# Podcast Listening and Informal Learning

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## Abstract

Listening to podcasts is a popular way adults learn outside of formal school settings. Examining podcast listening through the lens of informal learning is an important and underexplored area of inquiry. This is especially important considering the growth of the adult population in the United States and the new opportunities for learning and recreation. In this research, we interviewed 31 adult podcast listeners from across the United States about their experiences listening to and learning from podcasts. We open coded and refined the analysis to three themes. There was a strong connection between listening, learning, and personal growth among the participants. The participants experienced meaningful changes in their perspectives and behaviors from what they learned in podcasts. Finally, the unique features of the medium of podcasting such as its convenience and ease of production were integral to this learning.

## Keywords

adult education, informal learning, podcasting, interviews

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Listening to podcasts is a popular way adults learn outside of formal school settings. Examining podcast listening through the lens of informal learning is an important and underexplored area of inquiry. This is especially important considering the growth of the adult population in the United States and the new opportunities for learning and recreation. In this research, we interviewed 31 adult podcast listeners from across the United States about their experiences listening to and learning from podcasts. We open coded and refined the analysis to three themes. There was a strong connection between listening, learning, and personal growth among the participants. The participants experienced meaningful changes in their perspectives and behaviors from what they learned in podcasts. Finally, the unique features of the medium of podcasting such as its convenience and ease of production were integral to this learning.

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## Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to explore how and what adults learn from podcasts recreationally, outside of formal educational settings. Podcasting, the production and distribution of audio files in a serialized system, has experienced precipitous growth in the last two decades (Aufderheide et al., 2020; Edison Research, 2023; Sullivan, 2019). In the United States 64% of the population age 12 and over have listened to a podcast in 2022, up from 27% in 2013 (Edison Research, 2023). The most common reason people give for listening to podcasts is to learn new things (Edison Research, 2019). What people learn from podcasts and how this connects to their lives and personal development have been underexplored. Current research on podcasting and learning focuses on its applications in formal learning settings. Moreover, the growth in podcast listenership coincides with an increase in the adult population, a growing focus on adult learning, and new technology-mediated ways to learn outside of schools. By studying podcasting and the informal education of adults, the growing terrain of adult informal lifelong learning can be further delineated. This study was based on interviews with 31 people who listen to podcasts to learn outside of formal educational systems or goals. The research method comprised open-ended questions, an iterative coding process of the transcripts, and the examination of recurring themes. The main research questions were: What and how do adults learn from their self-directed listening of podcasts? How does this self-directed learning from podcasts affect their lives?

There have been important shifts in the demographics of the United States that make examining the informal education of adults an especially important concern. In 2020, 77.9% of the U.S. population was 18 or older, a 10% increase over the previous decade (U.S. Census, 2021). Furthermore, this coincides with a decline in the under-18 population and a growth in the overall population (U.S. Census, 2021). There are more adults in the United States than ever before, and they are an increasing percentage of the population. While formal education

has begun to address this demographic shift (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020), it is likely that self-directed informal learning, enabled and encouraged by technology, will play an important role. There has been a growing paradigm shift in viewing older adults as learners (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

This research examined podcasts in the context of adult informal learning that is self-directed and recreational. When considering the learning process for adults, there are three general settings where and when learning can occur: formal, nonformal, and informal (Coombs, 1985; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Formal learning is that which occurs in schools (prek-12 and higher education); nonformal is that which is organized and directed by institutions, but happens out of schools (e.g., at community center workshops and continuing education programs); and informal learning is defined as "the spontaneous, unstructured learning that goes on daily in the home and neighborhood, behind the school and on the playing field, in the workplace, marketplace, library and museum, and through the various mass media" (Coombs, 1985, p. 92). This research is focused on self-directed, unstructured, and recreational learning.

## Literature Review

Podcasting has grown in the last two decades. The meaning of the word "podcast" has evolved since the word was coined in 2004 by Ben Hammersley in *The Guardian* (Bottomley, 2015; Shamburg, 2021). The original description of a downloadable audio file does not fully capture the current phenomenon. Over the last 17 years, the term "podcast" has meant: a downloaded audio show, a series of shows distributed and updated to a listener's media device (computer, mobile, or smart speaker) by syndication technology, and a streamed series of audio or video. Many podcast producers now have complementary YouTube channels where the recorded interviews are shared, and this video series is considered the podcast. For this research, we focused on audio shows distributed in a series, released at once or over time, and with a set number or recurring without a defined end.

Podcasting fills a variety of needs (e.g., convenient entertainment, engaging content, distraction during mundane tasks), but a deep examination of how podcasts function in informal education for adults has been overlooked in the research. An illuminating and detailed study by the Pew Research Center titled "Lifelong Learning and Technology" does not mention "podcasts" or "podcasting" in the survey of technology for adult learners, though there is a focus on massive open online courses (MOOCs), Khan Academy, and digital badges (Horrigan, 2016). The role of podcasting in the informal learning of adults is overshadowed in research by its uses in formal learning and entertainment.

Indeed, a review of the literature on podcast listeners reveals a research gap in the applications of podcasting as an informal learning tool. There have been numerous studies on podcasting in formal higher education (e.g., Chung & Kim, 2015; Ferrer et al., 2020; O'Connor et al., 2020; Padayachee, 2017) and in K-12 education (e.g., Darwis, 2016; Li et al., 2018; Rosa et al., 2020). Little has been done to look specifically at informal learning and podcasts, though broader studies on podcasting have shown that learning is a leading reason for listening to podcasts. Chan-Olmsted and Wang (2022) conducted a national survey to examine motivation and usage and discovered that learning new information was one of the leading motivators for listening.

Learning has been found as a motive for podcast listening in studies that have focused on media gratification. Media gratification speaks to the satisfaction and motivations of media consumption, and it is frequently conducted with survey research (Kaye & Johnson, 2002; Perks, et al., 2019; Rubin, 1994). Swanson (2012) conducted a survey of college students and podcast listening through the lens of media gratification and found that they enjoy learning and then sharing what they learn with peers. Chung and Kim (2015) also looked at college students'

motivation and attitudes of podcasting with survey research through a media gratification lens and found that educational attainment was a major factor of their motivation to listen, along with escape, entertainment, and convenience. Perks et al. (2019) surveyed 737 podcast listeners through Amazon's Mechanical Turk human intelligence marketplace in the development of a Podcast Use and Gratifications Scale. One of the main factors contributing to gratification in this study was the participants' ability to control their edutainment, along with the ability to multitask and the sense of transportation to another mental state. Perks and Turner (2019) look at podcast listeners through the lens of gratification qualitatively through focus group research. Their study revealed that podcasts offer a rich supply of portable and engaging content that allows listeners to be productive in personally enriching ways.

