping process: the [media] audience are “invited” to take part and on that basis “play by the broadcaster’s rules” (p.93). The reasons given by Host A for censoring or eliminating potential feedback include being off topic, stating the obvious, being repetitive, and being hostile (personal communication, December 19, 2015). Host B noted that gatekeeping is not just employed when a listener is being excessively critical of the host or the content, it can also occur when a listener is being excessively complimentary (personal communication, November 23, 2015). Host A added that there is no set criterion, and it becomes a judgment call. Producer A confirmed that some active correspondents are regulars, who rather than adding to the discussion, have “a barrow to push” (personal communication, November 10, 2015). These fall into the category described by Gillman (2007) as “Agenda Callers” (p. 194). Host B stated that the views of the minority should not be given too much weight when it comes to editorial policy. Host B believes that over time more listeners will become accustomed to the concept of providing feedback and will begin to contribute. These may be due to the aging of the digital native generation. Achte (2012) notes that the media users of the future are more likely to participate than the current generation, who are mostly consumers. As a result RNZ National may find itself engaging with younger audiences as multi-platform delivery of media is normalized.

4.8 Chapter Summary

From the medium’s earliest years, radio listeners have been able to interact by writing letters or making phone calls to a broadcaster, expressing their opinions or requesting items to be broadcast. However, with the adoption of Web 2.0 technology, the “terms of [their] participation” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 257) have changed. Listeners, motivated by an emotional response to a story, and the ability to contribute with ease and speed, have become active participants providing broadcasters with a smorgasbord of content from which to choose and incorporate in their programmes as feedback. The advantages to the network are numerous: choice, immediacy, control and even an elongation of a story’s ‘life’ as active audiences continue to post on the network’s site or social media page even

after the radio has been turned off. And there are positives for the audience as well. The active audience can ‘vent their spleen’, correct facts, share a joke, or join an online community. The non-active audience can learn from, and be entertained by their fellow listeners. A listener may have their interest piqued by audience-provided feedback and seek out the story in podcast form from RNZ National’s web page.

The traditional notion of what constitutes a radio broadcast is becoming obsolete. However, given the reach of radio today, it could be said that Day’s (1994) definition of ‘broadcasting’ based on the agrarian metaphor for sowing seeds, “the deliberate dispersal of a signal to all and sundry” (p.1) is possibly more accurate now, than during the medium’s infancy in the 1920s. In qualitative research conducted for RNZ National, released in November 2015, 89% of RNZ (National and Concert network²¹) listeners aged 15 years and up, agreed that RNZ “promotes informed debate”, 92% agreed that it contributed to the development of an informed society and 89% agreed that it provided fair and balanced information (RNZ, 2016). To date, no qualitative research has been released publicly to ascertain listeners’ views and perceptions of RNZ National’s multi-platform context. If participant numbers can be seen as an indication of a positive response, then one can say that the network is beginning to move away from the “top down” paradigm described by Day (1994) when “broadcasters spoke and audiences listened” (p. 3) to a broadcaster that “seem[s] less rarefied, more accessible ... to everyday people” (Host B, personal communication, November 23, 2015). RNZ is acknowledging the “more prominent position” of the media user (Moe, 2010). Its engagement with new technology since the mid-2000s and its own qualitative research shows that is open to learning what its listeners want to hear on their public broadcaster. (Producer A, personal communication, November 10, 2015) describes RNZ National as “audience driven”. Jenkins’ (2006) asks the question: “is the public ready to push for greater participation?” (p. 254). RNZ National’s audience appears to have answered ‘yes’.

²¹ RNZ Concert is the fine-music arm of public radio network RNZ, comprising 85% music content. RNZ National’s weekly cumulative audience is 14% of 15+ listeners; RNZ Concert’s weekly cumulative audience is 4% of 15+ listeners.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Conclusion

This research project was framed around the research question: in what ways in what ways has interactivity, enabled by Web 2.0 technology changed the relationship between a public service radio network and its audience? Public broadcaster RNZ National was used as a case study. In this chapter, I will draw my conclusion from the triangulated findings of the data sets taken from both sides of the microphone, being the broadcast content, and those responsible for creating it. In doing this I will also reference the body of information in earlier scholarship. I will discuss the implications of the conclusion for public radio broadcasters. This chapter will also note the limitations of this study and suggest areas for future research.