There have been some other diverse qualitative approaches in the study of podcast listening—from qualitative content analysis to case studies. Drew's (2017) research examined the genres of educational podcasting in a corpus of the most downloaded podcasts in the "education" categories of popular podcasting aggregators and applied iterations of textual analysis to develop categories. The findings revealed three categories of educational podcasts: the quick burst, the narrative, and the chat show. Wrather's (2016) case study examined how podcasters cultivate audience engagement outside of the listening experience. This research examines the content of three shows and a review of the engagement on discussion boards created by the podcast company and major social media platforms such as Reddit, Twitter, and Tumblr. The results revealed a complex ecosystem in which fans consume and help create show content. Meserko (2014) similarly focused on a case study of the podcast *The Mental Illness Happy Hour* (Gilmartin, n.d.), a comedic podcast on mental health. The findings revealed a deep and complex relationship between host and listeners, a relationship that was facilitated by the intimacy of the medium of podcasting.

Qualitative research has also been used to examine the experiences of producers of educational podcasters. Shamburg (2020) conducted multiple case study research and examined successful, diverse, independent educational podcasters. The findings revealed that these producers were motivated by a desire to fill a niche in available media content, flexibility in their programming, and an appreciation of their editorial independence.

Interview research has also been applied to qualitatively study the experiences of podcasters and podcast listeners. The topic of motivation of independent podcasters whose purpose was to educate audiences on a specific topic (such as race relations, entrepreneurship, art appreciation) was extended in a study on why and how women of color podcast (Shamburg, 2021), a project inspired by the lack of representation of women of color in podcasting. This grounded theory study used interviews with 10 podcasters, a review of their shows, and contextual material (articles, reviews, show notes, and Web sites). The research revealed that these women were motivated by a deep sense of mission to fill a content niche, a sense of community from their audience, a feeling of personal growth, and the unique attributes of podcasting such as ease of production, editorial control, and the power of audio. Heshmat et al. (2018) conducted interview research to study the practices of frequent podcast listeners. Through snowball sampling they recruited 18 participants and conducted semi-structured interviews. They discovered that podcasts are a flexible way to support alone time and that the podcasts' ability to transport listeners away from their current time and place was important.

This research study examines recreational listening of podcasts, a type of informal learning. Informal learning can be delineated into three types: self-directed, incidental, and tacit (Duguid et al., 2013; Marsick & Watkins, 2016; Schugurensky, 2013). Self-directed learning is intentional and conscious. Incidental learning is characterized as the by-product of doing something else (e.g., learning vocabulary words of another language when traveling abroad), unintentionally, but consciously done by the learner. Tacit learning is the unconscious and unintentional learning that occurs through the course of living one's life. The focus on informal

learning in this study involves both the self-directed learning of podcast listeners and the incidental learning that occurs when the podcast listening is intended to entertain or to alleviate tedium of another task (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022; Heshmat et al., 2018).

Informal learning has a relationship with formal learning. Rogers (2014) described informal learning as the base of the iceberg, fundamentally supporting the tip of the iceberg of formal and nonformal learning. Informal learning gives us the deep and foundational knowledge, skills, and mindsets for success in schools. For example, informal learning helps up build the social and emotional skills that we need for academic success as well as provides context and relevance for what we learn in schools. Coombs (1985) counted informal learning as the most prevalent form of adult learning. Informal learning experiences are not only learner-centered, based on the needs and setting of the learner, but also a function of the learner's skills, styles, judgement, goals, and self-experimentation (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Moreover, informal learning plays an important part in how people view the world and themselves. Through informal learning we are exposed to diverse experiences, hone our social skills and critical thinking, and discover our interests and talents. Schugurensky (2000) found that informal learning can complement and contradict formal learning on topics such as racism, homophobia, and issues of the hidden curriculum, the powerful and unofficial lessons of schools. These are situations where people learn one lesson in school but encounter contradictory lessons outside of school.

People listen to podcasts for a variety of often interrelated reasons, closely connected to informal learning: to conveniently alleviate boredom (Heshmat et al., 2018), gather news and information (Boling & Hull, 2018), connect with communities who share an interest (Wrather, 2016), and learn new things (Edison Research, 2019). Moreover, as podcasts offer a variety of content, a single listener can turn to podcasting for different topics such as storytelling, relationship advice, political debate (Perks et al., 2019). Indeed, enticing and varied content is a part of the allure for podcast listeners; another allure is convenience. The on-demand audio format allows a listener to use a podcast during seemingly tedious or unappealing tasks (Heshmat et al., 2018). Perks et al. (2019) found that the customization of the experience is one of the leading appeals of the medium.

Podcasting can play an important role in the personal growth of an adult. The customization and privacy of podcasting offers options for adults to design their personal learning. Internet technologies have been a valuable medium for people when privacy is a pivotal element in the learning process. Fox and Ralston (2016) described how technology has been a valuable medium for people to learn about topics in privacy. In their research, Fox and Ralston focused on how LGBTQ individuals learn, connect, and grow with their identity privately online before coming out. Podcasting has been used by people to explore topics that they were embarrassed to discuss or even divulge with their family and friends (Heshmat et al., 2018).

The medium of podcasting has unique attributes. The customizable, on-demand nature encourages listening on one's own time. The low cost of creating a podcast has made it a fertile ground for a broad and diverse scope of topics. Moreover, audio allows the listener to engage in the co-creation of meaning. McLuhan (1964) considered audio a cool medium, a medium with which the listener must actively collaborate in making meaning by filling in the gaps where information is not provided. This often-solitary aural experience can lead to a mental transportation: a powerful sense of immersion into the world of the podcaster, away from the physical surroundings of the listener (Heshmat et al., 2018; Perks et al., 2019). Furthermore, Douglas (2004) described the evanescent nature of sound and its demand for our heightened concentration. The simple, inexpensive tool of recorded voices can have a powerful effect on individuals and audiences.

## Method

The purpose of this research study was to explore how and what adults learn from podcasts recreationally, outside of formal educational settings. This is underexplored territory on a nuanced topic, and the use of open-ended interview questions was a good fit for rich, complex, and unexpected data. Qualitative research allows for rich data collection without constricting participants to previously anticipated responses (Alexander, 2020; Lofland et al., 2006). Our approach was underpinned by constructivist grounded theory, which is used to avoid falling back on pre-determined ideas or theories (Charmaz, 2014). In that spirit, we avoided starting with strong theoretical framework or lens and intended to follow the data where it led us. Moreover, semi-structured interviews are specifically useful for exploring emerging topics as it allows for flexibility in the pursuit of new ideas with follow up questions (Wood et al., 2019).

### Self of Researchers

The research team consisted of a professor and his former and current students from a doctoral program in educational technology leadership. Christopher, the professor and lead author, has been working in educational technology since 1991, mainly focusing on K12 settings as a teacher, teacher educator, and researcher. His own experiences learning from podcasts and discussing them with friends and family members made him aware of the unrecognized role that they play in the continuing informal education of adults. Veronica is an adjunct faculty member at two colleges, specializing in business management and educational technology. Prior to moving into higher education, she was a vice president at a major brokerage firm, managing day-to-day operations. As a lifelong learner, she enjoys listening to podcasts to learn about new ideas and for pure entertainment. Remberto has spent the last two decades serving in a variety of instructional roles in corporate, educational, and non-profit sectors. As a researcher in educational technology, he has focused on various educational mediums to support online learning, including podcasts, online synchronous environments, asynchronous tools, and e-learning development. Juan is a doctoral student and a Professor of Cybersecurity at SUNY Westchester Community College. He is also the creator and host of the podcast *Technology Tap*, which focuses on helping listeners prepare for information technology certification tests. Kristina recently completed her doctorate. She has been working with educational technology in higher education since 2017 as an administrator of grant-funded projects, as an adjunct professor in undergraduate biology courses, and as a researcher. She was unfamiliar with podcasts before this research but was interested in understanding the informal learning of adults.

### Recruitment

After approval of our University's Institutional Review Board, the participants were recruited through Facebook and Instagram. We developed a Facebook post that briefly described the research and offered a $20 Barnes and Noble gift card for participation. The post was boosted with paid advertising, which allowed for targeting specific demographics, and it was automatically shared to Instagram. It was posted on our NJCU Educational Technology Department's Facebook page (NJCU Educational Technology Department, n.d.)) which is actively updated with information several times per week. A Facebook-boosted post allowed us to target the audience to included people in the United States who had a matched interest in "podcast" from ages 18-65+. The social media post linked to a landing page on our department's website that described the project and linked to a consent form. When a

participant completed the consent form, a notice was sent to the project leader and a research team member was assigned to contact the participant and then schedule and conduct the interview. There was a conscious effort to recruit a group of participants diverse in gender. Midway through the recruitment when most volunteers identified as female, we reassessed our targeting and changed the settings on the Facebook advertisement to target males.

## Interviews

The interviews were conducted by all the individual team members. The team developed and tested the interview script (Appendix A: Script and Questions for Interview) and rehearsed conducting the interviews. The semi-structured questions and the interview script were developed to improve our ability to smoothly elicit responses that addressed the research questions and to anticipate opportunities for follow up questions. We interviewed approximately four to five participants per week for two months.

We interviewed 31 people on their listening and learning habits with podcasts. The questions were semi-structured and related to their listening, learning, and behaviors related to podcasting. Following the script, the five researchers conducted the interviews via Zoom, each lasting between 30 to 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded on Zoom and then transcribed on Otter.ai. The Otter.ai transcript was downloaded as a Word file and uploaded to our Teams Folder, where we kept the transcription text file and the audio file along with a spreadsheet of the participants—with notes on the interviewer assigned, age, gender, occupation, location, and status of the interview (completed, transcribed, coded), and an address to mail the gift card. Each team member was responsible for their interview, recording, transcription, getting the material to the Teams folder, and updating the spreadsheet.

We had a diverse group of participants. Participants ranged in age from 23 to 61 years of age, with an average age of 42 years old. Of the 31 participants, 15 identified as female, 15 as male, and one as nonbinary. They came from 13 different states in the United States and one who was living between the United States and Australia. They self-identified as Asian (4), Black (2), Latinx or Hispanic (4), and White (21). They had a variety of educational levels: General Education Diploma (1), bachelor's degrees (12), master's degrees (10), doctoral degrees (8). The educational level of this sample was markedly higher than that of the general population (U.S. Census, 2022). The higher education level correlates with the higher educational level of podcast listeners (Edison Research, 2023).

## Coding

The unit of analysis was each participant, and the data sources were the interview transcripts. We analyzed the data in the spirit of grounded theory, with the research questions in the foreground: What and how do adults learn from their self-directed listening of podcasts? How does this self-directed learning from podcasts affect their lives? We held weekly group meetings that were an important part of the coding and analysis process. With an underexplored research topic, open coding and the perspectives of the different research team members were important. The team members had differing life experiences and experiences as podcast listeners, which created interesting connections and highlights in the team discussions. The goal was to establish the type of collaborative data analysis "in which there is joint focus [among the researchers] regarding a shared body of data to produce an agreed interpretation" (Cornish et al., 2014, p. 79). The coding began with the lead researcher's line-by-line coding of the first three interviews, and this line-by-line coding focused on actions and processes (Charmaz, 2014). The Atlas.ti file was shared with the team and during their meetings they discussed opportunities to merge and split the codes. A tentative set of codes were subsequently

used for the first 10 documents. Team members were encouraged to use these codes but to add codes for any new or varying idea. Each week the lead researcher would integrate the coded documents into a master Atlas.ti file and share the results with the team. They further discussed the codes and connections, and after 22 documents were coded, there was a set of categories that varied to around 20. The discussions of the codes and categories were done in weekly Zoom meetings and often involved going back to the original quotation, comparing it to others in the category as well as excluding it from categories—though several codes spanned both categories and the subsequent themes. As the team was made up of current students and a former student of the lead researcher, the lead researcher was aware of the possible reticence of the other team members to question his initial decisions and would consider this in efforts to elicit their feedback. As the 31 documents were coded with these categories, three themes emerged.