From the findings of this study I conclude that the use of Web 2.0 technology on RNZ National is shaping a new relationship paradigm for public service radio and its audience. The network is using new media technology to maximise its potential as a multi-platform, interactive broadcaster giving its audience multiple ways in which to react, respond, provide content and critique. What was once seen as a predominantly one-way medium is moving towards becoming a multi-lane communication highway in which broadcaster and listener talk to each other, listen to each other, and listeners talk amongst themselves. Interactive feedback content is now an integral part of RNZ National's schedule and a positive addition to their programmes. "I don't think you can reflect the zeitgeist now without incorporating listener opinion" (Host A, personal communication, December 19, 2015). The use of audience feedback as programme content is described by Manager A as the "audience increasingly owning and contributing to the media, rather than being broadcasted at" (personal communication, November 12, 2015).

The new paradigm is proving mutually beneficial to the broadcaster *and* the audience. The audience members recognise their "right to participate" (Jenkins, 2006, p.24) and their ability to contribute content of their own making. Using SMS texting, email or social media to express their views, they are able to react easily (Ewart & Ames, 2016) and speedily to what is broadcast by the network in the knowledge that their comments may be broadcast. Listeners can participate from a range of locations (Ewart & Ames, 2016), using a range of devices. They can edit their thoughts so that they are expressed clearly and eloquently (if that is the intention) before pressing 'send' or posting on line.

The broadcaster benefits by being able to use this source material to create content that makes the programmes “more lively” and “more relevant” (Host B, personal communication, November 23, 2015). Feedback is selected and edited for language or duration (or both) by the producer and host for on-air use. There are no concerns about censorship, duration or quality of articulation that can be found in the production of its cousin, talkback. This makes it ideal for use by a public broadcaster that has statutory obligations to maintain a standard of content while still meeting with its charter obligations to “foster critical thought, and informed and wide-ranging debate” (RNZ, 2016c). Listener participation not only provides on-air content for RNZ National, it also provides content for their social networking pages on Facebook and Twitter. Listeners post material that may or may not be used on-air, but either way it remains on the broadcaster’s page as content for other listeners to read and react to with another comment, or an acknowledgement such as adding the “Like” emoticon. The sharing of content from one of RNZ National’s social media pages will create awareness of the network. Another mutually beneficial aspect is that audience interactivity in this new environment is not time dependent. Listeners can contribute on any platform at any time and consequently the broadcaster has a ready supply of content to choose from.

Although the overarching research question that I set out to study was the effect of new media interactivity on public radio broadcasting, further conclusions can be drawn from the findings regarding active listener motivation. During the content analysis I observed that all interactivity falls into three categories: opinion (agree or disagree), adding information, and the expression of enjoyment or a lighthearted comment. This finding concurs with Ewart and Ames (2016) in their study of SMS and email interactivity, using focus group methodology. From this I conclude that all listeners, whatever the topic they choose to comment on, are motivated by one of these factors. Linked directly to this is the concept of emotional relevance, a term I use to describe the emotional connection a listener feels with a particular topic. Some (but not all topics) spark an emotional response in a listener, a ‘hot button’, which acts as one of the three motivating factors mentioned above. Some topics generate a “polarizing or controversial” (Producer A, personal communication, November 10, 2015) response. Some evoke a proprietary protectiveness in the listener as regards their family, their community, culture or possibly their country. Finally, some create a sense of personal insecurity and concern, particularly where financial matters are being discussed. A lack of emotional relevance equates to a lack of reaction. This explains why many international news stories, that do not directly affect

New Zealanders in their everyday life²² and therefore have no emotional relevance to them, do not generate a response, or very little response.

5.2 Discussion

The implications for public service radio, and public service broadcasting in general, are significant. They are aligned with Hendy's (2013) prediction that the "top down" model of PSB (p.1) "hasn't been disappearing so much as being re-invented – as a bottom-up phenomenon" (p.109). Public broadcasters such as RNZ National can continue to fulfil their obligations as a publicly funded institution (in the case of RNZ "foster[ing] critical thought, and informed and wide-ranging debate", RNZ, 2016), while still meeting the audience's desire to participate and contribute. The gatekeeping processes used around feedback content will ensure that it will meet "current norms of good taste and decency" as required by the Broadcasting Standards Authority. The successful incorporation of Web 2.0 generated content is just one way in which RNZ has moved towards the adoption of multi-platform technology. Hendy (2013) writes:

New forms of social media sometimes serve old media rather than replace them, and that new symbiotic relationships are even now being formed ... broadcasting is adapting to the new media age rather than being overwhelmed by it (p.109).