**Table 1**
*Examples of Open Code to Category to Theme*

| Open Code | Category | Theme |
|---|---|---|
| Learning about national parks | Learning new things | Learning new things |
| Satisfying intellectual curiosity | Learning new things | Learning new things |
| Listening for inspiration | Changing mindset | Learning new things |
| Starting meditation | Acting for self-care | Changing behaviors |
| Buying books | Acting as a consumer | Changing behaviors |
| Having better conversations | Socializing and podcasts | Changing behaviors |
| Empathizing to experiences | Learning new perspectives and Listening experience | Learning new things Leveraging medium |
| Feeling no judgements | Learning privately | Leveraging medium |
| Listening in car | Listening options | Leveraging medium |
| Binging | Listening experience | Leveraging medium |

Though we used techniques of grounded theory—line-by-line coding and no specific theoretical lens—we produced themes more akin to descriptive qualitative research rather than the theory building of grounded theory. As the final nine interviews were coded, we saw themes and patterns recurring, and the team concluded that we had reached saturation. The team discussed and agreed on three final themes of the work.

## Findings

Three major themes emerged from the interviews. Participants described their learning as an individualized experience and related to their overall growth. They also reported significant changes in their behaviors directly attributed to learning from podcasts. Finally, they described their learning in connection to unique attributes of podcasting, and how the medium was leveraged in their learning.

### Learning New Things

There was a strong connection to a sense of personal growth and excitement about learning independently when our participants discussed podcast listening. Listeners either learned new things about an existing interest or gained a new interest from listening to podcasts. Becky, a 48-year-old female administrative assistant, said this:

> For instance, if I read a book and I was really interested in it, I'd want to hear a discussion about it. I would look at those podcasts that had a discussion on that book, or a review of that book. It's the same thing that goes with any TV that I watch. If I watch something that I was really interested in, I tend to listen to a lot of podcasts that focused on that.

For Becky, podcasting was a way she could pursue ideas deeper and on her own. Many of the participants used podcasting in a similar way for books, TV shows, and other topics of interest, including cryptocurrency or sports teams. Podcasting was a way for them to learn more about a topic that had captured their interest. Kaity, a 38-year-old female city administrator, connected learning new things from podcasts with her personality:

> One of the good things about me and one of the bad things about me is that almost everything interests me. I find everything interesting. So, I sometimes I go down a rabbit hole with podcasts, and I just keep looking and then that leads me to something else, which leads me to something else. Then the next thing you know like six hours have gone by.

For Kaity, podcasting allows her to pursue new ideas on her own rather than following up on an existing interest. Several participants used the same phrase as Kaity of "going down a rabbit hole" to describe their experiences. Many were encountering unexpected ideas with a sense of serendipity. For both Becky and Kaity learning new things involved a sense of pursuing a passion or interest on their own that was otherwise difficult to pursue or learn about. It was a view of learning that was connected to their growth and development as individuals.

Interestingly, several participants contrasted the way they learned with podcasting with experiences in school. Stella, a 38-year-old female clerical worker, compared her interest in history podcasts with her school experience:

> I just kind of wanted podcasts about history. The first one that I ever listened to was one my brother suggested that was called *The History of Rome* by Mike Duncan, and then I was like "Oh wow, what other history ones are there? What other educational things can I be learning?" And so, I found *Stuff You Missed in History Class* and *Stuff You Should Know* … I was one of those kids that just smoked pot and skipped school. I definitely did not pay attention.

Stella elaborated that this was an issue of maturity as well alienation from the culture of schooling. A preference for learning by podcasts as opposed to traditional formal education can also be an issue of personality. Joy, a 38-year-old female administrative assistant, explained it this way:

> I'm pretty introverted when I'm in the classroom setting. I'm not currently taking any classes or anything like that, but when I did, I could see how podcasts would be a valuable asset to my learning rather than a classroom setting. Learning about something new via podcast would be more effective for me to learn about a topic rather than sitting in class and, you know, or doing a group project with someone.

Joy described herself as an "introvert" and expressed an aversion to group projects. Stella got excited about historical topics, presented in dynamic ways, during a point in her life when she was ready to engage with ideas. Joy appreciated learning in solitude without the requirements

to interact with others to learn. Learning with podcasts gave many participants an alternative way of learning new things, beyond the constraints and culture of traditional schooling.

Moreover, there were changes in the participants' mindsets and perspectives as they learned new ways to think. Daniel, a 42-year-old white male pastor of a congregation in a rural and conservative area in the U.S. South, said that his perspective on race changed from listening to a podcast:

> You can listen to other viewpoints that you may not have. That can open you up to, for me at least, being more accepting to seeing the other side, their perspective, and understanding a little bit more of, "okay, well, I hadn't thought of it that way." Listening to their story, you know, that's a real person telling how they felt about something. I can see their side of the situation a little easier, like on *This American Life* with Black Lives Matters and racial issues and different things like that. I feel like I've become more understanding and open than I had been five years ago.

Daniel underwent a shift in the way he thought about one of the major social issues in the United States today. He connected his changing views to the power and intimacy of listening to another person's story, a theme that connects with the unique attributes of podcasting. Others reported changes in their thinking on topics such as climate change, the conditions of indigenous people, women in the workplace, and the media. Stella described how her perspective on the media's focus on certain success stories changed:

> And there are episodes I've heard even six years ago that stick with me. *Citations Needed* has an episode about the media's obsession with perseverance porn, which means our media's obsession with perseverance stories, like the feelgood of "this guy walks to work every single day for 10 years, and some stranger buys him a truck." We're like, "oh, that's so great. Look at the story" instead of looking at what the societal problem this person had to persevere over. And those perseverance stories are a distraction from changing what has kept them down in society. That is something that has stuck with me. Ever since I heard that episode and changed the way I think about seeing those stories. So, when I do see them show up on Facebook, or whatever, I try to share that perspective and say, "This is a nice story. It feels good, but let's look at maybe what the problem is here. You know, like, there should be a bus route for this person."

For Stella, listening to that episode six years prior gave her a new lens to look at people, the media, and social systems. Through what she learned from a podcast; she sees an entire category of media stories as a fallacy. She now puts isolated stories of success as evidence of larger social problems that should be addressed. Daniel and Stella have had important evolutions in the way they look at significant social issues through what they learned in a podcast.

Several people also associated listening and learning with emotional changes. These emotional changes related to a reduction in stress. Eva, a 42-year-old female teacher from Virginia, discussed her experiences listening to running podcasts:

> The hosts are like kindred spirits . . . kinship, there we go. They were also saying "the kids and the job and the this and that. It's hard." It was that moment where I said, "Oh, oh, okay, yes, it's okay that I feel that this is hard. It is not just me

not being good with time and not creating a schedule. It's just simply a struggle." I listen to running podcasts generally for a mood sometimes. It can enhance and make it better when maybe you're not feeling that you're in a great mood. Maybe you have ice outside and can't go for a run. Maybe you listen to a podcast, and it makes you feel better, even though you didn't get to go do that.

Eva, a committed runner, was deeply relieved when she discovered that she was not alone in feeling a sense of frustration to manage the demands of work, family, and exercise. The podcast spoke to her in a deep way and provided emotional relief from the distress of feeling inadequate. The emotional changes that were reported among the participants related to their self-perceptions, interpersonal connections to family and friends, and motivation for work or wellness.

**Changing Behaviors**

All the participants indicated changes in behaviors based on their podcast listening. These changes included an increased focus on their self-care, improvements in their interactions with others personally and professionally, different approaches to their finances, and seeking products and experiences that were presented on podcasts.

A significant number of participants indicated that podcasts gave them the tools and the motivation to focus more on their self-care. These were behaviors that were initiated or facilitated by the content of a podcast. Gwen, a 28-year-old female barista, found meditation:

Meditation from the *Positive Mindset Podcast* was super big. Before I left my job in the city, I was commuting in during the pandemic, so I needed something to kind of calm me down, so I learned a lot of breathing techniques from the podcast.

One participant began intermittent fasting after listening to a podcast about it; she then dropped it when she heard on a different podcast that it can lead to hair loss, from which she was mysteriously suffering. Bethany, a 45-year-old accounting consultant, was inspired to create a vision board to help her manifest her goals based on an episode of the *Yoga Girl Podcast* and got a group of her friends to do it with her:

I'm doing like a vision board with my friends…We did the end of the year journaling thing together; we listened to the podcast together. I invited a few friends over on a Friday afternoon. We had our journals and we listened to it together. We did it all together, like as an exercise. Those are things I would have never done if I never listened to this podcast or knew anything about it.

Bethany got the idea and the directions for the vision board from the podcast and then recruited others to do it. Like Gwen, she drew a clear cause and effect between the podcast and the activities of self-help. Despite the communal experience here, the more intrapersonal behaviors relating to self-help and spirituality were also those that people tended to want to listen to alone and not discuss with others. Participants listened and learned how to take care of themselves psychologically, physically, and spiritually from the podcasts.

Participants also reported changes in their interpersonal communications. Many described having significantly better conversations with family and friends. They described new ideas that they could now discuss with others, particularly family members. These

included discussions of finances, philosophy, cosmetics, and current events. Vera, a 38-year-old female teacher, describes how listening and learning improved her conversations:

> I also liked the Stephanie Ruhle podcast because I felt like I got smarter when I was listening to it. The topics were great, and the guests were fantastic. She gave them a lot of leeway to have their full discussion...It was really nice hearing those conversations. The questions she asked were great, and it made me feel like it was alerting me to things that I should be paying attention to, that affect me in the world that I really didn't know, that I should be thinking about. So, it helps me kind of have better conversations within my circle of people and talking about things like that.

Beyond the personal feeling of "getting smarter" Vera also describes the better conversations that she has with others, indicating her improvement in a skill. Lenore, a 53-year-old female advertising executive described this:

> I do like to learn something new, then I could like talk to my dad about it, like the Kennedys or something like that. Or if it's like pop culture you can learn something new then. I have a son that's 23 and a son that's 17. Like you could talk to them about it.

Lenore seamlessly took information on history and pop culture and applied it in conversations with different generations. These were conversations about the topics of the podcasts and not the podcasts themselves. The content and conversations from these shows blended into their social interactions. Learning from podcasts improved conversations with family and friends—a change in behavior and an improvement in a skill.

The behaviors went beyond the conversations and into more overt actions. Participants took ideas and inspiration from podcasts that directly sparked changes in their behaviors. Marissa, a 48-year-old female receptionist, is an illustrative example when she described how she developed more progressive parenting practices from listening to a variety of parenting podcasts:

> …and then also this new thing, not a new thing probably, but it's the kind of parenting that I didn't experience, so I would say it's new to me. I'll give you an example. Now you're not supposed to make a kid share. They should only share with you when they're ready to share it. I feel like when I was being raised, you share what you have. Like, there're other kids in the room, you share it. Even when you're not ready, you're told to go share it. So that's changing, or that's changed... And I've also heard that, like, with grades in school, if you emphasize the grades, it doesn't turn out well. They feel undue pressure. Also, what's important is that they'll be able to stand up to people, to whoever's oppressing them and not just obey authority, like I was taught.

Marissa was contrasting this new way of parenting with the knowledge and experience she previously had. She also makes the point that she is aware that this more progressive approach has probably been in existence but that she only came to it through listening to podcasts.

Five participants who identified as educators or clergy described podcasts had an influence on what they said to their students and parishioners as well as new ideas for their work. Thomas, a 49-year-old male pastor, described it this way:

> If I'm preparing a sermon, I mean, well, I just heard an awesome story that's going to illustrate that sermon, you know, from one of these podcasts. I can pull that in and put that in there. My wife would say that I began almost every sermon with "so I was listening to this podcast, and..."

Ava, a high school teacher, described how information she gets from mythology podcasts helps her teach mythology:

> I had no idea the depth of knowledge about Greek mythology or ancient Mesopotamian mythology. There are so many fascinating stories that I wasn't aware of and that the kids love. Podcasts about folktales are another topic that has produced some pretty interesting connections that I can make with students.

Like how Vera and Lenore described their improved conversations with family and friends, both Thomas and Ava describe a fluid experience of listening, learning, and sharing what they learned. For Thomas and Vera podcast learning directly affects their work as a pastor and a teacher.

Nine of the participants indicated changes in their relationship to money based on what they learned from podcasts. Cheryl, a 56-year-old college professor described how she launched into investing into cryptocurrencies:

> I bought cryptocurrency because of *The Cryptocurrency Podcast.* I've actually been able to open up wallets. I stay on top of how things that are happening in the world are affecting crypto and the cryptocurrency market. I look to the utilities of the cryptocurrencies and which ones resonate with me...The crypto podcasts have changed my life.

Cheryl's podcast listening and social media reading deeply influenced her journey into cryptocurrencies. Vera made more subtle, yet still significant, investment decisions based on podcasts:

> One podcast kind of inspired me to do things a little differently. I ended up changing some things on how I manage our family portfolio for investments— I love my money. I don't know what to do with it ever, and I don't want to lose it. I'm the kind of person where it's hard to make it, and I want to hold on to it. And I realized that I have to change my thinking there. We had a couple of consultations, and my husband and I were talking things over, and we took some of her [the podcast hosts'] advice into consideration.

Other participants listened to podcasts and were inspired to make cost-cutting changes to their lifestyles for financial reasons and personal growth--adapting a more minimalist lifestyle, reducing consumerist habits, and getting out of debt. Podcasts gave the participants both the knowledge and encouragement to change their behaviors on important financial choices.

Most participants described new consumer behaviors. Participants indicated that they bought books, discovered new music, watched new TV shows, and tried new technologies after hearing about specific items on podcasts. Joseph, a 38-year-old male graphic designer, articulated what several participants expressed:

> Listening to someone and something is referenced [on a podcast], whether it be a book or an album, I will make a point to go and bookmark it and probably to

> buy it it. I was just listening to *Fresh Air*, and they were talking about a book that a woman wrote who traveled with her husband who had a degenerative disease…So she's a published writer, and she wrote a memoir about the process, so now I'm thinking about reading it.

Podcasts expose listeners to product descriptions that could entice a listener's interest to the point of purchase or action. Ronald, a 44-year-old teacher, described this type of reaction:

> I listen while walking and hiking, and there's a couple outdoor podcasts that I listen to, like *Outside Podcast* is one. I'll be like "that sounds like a neat national park to go to," so I'll try that. Or "here's a list of books about the outdoors," so I went, and I found that list and I've been reading through some of them just because oh, if these guys say these are interesting stories, then that sounds like something that maybe I would like as well.

Ronald took trips and read books based on the recommendation of the podcaster. His sense of trust and reliability in "if these guys say…" recurred throughout the interviews. Not only did podcasts expose listeners to new products, places, and experiences that resonated with their interests, but the overt or tacit endorsement of the podcast host carried influence too.

## Leveraging the Medium

The third theme related to the characteristics of podcasts: how learning was leveraged by the specific attributes of the medium of podcasting, a term we dubbed the "podcastiness." Participants appreciated the intimate nature of the act of listening and listening alone. Also, the nature of audio and a connection to the credibility, integrity, and the voice of the host had an important influence on the listeners' attraction, influence, and retention to shows. Implicitly, and often overtly, participants appreciated the low requirements for podcast production that leads to a broad and diverse offering of shows.

Every participant described listening as a solitary activity. Participants were listening as they drove on commutes, walked with earbuds, or cleaned their kitchens. The varied and popular audio technologies of earbuds, Bluetooth, and smart speakers coupled with the niche and varied content that spoke to an individual's tastes led them to listen alone. Greg, a 42-year-old male web designer who had several roommates, described the experience in some detail:

> It's like a solitary experience. Even if you're watching Netflix alone, I mean, you're sitting in the same room where people can come in, but listening to a podcast is like you're in your own headspace--you're totally in your own world. If I'm in the kitchen cooking, I'll just play it out of the speakers. But other times, I'll just have my headphones in. It's weird. I'm in the same room with my housemates, and maybe they're also cooking, but we're in our own worlds. I can understand how that could be kind of antisocial, but we don't necessarily always have the same interests or want to listen to the same thing.

Greg highlights the way that headphones and unique content give him an immersive and solitary experience. Two participants would occasionally listen to shows on long drives with their partners; these podcasts were specifically chosen to be of mutual interest and were the exception, not the practice of the participants.

Listening alone happened in a variety of contexts, based on the listeners' tolerance for distraction and the importance of the information on the show. Some participants were self-

described multitaskers, able to digest information while doing significantly demanding cognitive work. Eva highlights this:

> I think it's freeing to not have images…it just enhances what it is that I'm thinking, and it allows my imagination to kind of run with the ideas while keeping my interest. And yet it allows me to feel free enough that I could be cooking, or I can be moving about my life—in the car, on a run, whatever.

Not only does she enjoy the variety of activities she can do with her vision free, but also highlights the power of audio to make a listener a co-creator of meaning. Jamie, a 54-year-old female project manager, describes different situations for listening and the different states of mind the podcasts can induce:

> If I'm scrubbing the bathroom, I'll put it on, and it powers me through, and I start thinking, and it helps me kind of free my mind up to start thinking other thoughts, which is good. It's really great in the background during menial housework. I love doing crafting, so sometimes I'll put it on while I'm doing my beading and my crocheting or silly things like that. I like to think and do creative things so it really kind of helps me engage differently too.

Jamie consciously combines the show content and activities to induce different mental states. Many participants listened to it as the background sound of other activities and listened almost ambiently. Several others would find occasions to listen intently and take notes.

Many people also reported listening alone to topics that they did not want to discuss or pursue in public. Participants listened to topics that they were uncomfortable discussing or having others know of their interest; some of these related to sex, spirituality, and self-help. Their reluctance to discuss it with others was to avoid judgement or conflict. Joseph described a topic that he preferred not to admit to because of its stigma:

> I did discover they have erotic fiction podcasts. Oh, fiction, I write fiction--that makes sense. It's kind of like, you don't tell your friends you're watching Pornhub or anything like that. It's one of those things. That's probably an area where I 'm not going to share this with anyone because I don't need to, and no one else needs to know.

Gwen also kept her listening private, though with a different twist on avoiding the judgement of others. Here are her thoughts on *The Positive Mindset Podcast* (Henry G, n.d.):

> So, I think people don't really want to hear "Look how happy I am. This is what I'm working on myself." People might feel like, "Oh, this is all pretend." I've had somebody literally just be like, "What are you? Why are you being like a yoyo, like a hippie?"

Both Joseph and Gwen keep their listening private to avoid judgements. For Joseph, it is a topic that is socially stigmatized, erotica. For Gwen, it was more about subjecting her personal growth journey to the possible cynical judgments of others. The ability to learn alone about topics of interest—without going to a classroom or announcing yourself on a discussion board—is an almost default feature of podcast consumption.

One of the clear preferences for the medium was the variety of topics that podcasting afforded. This allowed people to pursue their existing passions and discover new interests to

satisfy their intellectual curiosity—to learn new things. The connection between this variety and the medium of podcasting was articulated by participants as they discussed the ease of creation as a factor that they appreciated. Reagan, a 52-year-old marketing professional, explained:

> Audio is a medium that I'm into and enjoy. I like seeing how podcasting is taking audio in different ways, the way it evolves. It's great to see the creativity that's going into it-- the way people are using the technology . . . just how it sort of democratizes access to audio . . . it's fantastic.

Carlos, a 35-year-old male information technology worker, connected that accessibility to a larger sense of connection:

> What I like also is that there's almost this aspect of do-it-yourself, like anyone can do it, that we can have a podcast and have that deep discussion. I guess the idea, or the hope is that some others will connect with that discussion. So, I kind of like the universal aspect of it.

The participants acknowledge the connection between easy access to production and the variety and richness of the topics. There's a reflective appreciation of this relationship that stems from ease of production, a salient characteristic of the medium of podcasting.

One final factor of the medium that we found related to learning was the was the attraction and retention of a listener because of the voice and style of the host or hosts. Joseph described it his way:

> A large part of it also is the sound quality and the people talking. Honestly, you know Roman Mars? I could listen [to] him read anything, you know, or like Ira Glass from *This American Life*. You could listen to them read the phonebook, and you are just like I just want you to talk. This is great.

Regan appreciated the both the dynamics of a cohosts and the passion of a single host:

> The podcasts keep me listening because they're interesting. There's one that has two women who are the lead hosts, and it's really sort of like "you're not gonna believe what I just learned about this." They're having a conversation type of style. I like the *Sporkful Podcast*. It's all over the place. He's got a strong personality in it. He was like really passionate about what he was trying to do.

Regan appreciated the way the voice conveys a personality. Moreover, she connects to the "conversation-type of style," the familiarity and intimacy that happens when podcast hosts can chat with each other unfettered by tight time constraints, high cost, or cumbersome equipment; the medium of podcasting is free from these constraints. Carlos would even stick with a show because of a host; the tone and sound of the host were more important than the current topic:

> The reason why I listened to them more frequently does not have to do with the content, but the content is what I'm interested in, but the presenters also play a part in it. I've listened to other podcasts that I won't mention and either found them boring, or maybe the voice of the presenter was monotone. With these three in particular that I mentioned before, the presenters are, I'm going to say

calming, soothing, and they keep my interest, even when I was impatient with the topic.

Carlos liked to discover new and interesting things and would stay with the hosts under the assumption that they would get to them eventually; the tone of a host that did not alienate the listener was the foundation of this persistence. Benjamin, a 23-year-old male waiter, described this sense of familiarity with listening:

Like it's your kind of people that have a similar interest to you. It feels like you're just sort of hanging out with them, except you can't talk to them, obviously, because it's a prerecorded thing, but that's what I like about it. Just listen to people talk about stuff that you're interested in or listen to people that are funnier than you.

For all the participants, the quality of the voice, the personality it conveyed, and the dynamics of the conversation influenced their listening and subsequent learning. The primacy of the human voice, heard at a time convenient to the listener, is a salient feature of podcasting.

The participants were engaged in their listening and learning because of this sense of expertise and authenticity; the hosts were very familiar and deeply embedded in the topics. Many of the participants enjoyed hearing directly from people that they perceived as experts. Haley, a 27-year-old female nurse articulated it this way:

The information you didn't learn about, for example, on mental health. The information you are given in a podcast by he or she is an expert, and he or she has gathered a lot of information and has experience, so the information that he or she is sharing is very solid, which can help someone out here, and I believe the information really helps me a lot.

The main way the host conveys their expertise is through the podcast; none of the participants described background research or known credentials to support this sense of expertise. Related to expertise is authenticity, Eva directly connects listening to a voice to authenticity—a trusted and genuine source:

If you were reading it on a piece of paper, it doesn't have the same impact as when you're hearing a voice that's that sharing in a more, I don't know, not to overuse the word authentic, but really an authentic way with the jargon.

The host becomes a trustworthy authority, through the act of listening to the sound of a voice. The sole sound of a human voice, speaking intimately and stripped of visual information, conveys a powerful sense of authenticity and intimacy.

**Discussion**

How and what participants learned from podcasts recreationally, outside of formal educational settings, was an individualized and customizable experience. They learned a variety of topics—some that they had an initial interest in and some that they discovered through podcasting. They gained knowledge that satisfied an intellectual curiosity, contributed to their personal growth, and changed their perspectives on important topics. They also changed their behaviors based on what they learned. They improved their self-care, changed their interpersonal behaviors, developed new financial habits, and sought products and experiences

from podcasts. Moreover, the unique attributes of the medium of podcasting—its convenience, the low barriers to production, and the intimate nature of audio—contributed to its influence to educate.

Participants listened to podcasts during tasks that spared enough cognitive load to pay attention to the degree that they wanted. Many participants enjoyed listening while engaged in other activities. They could consider how intently they wanted to listen, whether they wanted to rewind and pause, or treat the podcast as background music. The prevalence of listening ambiently while doing other work extends the previous research on podcast listening that found a major attraction of podcasting is to alleviate the tedium of another task (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2022; Heshmat et al., 2018; Quirk, 2015). Several participants also described the experience of transportation, losing track of time and location and immersing themselves in the experience of the narrative (Green & Brock, 2000).

Our study suggests that there is an alchemy among the listener's disposition, the task, purpose, and content that can vary the listening intensity from highly intentional to casual background sound. This individualized and customizable approach correlates to the characterization that Merriam and Baumgartner (2020) made of informal adult learning as an experience based on the learner's skills, styles, goals, and self-experimentation. The options, variations, and customizations for learning and integrating learning from podcasts into an adult lifestyle also tracks with the broader social change of seeing adults as having "unending potential for development" (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020, p. 8).

Podcasting shifted learners' perspectives on important topics. As the study's participants engaged in podcast content, they took on new perspectives and mindsets. This correlates to Schugurensky's (2000) description of informal learning as having the ability to contradict formal learning on important topics such as race and LGBTQ issues. Several of our participants contrasted their learning by podcasts with their learning in formal education. Topics become more interesting and meaningful after listening to podcasts and new perspectives gain credibility. Moreover, podcasting changed perspectives on important topics such as finance, parenting, self-care, and race relations. Podcasting was a fertile place to be exposed to new ideas and learn things; this correlated to Bloedel and Manning's (2017) research about the ability to learn topics online in informal settings when there is limited or skewed content in the formal settings and the informal settings offer more robust and credible information.

The trend among the participants was to keep their learning about personal growth private. Their inclinations to not share their learning about spirituality, self-care, and self-help correlate with a broader trend in informal online learning. Fox and Ralston (2016) described how technology has been a valuable medium for people to learn about topics privately. Their research focused on how LGBTQ individuals learn, connect, and grow with their identity privately online before coming out. Podcasting has been used by people to explore topics that they were embarrassed to discuss or even divulge to their family and friends. This extends existing research with learning alone online (Fox & Ralston, 2016; Heshmat et al., 2018). It also correlates to Meserko's (2014) research which points to the informality and dynamism of podcasts which liberate participants and leads to deep personal experiences as listeners.

Overall, these findings outline the overall shape of an ecosystem, one not characterized by peer-to-peer interactions but mediated through the ideas and persona of the host or hosts of the podcasts. Listeners enjoyed learning alone with podcasts rather than interacting with a formal community. None of the participants were highly active in any formal groups and only two engaged in following Twitter accounts of their podcasts. Though a few followed Facebook groups, they were peripheral observers rather than engaged participants. This contrasts with Wrather (2016), who analyzed how listeners and producers engaged in online spaces for comedy podcasts, extending the connections beyond the act of listening to the shows. The

participants we interviewed mostly listened alone and frequently discussed the ideas of the shows with others; however, they discussed the podcasts themselves infrequently and interacted online less frequently. Online interactions were peripheral to their listening and learning experience.

The listeners' feelings toward the podcast hosts were also critical to their engagement and loyalty. Listeners gravitated to shows by hosts whose voices and personalities connected with them. They also appreciated the sense of expertise that a host had, like Heshmat et al.'s (2018) findings that the character and the voice of the host played an important part in listener loyalty. In addition, like the findings of Meserko (2014), an important dimension was the sense of authenticity of the host. This connection is further explained by the nature of audio and the co-creation of meaning when listeners must make inferences to what they hear and invest themselves in creating the knowledge by supplying the mental images of the audio (Douglas, 2004; Shamburg, 2020). Participants also appreciated the ease of podcast production; they connected that with the variety of topics and styles. Shamburg's (2020, 2021) research into independent podcasting described the broad spectrum or production techniques of educationally oriented podcasters—from producing shows on a smartphone during walks to professional studios.

## Limitations and Delimitations

There were several limitations to this study. The sampling method was the most limiting component. Though we strived to get a variety of participants, we were limited to people who used social media and felt comfortable enough to volunteer through a Facebook or Instagram post. There are podcast listeners who do not use those social media platforms. Moreover, we were limited to participants who were eager to talk to us about their learning and podcasting behaviors. It is reasonable to assume that there are people who learn from podcasting who do not want to discuss what they learn. Furthermore, our participants responded to a specific call for people who learn from podcasts, requiring a recognition of learning. Many people learn from podcasts but may not recognize it. We were also limited by the amount of information that the participants wanted or were able to share with us. Their candor and memories would shape the responses that they gave us.

There were certain epistemological delimitations that are worth noting. We did not examine the validity or reliability of the information that the participants were getting. Moreover, we did not examine the moral and ethical implications of what people learned. For example, people turn online to support unhealthy or damaging pursuits, such as facilitating eating disorders such as anorexia (Harmon & Rudd, 2019), committing suicide (Biddle et al., 2018) and fueling conspiracy theories (McPhate, 2016). These are important considerations that our research did not address.

Finally, though all interviewers developed and used the same script, rehearsed our interviews, and debriefed at weekly meetings, our review of the transcripts clearly indicates our follow-up questions, demeanors, and personalities shaped the interactions; consequently, the character of the responses would vary.

## Implications

Podcasting is a powerful and important medium for the growth and education of adults. It allows listeners to pursue topics of interest as well as discover new areas of interest—to learn new things. Moreover, podcasting has the power to affect behaviors in significant ways: from changing a person's approach to family dynamics to significantly influencing their investment strategies. Podcast listening can change long-held beliefs and opinions. The learning happens

alone, during times and in places that are convenient and advantageous to listeners, chiefly to relieve boredom during tasks that offer some spare cognitive load. When looking across a lifespan, podcasting is an increasingly important source for growth and development of adults, and it is an important and rewarding area for increased educational research.

There are several broad implications of this study. The major one is to move the study of this type of everyday learning out of the margins of academic consideration. Informal adult learning is like the air we breathe, an essential component to our healthy growth, unseen but right under our noses. The variety of topics in podcasting that attract and stimulate learners has implications for podcast distributors and educational institutions. The finding that podcasts have an influence on listeners' behaviors should be a consideration for policy makers, educators, and content creators. There should be a discussion on how and when to leverage or remediate this influence. Moreover, the prominence of self-care as a topic can inform formal education, especially as it focuses on mental health and social-emotional learning. Overall, this study's examination of the rich learning lives of adults who are not enrolled in formal educational programs can be a call to further address their learning interests and aspirations across a spectrum of institutions and mediums.

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## Appendix A

**Script and Questions for Interview**

Thank you for participating. We are conducting this research to explore how people learn outside of schools with podcasts. We are looking at people who listen to podcasts and learn new things—this can be fitness, spirituality, food, travel, motivation, politics, culture, entertainment news, entrepreneurship—mainly topics where the learning can affect how you think and act outside of podcasting.

1) What are some of your favorite podcasts that seem to fit this description? Feel free to scroll through your phone to think of a few.

2) Do you remember how you found out about this podcast? Can you describe that. (NOTE to Interviewer – You may cycle through each podcast for questions 2-8—keep track and return to ones that the participant did not talk about)

3) What is it about \*these podcasts\* that keeps you listening?

4) How did you get interested in this/these topic?

5) How many hours a week do you listen to podcasts? Where do you usually listen? When?

6) Have you learned new things from listening to this podcast? Can you describe it?

7) Do you think you have done anything new or different because of listening to this podcast (for example trying a new food, trying meditation, buying a book, tried a new recipe, planned a trip).

8) Are there any ideas that you've gotten from listening to a podcast that stay with you— that you continue to think about after listening? (for example, relationships, politics, aging, friendships, etc.).

9) What do you like about podcasts, in general?

10) Do you talk to others about podcasts you listen to? Can you describe that?

11) Are there times that you don't like to talk to people about podcasts? Can you elaborate?

12) Do you ever listen to material that you would not feel comfortable listening to or discussing with others, material that you prefer to listen to alone?

13) Do you follow or participate in any online activities related to those shows? For example, do you follow a Facebook group, Reddit page, or subscribe to an email newsletter? Can you describe?

14) Anything about podcasts that you want to mention?

15) Thank you, again, your personal information will be kept confidential, and of course, you do not have to answer any questions. Could you tell us how you identify racially, ethnically (Black, Latinx, White, etc.) How do you identify your gender? Could you tell me your age, occupation, and your highest educational degree completed, and what that was in? What state do you live in?

We would like to mail the Barnes and Noble Gift Card. Can you tell us your mailing address for it.

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## Article Citation