In 2015 RNZ changed its branding from Radio New Zealand to RNZ, purposefully moving itself away from being purely a radio medium (RNZ, 2015). Also in 2015, the weekday news programme *Checkpoint* began simulcasting on free-to-air television and live video streaming (RNZ, 2016d). As a public broadcaster, RNZ can indeed be labelled "PSB 2.0" (Jones, 2009, p.206).

The conclusions regarding audience motivation have implications for producers of content. It is clear that some topics evoke more reaction than others or in some cases a particular angle taken may create emotional relevance and motivate a listener. An example of this was the New Zealand angle added to the Syrian refugee crisis: should the country accept more refugees? If producers wish to encourage contributions they need to understand the 'hot buttons' of emotional relevance that spark a reaction and motivate listeners. The unanswered question of what proportion of the audience are active listeners is discussed below in Limitations. Despite this gap in the knowledge, Host B believes that as time goes by, a higher proportion of listeners will be willing to contribute as they

²² This finding refers to international news stories, not interviews with international guests.

become accustomed to the process. This concurs with Achte (2012) who considers that the next generation of listeners is more likely to be content creators than the current generation of content consumers

5.3 Limitations

There were several limitations to this research project. I was unable to record every day-part broadcast by RNZ National in September 2015. However, I believe that the 114 hours recorded provide a valid sample for this study. There was no way of establishing how many listener contributions were made at source, compared with how many made it through the gatekeeping process to be broadcast as feedback. The closest indication can be seen in Figure 4.2 which shows that on one day alone, 653 posts were made to a thread on the RNZ National Facebook page, about the new New Zealand flag debate, while 16 comments were captured across the whole month. A statistic that could not be gleaned from the recorded content was which platform (text, email or a posting to the Facebook or Twitter page) was the source of the feedback as read by the host. In some cases a reference was made to the source of the feedback, but this was not consistent. This information would have given an indication of the popularity of one platform over another.

5.4 Future Study

The focus of this study has been on public radio, its active listeners and the content they produce. However in considering the Brechtian vision of “the finest possible communication” being when an audience can “speak as well as hear” (Brecht, 1993, p.15) it should be acknowledged that the majority of the public radio audience, the consumers of the content, don’t “speak”, they *only* “hear”. Few studies appear to have been done on the non-active listener experience of Web 2.0 interactive content. The work by Ewart and Ames (2016), who surveyed both active and non-active listeners, is an exception. However, it is possible to surmise that feedback content provides the non-active audience with interesting, topical content to listen to. Quantitatively measured audience ratings will give an overall indication of the size of the listening audience, but more qualitative research needs to be undertaken to learn their views on interactive content.

A related area of study, which can be seen as the ‘holy grail’ of interactive talk radio research for both public and commercial radio, is the percentage of active versus non-active listeners. It is assumed, as mentioned above, that the majority of listeners do not

participate, however the ratio has not been established in media scholarship. It is considered part of radio industry anecdotal knowledge, and is referred to in a 1996 newspaper story, *What's the 1% rule?*, which used early You Tube take up statistics to state that out of 100 people, 89 would read a posting, 10 would interact with it but only 1 person would initiate a post (Arthur, 1996). Ewart and Ames, (2016) study looked at the motivations behind SMS and email contributions, but not SNS postings. They state: “there is much more work to be undertaken on the topic of non-verbal contributions to talkback radio, particularly with the increasing use of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter” (p. 91-92). Their research was undertaken on commercial radio.

Public radio broadcasters were once thought to know “better than [their] listeners what they wanted or needed” (Scannell, 1996, p.11). However the Chief Executive of public radio broadcaster RNZ, Paul Thompson, has stated that “our audiences are changing” (RNZ, 2015). This study shows that the public service audience is now actively involved in the production of content and are indicating to the broadcaster what they “want and need”. While public radio network RNZ National redefines itself as a multi-platform broadcaster, the “changing” audience is redefining its relationship with RNZ National.

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Appendix A

List of feedback comments by topic as recorded from RNZ National, September 2015

Topic	Number of Feedback comments broadcast	Day-part	Source
Detainment of New Zealanders in Australian detention centres	26 (Mass)	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
The new New Zealand flag	16 (Mass)	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Should New Zealand accept Syrian refugees?	12 (Mass)	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Bob Dylan concerts in NZ memories	12 (Mass)	<i>Afternoons</i>	Pre-selected interactive slot
Sexualisation of pop culture/sex trafficking	12 (Mass)	<i>Sunday Morning</i>	Feature interview
Compliments on music choice	11	All except <i>Morning Report</i>	Listener generated comments
Gender pay gap	10	<i>Sunday Morning</i>	Feature interview
Self-driving cars	10 (Mass)	<i>Sunday Morning</i>	Feature interview
AgResearch redundancies	10 (Mass)	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	News/ current affairs story
'Climate-change refugee' deportation	9 (Mass)	<i>Morning Report & 9- Noon</i>	News/ current affairs story
Underpayment of beneficiaries	9	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
A new New Zealand National Anthem	8	<i>Morning Report, Nine to Noon & Afternoon</i>	News/ current affairs story
Foreign Ownership of New Zealand land.	8	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Anton Oliver on Rugby World Cup	7	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	News/ current affairs story
Rock songs as lullabies	6 (Mass)	<i>Afternoons</i>	Preselected Interactive slot
Tribute Albums	6 (Mass)	<i>Afternoons</i>	Preselected interactive slot
Treatment of feral cats	6	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	News/ current affairs story
Korowai Trust housing project halted	6	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story

Topic	Number of Feedback comments broadcast	Day-part	Source
Deportation of convicted rapist to Ethiopia	6	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Windscreen washers at intersections	6	<i>Morning Report, Nine to Noon & Afternoons</i>	News/ current affairs story
Children in CYF care being sent to other centres due to lack of beds	6	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
University graduate employment and pay scale information	6	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	News/ current affairs story
Concerts in New Zealand: Elton John, Billy Joel, Johnny Cash	6	<i>Afternoons</i>	<i>Great New Zealand Concert</i>
Preserving fruit	6	<i>Afternoons</i>	Feature interview
Earthquake felt	4 (Mass)	<i>Morning Report</i>	Listener generated comment
Gender transitioning interview	4	<i>Sunday Morning</i>	Feature interview
Ban on soft drink dispensers in hospitals	4	<i>Morning Report & Nine to Noon</i>	News/ current affairs story
Richard Nixon book i/v	4	<i>Saturday Morning</i>	Feature interview
Paracetamol overuse	4	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	News/ current affairs story
Buying pandas for Wellington zoo	4	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Fonterra/dairy payouts	4	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
The Bullingden Club	4	<i>Saturday Morning</i>	Feature interview
Chris Brown singer, entry to New Zealand	4	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Intelligence/ whales	4	<i>Afternoons</i>	Feature interview
Effect of family size	3	<i>Afternoons</i>	Feature interview
Smashing pianos to mark earthquake anniversary	3	<i>Afternoons</i>	News/ current affairs story
Queen Elizabeth II becomes longest serving monarch	3	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Tax avoidance	3	<i>Sunday Morning</i>	<i>Insight</i>
Magda Szubanski i/v	3	<i>Saturday Morning</i>	Feature interview

Topic	Number of Feedback comments broadcast	Day-part	Source
History of Governor General position	3	<i>Evening</i>	Feature interview
Rugby culture	3	<i>Sunday Morning</i>	Feature interview
Comment on mathematician interview	3	<i>Evening</i>	Feature interview
Auckland housing crisis	3	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Eating insects	3	<i>Afternoons</i>	Unknown
Rat influx in Christchurch	3	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	Feature Interview
Euthanising attacking tiger	2 (Mass)	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Jeremy Corbyn election (Int)	2	<i>Sunday Morning</i>	News/ current affairs story
Graeme Brazier (Hello Sailor) dies	2	<i>Afternoons</i>	News/ current affairs story
Liverpool's Slavery Museum	2	<i>Morning Report</i>	Feature interview
Edward Lear's work	2	<i>Afternoons</i>	Feature interview
Where do lost socks go?	2	<i>The Panel</i>	<i>The Panel</i> discussion
Quality of NZ's water and food	2	<i>Afternoons</i>	Feature interview
History of Governors General and servant pay	2	<i>Nights</i>	Feature interview
Poem from regular contributor	2	<i>The Panel</i>	Listener generated
Carbon emissions from airlines	2	<i>Afternoons</i>	Feature interview
Computers in schools (OECD study)	2	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Home-made food	2	<i>Afternoons</i>	Feature interview
Alannis Morrisette	2	<i>Afternoons</i>	Comment on music played
New Guinea tourism	2	<i>Afternoons</i>	Feature interview
Farming/Loan swaps	2	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	News/ current affairs story
Live animal experiments	2	<i>Morning Report & Saturday Morning</i>	News/ current affairs story
Mt Taranaki views	2	<i>Afternoons</i>	<i>Road Map</i>

Topic	Number of Feedback comments broadcast	Day-part	Source
Ohariu Country Club Memories	2	<i>Nights</i>	<i>Spectrum</i>
Planting for bees	2	<i>Afternoons</i>	Feature story interview
Texting and driving	1 (Mass)	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Ruby Wax on mindfulness	1 (Mass)	<i>Afternoons</i>	Feature interview
Do worms grow back after being chopped?	1 (Mass)	<i>Afternoons</i>	Host comment
Should you brown meat before cooking?	1 (Mass)	<i>Afternoons</i>	Food segment/ host comment
Enjoyed Dambusters i/v	1 (Mass)	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	Feature interview
Enjoyed Matika Wilba i/v (photographer)	1 (Mass)	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	Feature interview
Malcolm Turnbull election (Int)	1	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	News/ current affairs story
A skinny Miss Piggy?	1	<i>The Panel</i>	<i>The Panel</i> discussion
How to get teenagers of bed	1	<i>The Panel</i>	<i>The Panel</i> discussion
Soft pornography books	1	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	Feature interview
Driving on beaches	1	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
'Breathing Alcohol' bar	1	<i>The Panel</i>	<i>The Panel</i> discussion
Neil Finn song for Syrian Refugees	1	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Harvard potato study	1	<i>The Panel</i>	<i>The Panel</i> discussion
Silly names of bands	1	<i>Afternoons</i>	Comment on music played
Memories of slot car racing	1	<i>Afternoons</i>	Unknown
Joke re dating a rock	1	<i>Saturday Morning</i>	Feature interview
Meaning of 'Uptown'	1	<i>Afternoons</i>	Feature interview
Criticism of Lorde's music	1	<i>Afternoon</i>	Comment on music played
Closure of Auckland museum display	1	<i>The Panel</i>	<i>The Panel</i> discussion

Topic	Number of Feedback comments broadcast	Day-part	Source
Danger of battery chargers	1	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Australian sexism	1	<i>Afternoons</i>	Feature interview
Leap-seconds	1	<i>Sunday Morning</i>	Feature interview
Life on Mars	1	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Climbing Everest restrictions	1	<i>Morning Report</i>	News/ current affairs story
Myopia in children due to use of devices	1	<i>Nine to Noon</i>	News/ current affairs story
Living conditions for Palestinians	1	<i>Nights</i>	Feature interview
Correction re members of The Yardbirds	1	<i>Nights</i>	Comment on music played

Appendix B:

RNZ National day-parts and programme titles

Day-part	Programme Title
Weekdays 6-9am	<i>Morning Report</i>
Weekdays 9-12pm	<i>Nine to Noon</i>
Weekdays 1-4pm	<i>Afternoons</i>
Weekdays 4-5pm	<i>The Panel</i>
Weekdays 7-12am	<i>Nights</i>
Saturdays 8-12pm	<i>Saturday Morning</i>
Sundays 7 -12	<i>Sunday Morning</i>

Source: RNZ (2016e)

Appendix C

RNZ National Staff Survey Questionnaire

Part 1 – Making the Decision

1. Was there a conscious decision to begin using audience/listener participation on the live segments of RNZ, and if so, when was that?
2. What was the reasoning behind adding this form of participation?
3. From your perspective, what was the reaction of the listeners to this new form of participation?
4. Was there resistance - from any quarter: hosts, producers or listeners?

Part 2 – What Does Listener Participation Bring to the programmes

1. In what ways do you think this form of listener participation benefits the programme?
2. Are there specific examples of benefits to programmes and if so what are they?
3. In what ways do you think this listener participatory culture benefits RNZ's image?
4. Are there some programmes which were not suited to listener participation?
5. Do you have regular contributors?
6. Do you get many contributions that cannot be used?
7. What topics attract more reaction than others?

Part 3 – The Future of Listener Participation

1. Can you see new media having more to contribute in the future as technologies change?
2. What would your advice be to other public broadcasters in terms of adopting new media?

Part 4 - Any further comments you may wish to add: