

IMAGINE THIS: RADIO REVISITED THROUGH PODCASTING

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ABSTRACT

Today, listening to radio is typically a secondary activity since people tend to tune in while doing something else. This is a far cry from the Golden Age of Radio when people paid close attention to what was broadcast and relied on their imaginations to visualize scenes and characters. Ironically, it appears that technology is enabling listeners to experience radio much like they did over 60 years ago. Through podcasting, individuals can control not only what they hear, but also when and where it is heard, which enhances opportunities for attentive listening and mental imagery. By relying on the uses and gratifications approach, this study reveals that people attentively listen to and visualize content from podcast programs which contain aural characteristics similar to shows aired during the Golden Age of Radio. The research findings are based on responses gathered from online surveys completed by individuals who listen to the podcast version of the popular public radio program, *This American Life*.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Digital technology is changing the radio landscape. Aside from traditional radio, listeners can now tune in through podcasts, satellite radio, and the Internet. While technology may be transforming how people access radio, the way they process what is heard remains the same—people rely on their imaginations to envision program content. Regardless of how the audio is relayed, radio allows for mental visuals that are as limitless as the imagination, and unlike other electronic media, it produces images unique to each listener.

This was most apparent in the 1930's and 1940's when radio was the nation's dominant medium. It was how people stayed in touch what was happening both nationally and abroad, and was the country's primary source of entertainment. Similar to how individuals watch television today, people typically sat down near the radio and listened to their favorite shows. It was also during this time when radio aired an array of program formats including comedies, dramas, and variety shows.

The way Americans tuned in to radio changed when television took over as the chief form of home entertainment. Most shows on radio transitioned to television, taking with them the intimate experience of developing personal imagery. In response, radio stations began broadcasting primarily music, a move that kept the radio craze alive, but one that permitted people to become passive listeners. What was heard on the airwaves no longer demanded the attention and participation it once required.

Today, thanks to satellite radio and the Internet, audiences have more listening choices than ever before. People can select from an array of musical stations and tune to programs ranging from re-broadcasts of old-time radio shows to uncensored talk radio (Fisher, 2006; Weiner, 2006). Yet with thousands of options to choose from, including variations of formats heard during the early years of radio, the greatest selection of programs can be found through podcasting—a type of Internet radio that allows listeners to download digital broadcasts to a portable media player for later playback. (Bertram, 2007; Bulkeley, 2006; Puente, 2007)

Given the types of programs available through podcasting, coupled with the convenience and mobility of portable media players, listeners can once again find the time to attentively listen to radio. This study explores how podcasting is altering the way people listen to the medium by surveying podcast listeners of a radio program which possesses elements of shows aired before the 1950's, namely, *This American Life*. Based on the uses and gratifications approach, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Podcasting is transforming listening to radio from previous background use to an active, engaging process.

The study also explores a byproduct of increased listener attention with the following research question:

R1: Do listeners tend to visualize podcast programs?

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Radio after Television

A series of early studies examining the impact of television found that audiences were spending less time listening to radio than before the advent of television (Coffin, 1955; Himmelweit et al., 1958; Kippax & Murray, 1978). Despite indications of less use, more recent studies indicate Americans are still highly reliant on radio. In fact, according to industry research, the number of adults who listen to radio on a daily basis is greater than the number of individuals who watch television (Merli, 1998). Furthermore, throughout the past decade, radio audiences continued to increase while audiences of both television and newspaper declined (Ditingo, 1999).

Research may suggest Americans are still tuning in, yet it does not imply listeners are paying attention to what they hear on the airwaves. This was noted by Robinson and Godbey (1999) who described listening to radio as a secondary activity that takes place while pursuing other activities. Moreover, a recent study which labeled radio as “the ultimate ‘background’ medium,” found that 75 percent of the time people spent listening to radio took place while doing something else (Holmes, Papper, Popovich, & Bloxham, M, 2006, p.11).

While some research defines radio as a passive medium, there is data which suggests certain types of aural content heighten listener arousal. That is, radio messages with musical onsets, voice changes, and sound effects can increase listener recall and

physiological arousal (Potter & Callison, 2000). In addition, other research associates heightened levels of attention with media messages that evoke emotional responses (Lang, Bolls, Potter, & Kawahara, 1999).

Aural Elements

The association between memory and music is profound, as songs can provoke recollections of past events (Vedantam, 2007). Douglas (1999) suggests that listeners need only hear the first few bars of a song before envisioning images of people and places associated with the tune. In addition, the repetitive rate which tunes are heard on the radio strengthens the connection between music and memory since listeners associate songs with a particular time, place, or moment,

Broadcasters also use music as a means to communicate with listeners. For example, Hilliard (1984) noted that music can establish the identity of a radio program and explained that upon hearing the opening theme of *Make Believe Ballroom*, audiences knew they would soon hear the deejay play musical records (Hilliard, 1984). Similarly, Crisell (1986) pointed out how listeners identify radio stations based on musical jingles. He also explained that music is used to signify a show break or conclusion, similar to how a closing curtain denotes the intermission or the end of a play (Crisell 1986). Hilliard (1984) also stated that music portrays specific images and suggested an instrumental piece containing a “spiral rhythm from a high to low pitch and ending in a crash” could conjure the image of a man jumping off a tall building (p.25). In addition, Shingler and Wieringa (1998) also discussed how instrumental noises can characterize imagery. They suggested a cacophony of percussion instruments could depict the scene of an electric thunderstorm more effectively than recordings of thunder and lightening.

In addition to relying on music to enhance programming, the quality of one's voice (Arnheim, 1971) as well as the selection of words spoken over the airwaves play a critical role in communicating with listeners (McInerney, 2001). The voices heard on radio must be unmistakable since audiences have nothing more than aural means to distinguish among characters (Arnheim, 1971). Additionally, the dialogue is used not only as a way to relay information, but also as a tool for providing story details beyond what is spoken (McInerney, 2001). McInerney illustrated this concept by comparing two radio scripts, each of which depicts the scene of a woman's final exit from a home she cannot afford to keep. The first script states:

WOMAN: I walked down the hall and opened the door and saw it was raining. I walked down the path, opened the front gate and turned towards town and the agents. Looking back I saw how shabby the house looked. (p.47)

McInerney (2001) describes the first passage as simple and accurate, but concludes the selection is dry and lacking in detail. Alternately, he finds the second passage to be visually superior since it allows audiences to envision details beyond what is mentioned. The script reads:

NARRATOR: I picked up my coat as I walked down the hall. I noticed the patch of damp had grown bigger and the plaster had started to peel. Once outside, I had to pull twice to engage the lock. The garden was as weed-choked as ever; the narrow concrete path cracked and crumbling. Turning up my collar against the rain, I headed wearily towards town and the estate agents (p. 47).

McInernery (2001) notes how the wording depicts the woman's passing through the door without it being stated and also refers to the description of the dreary-like conditions as a means to help the listener further visualize the woman's depressive situation.

Thomson (2002) noted the power of words by defining radio reporters as storytellers capable of creating a sense of presence with listeners. This was further illustrated by Douglas (1999) in her description of George Hicks' famous V-day broadcast. Douglas (1999) noted that Hicks words enabled listeners to feel as if they were witnessing the attack and compared the news piece to sports play-by-play broadcast where listeners could gain a sense of the location and movement of the battle (Douglas, 1999).

Sound effects are also an effective way to impact how listeners visualize radio. In fact, Becker (1946) noted that sound effects can be used to not only create images but also to intensify them. Decades later, Hilliard (1984) suggested the same approach when discussing how to use sound effects to establish a setting. He noted the sounds of clinking of glasses and the clatter of dishes might portray a restaurant scene; however, if the scene included violin music and lulling whispers, the setting might suggest that of an old-style Hungarian or Romanian restaurant. Additionally, Hilliard (1984) suggested the emphasis of distinct sounds can direct listeners to a specific location. He asserted that upon hearing a banging gavel during a courtroom scene, the mind's eye will immediately direct itself to the judge's bench (Hilliard, 1984). Producers can also use sound effects to convey time. For example, Hilliard (1984) suggested the sound of a crowing rooster might indicate an early morning setting or the sound footsteps on a quiet walkway could imply a late night scene.

Radio is a medium of sound, but silence also plays an important role in the perception of listener imagery (Crisell, 1986). Unlike silent scenes on television in which audiences have visual stimuli to focus upon, with radio, listeners must rely on their imaginations to fill the void (Crisell, 1986). Crisell (1986) further explains this concept with a brief dialogue: “Pass me the bottle. Cheers...Ah, that’s better!” (p.56). He states that while the piece did not mention the man drinking from a bottle, the silence in the piece enabled listeners to visualize the action (Crisell, 1986). In another example, Fink (1981) refers to a famous Jack Benny comedy skit to illustrate the visual ability of silence. Fink states:

The skit consists of a confrontation between Benny and a mugger on the street. Says the mugger: “Your money or your life.” Prolonged pause: growing laughter; then applause as the audience gradually realises *[sic]* what Benny *must* be thinking, and eventually responds to the information communicated by the silence and to its comic implications. (p. 202)

In this example, Fink conveys how the audience is able to envision what Jack Benny is both thinking and doing based on nothing more than the use of silence.

Radio from the 1920's to 1950's

Many of those who experienced radio during its early years miss the intimate connection with the medium, and long for the process of creating personalized visuals (Douglas, 1999). In another observation, Eskenazi (2005) noted the level of intensity and concentration once associated with radio by describing how he listened to news commentator, Walter Winchell. Eskenazi (2005) stated, “[E]veryone stopped what they

were doing to come in and listen...we'd look at the radio, and give it our attention. You didn't talk when the radio was on" (p.69).

Listeners also developed a similar connection with radio dramas. This was in part fueled by the show hosts who served as a reliable presence with whom audiences could regularly visit (Hand, 2006). Hand (2006) illustrates this concept by referring to the program, *The Witches' Tale*, where each week listeners looked forward to hearing the show host, Old Nancy, introduce the latest tale with her grim, yet comical dialogue.

Conversely, the unpredictable nature of horror programs also heightened audience attention (Hand, 2006). Listeners tended to pay close attention to the shows since the fate of the characters could change at any moment. They were drawn to tales with twists and turns, even to the extent where programs manipulated the listeners' trust to enhance the unpredictability of the story. As an example, Hand (2006) refers to an episode of *Mystery Playhouse*:

[T]he narrator and focal character, Red (John Neill), invents a plausible alibi for his roommate Dixon (Sam Wanamaker) after the latter's girlfriend has gone missing. Having made this decision, Red finds himself embroiled in the investigation of a murder. In the final minute of the play, however, it transpires that Red—whom we have listened to, followed, and trusted throughout—is himself the murderer. (p.184)

It is with this brief summary that Hand illustrates how programs relied on the unpredictable nature of horror stories to influence and alter the listener's perception of program characters.

Another genre, namely children's shows, captured the attention and imagination of listeners. This was especially noticed with the program, *Let's Pretend*, where audiences were "transported to another world" by using their imaginations to envision fairy tales such as "Sleeping Beauty" and "Hansel and Gretel" (Eskenazi, 2005 p.67). Eskenazi (2005) noted that listeners could envision show characters which were scarier or more outrageous than anything on television and illustrated this concept by suggesting the witch from *The Wizard of Oz* could have the nose of Margaret Hamilton or be ten feet tall.

Another narrative-like program that captured audience attention was *Lux Radio Theater* which featured adaptations of popular movies performed by Hollywood celebrities (Becker, 2004). Beginning in 1934 and lasting until the mid-fifties, the show brought big name films such as *The Philadelphia Story*, *The Maltese Falcon*, and *The Wizard of Oz* into the homes and imaginations of Americans (Eskenazi, 2005). Longtime host and famous director, Cecil B. DeMille, helped create a feeling of glamour where audiences could tune in to hour-long presentations performed by acclaimed actors such as Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, and Marlene Dietrich (Becker, 2004).

Soap operas also fueled the imagination of listeners by involving them in the fictional worlds of "friends and enemies they might never encounter otherwise" (Matelski, 2004, p. 1286). Brooke (1995) suggested that people find soap operas appealing because the characters face similar, yet exaggerated, dilemmas as those tuning in at home. Brooke (1995) also stated that audiences are captivated by the genre because the storylines move at a slow pace and typically require daily monitoring.

Radio comedies also required audiences to pay attention since much of the humor centered on wordplay (Douglas, 1999). This was observed with George Burns and Gracie Allen in *The Burns and Allen Show* which focused on Gracie's misunderstanding of language. For example, in one episode George asked Gracie if she knew what an adage was, and Gracie responded, "'Oh sure, that's where you keep your old trunks'" (p. 115). Wordplay was also heard on the popular minstrel blackface comedy, *Amos 'n' Andy* which entertained audiences with racist "linguistic mutilations" (Douglas, 1999, p.108). For example, the show characters pronounced words such as "acknowledged," as "acna-o-wheel-dij," and referred to figures such as J.P. Morgan and Charles Lindbergh as J. Ping-Pong Morgan and Charles Limburger (p. 108-109).

The highly-rated comedy program, *Eddie Cantor's Chase and Sanborn Hour*, also relied on verbal humor to entertain audiences. The show included comical skits and stand-up comedy, but it primarily focused on the quick-witted banter of two ethnic characters. The men's overly-exaggerated accents also added to the humor of their continuous exchange of insults, and listeners had to pay close attention to keep up with the rapid pace of the comical comebacks (Douglas, 1999).

During World War II, Americans attentively listened to news broadcasts to learn what was happening both at home and abroad (Balk, 2005). The reporters not only described the situation overseas but also spoke in a manner that compelled audiences to keep listening (Olson & Cloud, 1996). Additionally, unlike the shorter news pieces of today, a report heard during this era typically lasted fifteen minutes and was uninterrupted by commercial breaks (Looker, 1995).

Podcasting

Decades later, a new way of tuning in to radio was introduced to listening audiences. The term *podcasting* is based on a combination of the terms *broadcasting* and *iPod* and refers to the technology that searches the Internet for digital audio files and automatically downloads them to an iPod or MP3 player (Honan, 2005; Podcast, n.d.). Podcasting was developed in 2004 in part by former MTV VJ, Mark Curry, in response to his frustration with the slow process of locating audio files and manually downloading them to his iPod. Pulling from a technology created by David Winer, Curry created the initial podcasting software designed to automate the process. Known as ipodder, the software enabled podcast subscribers to have new broadcasts automatically delivered to their computer for on-demand playback (Goldberg, 2004).

Most anyone can create a podcast (Potter, 2006). Even those with limited computer savvy can set up a broadcast through Web podcasting services that allow individuals to record audio on their computer and post it online to share with others (Hoffman, 2006). In 2005, Apple Computers introduced a podcast component to their iTunes service and added over 3,000 podcasts which now has been identified as the most popular podcast resource (Sandoval, 2005; “Podcasting to Hit,” 2005). The iTunes listings include a variety of mainstream media podcasts including programs from National Public Radio (NPR) and *Newsweek* as well as video podcasts from Comedy Central (Sandoval, 2005).

Unlike traditional radio, podcasting allows listeners to time-shift and place-shift content, meaning that they can listen to whichever podcasts they choose, whenever, and wherever they please. This allows busy people to hear their favorite broadcasts (Dotto,

2005). In addition, NPR made it even easier for listeners to catch up on content. By creating podcasts based on topic-specific selections, listeners can hear segments from multiple shows in a single podcast program (Glaser, 2005).

Beyond appealing to consumers, podcasting is catching on in other arenas. Advertisers are gaining an interest in podcasting since they can send highly-targeted messages to audiences who are actively seeking information (Maruggi, 2005). Podcasting has also found its way into the education industry now that some universities provide podcasts of class lectures, (Silva, 2006) and businesses are also taking advantage of the medium, as seen with McDonalds Investments and *The Motley Fool* which podcast free financial advice (Nielson Media Research, 2006). Additionally, some companies include podcasts on their Web sites to keep browsers online for longer amounts of time (Clapperton, 2006), and others may start delivering materials such as whitepapers through podcasting (Karpinski, 2006).

The number of people who download podcasts is growing. Beginning with 820,000 users in 2004, the number expanded to over 4.8 million people in 2005 ("Podcasting to Hit," 2005). A survey conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, found that 20% of Americans and 26% of Internet users own a portable media player, and 12% of Internet users have downloaded a podcast. (Madden, 2006). In addition, the research also found the selection of podcasts is expanding. The report stated:

The array of individuals and mainstream media institutions that now provide podcasts has also expanded dramatically. For example, in November of 2004, Podcast Alley, a podcast directory website, listed fewer than 1,000 podcasts for

download. Today Podcast Alley catalogs more than 26,000 different podcasts, totaling more than 1 million episodes. In addition to homegrown podcasts that cover topics ranging from music and fashion to religion and politics, mainstream media institutions such as NPR, the BBC and Comedy Central now regularly provide podcasted material as an alternative way to distribute their content.

(Madden, 2006, p.1-2)

The report shows the number of individuals who listen to podcasts is growing as are the varieties of both professional and amateur podcast programs.

While one study estimated that by 2010 between 20 million and 80 million Americans will be listening to podcasts, (Chapman, 2006) a more recent report indicated podcasting will experience a slower growth than expected (“Digital Media,” 2006). Yet despite the newer findings, it appears people are still interested in podcasting, considering 29% of American adults who own a portable media player have listened to a podcast (Kerner, 2005).

This American Life

Established in 1996, the popular award-winning program is produced and hosted by Ira Glass and broadcast on over 500 stations nationwide (Huhn, 2006). *This American Life* (TAL) is recognized for its eclectic productions and ability to transform stories about everyday life into intriguing tales. Each week the pieces heard on TAL revolve around a specific theme, and are described as “bursting with irony suspense, paradox, drama, and humor” (Zuckerman, 2005, p. 26). The tales are also known to create a sense of intimacy with audiences, almost as if the storytellers are speaking directly to each listener (Huhn, 2006).

In late 2006, TAL began to offer free podcasts available through iTunes and other podcasting directories (Broida, 2006). Additionally, the televised version of TAL, described as having a “documentary-style look,” premiered on Showtime in spring 2007. Not unlike the reflective tone observed on the radio version, TAL on screen takes a similar approach, although most of the stories seen on television differ from those heard over the airwaves (Barnhart, 2007).

MySpace

MySpace is a popular social networking Web site designed as a way to meet new people and connect with individuals who share common interests (Carr, 2007). It was launched in 2003 (Carr, 2007) and attracts 110 million users per month (Stone, 2007). Individuals can join MySpace by creating a profile Web page which typically contains basic demographic as well as variety of personalized content. Members can also customize the text and appearance of their profile Web pages and include multiple photos and videos as well as links to other member profiles (Carr, 2007). MySpace is also a popular entertainment resource where users can search through the profile pages created for different musicians, comedians, and movies (Bruneau, 2007).

Friendster

Friendster was the first online networking community and debuted in 2002 (Klaassen, 2007). Similar to MySpace, users can create a profile Web page which includes photos, personal details about the member and links to other Friendster profile Web pages. Members can meet new people by building an online social network consisting of other Friendster members (Davis, 2003) and also create fan networks dedicated to promoting different artists, bands, and celebrities (Yazon, 2007). While not

as popular as MySpace, Friendster does have 31 million registered users (Klaassen, 2007) and can bring in as many as 16 million unique visitors per month (Roizen, 2006).

Uses and Gratifications

The label “uses and gratifications” (U&G) was coined by Katz (1959) in his article calling for scholars to turn attention toward investigating what people do with media rather than what media do to people. The U&G approach is taken from perspective of the audience member and seeks to understand why individuals use media and the gratifications they seek and receive from media (Littlejohn, 2002; Wimmer & Dominick, 1991). Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch (1974) summarize the approach as follows:

Compared with classical effects studies, the uses and gratifications approach takes the media consumer rather than the media messages as its starting point, and explores his communication behavior in terms of his direct experience with the media. It views the members of the audience as actively utilizing media contents, rather than being passively acted upon by the media. Thus, it does not assume a direct relationship between messages and effects, but postulates instead that members of the audiences put messages to use, and that such usages act as intervening variables in the process of effect (p. 12).

Evolution of Uses and Gratifications

The beginnings of the U&G approach can be traced back the 1940’s when scholars began to explore why individuals use media. Early studies consisted primarily of descriptive accounts that classified consumer gratifications into varying categories (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991). These included Herzog (1940, 1944) on identifying the

appeal of radio quiz shows: competition, education, self-rating, and the gratifications sought by women who listened to radio soap operas. Berelson (1949) investigated why individuals read the newspaper and grouped responses into five categories: information about public affairs, a tool for daily living, respite, social prestige, and social contact. Additional research included Suchman (1942) and his exploration of motives for listening to music on the radio and Wolfe and Fiske (1949) on the development of children's interest in comics.

The next phase of U&G research took place in the late 1950's and continued throughout the next decade. During this time, researchers emphasized the psychological and social factors which were presumed to be indicators of media consumption patterns (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991). For instance, Schramm, Lyle, and Parker (1961) discovered children's mental abilities and relationships with others influenced the way they used television. Mendelsohn (1964) concluded listeners rely on radio for a variety of purposes: companionship, to alter one's mood, to relieve boredom, to obtain information, to vicariously participate in an event, and to assist with social interaction. Moreover, Gerson (1966) concluded race played a role in determining how adolescents use mass media, and Greenberg and Dominick (1969) suggested not only race, but also social class lent a hand in predicting television use among teenagers. Additionally, Klapper (1963) suggested researchers focus on identifying the consequences of media consumption in addition to the motives for media use.

The next milestone in U&G research was attributed in part to the Katz, et al. (1974) landmark publication, *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research*. In response to criticisms that earlier U&G approach studies

lacking organization and a consistent methodology, the Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch collection investigated and summarized previous U&G studies and offered a methodological framework. Katz et al. (1974) also provided a description of the U&G approach which researchers relied upon as a guide for U&G investigation (Raymond, 1996). Katz et al. (1974) identified the approach to be concerned with the following concepts:

(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratification and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones (Katz, et al., p.20).

In addition, Katz, Gurevitch, and Hass (1973) developed a list of the societal and psychological needs satisfied by media. The primary sources of need satisfaction included (1) strengthening knowledge of self, friends, or society, (2) strengthening the status of self or society, and (3) strengthening contact with family, friends, society, or culture.

Rosengren (1974) sought to enhance the societal and psychological viewpoint by suggesting that gratification motives were associated with an individual's personal characteristics and social environment. Palmgreen and Rayburn (1979) explored this stance by investigating viewer exposure to public television and found the U&G approach to work well in combination with other determining factors such as media availability, work schedules, and social constraints. Another investigation conducted by Blumler (1979) suggested cognitive motivation increased the amount of information

obtained from media while diversion motivation heightened the perceptions of the accuracy of social portrayals on television. Similarly, McLeod and Becker (1981) noted that study participants who were told in advance of an impending exam utilized public affairs magazines to a greater extent than those in a control group. Furthermore, Bryant and Zillmann (1984) discovered boredom and stress impacted the types of television programs individuals selected to view since individuals affected by stress opted primarily for tranquil programs while bored individuals preferred exciting content.

In addition to drawing from the Katz, et al. (1974) U&G model, scholars also turned to the assumptions outlined by Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rosengren (1985) as a standard parameter for U&G exploration. The assumptions are as follows:

(1) the audience is active, thus (2) much media use can be conceived as goal-directed, and (3) competing with other sources of need gratification, so that when (4) substantial audience initiative links needs to media choice, (5) media consumption can fulfill a wide range of gratifications although (6) media content alone cannot be used to predict patterns of gratifications accurately because (7) media characteristics structure the degree to which needs may be gratified at different times, and further because (8) gratifications obtained have their origins in media content, exposure in and of itself, and/or the social situation in which exposure takes place. (p. 14)

Scholars also incorporated existing communication theories into the U&G approach. Rayburn and Palmgreen (1984) developed a model which combined the U&G approach with Fishbein and Azen's (1975) well-known expectancy-value theory. The combination model proposed that gratifications sought from media are attributed to one's beliefs (expectations) about media and one's evaluations of the material from that media (Rayburn & Palmgreen,

1985). Littlejohn (2002) illustrated this concept by explaining that if a person wants to be entertained and believes sitcoms provide entertainment, the person will gratify his or her entertainment needs by watching sitcoms. Additionally, Littlejohn (2002) noted that if a person does not care for sitcoms and believes that they are unrealistic, the person will not view them.

Swanson and Babrow (1989) tested the combination approach by studying student television news-viewing habits. Approximately 300 students answered a questionnaire designed to extract information about their attitudes toward the television news, how often they watch the news, and the gratifications obtained from viewing news. Upon investigation of the student responses, the researchers concluded there was a correlation between students' expectancy values (their attitudes) and how often they relied on the news to gratify specific needs.

Researchers also incorporated the dependency theory into U&G research. Developed by Defleur and Ball-Rokeach (1982), the theory proposes that media influences are determined by the interrelationship among the media, its audiences, and society. The combination model created by Rubin and Windahl (1986) incorporated gratifications sought as component of media dependency and assumed "dependency may result when an individual instrumentally seeks out certain communication messages or ritualistically uses communication channels" (p. 187). This was observed in a study of self-labeled television addicts who used television as a means to avoid unpleasant thoughts, control their moods, and spend time (McIlwraith, 1998).

Although most U&G studies focus on television consumption, researchers also investigated how consumers use other media (Rayburn, 1996). Example studies explored the use of radio call-in shows (Surlin, 1986) tabloid reading habits (Salwen & Anderson, 1984), cellular phone use (Leung & Wei, 2000), motivations for using the Internet (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000), and gratification dimensions for using personal digital assistants (Trepte, Ranne, & Becker 2003).

U&G and Newer Communication

The assumption of an active audience is “gaining credibility” among new technology researchers (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 19). Ruggiero noted that given the emergence of new media outlets, audiences are playing a more active role in selecting preferred media sources. This was observed by Heeter and Greenberg (1985) who concluded audiences select programming from a subset or repertoire of preferred cable channels. Ferguson (1992) reinforced this notion by concluding cable television to be “the most important predictor of channel repertoire” (p.89).

Additionally, the U&G approach is ideal for examining the Internet as it provides a “cutting-edge theoretical approach” for exploring the emergence of a new medium (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 27). The Internet also increases the potency of the U&G perspective because it requires a higher level of user activity in comparison with other media. In addition, Rayburn (1996) described the Internet as an “intentionally consumed” medium since users deliberately choose which Web sties to visit (p. 157).

The Internet possesses three characteristics not commonly found in other media: interactivity, demassification, and asynchronicity (Ruggiero, 2000). Interactivity enhances

the basic U&G assumption of an active audience (Ruggiero, 2000) and is defined as “the degree to which participants in a communication process have control over, and can exchange roles in, their mutual discourse” (Williams, et al p. 10). The concept of demassification is described as “the degree that a specific message can be obtained by each individual in a large audience” (p.12). Chamberlain (1994) suggests that through demassification, individuals can personalize messages to meet their needs and discard other media they refuse to consume. The third characteristic, asynchronicity, refers to the notion that messages “can be staggered in time” (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 16). Williams, et al. (1988) referred to electronic messages as an example of an asynchronous technology since senders and receivers of electronic mail can communicate with one another at their own convenience. In addition, Ruggiero (2000) suggested that most communication conducted over the Internet is also asynchronous because users can send and receive information at their leisure.

Addressing Criticisms

Although recognized as a one of the most popular mass communication theories (Littlejohn, 2002), scholars have criticized the approach for multiple reasons. Opponents cite U&G research to be atheoretical in nature (Elliott, 1974; Swanson, 1977; Weiss, 1976) and as possessing conceptual problems (Swanson, 1977). Specifically, Swanson cited four problems with the approach: 1.) its vague conceptual framework, 2.) its lack of precision in defining key concepts, 3.) its confusing explanatory apparatus, and 4.) its failure to consider the audience’s perception of media content.

Despite criticism, opponents still relied on the approach and strove to continually tweak and refine the U&G paradigm (Ruggiero, 2000). Eventually, scholars “answered the

criticisms—albeit not always to the satisfaction of the critics—and solidified the uses and gratifications as a major model for mass media research” (Rayburn, 1996, p. 146).

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Hypothesis and Research Question

The literature suggests that listener attention can be dependent on the producers' selection of music, sounds, voices, and dialogue to be heard over the airwaves. Heightened listener attention is associated with programs that focus on storytelling such as *This American Life*, shows with varied content such as *A Prairie Home Companion*, and programs that evoke emotional responses such as *All Things Considered*. Although many past examples in the literature illustrating how these characteristics can increase listener attention reference shows that aired during the Golden Age of Radio (from the late 1920's to the early 1950's), podcasts of programs that contain similar characteristics may also result in heightened audience attention. This is proposed not only because there are a multitude of podcasts which possess these characteristics but also because podcasting is a highly interactive process. When compared to listening to traditional radio, podcasting requires a greater level of user activity which in turn enhances the uses and gratifications (U&G) assumption of an active audience. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Podcasting is transforming listening to radio from previous background use to an active, engaging process.

The study also explores a specific byproduct of heightened listener attention, namely visualization, with the following research question:

R1: Do listeners tend to visualize podcast programs?

Methods

Two online surveys were emailed to individuals who listen to *This American Life* (TAL). The first survey was sent to 391 listeners and resulted in 225 responses while the second follow-up survey was distributed to 109 listeners and rendered 74 responses. During the research process, the Showtime version of *This American Life* (TAL) made its premiere, yet the selection of persons to whom the survey was distributed as well as the review of the first survey results were both conducted before the televised program was on the air. The details regarding the selection of TAL listeners and the development and distribution of the two surveys are addressed in this section.

It was determined that the best way to explore the hypothesis and research question was to survey individuals who listen to a podcast program that contains characteristics associated with heightened listener attention. TAL was selected because it possessed a variety of these characteristics: 1.) the show has a regular host; 2.) it contains storytelling content; 3.) the stories contain a variety of dialogue, voices, sounds, and music; 4.) the stories vary with each episode, and 5.) the stories include both dramatic and comedic tales.

The first step was to develop a list of TAL listeners to whom the surveys would be distributed. Two online communities, MySpace and Friendster, were selected as ideal sources for locating TAL listeners because each Web site contained a TAL fan group. It should be noted the researcher chose to use Friendster rather than the popular online community, Facebook, since Friendster contained a greater number of relevant TAL listener profiles. Beginning with MySpace, the researcher accessed the TAL fan group by typing the

phrase “This American Life” in lowercase letters without quotation marks in the keyword search option on the MySpace Groups section. The search for the phrase was conducted without quotations since a previous attempt in quotations did not render any search results. A link to the TAL fan group was found on the first page of search results, and the fan group Web site was then accessed. The fan group home page contained an option to “view all members” which linked to multiple pages containing links to the profile home pages of its group members. Beginning with the first member profile, each link was opened, and the corresponding Web site address was highlighted, copied, and pasted into an Excel spreadsheet. The process continued until all 219 of the listed member profile Web addresses were documented.

A similar process was used to locate the Friendster TAL fan group member profiles; however, since searches on Friendster could only be performed by Friendster members, it was necessary for the researcher to first obtain a Friendster membership. After joining Friendster, the researcher accessed the search section designated for locating Friendster groups, and typed the phrase “This American Life” in lowercase letters without quotations. The search option also allowed users to select from a list categories and locations. In this case, the category option was left blank, and the location option was left on the default selection, United States. The TAL fan group Web pages were then accessed by clicking on the TAL fan group link located on the first page of search results. Links to the TAL fan group member profiles were found on both the TAL fan group home page and also by accessing the “see more” option also located on the home page. Beginning with the first member profile, each link was opened, and the corresponding Web site address was

highlighted, copied, and pasted into the same Excel document used to list the MySpace TAL fan group members. This process continued until all available member profile addresses were documented, adding approximately 30 profiles to the listener list¹.

In effort to locate additional TAL listeners, MySpace was also used as a source for locating profiles of persons who were believed to listen to TAL, yet were not a part of the TAL fan group. This was done by typing the search phrase, “This American Life,” in lowercase letters without quotations in the search option located on MySpace home page. Although the search resulted in numerous links to TAL listener profile pages, not all the profiles were relevant to TAL. For example, while some profiles included the phrase, “This American Life,” a few used it in reference to the music band of the same name. Additionally, the content of some profiles contained only one or two of the three words in the show title. Other profiles included all three words, yet they did not appear in the same sequence as the search phrase. Also, although relevant to TAL, some result profiles were associated with persons, movies, or books featured on the program.

In an attempt to locate relevant profiles from the search results, a list of criteria for inclusion on the TAL listener list was created. First, it was determined that profiles that did not contain the phrase, “This American Life” within the interests section of the profile would not be placed on the list. Next, if the profile did include the phrase “This American Life” in the interests section, yet it was located under the music interests category, it was not placed on the list. In addition, in effort to maintain the consistency of the list, profiles associated with topics or persons featured on the program would not be placed on the list. Profiles

¹ The Friendster profiles were documented under a separate tab. The exact number of profiles is not known since profiles from additional Friendster searches were placed on the same page.

were placed on the list if they did not contain any of the before-mentioned characteristics and if they adhered to the additional following criteria: 1.) the phrase, “This American Life” whether it be in lowercase, uppercase, with quotes or without quotes, was located in the interests section; 2.) the profile included at least one additional phrase associated with TAL or public radio such as Ira Glass, NPR, or David Sedaris, 3.) the profile was not already on the listener list, 4.) the age posted on the profile was above the age of 18². As a result of this exploration, approximately 50 additional profiles were added to the list³.

Additional TAL listeners were also found on Friendster using a similar approach. Upon accessing the general search option from a link located on the Friendster home page, the phrase “This American Life” was typed in lowercase letters without quotations in the general search box. The general search also included a list of keyword categories from which to choose, and the option to search for “interests” was selected. Otherwise, the remaining search options were left on the default settings including the option to search for profiles posted by persons between the ages of 18 to 65. Since the search was based on locating one’s interests, and given that Friendster profiles tend to have less content than those on MySpace, the profile needed only to contain the phrase, “This American Life” in the profile’s hobbies and interests section to be added the TAL listener list. From this, approximately 40 profiles were added to the list⁴.

Although the list was assumed to be comprised of individuals who listen to TAL, it was still unknown whether or not they tuned in through podcasting. Therefore, the

² Individuals who stated an age of 99 years or older were not included on the list.

³ The exact number is not known since the profiles were placed under the same tab used for documenting additional profiles.

⁴ The exact number is not known since the profiles were placed under the same tab used for documenting additional profiles.

researcher determined it would be best to first send a preliminary survey to the entire TAL listener list, and then follow up with a second survey intended only for those who stated they listen to the program via podcasting. This way, the information about TAL listeners and their experiences gathered in the first survey could be used for the development of relevant, highly-targeted questions in the second survey specifically designed to explore the hypothesis and research question.

The first survey included a question which asked participants to list their favorite TAL episodes and another asking them to describe why they enjoy listening to the program. Individuals were also asked if they listen to the show via podcasting, and if they did tune in to the podcast, they were asked to provide an email address or profile Web address if they were willing to participate in the second survey.⁵ The remainder of the survey focused on questions about TAL listening habits, TAL listener attention, and listener demographics.

After developing the first survey, the researcher created an email message which included a brief introduction letter and a link to the online survey. In addition, the letter also identified the researcher as a fellow TAL fan in effort to elicit a greater level of candor from the participants. The message was then emailed to the individuals listed on the MySpace portion of the TAL listener list. This was done by accessing each MySpace profile Web page and delivering the message through the profile's "send message" option. Similarly, the same message was then emailed to the Friendster portion of the list by accessing each profile Web page and delivering it through Friendster profile "send message" option. The researcher was

⁵ Willing participants were asked to provide contact information since the survey software could not track participant Web addresses.

unable to access some profiles from the list, as they were no longer online. Overall, the email messages were distributed to approximately 300 individuals⁶.

Since previous searches on both MySpace and Friendster rendered hundreds of results, the researcher determined the survey message should be sent to additional listeners in effort to gather as much data as possible. Over the span of approximately two weeks, additional MySpace and Friendster profiles were added to the list using the same search method for locating TAL listeners who did not belong to a TAL fan group. As each new profile was located, the survey message was emailed through each profile “send message” option. In total, the survey message was distributed to 391 individuals, and the survey was taken offline upon receiving 225 responses.

The survey results were then accessed online through the same software service used to develop the survey. Since 109 podcast listeners agreed to participate in a follow-up survey, the researcher determined that the development of the second survey could begin. The next step was to review the first survey responses and decide how to use the data to create a second questionnaire. Given the great amount of detail in the answers from the questions about the respondents’ favorite episodes and why listeners enjoy TAL, it was determined that the follow-up survey questions should be based primarily on common themes found in the answers to these two questions. The researcher then reviewed the 182 answers to the question which asked participants to explain why they enjoy listening to TAL and concluded the answers contained four common themes: emotion, connection, engagement, and mental stimulation. Next, the researcher reviewed the 185 answers to the

⁶ The exact number is not known since profiles from additional Friendster searches were placed on the same page.

question which asked participants to list their favorite TAL episodes and documented the top five most-mentioned episodes. Then, the researcher listened to each of the five episodes for common aural themes and determined they all contained music and a detailed first-person narrative. Next, a series of questions for the second survey were developed based on the discovered common themes. The researcher also included an additional question that focused on listener frequency. Finally, since the Showtime version of TAL had premiered on March 20, and the survey was distributed on March 25, it was necessary to ensure that participants were aware the survey was intended to explore their experiences with the aural version of TAL and not the televised program. Therefore, the first page of the online survey included a brief message explaining the purpose of the research.

The first step in distributing the second survey was to create an introduction letter thanking the listeners for their willingness to participate. Next, it was necessary to access the section of the first survey that contained the contact information of the persons willing to participate in the follow up survey. Then, beginning with the first listed individual, the researcher sent a message containing the introduction letter and a link to the second survey to each person on the list. The method of distribution depended upon whether or not the person provided an email address or profile Web address in the first survey. If the individual included an email address, the survey was sent from the researcher's university email account. Otherwise, the survey was sent through the profile Web pages using the same approach described for sending the first survey. If the individual listed both an email address and profile Web address, the email address was used since multiple addresses could be included in one email message. Messages were sent to all 109 willing participants. Upon

receiving 74 responses, the researcher determined that an adequate amount of data had been gathered and turned off the online survey on March 30. This decision was also based in part on the following reasons: 1.) the researcher felt it would be best to take the survey offline in effort to minimize the impact of the televised version of TAL on participant responses, and 2.) the response rate had substantially lessened to only one response per day.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Survey 1

Of the 391 TAL listeners found on MySpace and Friendster, 225 responded to the first online survey. In addition, the two open-ended questions in the first survey also rendered a high response rate, as 185 of the participants discussed their favorite TAL episodes while 182 addressed they enjoy listening to TAL. The response rate for the remaining questions ranged from 100% to 82% excluding the question which asked podcast listeners to participate in a follow-up survey. That question resulted in a 64% response rate.

Listening habits. The survey found the majority TAL listeners (59.1%) tune in to TAL through podcasting. In addition, when asked to select among statements which best described how participants listen to TAL, 80.7% selected the response, “very attentive listener.” The survey also showed that audience loyalty was apparent, as two-thirds (63.1%) have listened to the show more than five years, and 60% claim to listen at least once a week. It also appears those who listen online or through podcasting tend to have varied listening schedules. One online listener claimed to tune in anywhere from twice a day to once every two months. Others noted how both work and school schedules impact how often they tuned in to TAL. For instance, one respondent wrote, “[I] used to listen weekly, but grad school cut my listening to almost never.”

Emotion. When participants were asked to describe why they enjoy listening to TAL, a noticeable number elaborated on the program's ability to evoke emotional responses. One respondent described the program as real and romantic and claimed that a single episode could evoke both laughter and tears. Another listener noted the emotional impact of the program with the following statement:

It goes through all range of emotions. It is entertaining while also being informative.

I am a daily NPR listener, so I enjoy most of the programs – but TAL stands out. I do not know if it is the stories, music or Ira – but it all just seems to mesh well.

Another person noted how quickly listeners can respond to the show and stated, “I like that someone who I can't see, have only known for a couple minutes, can make me cry or laugh, or just pause.” Others provided details regarding the show's ability to affect the emotional state of its listeners. For instance, one participant wrote:

I seriously get this joyful glee when I sit down and listen to it - even if the particular story angers me or frustrates me, I still feel a satisfaction in having heard it. It's given me windows into worlds I didn't even know about and confirmed storys *[sic]* and feelings I thought I only thought or knew about. I love it because it's a show that draws people in - makes them think about things, brings to light things we have been laughing about for years.

In addition, another listener commented, “It's utterly pleasureable *[sic]*... it feels like you're doing something good, staying in tune with the world, in the tiniest way possible and yet without being frivolous about it. It's unlike anything else out there.”

Moreover, one person went so far as to compare tuning in to TAL to a religious experience:

I work in oral history and the show very often captures the true golden nuggets of storytelling which are what I love about oral history in the first place. The show is touching without being too sentimental (there are some rare exceptions but generally it stays off corny very successfully [*sic*] while addressing very serious and emotional matters). I always learn something from it, over the years it has helped me reach moments of transcendence which I think religious people find in church. I know this sounds over the top but it really helps me reflect on what it means to be human and alive!

Lastly, another participant summarized the level of emotion associated with listening to TAL with the following antidote:

Sometimes when I listen to This American Life, [*sic*] I'm almost brought to tears by the power of the stories, sometimes I laugh uncontrollably, sometimes I absorb startling information or see true human nature. I've loved it since I was young and my friends and I were driving around looking for mischief, we changed radio stations and began listening to someone telling a story about Christmas dinner, the five rowdy boys were instantly silent and remained that way until it finished. It has the power to shut up teenage boys, that best explains it's [*sic*] majesty and power.

Engagement. Other respondents enjoy TAL because they find the program to be engaging. For instance, one person wrote:

I love the stories, they are touching and they are meaningful, I love the humor and the relevance of it all. I can get lost in an episode for an hour and I love that. I love Ira's

voice, so soothing and entertaining. This show has been a wonderful asset to my life. Another listener noted, “I get absorbed into the stories—and even if I want to turn them off—I can't.” Another person addressed a similar view point:

I've had more "driveway moments" with TAL than with any other program. Its subtleties, its depth and its flawless production makes it one of my all time favorite forms of entertainment. (Our next born son will be named Ira. Honestly.) Moreover, another listener described the level of engagement associated with listening to TAL with the following statement: “I don't think it's possible to get as much quality entertainment as you get with TAL through any other medium; if they produced a new show every hour, the Lord knows I'd never get my homework done.”

Some respondents compared listening to TAL to other media formats. For example, one participant wrote:

Because it is like watching TV and reading a book all at once, only better. I get sucked in by the story line and then I have to finish listening to the episode... I have to be somewhere where I can pay attention....

In addition, another respondent stated:

the *[sic]* stories transport you in a way television can't. the *[sic]* editing/sound is done in such a brilliant way that it feels like you're listening to people in the same room with you. stories *[sic]* often involve people we wouldn't normally come in contact with/identify with and make connections in ways that remind us maybe that it's our capability for humanity that binds us together....

Connection. People also enjoy listening to TAL because the program creates a sense of connection with its listeners. For instance, one respondent wrote:

I find TAL to be very comforting in a way. It connects me to people that I've never met, but I feel like now know in some special way. I look forward to long drives where I can listen to Ira Glass introduce me to people and their stories. TAL helps me stop and celebrate the small things, that I sometimes take for granted, with it's *[sic]* stories.

Similarly, another listener stated:

It makes me feel connected to the world on a very human level. It gives me insight into the lives and experiences of people in a unique and personal way, and makes me feel empathy for people with whom I would normally not. Also, I love a good story.

Others described how listeners can connect with the people in stories they hear: For instance, one individual explained:

I feel a very strong connection with almost all of the people interviewed in one way or another. Just to give two examples, I related so well to Julie Snyder's story about her experience with MCI because someone took out cable in my name and I knew how it felt to be trapped on a neverending *[sic]* phone conversation. I also think that the Babysitting episode is so relatable for anyone who is human.

Another participant noted how the show creates a sense of connection among TAL listeners. The individual stated, "It is well-produced and I feel as if I am connecting with both the people whose stories are told and other listeners." Others described the show's ability to connect with others by discussing how TAL alleviates feelings of loneliness. For instance,

one listener wrote, “It's wonderful and makes you feel connected and not so isolated in an often lonely cold world.” Others described listening to TAL as a means for reconnecting with people and ideas. One participant stated:

I am a struggling single mom living in a small town in Italy. My own son doesn't speak much english, *[sic]* and listening to TAL seems to reconnect me with a whole world of ideas that I don't have very much contact with in my daily life. I like the idea of giving a narrative structure to the sway of existence, and the investigation of marginal phenomena (which are never marginal, if you examine them closely enough). It reminds me of coversations *[sic]* with my brother, the ones that we never are able to have over the phone or with email.

Mental stimulation. A noticeable number of participants addressed the mental activity associated with listening to TAL. For example, one listener wrote about the variety of information heard on the program:

I love that the show is a cornucopia of knowledge about so many different aspects of life, and different types of people. I find that even with such diversity, the staff manages to create stories that I relate to; every time. I feel that I learn so much from the show, all while being entertained. TAL is by far my favotite, *[sic]* and most visited, form of entertainment.

Another listener discussed the type insight offered by the program: “It genuinely helps me to understand different places, people, and perspectives. As a secular humanist, it helps re-affirm my faith in the universality of the human experience.” One person noted how the program subject matter finds its way into various conversations. The listener stated, “It's

funny, fascinating, thought-provoking, informative and entertaining. I find myself referencing it in conversation more than any other program. ‘I heard an episode of TAL that....’” In addition, another listener discussed the depth of knowledge acquired from tuning in to the program:

Each show presents at least one glimpse into the lives of another person, and either i *[sic]* find something startling alien and new that changes my perception or else imparts some wisdom on the world and my experiences in it, or else I find something shockingly familiar that I didn't know others experienced or could phrase better than I ever could.

Favorite Episodes. When asked to list their favorite episodes, many respondents were unable to recall the titles of favorite episodes and instead answered by providing descriptions of different stories. Of those who listed titles, “Superpowers” was cited most often with 24 mentions. “Fiasco” followed with 22 mentions, then “Loon Lake” with 19, “Babysitting” with 17, and finally “Testosterone “with 14 mentions. The name, David Sedaris, was cited more often than any show title with a total of 32 mentions.

Narration and Music. Some participants also discussed the narrative style heard on TAL. For example, one listener stated, “i *[sic]* love that, most of the time, they let the people in the stories tell the stories themselves instead of relying solely on the reporters to retell them to us.” Similarly, another listener wrote, “I have a hard time going to sleep without it playing. I listen to it every single night. It's the narrative style, I guess. I like how conversational Ira Glass is.” Another person stated they enjoy both the narrative style and music heard on the program. The respondent wrote, “Originally, I was caught by the unique

way of storytelling that blended voice and music. As I continued to listen, I enjoyed the stories both funny and poignant.”

Survey 2

Of the 109 podcast listeners who agreed to participate in the follow up questionnaire, 73 individuals responded to the survey. The response rate for the survey questions varied from 100% to 97% excluding one question which asked listeners to describe why they do or do not visualize what they hear. That question resulted in a 78% response rate.

A total of 84.5% individuals stated they tune in to TAL more often now that they can podcast the program. In addition, Table 3 shows the vast majority of listeners (84.9%) experience a variety of emotions when listening to TAL. Additionally, Table 4 illustrates they also experience high levels of engagement, connection, and mental stimulation. Furthermore, Table 5 shows the majority of respondents (78.9%) tend to visualize the persons or settings heard on the program.

Table 3
Statements Selected by Participants Which Describe Levels of Emotion When Listening to TAL

Statement	<u>Answer Selection</u>	
	Percent	Count
I rarely experience emotional responses to the stories aired on TAL.	0.0%	0
I tend to experience an array of emotions, sometimes even more than one in a single hour-long episode.	84.9%	62
I have experienced emotional responses, yet they are not typically powerful or intense.	11.0%	8
Other	4.1%	3

Table 4
Participant Rating of Statements Describing How They Experience TAL

Statement	Average	Count
The stories thought are provoking and I think about them even after the program has ended.	1.47	72
Much like reading a good book, I tend to get totally absorbed when I listen to TAL.	1.52	71
Listening to TAL is intimate experience that enables me feel a connection with TAL hosts and storytellers.	1.69	71
I believe listening to TAL requires mental participation.	1.64	71
Listening to TAL is like hearing a friend relay a funny or interesting story.	1.62	71

Result averages are based on a five-point scale with 1 representing “strongly agree,” 2 representing “agree,” 3 representing “neutral,” 4 representing “neutral,” and 5 representing “strongly disagree.”

Table 5
Statements Selected by Participants Describing How They Experience TAL

Statement	<u>Answer Selection</u>	
	Percent	Count
I'm frequently thinking about or doing something else; I never give it my full attention in the way I would a TV show.	0.0%	0
I can visualize the people being talked about or interviewed, or the places described on TAL.	78.9%	56
TAL is more engaging than most radio shows, but I never actively picture or visualize the people or settings on the show.	21.1%	15

When asked to elaborate on why listeners do or do not visualize the program, the responses included a variety of viewpoints. For example, one listener explained how one's level of interest in the story is associated with visualization:

I visualize the places and characters a little easier when the person relaying the story is interesting to me. I feel a little more emotionally invested when I can put myself in the narrators *[sic]* place or have had a similar experience to the one being described.

Another listener noted the importance of paying attention to the show:

The stories are so intimate and in-depth; I only listen when I can give the program my full attention. I often find myself visualizing the story tellers telling their stories, and I often visualize the stories they are telling. I think this is because, like reading a book, there is so much detail and the stories can be SO funny or SO emotionally intense, I

tend to savor the programs fully and become totally absorbed. I guess the book analogy is the most effective way to describe the experience, it is totally engaging. I only get this experience when I DO give the program my full attention, which is why I only listen to it when I can. If I get distracted, I'll pause the program and revisit it another time.

Multiple participants also noted how the program's narrative approach enhances listener visualization. For example, one listener wrote:

[T]he show tend *[sic]* to have the people in the stories tell the stories first-hand, hearing the way they talk and the pieces of information they include (intentionally and unintentionally) helps to visualize the story. also, *[sic]* the host and reporters are really good at making sure what details to include to help make the story more colorful, not too much details to bog down the story but the important pieces that keeps the story captivating.

Other listeners described how the use of multiple elements assisted with the visualization process. For instance, one participant stated:

I get fully absorbed into the stories. The descriptive approach *[sic]* to storytelling, the tone of the speakers, the background sounds often included, as well as the music just lend themselves to me imagining visually what's going on.

Others claimed that visualization is a natural process, as noted in the following comment: "I find the descriptions evocative enough that the visualization comes pretty naturally." And another listener stated, "how *[sic]* can you not? it *[sic]* is like reading a book and not imagining it in your mind."

While some participants stated they do not visualize the program, there were still mentions of how TAL was associated with higher levels of engagement, as seen in the following statement: “I am not a visual person so I don't tend to visualize things that way. I am almost always totally absorbed in the show however, and I only listen to it during long walks, car rides, bus rides, etc....” Similarly, another listener wrote, “I guess I'm content with it being verbal – I wouldn't say that my attention is diverted – it's very engaging. I just don't add visualization to it....”

Less than half (48.6%) of the respondents said they prefer to listen when they can pay full attention to the program, and just under one-fourth (23.6%) tune in while taking part in other activities. However, of those who tend to listen while doing something else, multiple listeners noted they tune in while pursuing activities which require little attention. For instance, one person wrote, “I prefer to listen to TAL when I can pay full attention to the show AND when doing things that require some degree of mindless attention - i.e. washing dishes, doing laundry, cleaning, driving.” Another listener stated, “I listen to TAL while doing other non-verbal things like running or drawing. I feel like I can give it my full attention despite multitasking.” Conversely, some listeners are unable to pay full attention to the program when pursuing other activities, as noted in the following statement: “I listen to it at work, and often miss parts, so I generally listen to an episode 2 [*sic*] or more times so I can actually absorb all of it.”

Although the five favorite episodes found in the first survey responses contained both music and a first-person narrative, Table 6 illustrates a greater importance on narration than music when it comes to higher levels of engagement. In addition, the table also shows the

selection of stories heard on TAL as well as the sequence in which they are presented tend to appeal to podcast listeners.

Table 6
Participant Ratings of Statements Describing How They Experience Listening to TAL

Statement	Average	Count
The use of music helps me visualize the stories.	2.13	72
I enjoy the way TAL threads together the story topics.	1.49	71
I find the personal narration helps me become engaged in the stories.	1.44	70
The selection of stories is one of the show's most appealing aspects.	1.39	71

Result averages are based on a five-point scale with 1 representing "strongly agree," 2 representing "agree," 3 representing "neutral," 4 representing "neutral," and 5 representing "strongly disagree."

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

By surveying listeners of the podcast radio program, *This American Life* (TAL), this study explored the impact of podcasting on how people listen to radio. Although the research was limited in relation to the overall podcasting population, the findings suggest that podcasting may be altering the way people experience radio. Specifically, the study hypothesis which proposed that podcasting is transforming radio from previous background use to an active, engaging process is supported by the research findings. The findings also addressed the study research question by suggesting that listeners do tend to visualize podcast programs.

The study hypothesis is supported by a series of data found in the second survey. First, considering the overwhelming number of podcast listeners who experience an array of emotional responses when listening to TAL, it can only be assumed they are actively engaged with the program. Similarly, the same assumption is also supported by the fact that zero respondents indicated they rarely emotionally react to the program. In addition, almost all the participants stated that tuning in to TAL is a thought-provoking process that involves mental participation, which in turn arguably means that listeners are actively listening to the program. There was also a high indication of respondents who stated they feel connected with the stories and persons heard on the program, which as seen in the literature, may also indicate that people are attentively listening. Interestingly, while only half of the listeners

said they prefer to tune in when they can pay attention to the show, the majority of those who multitask while listening prefer to tune in while conducting less demanding activities. Finally, not only do the findings suggest that podcast listeners are practicing active and engaging listening habits, but it also appears they are listening in this fashion more frequently. The survey found that 80% of listeners tune in to TAL more often now that they can podcast the program.

The active and engaging listening habits noted in the second survey are also supported by results from the first survey. Support of these finding can be found among the numerous first-survey responses listed in the results section detailing the high levels of emotion, connection, mental participation and engagement associated with listening to TAL. Although the first survey was intended as a means for developing the second survey, its findings should not be dismissed since half of the first survey participants listen through podcasting. Yet, since it is unclear which first survey responses are from podcast listeners, the first survey results should be seen only as means for supporting the second survey findings and not as a representation of how individuals listen to TAL podcasts.

The answer to the study research question was found among the second survey results. The listener responses to questions regarding program visualization suggest that listeners tend to visualize podcast programs. This is supported by the high percentage (78.9%) of podcast listeners who said they can visualize the people or places heard on TAL and by the multiple responses describing how the stories heard on TAL promote mental visuals.

In relation to the uses and gratifications (U&G) approach, the findings suggest the level of involvement associated with selecting a medium is associated with how individuals experience that medium. Rayburn (1996) and Ruggiero (2000) suggested the interactive nature of the Internet emphasizes the U&G assumption of an active audience, and it appears that the highly selective process of podcasting renders a similar effect. Given the indications of the emotional and mental involvement observed in the second survey, the research suggests that those who listen to TAL through podcasting are highly active, attentive listeners.

Implications

Although small in scope, the research findings do suggest that podcast broadcasters can capture listener attention by utilizing aural characteristics of shows heard during the Golden Age of Radio. The findings further show these characteristics coupled with the availability of programs which interest listeners can assist in establishing a strong fan base as seen in the responses from both surveys. Furthermore, unlike the early days of radio, it is apparent that these fan bases are not limited to a specific time and location but instead are becoming a part of a global society.

Limitations

Similar to other projects of this size, this study is not without its limitations. First, it is limited in regards to the selection of participants, as they represent only a small fraction of the podcasting population. Next, although the second survey was answered by podcast listeners, it is possible that some answers reflect what listeners experience not only when tuning in to TAL through podcasting, but also when listening to TAL on the radio. Third, the

second survey was distributed after the premiere of the Showtime TAL series, and it is possible that exposure to the television program may have impacted participant responses.

For Future Research

In order to further explore the impact of podcasting, it may be beneficial to study the listening habits of persons who tune in to talk and news podcast programs. This could be further examined by surveying individuals who listen to a particular talk or news program on traditional radio and compare those findings with a survey completed by individuals who listen to the same programs through podcasting. Furthermore, with the recent premiere of the Showtime TAL series, there is a rare opportunity to examine the difference between listening to stories through podcasting in relation to viewing similar stories on television.

Conclusion

In summary, this study found that individuals who listen to podcast programs which contain traits similar to shows heard during the Golden Age of Radio are attentive listeners who are actively engaged with the programming. Additionally, because listeners are actively tuning in to podcast programs, the study also suggests people are visualizing what they hear on the airwaves. The study was based on the uses and gratifications assumption of an active audience and suggests the high level of user activity associated with listening to podcasts corresponds with the high levels of listener attention seen in the research findings. This work represents only a small view point of the overall impact of podcasting, but based on the findings of this study, there is ample opportunity to further explore how podcasting is changing the way people listen to radio.

APPENDIX A

Survey 1 Letter

Hi there,

I'm working on a graduate thesis that explores the experience of listening to This American Life. As a fellow TAL fan, I'm hoping you may be interested in helping by answering a very brief questionnaire. Your input would be greatly appreciated. The link below will take you to the survey.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=99543346957>

I can't wait to see what others have to say about the show!

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,
Kristine Johnson
k.c.johnson@tcu.edu

APPENDIX B

Survey 1 Results

Question 1: Approximately how often do you listen to This American Life (TAL)?

	Response Percent	Response Count
More than once a week	19.1%	43
Once a week	40.9%	92
Once every two weeks	15.6%	35
Once a month	15.6%	35
Other (please specify)	8.9%	20
Answered Question		225

1. almost every day
2. Online when I can (aver. 1 every 2weeks)
3. I listen to several episodes in a row from the website whenever I have time, every month or two.
4. varies from several episodes a week to less than once a month
5. I download podcasts, purchase episodes from iTunes, and listen when I take trips.
6. usually i forget to listen for several weeks and then listen to several online for a day or two.
7. sometimes 2 episodes a day, sometimes not for weeks, depends on how busy i am
8. i tend to listen in spurts via mp3/podcast
9. i listen once a week and have listened to all the archive shows too
10. Probably just once or twice a month, but multiple episodes online.
11. les than once a month
12. Since I've been caught up on pretty much the entire library, I've been listening once a week.
13. Used to listen weekly, but grad school cut my listening to almost never :(
14. i'm actually going w/once a week. but it's ONLY ON npr once a week! i live in chicago, and it's a chicago public radio show!
15. when theres a new episode

16. I used to listen to it daily online. But I changed jobs and now I don't have the luxury of listening. But I do listen whenever I can on the weekends.
17. Usually once a week, but for awhile I was listening to at least five a day, while at a extremely boring day job. Pretty much listening to all the past episodes in order.
18. Every week when I am in my home town, once a month - rarely ever when I am at school
19. I listen to them all, but not necessarily when they originally air. I download them as a podcast and listen when I get the chance.
20. it depends on how busy I am and how well my internet connection is, so right now it's at least 3 times a month.

Question 2: Where do you typically listen to TAL? Please select all that apply.

	Response Percent	Response Count
At home	71.6%	161
In the car	48.0%	108
At work	22.7%	51
Other (please specify)	21.3%	48
Answered Question		225

1. on my iPod while walking outside
2. out & about (podcast)
3. to the podcast, in the painting studio :)
4. on ipod -- running, commuting (subway), walking
5. while walking
6. podcast
7. On my iPod, walking to work, doing yardwork, riding the bus, etc.
8. During my office hours for an organization at Bradley University
9. ipod; on train during commute to work
10. while riding my bike, on the subway
11. online
12. walking on the way to work
13. On the bus, walking
14. commuting via public transit
15. walking/on the train
16. I download the podcasts and listen while I workout.
17. on the bus. walking
18. podcast
19. airplane (podcast)
20. on the way to work and at home
21. during school work
22. out and about
23. on ipod
24. on my iPod while I walk or commute - I live in NYC

25. ipod
26. while working, on my ipod
27. I download to my iPod and listen on my bike commute to school
28. on the net
29. Podcasts from Itunes
30. on my podcast on the way to work, I live in London so that's the most practical way of listening to it. When I lived in Chicago I listened to it every week
31. all of the above, and on podcast if i miss it.
32. While working out
33. I always curl up in bed and listen
34. mp3/radio player
35. gym
36. on the go-podcasts
37. iPod
38. kcrw.com
39. podcast / ipod
40. at my computer working...
41. School
42. Often on my iPod when I am running.
43. at school
44. itunes podcast mainly
45. anywhere, it's a podcast now. Ipod available.
46. at school
47. Walking to and from work/Travelling Generally
48. Online

Question 3: How long have you been listening to TAL?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than one year	4.4%	10
One to five years	63.1%	142
More than five years	25.3%	57
More than ten years	7.1%	16
Answered Question		225

Question 4: Do you podcast TAL?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	59.1%	133
No	40.9%	92
Answered Question		225

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Question 5: What are your favorite episodes?

1. wow. off the top of my head. the one about quantifying things that shouldn't be quantified. the ones about masculinity. the valentines one with the couples arguments being video taped, the in the middle of no where one (nahru and press 0 to talk to a real person) the two from afganistan, the ones about the war on terror. the one on ADM, of course the squirrel cop one. shoot i don't know.
2. The Fix is In
3. "Fiasco," "Babysitting," "Music Lessons," "Telephone"
4. Running After Antelope Adventures in the Simple Life House on Loon Lake Fiasco!
5. A favorite? Are you kidding me?
6. Fiasco! Superpowers. Notes From Camp.
7. Hmm... I have many... I like looking in the archives... I'm still going through the "our favorite shows" listing... Favorite recent episodes include Fiasco, Quiz show, and unconditional love...
8. fiasco,

9. Cruelty of Children Reruns Delivery among others.
10. Shouting Across the Divide, the one that included Squirrel Cop, The Call was Coming from the Basement
11. Fiasco!, of course. All the rest are tied for number 2.
12. The ones where David Sedaris talks about his family and boyfriend. Ones with Sarah Vowell and/or Scott Carrier. The one with the story of the rookie cop trying to catch a squirrel in a house. The one about babysitting was probably my favorite.
13. Romance What is this thing? Apology Testosterone
14. "What are you looking at?" -The episode as a whole. I'm a huge fan of Sarah Vowell, so any episode with her generally gets a good review in my book. Also, the Christmas Specials. It's become part of my holiday tradition now.
15. 20 Acts in 60 Minutes Fiasco Telephone Cringe
16. Notes on Camp, Babysitting, Neighbors
17. Really anything with David Sedaris or Sarah Vowell.
18. Babysitting Act V What I Should've Said My Experimental Phase Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time Settling the Score Family Legend Miracle Cures Allure of the Mean Friend Reruns Devil on my Shoulder House on Loon Lake Superpowers
19. "Americans in Paris", "How To", "Blame it on Art", "Poultry Slam '96", "Teenage Embed", "Return to Afghanistan", "Death to Wacky"
20. Anything by Jack Hitt, hands down.
21. Oh so many!!! How to narrow it down? First Day 11/13/98 could be it.
22. An old episode about vacations
23. Notes on Camp
24. Fiasco Music Lessons Christmas and Commerce Family Physics Golden Calf
25. What I Should Have Said What is This Thing? Shouting Across the Divide
26. liars shoulda been dead hoaxing yourself three kinds of deception middlemen superpowers home movies babysitting best interests mind games numbers the missing parents bureau kid logic 24 hours at the golden apple recordings for someone 20 acts in 60 minutes million bubbles devil on my shoulder secret life of daytime testosterone mapping niagara invisible worlds living the dream ask an expert
27. My favorite is probably the first I ever listened to, about why people love other people hating them.
28. "In the Shadow of the City" "Superpowers" "My Big Break" "Fiasco!"
29. David Sedaris readings, "And the Call Was Coming from the Basement," "Apology," "The Allure of the Mean Friend," others.
30. Fiasco, a very special david sedaris christmas
31. Heretics (2005) What I Should Have Said (2004) Come Back to Afghanistan / Teenage Embed II (2003)
32. Telephone, What I Should've Said, Reruns, Godless America, 20 Acts in 60 Minutes
33. Running After Antelope, Lost in America (because I was there for the recording), What's In a Number?
34. I really enjoyed this years Halloween episode. A past favorite was a story about a hotline in NYC where people could call and confess secrets.

35. <http://www.thislife.org/pages/descriptions/02/223.html>
<http://www.thislife.org/pages/descriptions/00/172.html>
<http://www.thislife.org/pages/descriptions/03/241.html> These are just off the top of my head. I could go on!
36. the one where they do hamlet in prison sad ones where people struggle
37. Fake Science, Notes on Camp, Superpowers, Two Steps Back, Babysitting
38. Can't remember the titles off hand, but if you want to email more questions, I can tell you then.
39. By far, my favorite story (I'm not sure which episode) was "Get Over It!" by none other than Ira Glass.
40. *notes on camp *recordings for someone *anything with jonathan goldstein
41. house on loon lake, monogamy
42. Christmas Spectacular 2005 Notes on Camp 20 Acts in 60 Minutes Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time
43. way too many of them to answer
44. Anything with David Sedaris, Sarah Vowell, David Rackoff, or Starlee Kine
45. Pray, Shouting Across the Divide, Fiasco, Home Movies, Act V, Recordings for Someone, Heretics
46. 24 Hours at the Golden Apple Babysitting
47. Republican National Convention Who's Canadian Monogamy Advice Recordings for Someone Perfect Evidence Devil on My Shoulder Ask an Expert Testosterone You are So Beautiful to Me 20 Acts in 60 Minutes 81 Words
48. the parrot & the pot bellied pig; starcrossed lovers; i enjoy being a girl, sort of; ACT V - which is my favoritest favorite;
49. Love the Superpower episode. Also any with David Sedaris. Also love Sarah Vowell and David Rakoff, and the guy (Jonathan Gold-something) who does new versions of Bible stories.
50. Allure of the mean friend
51. Kid Logic, Conventions, 20 acts in 60 Minutes, Fiasco, Notes on Camp (I'm sure there are so many more I've forgotten!).
52. Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time, 20 Acts in 60 Minutes, Lost in America, When You Talk About Music, 24 Hours at the Golden Apple, What I Should've Said, Accidental Documentaries, Trail of Tears, Home Movies, Kid Logic, Mapping, Superpowers, Recordings for Someone, Telephone, Invisible Worlds,
53. the one about fake worlds (jack hitt explores dinosaur myths) David Sedaris & the other david guy the one about the sancity of marriage The Christmas ones Johnathan Goldstein (Allure of the mean friend, the one about the phone message, etc.)
54. offhand: what is this thing reruns recordings for someone
55. too many to list.
56. "Harold" "Heretics" "Dolls"
57. Someone to Watch Over Me Heretics Quiz Show In Defense of Godlessness A Little Bit of Knowledge Shouting Across the Divide Houses of Ill Repute My Experimental Phase Superpowers How We Talked Back Then

58. Kid Logic Father's Day 1999 My Brilliant Plan This American Life Holiday Spectacular The Parrot and the Potbellied Pig 20 Acts in 60 Minutes
59. There's one about chickens I liked. The holiday ones are great. The one about 24 hours at the Golden Apple Diner in Chicago. Many of them, really - I like ones that are about strange little idiosyncrasies of life, like the lives of garbage men. I'm not that picky, except I don't much like the ones that are political because I'm not a very political person.
60. Notes on Camp, Unconditional Love, Like It Or Not, Superpowers
61. Fiasco
62. I liked the one about the girl who made up the family she babysat so she could get away from her mother. Also, I like David Sedaris.
63. i love them all. a recent favorite was houses of ill repute, especially the segment about the man whose house was inhabited by sex workers and drug users
64. House on Loon Lake Didn't ask to be born Notes on camp Houses of Ill Repute Settling the score Reruns Where words fail
65. ????
66. Notes on Camp, Superpowers, Harold
67. OK - not knowing episode titles... The one where they do Shakespeare in prison, the one where the Iraqi/American boy goes back to Iraq, the really scary one where the police convince the boy that he killed his younger sibling, the Halloween episode from 2006, the one about Jerry Springer, the one where the woman is attacked by a rabid racoon, so many more...
68. David Sedaris in Paris, Reruns
69. Anything with David Sedaris. "Getting and Spending" "NOt What I meant"
70. david sedaris' x-mas mall story. all night diner in chicago. improv everywhere. many others...
71. cringe, camp, fiasco, house of ill repute, cat and mouse
72. Oh, so many to choose from! There was one about a limo driver that stood out for me for some reason.
73. The last one about houses of ill repute was especally good. I also enjoy any with Sarah Vowell or David Sedaris. Also, any that use music from TMBG also rate high in my book
74. 1st favorite...definatly the mortified episode. that's not the official name of the episode, but it features the show that is put on in L.A. in which people read from their personal journals, lettters, etc... 2nt fav: again, don't know the offical name of the show...but I love the show with the creator of the found magazine guy. 3rd: the Katrina show was phenominal. Really. 4th: Alwalys love to hear David Sedaris, or Sarah Vowel...especially David.
75. Babysitting, Classifieds
76. didnt ask to be born (209), music lessons (104), superpowers (178), and loads and loads more
77. Act V, My Experimental Phase, Fiasco, The Fix Is In,After the Flood, (many more....)
78. Superheroes Valentine's Day Act V of Hamlet in the prison
79. Anything with David Sedaris

80. The House on Loon Lake, Faustian Bargains, Cruelty of Children, Notes on Camp, Babysitting, Hoaxing Yourself, Didn't Ask to be Born, Superpowers....too name just a few
81. 47, 54, 61, 62, 66, 67, 94, 95, 115, 117, 127, 141, 165, 178, 180, 182, 184, 188, 202, 203, 205, 207, 222, 226, 231, 247, 257, 259, 261, 264, 268, 270, 279, 286, 287, 293, 306, 319.
82. The Fix is In House on Loon Lake Fiasco
83. My favorite ever was "Cringe" but most recently I really enjoyed "Houses of Ill Repute."
84. I liked "The Super" among many others I can't think of right now.
 - 1) the grateful dead's lyricist loses the new found love of his life in a plane crash.
 - 2) Dad records his drug using son's phone messages to teach a lesson.
 - 3) Canadians among us.
 - 4) Bumbling would-be terrorist who the U.S. cites as an example of success for homeland security.
85. i think my all-time favorite is called something like "it never ends," the one with the story about a high school reunion and another story about a guy who is obsessed with his ex girlfriend. sorry i can't remember the exact title.
86. Oh, so many... let's see: "What's in a number" (both editions) "Unconditional Love" "Heretics" "DIY" "Apology" "My Experimental Phase" "My Pen Pal" "20 Acts in 60 minutes" "You Are so Beautiful...To Me" "Reruns" "Perfect Evidence" "How to Win Friends and Influence People" "Cringe" "Nobody's Family is Going to Change" "In Dog we Trust" "What're You Lookin' At?" "Take a Negro Home" "I Enjoy Being a Girl, Sort Of" "Monogamy" "Kindness of Strangers" "Media Fringe" "Get Over It" "When You Talk About Music" "Notes on Camp" "Music Lessons" "My Pen Pal"
87. Act V Testosterone
88. Somewhere in the Arabian Sea Notes on Camp Seemed Like A Good Idea at the Time Not What I Meant (only Act 1) Lost In America
89. The Cat Came Back, House on Loon Lake, 20 Acts in 60 minutes, And the call was coming from the basement, etc (all of them are great!)
90. I loved the episode "Mind Games," when the improv troupe acted like big fans of the unknown band, etc. There was one about a guy who has constant ringing in his ears... One about the two kids who tell their mom that they're always babysitting for a pretend family to escape an "abusive" relationship... It's hard to choose- I love them ALL!
91. Too hard to say. I own the cd's and liked the anniversary show that was a "greatest hits" type deal. I remember it had Julia Sweeney talking about cancer and somehow it was funny. I also liked the Macy's window Christmas Freud that is on a CD. Oh, and the one with filmmaker of Jawbreaker who describes the CRAZY home movies he used to make of a kid.
92. That's a really hard question. I love them all so much. I love the one where the guy sees his own apartment, only better, on reality TV. I love the one they played recently where the American soldier falls in love with an Iraqi POW. The one about the phone company is pretty good, where that woman's getting the runaround for months and months. There are others, though, that have had me just in tears on my living room floor; it's hard to keep them separate, or remember ones I haven't heard more than once. Maybe if there were a list of all of them, I could remember better exactly what my favorite ones are...

Anyway, those are the favorites I can remember right now. Oh, and I love when they sample stuff from the Story Corp project

93. Oh, Gosh, I don't know the exact names, there are so many! The one with the adopted baby from Bulgaria or Romania who grows up in the U.S., the one with one of the producer's (I think) parents' divorce who get back together, the one in Salt Lake City party where the kidnapper and the girl show up and no one recognizes them,...
94. in no particular order: first day (squirrel cop) the real story (jar jar head) time to save the world (fools rush in, where mommies fear to tread) fiasco (opening night) 81 words godless america the friendly man
95. Oh, good Lord! Anything with David Sedaris.
96. Music Lessons, I enjoy being a girl sort of
97. Last words -the job that takes over your life-ladies and germs (were the ones that first captured me and the first that come to mind, I generally always enjoy them except when Ira Glass and Sarah Vowell get a bit too self indulgent)
98. It's hard to pick a favorite. Any episode where I can remember a story and bring it up in conversation is a fave.
99. Babysitting, And the Call Was Coming From the Basement and Hitler's Yacht
100. Heretics, What's in a number, A better mousetrap, It seemed like a good idea at the time...
101. love them all.
102. All time favorite to date is "My Big Break"...specifically Act III "Oedipus Hex". After that, too many close seconds to even begin to sort them out.
103. "Cruelty of Children," "Ladies and Germs," "How We Talked Back Then," and "The Super"
104. one that comes to mind is the episode when people told stories of things they believed to be true but then came to find out they were false I especially adored the girl who thought unicorns were real and she was in her 20s I thought she was so precious and I wanted to hug her.
105. Windfall, Two Steps Back, Godless America, DIY
106. Testosterone, Conventions, First Day
107. the one where the man fell in love at a conference but she died on a plane about a year later. The beauty of their relationship plus the tragedy of loss. I also love the story of the cop chasing the squirrel in the attic. I love the story of the ultimate goths wearing pink. etc etc etc.
108. really I like them all, I think I have every single episode that I bought from audible, and I make all my assistants listen to it when we're working, the ones that they really liked are superpowers, the one about the guy stranded on an island in NY, I think he was from Russia, the one about curly oxide, in the middle of nowhere, the one with Crispin Glover and Sean Penn, I think it was called repeats? the one about the parrot that got stolen from the NY zoo, my only problem is that I have a hard time listening to things more than once in 6 months, I had a subscription to them through audible, but sometimes the whole month would be a repeat, and I own all of them, I just started to podcast it so I can stay up on new episodes again

109. Valentine's Day 98 The one with the guys who had to touch the truck for as long as possible Any David Sedaris episode, especially his Elizabethan one. When Sarah Vowell reports on her father and guns. The guy who rode his bike around as if he only had a year to live. The mean kids and the guy in the well. The Peter Pan Fiasco.
110. Any X-mas episodes. Am a sucker for unusual Holiday "shtick"
111. Quiz Show, Babysitting, The Middle of Nowhere, every episode!
112. I have yet to hear one I didn't enjoy but some standouts are: Media Fringe, Say Anything, 20 Acts in 60 Minutes, Act V, The Job That Takes Over Your Life, Kid Logic.
113. The Super, Seemed Like a Great Idea at the time, Babysitting, Star-Crossed Love, My Brilliant Plan, What's in a Number NOTE: Though I've listened to public radio and caught random episodes of TAL since the beginning of time, only since I discovered the podcast have I become a hopeless addict, scratching my neck and face every Monday waiting for the podcast.
114. I can't really remember, but I know I really liked "Unconditional Love."
115. Music Lessons Say Anything Notes on Camp The one where the dude crosses the U.S. in that old old truck on a hot summer. The one that explains what went down during Hurricane Katrina. Any episode with Davey from Found.
116. the episode about the abandoned house.
117. i can't even think of the titles of them. I really liked the show about Catastrophes.
118. gosh, I don't know the names. there's one about the children's video production, where they're "gay as a whistle" that cracks me up everytime I think about it.
119. Fiasco A very David sedaris christmas Superpowers Urban Nature -- "hidden people"! Kid Logic
120. What I Should Have Said Superpowers Allure of the Mean Friend the one with the guys who wrote the worst song ever, i don't know the title, but if you do let me know (i heard it over the late summer early fall of 2001)
121. Recorded for Someone Backed into A Corner 20 Acts in 60 Minutes
122. a little bit of knowledge godless america backed into a corner promised land recordings for someone parental guidance suggested david and goliath houses of ill repute
123. House on Loon Lake
124. Telephone Middle of nowhere Pray House on Loon Lake Seemed like a good idea at the time Testosterone
125. Act V, Teenage Embed, Testosterone, Accidental Documentaries, etc.
126. Squirrel Cop, Sarah Vowel and Andrew Jackson, Jesus Shaves, Old Buildings, 24 Hours at a Chicago Cafe, On a Garbage Route, Shoplifting Granny...
127. anything David Sedaris especially his adventures on the French subway The chicago diner any/all
128. "Testosterone" really stands out.
129. Episode 293: "A little bit of knowlege"
130. Act V 24 Hours at the Golden Apple Superpowers Testosterone Pray
131. Godless America Swing Set Testosterone Heretics Parental Guidance Suggested The Sanctity of Marriage

132. Cruelty of Children, House by Loon Lake, My Experimental Phase, Lock Up, anything with David Sedaris
133. gosh i love so many but #246 My Penpal and Pray from 1997
134. probably cruelty of children and babysitting
135. Fiasco, Testosterone, Prayer, Cringe... there are so many!
136. Disasters, Classifieds, Prom, The one about finding out something isn't true later in life...(sorry, bad with episode names), the one about the mole in Archer-Daniels-Midland co.
137. I can't say specifically. I favor the ones that sound more like... light-hearted stories. I like when there are the guest writers on like David Sedaris.
138. Oh Man! There are so many! I loved: "24 hours at the Golden Apple", the one where they had like 24 acts, The episode with the guy in brooklyn who is convicted of murder but is innocent and is working with a lawyer to clear his name - that one was powerful! "Camp Stories" "It seemed like a good idea at the time" Recently, the "Supers" story with the snowman who could lift weights nearly made me cry with laughter. There was a powerful series on the school system that Ira did. Seriously there is not one episode that I haven't come away having either laughed my ass off, cried, been dumbfounded, enlightened, or become more delightfully aware. Usually its a small combination of all of these happening simultaneously.
139. Pimp Anthropology, Quitting, What You Looking At?, Last Words, Scenes From a Transplant, Lockup, 24 Hours at the Golden Apple, The Fix Is In, Memo to the People of the Future, Them, Neighbors, Limbo, Reruns, Secret Government, Apology, My Experimental Phase, I'm From the Private Sector and I'm Here to Help, After the Flood, Know Your Enemy, DIY, Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time, Habeas Schmaebas, Time to Save the World
140. "Reruns" (Beaver trilogy episode) This years Halloween special "My Brilliant plan"
141. Section on stuttering, 2006,
142. superpowers, backed into a corner, Harold Washington episode
143. so far in '07 #324: My Brilliant Plan 59:36 1/29/2007 Big ideas gone amok. An 11-year-old boy wants to see his dead father again and comes up with the world's most complicated solution. And an American reporter tries to avoid insurgents by renting a house in Baghdad rather than living in a hotel. old episode regarding the teen who lite himself on fire and survived also the running with scissors episode
144. squirrel cop. the preacher that everyone turned their back on when he received the gospel of inclusion (i think that's what it was called) the one where the guy was tagging near rumsfeld's house and was accused of being a terrorist.
145. notes on camp, babysitting, music lessons, cruelty of children, superpowers, the house by loon lake, testosterone, my experimental phase, i really love them all.
146. "Christmas and Commerce" "I Enjoy Being a Girl, Sort of" "Testosterone" "Cringe" "My Pen Pal"
147. dishwasher pete series, anything by david sedaris and sarah vowell, john goldstein
148. A Better Mousetrap Last Words DIY With Great Power Home Movies
149. 20 stories in 60 minutes superpowers Julia Sweeney my experimental phase

150. the cloned cow... the lady who does whatever(usually lying) she can to get what she wants and her daughter knows about it to... the man who tried to build a time machine... i know there are more but my mind is drawing a blank right now
151. The one about Summer Camp Spies Like Us I also enjoy some of the more recent ones that are somewhat political
152. Sarah Vowell and the mix tapes. Paw Paw For Jesus. Sedaris and Vowell are always great.
153. 60 Stories in 30 Minutes, and any one with David Sedaris in it. Also the Mr. Rogers one.
154. Fiasco
155. The house on loon lake; Not what I signed up for; and of course any one that has Sarah Vowell or David Sedaris
156. cringe jobs that take over your life who's canadian? superpowers
157. Prom, Camp, Act V, 24 hours at the golden apple, the house by loon lake, pray, unconditional love, say anything... I'm pretty sure I've listened to every episode. I don't really get into the political stuff, though.
158. What's in a number, Allure of Crime
159. #3 Poultry Slam; #61 Fiasco!; #104 Music Lessons; #280 Heretics
160. the cruelty of children, superpowers, heretics, godless america, babysitting, the super, and the call was coming from the basement
161. Anything that does NOT involve a David Sedaris fairy tale of some sort. I like his stories about his life, but when he writes something involving animals, I tune out pretty quickly. I also enjoyed the post-Katrina episodes, some of the religious episodes.
162. the one about the voicemail system at columbia and the one about rocket man and the chicago classified section come to mind
- My Experimental Phase - Mind Games - Go Ask Your Father - The House by Loon Lake - Two Steps Back - 24 Hours at The Golden Apple - Father's Day (with Ira's Dad co-hosting) - The one about the Chicago mayor in the 1980's (really sorry I can't find the title)
163. The superhero one...
164. Really anything with David Sedaris and Sarah Vowell. Gay/Lesbian issues. Politics. "Hoaxing Yourself" (3/17/00) "Three Kinds of Deception (12/15/00)" "Cringe" (4/13/01) I remember "House on Loon Lake" (11/16/01) was the first TAL I ever heard. I was hooked. I enjoy listening to the archived episodes online.
165. superheroes anything with David Sedaris or Sarah Vowell
166. hmm, too many to count. the holiday spectaculars are always great. "Reruns"; the one from a couple years ago with Catherine Keener reading a story (can't remember the name); "House of Ill Repute"; the one with the story about the GHW Bush protester who embarrassed himself; so many favorites I can't think straight.
167. The House on Loon Lake, The Way We Talked Back Then, In The Shadow of The City
168. the episode with the preacher that decided to not believe in hell
169. "Two Steps Back", "After the Flood", "This is Not My Beautiful House", "Prom", "Summer Camp"

170. Superpowers, 20 Acts in 60 Minutes, Act V, Shoulda Been Dead, Holiday Spectacular '05
171. Can't remember the titles, but the one about sperpowers (flight vs. invisibility) and the one during which David Sedaris reads "Jesus Shaves."
172. House on Loon Lake 24 Hours at the Golden Apple Babysitting Conventions The Friendly Man Family Legend
173. The Super, Superheros, Shouting Across the Divide
174. Superpowers for sure. Testosterone. A few others I can't quite remember the name of.
175. I listened to the ones my friend downloaded for a long time, so I don't know the names. Some of the newer ones I like: The Super, Shouting Across the Divide
176. Aw, man. I love all the David Sedaris stuff and maybe Shadow of the City and 20 Acts in 60 mins.
177. The episode about the black ship during the war that crashed off Greenland I believe. The episode about the guy that just moved to NYC and sees his apartment on some reality show.
178. Cat and Mouse A Little Bit of Knowledge Crime Trying to Save the World
179. the one with the little mermaid story - never gets old cringe is pretty good too
180. the house on loon lake
181. Oh my, I love so many! I appreciate those with a political slant (the Habeaus Corpus episode), but I also loved those like The Cat Came Back. I'm also bad at superlatives - I can't remember my favorite of anything.
182. I loved the super hero one. "Superpowers"
183. Act V The House on Loon Lake Pimp Anthropology whatever the episode is about authenticity v.fakeness, with the segment by Scott Carrier about "southerners" on film

Question 6: Why do you enjoy TAL?

1. Quirky. I get absorbed into the stories - and even if I want to turn them off - I can't
2. i like listening to stories. i like that the stories are narative but also about real things. i like the production a lot (although i think that they should get more music instead of recycling the same stuff.) i like that they are these really individual stories that are totally out of the ordinary but that you call also feel conected to. a lot of the guys on TAL have kind of femine voices like me and so that feels nice. it is a great thing to talk with other people about.
3. it presents the often overlooked sides of life in a manner that makes one reflect on events and ideals that we have in our own lives.
4. It's smart and funny and sad, all at the same time.
5. Difficult to explain... Relaxing and familiar. I have fallen in love with the different characters that weave in and out, giving peeks into something special each time. Ira, Sarah, David, Jonathan, Scott are wonderful.
6. It's real. It's funny. It's reflective. And the stories are very diverse.
7. it feels so intimate to listen to other people's lives diversity of subjects
8. It's well done, interesting, entertaining, and it's nice to hear words without a screen.
9. great human interest stories...

10. It is uniquely artistic, not only for radio but for human discourse of all kinds.
11. I just feel more at home in the world when I listen to this show. I love being able to identify with complete, random strangers. The show has an ambiance that is impossible to define, but it makes me feel better about life!
12. It's funny, fascinating, thought-provoking, informative and entertaining. I find myself referencing it in conversation more than any other program. "I heard an episode of TAL that..."
13. Variety of subject matter and tone, excellent writing and editing, excellent performers.
 1. I love Ira's voice.
 2. It's so effectively edited.
 3. The stories are incredibly interesting.
 4. The topics are issues I'm interested in.
 5. I love hearing people's personal stories.
 6. The concept of an everyday theme addressed in such different ways on this show is a great twist.
14. It's honest. It can move you from laughter to tears in a single show. I just love everything about it. Ira, the music choices, the short stories, the real life stories they find. It's always interesting, even when the subject of the show is not one that I am normally drawn to. It makes me think, makes me see the world differently. And usually, it gives me hope.
15. Opens a window on other perspectives that I would never otherwise have.
16. I like to learn stories.
17. It makes me feel connected to the world on a very human level. It gives me insight into the lives and experiences of people in a unique and personal way, and makes me feel empathy for people with whom I would normally not. Also, I love a good story.
18. I think it's that I simply enjoy a good, true, story. I like that someone who I can't see, have only known for a couple minutes, can make me cry or laugh, or just pause.
19. I find TAL to be one of the most touching, compelling and funny shows on the radio. I also get exposed to many new artists and writers that I like to follow up on, some have become my favorites.
20. It's utterly pleasureable... it feels like you're doing something good, staying in tune with the world, in the tiniest way possible and yet without being frivolous about it. It's unlike anything else out there.
21. No matter the theme, it grabs my attention. It is a masterful mix of humor, always poignant, it often challenges listeners to step out of their comfort zone. It's introduced me to new ideas, writers and interests. Ira Glass is a genius.
22. Because of the unique story-telling style--the pace is slow enough for the stories to really sink in and make you think, but not too slow (for example, Garrison Keillor makes me snore big-time) It's also unique for a story-telling radio show to have a young target audience. It's "hip" and "cool".
23. Originally, I was caught by the unique way of storytelling that blended voice and music. As I continued to listen, I enjoyed the stories both funny and poignant. Plus, I think Ira Glass is just really cool.
24. I like the humorous stories. I like to laugh.
25. It is entertaining, informative and extremely well put together. I feel like I learn from it. The show exposes me to things I might not otherwise know about.
26. It always gives me new ideas to think about. I love Ira Glass. It helps me lose track of time/be more productive at making art.

27. It's a great way to start my Sunday morning as I'm making breakfast. I like the shift in tones - I can spend part of my morning laughing and part of thinking. It's a good way for my brain to get going.
28. The stories are engaging and so well presented I don't even feel like they've been edited. The producers seem like friends of mine who have stopped by to tell me some great stories.
29. Varied, unique, interesting broadcasts.
30. It's an escape from everyday life.
31. It's phenomenal story telling, I enjoy looking at the world and American culture through the perspective of Ira Glass and the contributor's editing. It genuinely helps me to understand different places, people, and perspectives. As a secular humanist, it helps re-affirm my faith in the universality of the human experience.
32. It's informative, entertaining, consistently engaging and well written. I'm also a radio producer and it is a fine example of quality audio production.
33. I find TAL to be very comforting in a way. It connects me to people that I've never met, but I feel like now know in some special way. I look forward to long drives where I can listen to Ira Glass introduce me to people and their stories. TAL helps me stop and celebrate the small things, that I sometimes take for granted, with it's stories.
34. Because it makes the everyday magical.
35. straightforward narrative structure variety of topics
36. Interesting stories well told.
37. It's just a really great part of living in this country. I think it gets to issues that are really present, and important, and approaches them in really creative ways.
38. I listen to a lot of music when I do work that involves words, I like to listen to people telling me stories when I'm cleaning/making dinner/doing design work/doing craft projects. A huge swath of my friends listen to it, so it's always great to have conversations about ones we've listened to in common.
39. Stories are who we are. I think increasingly there are people in the world without stories, and this is sad. TAL is one way of sharing those stories.
40. it's funny and creates all sorts of strong emotions, and often does both at the same time
41. Stories and ideas I've never thought to explore.
42. Really good storytelling. I got hooked by the way TAL handles religion in America -- OK, actually, I got hooked when my friend said, "you have to hear this" and played the Peter Pan story from Fiasco, but THEN I started looking at other episodes -- but enjoy the show almost every week. I find the show to be inspiring and interesting. Inspiring in that it makes me feel closer to the rest of America for a moment -- like, these stories are incredible and these people may be nothing like me, but I can see why they are human. I listen to it because I'd rather read Vonnegut than the Da Vinci Code. I want to hear about stumbling and failure and extacy and change with characters who can feel and exist on their own rather than grand tales of mystery and betrayal with cookie cutter stereotypes, driven by invoking grand ideas and controversial subjects. I want other "ways in" to those things that make me think about American identity.
43. Because it catches an element of humanity in every ordinary person.
44. The stories are fresh and interesting and make me think.

45. It can be touching, informative, hilarious... it's the best of all things.
46. It would take too much time. Check this entry on my blog for a more detailed reason than I could possibly give here: <http://melvillean.livejournal.com/21815.html>
47. it's always moving- whether it makes me laugh or cry or sigh, it always evokes some sort of emotion
48. makes me cry...
49. I love the stories, they are touching and they are meaningful, I love the humor and the relevance of it all. I can get lost in an episode for an hour and I love that. I love Ira's voice, so soothing and entertaining. This show has been a wonderful asset to my life.
50. Interesting topics, good pacing and structure
51. it's beautifully written and crafted. it totally captures the human experience. it inspires, touches, and educates me every week.
52. Despite its pretensions, there's a lot of true moments in it.
53. I enjoy the narrative style, the choice of stories that the producers make, and the variety of material used.
54. That's a really tough question. I think because of learning about life experiences that I would have no way of knowing about, and the humor :D
55. I like the exposure of humanity in non-fiction form.
56. At the outset it was because I might have the chance to hear David Sedairs...now, because the stories can be fascinating, hilarious, sad, poignant, usually a mix of all these characteristics in one episode.
57. It's not too high-art and not too low-art. They're unusual stories, very well told. It's not difficult like my grad school reading, and not brainless like a lot of TV. I feel they convey things about what people are doing, and human nature, that are obscure and not often addressed. So they're sort of sociological, telling a slice of life that you can't get from the impersonality of the news - and better than the personal stories in blogs because they have the greater perspective provided by smart outside observers.
58. This American Life is fascinating, intelligent and quirky. It's my favorite thing. Even as its popularity grows, TAL has a very grassroots feel. It seems like something that wouldn't be widely available by conventional means, yet it is. What could be more interesting than peoples' stories and eccentricities? It's also my dream job. I also want to marry Ira Glass.
59. TAL is brain food. Entertaining, thought-provoking, funny. Reminds me of how everyone has at least one fucked-up life experience. TAL is simple and not over produced. I like the musical interludes in the stories that gives the listener time to absorb.
60. it is an intimate experience
61. I really enjoy how the shows tie together different stories around similar themes - and beyond that, the way it ties us all together, regardless of how different we are as individuals. In that sense, it's unifying (not to mention entertaining).
62. it's real, fresh, engaging...it's rad!
63. The show covers interesting topics and reveals the importance of people in our lives.
64. It's brilliant. Just the right combination of humor, political insight and interesting stories

65. How can I answer that? It's like asking why I like chocolate milk or kittens! I guess that's my answer - TAL is the radio equivalent of chocolate milk and kittens. Everyone should like it!
66. For interesting stories, not usually for the serious stuff. For the non-stuffy way people tell them. For ironic endings. For real life. It's always so interesting to hear how real people tell and react to stories, and you really get a sense that people truly are the same everywhere you go (at least in America) and that the person you're listening to could be your friend.
67. I love that the show explores sometimes random, offbeat aspects of our lives, and, furthermore, how the producers string together the chapters into a theme. Also, the show where they contacted people formerly imprisoned in the "War on Terror" highlighted aspects of our current policy that are hard to explore in depth in other media due to limitations of time or style.
68. it captures the simple joy and pain of everyday life.
69. Because it makes me feel like my disasters have a funny purpose. Also, it is really comforting and resolves any feelings of loneliness I have in law school.
70. I love stories, whether they be in the form of books, movies or simply listening to someone speak. I love radio because I can be entertained and informed while doing other tasks. TAL has often been the perfect companion while working at home or driving in my car.
71. Great stories, great host, and great writers.
72. oh, where to begin. It always brings a fresh sense of humor, or perspective. Always very smart and/or funny. Such a talented pool of people...what about that episode where they all test their testosterone levels...that was another great one...sigh...
73. Experiencing and relating to the stories.
74. the honesty. ira glass
75. Because it informs, entertains, and surprises. It connects the listener with a human experience that is simultaneously foreign and immediately identifiable; Finally, it accomplishes what I believe all art should- it causes its audience to see some facet of the world in a new way and in doing so challenges them to reconsider certain assumptions of life that had been taken for granted.
76. Humor, levity
77. I love the storytelling, the way it can make you laugh and cry in the same hour, and of course I have a HUGE crush on Ira!
78. I always liked listening to radio programs.
79. It's entertaining with a gentle sense of humor, and an engagement with the subject/material that's affectionate without much of the modern ironic stance. Unhesistantly sentimental, when it wants to be. And for me, the mostly documentary, nonfiction aspect is a big part. Interesting doesn't have to be sensationalistic or fiction. Nonfiction makes it more interesting.
80. I never have any idea what I'm going to hear, but I'm always interested. The writing and editing are amazing. I can't believe that show can be put together weekly. I appreciate the diversity I find in the contributors and their perspectives. And, of course, I can't imagine any other host than Ira Glass. As long as you have him you have me.

81. It has a certain literary appeal to it, like a book on the radio.
82. They prove, time and again, that the devil is in the details. They show slices of life that certainly would otherwise go unseen. And they are master storytellers. It's irresistible.
83. it makes everyday life seem so much more interesting. it makes me realize that nobody's life is typical or boring. and the fiction is some of the best writing today, in my opinion.
84. I am going to sound like I'm marketing the show when I say this, but TAL is, to me, the most original blend of humor, intellect and reflection, and political critique that I have ever heard. It's so so smart, and sometimes heartbreaking. As a sometime essayist it makes me want to be a better writer, and as an aspiring academic it makes me want to speak to audiences other than fellow academics. It has been a part of my weekend ritual in one way or another since 1999, and my weekend now feels incomplete without Ira Glass's voice.
85. Interesting stories about everyday people, in real situations. What's not to like? It's like the radio version of "reality TV", only not disgusting. It shows that you don't have to make things cheap or sensational to be interesting.
86. I love the stories, the voices, the humor. It's intimate. It literally makes me laugh and cry.
87. It captures you, draws you in and holds you engulfed in it's weaving stories.
88. I've had more "driveway moments" with TAL than with any other program. Its subtleties, its depth and its flawless production makes it one of my all time favorite forms of entertainment. (Our next born son will be named Ira. Honestly.)
89. The stories are really good. I also like their background music choices, but they need to mix it up a bit more. You can only use Tortoise for so many things before it's trite. The shows make you feel a good mix/range of emotions. The shows are also about stuff that you wouldn't normally hear about. Plus, Ira Glass is so cute in the way he questions. He's funny and not condescending.
90. The stories are always so touching and true and WELL-WRITTEN. They make me reconnect with humanity at the end of a long work week. I actually think they make my life better, make me a better person; those stories are in my head a lot.
91. For aesthetic, nostalgic reasons: there is nothing like that on radio any more, and it is important to share poignant stories as it brings us closer together
92. hard to say. it feels real. it is funny, sad, poignant, pointless. most of the time it is the most riviting source of entertainment i consume (tv, books, magazines, film)and sometimes it is the most boring. i listen to podcast reruns when i can't sleep and it does the trick everytime. ira glass' voice makes me feel relaxed and calm. i don't know.
93. It talks about our culture in a very unique way. The format of the show is interesting and the music they play is good.
94. It's unusual, it's interesting, it's thought provoking, it's gently humorous.
95. Entertaining, insightful, interesting
96. I work in oral history and the show very often captures the true golden nuggets of storytelling which are what I love about oral history in the first place. The show is touching without being too sentimental (there are some rare exceptions but generally it stays off corny very succesfully while addressing very serious and emotional matters). I always learn something from it, over the years it has helped me reach moments of

transcendence which I think religious people find in church. I know this sounds over the top but it really helps me reflect on what it means to be human and alive!

97. It's honest and well written.
98. Ira Glass has the most amazing voice - as well as David Sedaris.
99. I am a struggling single mom living in a small town in Italy. My own son doesn't speak much english, and listening to TAL seems to reconnect me with a whole world of ideas that I don't have very much contact with in my daily life. I like the idea of giving a narrative structure to the sway of existence, and the investigation of marginal phenomena (which are never marginal, if you examine them closely enough). It reminds me of conversations with my brother, the ones that we never are able to have over the phone or with email.
100. I'm addicted to public radio, but i liked our chicago station more before they changed their scheduling line up. (and yes, i'm a member.) that said, i love the fact that ira doesn't have the "npr broadcaster" voice -he's spoken about this on air during the 10th anniversary show- he's very REAL, and so are the stories. i've had some of my "driveway moments" while waiting to hear the end of a TAL.
101. I love that the show is a cornucopia of knowledge about so many different aspects of life, and different types of people. I find that even with such diversity, the staff manages to create stories that I relate to; every time. I feel that I learn so much from the show, all while being entertained. TAL is by far my favotite, and most visited, form of entertainment.
102. Ira Glass is clever, and his interviews are always amusing. The guests/interviewees are eloquent and from various classes, ethnicities, and genders. Also, David Sedaris.
103. The varied range of emotions and touching experiences of human existence. It's wonderful and makes you feel connected and not so isolated in an often lonely cold world.
104. I love storytelling, and they dig up some of the most fabulous stories anywhere.
105. Great stories, Funny, Intelligent, And David Sedaris amuses me so :)
106. The stories are well produced, touching, entertaining, and unusual. They aren't stories I would hear anywhere else. I could listen to them over and over again.
107. Real people, real stories, perspective you don't really get anywhere else.
108. its interesting
109. I have a crush on Ira Glass jk.
110. Good stories (providing that they don't get too depressing), not loud as minstream outlets and takes thier time with each story.
111. I feel a very strong connection with almost all of the people interviewed in one way or another. Just to give two examples, I related so well to Julie Snyder's story about her experience with MCI because someone took out cable in my name and I knew how it felt to be trapped on a neverending phone conversation. I also think that the Babysitting episode is so relatable for anyone who is human.
112. To be honest, I don't know. I just do. I was hooked from the first episode I heard. I like the format. I like that it's easily relatable. I enjoy the variety of the stories--that they can be humorous and moving all in one episode.

113. It is so completely entertaining. Many of the stories have an emotional quality to them that engages your soul, and others are so funny that you laugh out loud like a drunk old man. I don't think it's possible to get as much quality entertainment as you get with TAL through any other medium; if they produced a new show every hour, the Lord knows I'd never get my homework done. I also value the picture it paints of different aspects of society you might not encounter everyday. I enjoy the stories that I know I would not be able to hear anywhere else.
114. I get way more out of it than television, and I just find it very engaging.
115. I can't explain it. It's like an addiction, I think. I have a hard time going to sleep without it playing. I listen to it every single night. It's the narrative style, I guess. I like how conversational Ira Glass is. The whole thing is sort of like a 'zine -- there's a loose theme and then incredibly weird and creative stories that follow the theme. It's like, you know how every once in awhile someone tells you like a freaking awesome story? Every episode of This American Life is like that.
116. YES!
117. it's real. it's romantic. one episode can have me laughing out loud, then sobbing my eyes out. I just feel like a better person listening to it.
118. There is nothing like it on the radio. It represents what our media can and should be.
119. it's sense of humor
120. TAL plays heartwarming and funny segments while the other media outlets seem to focus only on death and destruction. Its funny. If it weren't for TAL I never would have discovered David Sedaris and Sarah Vowell. Makes me feel smart when I mention something I've heard on NPR.
121. awesome, wonderful stories that you get to hear no where else!!! also, i love that, most of the time, they let the people in the stories tell the stories themselves instead of relying solely on the reporters to retell them to us.
122. Ira Ira Ira
123. I like looking at old things in a new way. It is comfort food for my ears... and mind.
124. The art of storytelling is slowly becoming a lost medium in our culture today and TAL is helping to sustain this tradition in a clever, enlightening and often humorous way.
125. Honest, open, daring, different than anything else on the radio...
126. Ira Glass, his ability to tell the story and interjections of his thought. The people and their stories draw you in, you can't help but love the format and the stories
127. I enjoy the exploratory aspect of the show - they investigate topics that I never would have thought I'd be interested in. Also, it's usually funny as all get-out.
128. I enjoy hearing fascinating stories from regular (although often very irregular!) people. The idea that this radio seeks out these stories, not from celebrities, or the big news stories of the time, but from average people who happen to have a great story to tell, is really refreshing. It's a nice break from everything else the media and entertainment business shove at you. It's storytelling at its best and most honest. I also like the way they weave different stories together under some similar theme.
129. After listening to an episode I don't feel more stupid than before I listened to it...and it's extremely entertaining...like reality TV.
130. Because it's great! I love the humor and emotions of the stories.

131. I love it! It is thought provoking and highly interesting. I wish I could write like that. Their stories are riveting. I only wish i discovered it sooner so that i could have made a plane to be apart of it all. I really enjoy the honesty of the show and the creativity that is put into it.
132. the insights into parts of peoples lives that normally you get no real access to - somehow themes that initially you'd imagine to be quite dry & bland are expanded upon beautifully; and as the stories are about real occurences they're always quite powerful & moving.
133. Connection. To laugh. I feel like it has a sensibility that is just a step off-kilter, kind of like me. I love it.
134. Oh I wrote about this in my application for journalism school...Obviously the story-telling is superb. But besides that I like TAL because it makes me care about things. I get emotionally involved. My application essay was a lot more articulate than that, but I don't remember what I said exactly...
135. I kind of expounded on this at the end of my last answer....oops. I seriously get this joyful glee when I sit down and listen to it - even if the particular story angers me or frustrates me, I still feel a satisfaction in having heard it. It's given me windows into worlds I didn't even know about and confirmed storys and feelings I thought I only thought or knew about. I love it because it's a show that draws people in - makes them think about things, brings to light things we have been laughing about for years. I got my parents and family hooked and its the greatest thing having a cup of coffee with my folks on a saturday now and again, listening to this american life and learning and laughing and understanding together.
136. This program has made me realize I really enjoy listening to stories! On this program I enjoy the atmosphere and the feeling it gives me through how the stories are told and the music. I like that it is broadcast from my favourite city how Ira Glass talks.
137. The stories are intruiging, off-the-beaten path and engaging. I laugh, I cry, I am inspired.
138. I like the characters and the way that they relate to the story. I also find it interesting when the different stories tie themselves together through the use of the acts. I work in television news so I'm always looking for interesting ways to tell stories.
139. It provides stories I can't find else where (TV, newspaper)
140. It is calming
141. intelligent and funny presentation of stories diversity of topics and people my wife enjoys the same style/interests; we can discuss the issues
142. the stories transport you in a way television can't. the editing/sound is done in such a brilliant way that it feels like you're listening to people in the same room with you. stories often involve people we wouldn't normally come in contact with/identify with and make connections in ways that remind us maybe that it's our capability for humanity that binds us together...
143. There is no other program, on radio or television, that captures my imagination and encompasses life's full spectrum of emotions like tal. I can't put it into words. It's smart, funny, and allows the listener to feel connected with people all over the world.

144. Great storytelling, great music. The images that the writers describe are so vivid...its better than watching TV. The variety of stories.
145. like most people, i enjoy listening to good stories. often times when i'm driving, i pullover or if i've arrived at my destination i stay a bit longer. it's great to do house work to also.
146. It is so so very good. Excellent stories, fantastic writing, pretty regularly moving and most definitely usually good for a laugh.
147. Listening to TAL makes me feel a little more connected to man-kind in an ever isolated world.
148. mroe interesting than most things out there
149. Because it is like watching TV and reading a book all at once, only better. I get sucked in by the story line and then I have to finish listening to the episode. I listen to a lot of MPR/NPR during the day at work, but when I listen to TAL I have to be somewhere where I can pay attention. And I am in love with Ira Glass (or with his voice). Sarah Vowell is pretty amazing too.
150. It's funny, it's entertaining. It's thought provoking. One of my favorite things on the radio.
151. It is very interesting and entertaining.
152. I've always loved listening to stories, since I was a little kid. These stories are told so well and I feel refreshed after listening because not only can I relate to a lot of them, I learn as well. Plus, Ira is great and I love the contributors, specifically David Rakoff, Sarah Vowell, David Sedaris, and Jonathan Goldstein.
153. It goes through all range of emotions. It is entertaining while also being informative. I am a daily NPR listener, so I enjoy most of the programs - but TAL stands out. I do not know if it is the stories, music or Ira - but it all just seems to mesh well.
154. It's reflective, intelligent, and funny. I feel the format and subject matter continue to be fresh and interesting. Giant Ira Glass crush.
155. I love people. I'm interested in how people can be so different from each other, yet still exist together. People are the greatest.
156. The stories always seem very real. They also capture a persons interest.
157. I adore Ira Glass. I believe every word that man utters.
158. great storytelling! it makes me laugh, it's educational, it has a liberal slant...
159. The stories take me our of my own life and help me remember all the other people out there. They can be heart-breaking, joyful, entertaining, all in one episode.
160. Interesting stories and perspective, great insights into human nature, i appreciate the introspection, it is smart, i like the music between the pieces, ira is awesome, as is david sedaris and amy
161. The real life stories and observations and the interesting, sometimes thought provoking and slightly humourous way they are presented.
162. the wit!
163. I love hearing different perspectives of stories that I either wouldn't normally hear about or get a different angle on them. They're very insightful and you get lost in that hour.

164. It gives me new insight into how other Americans live their lives. Many times, despite what I think, I'm very much like many other Americans.
165. Aside from excellent production and very varied content, it makes me feel that there really is a rich American culture. It allows me to connect, however briefly, however faintly with people I'll never meet; people I identify with and people I might never understand. Sometimes when I listen to This American Life, I'm almost brought to tears by the power of the stories, sometimes I laugh uncontrollably, sometimes I absorb startling information or see true human nature. I've loved it since I was young and my friends and I were driving around looking for mischief, we changed radio stations and began listening to someone telling a story about Christmas dinner, the five rowdy boys were instantly silent and remained that way until it finished. It has the power to shut up teenage boys, that best explains it's majesty and power.
166. Wonderful storytelling; the writing is so funny and witty and moving and poignant; it introduces us to different types of people and different types of experiences; it's just beautiful: I'd rather listen to an hour of TAL than watch anything on TV.
167. extremely entertaining and witty. informational at times.
168. Usually funny or poignant, but rarely sentimental. Thoughtful, quality production. I have ones that I care for and ones that I do not so much, but I never heard a boring episode.
169. It deftly moves between tragedy and comedy, using its original voice and style to create something totally and utterly real and human. Each show presents at least one glimpse into the lives of another person, and either i find something startling alien and new that changes my perception or else imparts some wisdom on the world and my experiences in it, or else I find something shockingly familiar that I didn't know others experienced or could phrase better than I ever could.
170. It is well-produced and I feel as if I am connecting with both the people whose stories are told and other listeners.
171. Great storytelling, and It helps me fall asleep at night.
172. I love stories about ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. I think it contributes to keeping the oral tradition alive.
173. Always interesting stories, even if I don't think it will be before I listen
174. It is like a window into peoples live that I would never meet. I never know if I am going to laugh or cry but I always enjoy it. Radio seems to allow an intimacy that visuals wouldn't.
175. It makes me laugh and think. It sometimes feels like listening to a story that is a form of six degrees of seperation. I love the production quality and for some reason everybody that speaks sounds like they could handle their local nightly news. You get to hear stories from people that you are never going to meet but that could be your best friends, not because they are similar to your actual friends but because they seem so interesting.
176. The experience of real life, as told by comtemporaries. Hearing stories told is an amazing experience, different than reading, different than film, altogether its own and still deeply impactful.
177. never disappoints
178. It's extreamly interesting, and quirky. I love it

179. It's totally my sense of humor. Sometimes it's wry, sometimes it's goofy (and Ira Glass giggles) - it's the best stories about real people. If it were a place, it'd be a hip coffee shop, where there's no pretense. If it were a place, it'd be the anti-wal-mart.
180. the humor/pathos and sadness of some of the stories. And to peak into others lives that aren't mine.
181. Always interesting, but something different each time. Sometimes it's hilarious, sometimes educational, sometimes moving... it's one-stop shopping for a lot of vaguely defined needs. And Ira really starts to feel like a friend after a while.

Question 7: How would you describe your level of attention when listening to TAL?

	Response Percent	Response Count
I am a very attentive listener	80.7%	159
I am a somewhat attentive listener	63.1%	36
I am not an attentive listener	25.3%	0
Other (please specify)	7.1%	2
Answered Question		197

1. Depends on the topic and where I am listening to it.
2. I listen to it when I'm falling asleep usually, so usually my attentiveness degrades over time.

Question 8: What is your gender?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Male	34.2%	67
Female	65.8%	129
Answered Question		196

Question 9: What is your age?

	Response Percent	Response Count
18-21	9.7%	19
22-25	25.6%	50
26-30	37.4%	73
31-40	23.6%	46
41-50	3.1%	6
51-60	0.5%	1
61 or over	0.0%	0
Answered Question		195

Question 10: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than high school	1.0%	2
High school/GED	3.6%	7
Some college	23.6%	46
Two-year college (Associates)	6.2%	12
Four-year college (BA, BS)	47.7%	93
Master's degree	13.3%	26
Doctoral degree	2.1%	4
Professional degree (MD, JD)	2.6%	5
Other	0.0%	0
Answered Question		195

Question 11: What is your occupation?

1. Banker
2. child care
3. Entertainment Lighting and Media Designer
4. editor
5. Univeristy Laboratory Research Assistant
6. Scientist
7. Teacher
8. writer
9. Student
10. Library Associate/ grad student
11. Electrical engineer
12. I'm a draftsman for a semiconductor company.
13. Clinical Psychologist
14. Library Clerk (day job)/ Actress (night job)
15. Billing Representative
16. I am a college student.
17. Secretary
18. I make handbags from the comfort of my dining room/computer room/sewing headquarters
19. I am a student at Reed College and a part-time nanny
20. Writer
21. Recreation Supervisor, municipal government
22. Student, self-employed
23. PhD student
24. I work for an insurance company processing new business applications for proptery and auto policies.

25. Government employee
26. educator
27. Artist/Museum Educator
28. Teacher
29. Technical Writer
30. Administrative Assistant - publishing
31. photofinisher
32. Software Engineer
33. graduate student, computer system administrator, radio producer/dj
34. textile designer
35. Student
36. student
37. IT Manager
38. Web designer
39. admin assistant
40. Teaching Assistant, Graphic Designer.
41. Registered nurse
42. Student
43. Film production
44. Full-time student
45. Student Freelance Reporter
46. Grad student
47. graphic designer
48. Manager of the Linguistics Department of a software company
49. Teacher (elementary)
50. full time student, part time email marketer
51. product designer
52. Paralegal (and also law student)
53. interior design.
54. Nurse Aide
55. Commercial artist/photo retoucher/photographer
56. Librarian
57. High School English Teacher
58. Full-time student
59. Library worker, grad student
60. nanny/student
61. Arts marketing
62. Managing editor of medical publications, Community Outreach Coordinator for a state medical society
63. Massage Therapist
64. public health and social science research
65. Account Director for an advertising research firm.
66. Cartographer
67. Mail Carrier

68. Non-profit
69. Graphic Designer
70. Windows Sys Admin
71. Good question-- currently looking for one.
72. actor/comedian
73. Student
74. Teacher
75. Computer sales/tech
76. Currently in school.
77. parks programming
78. art student
79. I'm an actor and a tutor.
80. Marketer/ Publisher
81. Student
82. designer
83. I own a Vintage Shop called Prototype Vintage Design we sell Mid-Century Home Decor
84. customer support for an Internet company.
85. Copyeditor/Production Editor at a book publisher.
86. Magazine web director.
87. Police Officer
88. grad student
89. Grant Writer
90. student, caregiver
91. I'm currently a PhD student in cultural anthropology, focusing on health, illness, and wellness. I have formerly worked in public health and in theatre.
92. Software Developer
93. Lawyer
94. Vet Tech
95. Part time Event Planner and full time Homemaker.
96. Media Studies Grad Student (and p/t admin assistant)
97. I'm a nurse's assistant and a nursing student
98. unemployed at the moment
99. project coordinator for a research project.
100. Student
101. Registered nurse
102. Editorial Assistant for a regional women's magazine
103. Assistant Professor
104. Production Asst./Underachiever
105. Relay Operator
106. teacher/translator/tourguide
107. wine sales. wanting to go back to school though, biology major. hope this is really your thesis and not a showtime "target audience" ploy. but, even if it is, i love the show and lend it my suport.
108. Waitress (still in school: Accounting/Law)

109. Editor
110. Artist
111. Teacher, Writer
112. Editor
113. Actress
114. artist
115. Actor
116. Author
117. Student and PT Secretary
118. night manager of the bakery/deli department at a local grocery store
119. I just got out of the Army and am now going to school full time. I am now in the Army Reserves, but that doesn't really count. I have been a military paralegal for the last 8+ years.
120. Medical transcription and retail
121. Student - CS Major.
122. Retail
123. musician
124. RN
125. musician
126. Sales clerk
127. Witness in small claims court for a medical center
128. film production
129. Computer data person
130. Waitress and soon to-be Grad Student.
131. Bartender
132. sales manager for not for profit museum stores
133. massage therapist/ future accountant
134. Theatre Director and Dramaturg
135. Website Production Manager
136. Marketing professional
137. Theatre Educator but currently volunteering in Manila Philippines for 9 months.
138. well im a student, halfway through a philosophy degree at the university of leeds, england.
139. Software
140. Graduate student - Journalism
141. Graphic Designer/Photographer
142. STUDENT
143. Business Development
144. Videographer for a local news station
145. student
146. Legal videographer and some other nonsense
147. Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist
148. graphic designing computer monkey
149. kitchen manager, cook.

150. Student
151. i'm a photoshop wiz and work in the print biz
152. Student, law.
153. Sales
154. i am the cook for a child care center
155. Development Associate for a non-profit
156. recording engineer/music producer
157. None.
158. I work in a historic theater as a member of house staff...nothing serious, but potentially though not necessarily career oriented.
159. A caseworker for a non-profit who helps homeless individuals and families. And no, I do not like TAL b/c I am 'touchy/feely'
160. Bar Manager
161. Student / Office Temp / Moderator for Asperger's Syndrome social skills group / member of an improv comedy group
162. Student
163. Unemployed (freelance broadcast assistant/radio producer)
164. Private Voice Teacher
165. public relations manager for a fortune 500 company
166. soon-to-be-librarian, currently a contract specialist
167. toymaker
168. writer/non-profit
169. Film production graduate student
170. Physician
171. Unemployed, aspiring writer
172. currently unemployed, but working in the television biz
173. Vet tech
174. Graduate Student
175. Writer/Grantmaker
176. Inventory for a retail store.
177. Information & Referral (social services)
178. Student/video editor
179. Entertainment Industry
180. Supply Chain Analyst
181. Data Quality Assurance for Cancer Study (researcher)
182. Consultant for NFP and TV Marketing Manager.
183. Apprentice Editor
184. librarian
185. student/illustrator
186. Payroll & Benefits Specialist (aka HR Generalist)
187. projects assistant/paralegal
188. lawyer

APPENDIX C

Survey 2 Letter

Hi there,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the TAL follow-up survey. I'm greatly indebted to you for making my thesis research work incredibly interesting and rewarding!

Similar to the first TAL questionnaire, this one is quite short and should take no more than a few minutes. You'll find the link below:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=462823554402>

Again, thank you for your help, and please feel to contact me with any questions.

Cheers,
Kristine Johnson
k.c.johnson@tcu.edu

APPENDIX D

Survey 2 Results

Question 1: Which of the following best describes the level of emotion you experience when listening to TAL:

	Response Percent	Response Count
a. I rarely experience emotional responses to the stories aired on TAL	0.0%	0
b. I tend to experience an array of emotions, sometimes even more than one in a single hour-long episode.	84.9%	62
c. I have experienced emotional responses, yet they are not typically powerful or intense.	11.0%	8
Other (please specify)	4.1%	3
Answered Question		73

1. mix between b and c
2. I have had to stop listening while at work because I would sometimes start crying.
3. There have been episodes that keep me thinking for hours or days after I have heard them. Others are fun or interesting, but do not give me strong emotions or feelings.

Question 2: Please select one answer from each of the following statements which best describes how you experience TAL:

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
The stories thought are provoking and I think about them even after the program has ended.	58.3% (42)	37.5% (27)	2.8% (2)	1.4% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.47	72
Much like reading a good book, I tend to get totally absorbed when I listen to TAL.	56.3% (40)	35.2% (25)	8.5% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.52	71
Listening to TAL is intimate experience that enables me feel a connection with TAL hosts and storytellers.	43.7% (31)	46.5% (33)	7.0% (5)	2.8% (2)	0.0% (0)	1.69	71
I believe listening to TAL requires mental participation.	40.0% (28)	55.7% (39)	4.3% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.64	70
Listening to TAL is like hearing a friend relay a funny or interesting story.	50.7% (36)	39.4% (28)	8.5% (6)	0.0% (0)	1.4% (1)	1.62	71
Answered Question							72

Question 3: I tend to listen to TAL more often now that I can podcast the program.

	Response Percent	Response Count
True	84.5%	60
False	15.5%	11
Answered Question		71

Question 4: Choose the single best answer that describes the way you listen to TAL:

	Response Percent	Response Count
a. I'm frequently thinking about or doing something else; I never give it my full attention in the way I would a TV show.	0.0%	0
b. I can visualize the people being talked about or interviewed, or the places described on TAL.	78.9%	56
c. TAL is more engaging than most radio shows, but I never actively picture or visualize the people or settings on the show.	21.1%	15
Answered Question		71

Question 5: If you answered b or c, could you briefly elaborate on why you do or do not visualize the characters or settings on TAL?

1. I visualize the places and characters a little easier when the person relaying the story is interesting to me. I feel a little more emotionally invested when I can put myself in the narrators place or have had a similar experience to the one being described.
2. The storytelling is so vivid that it is part of the entertainment and enjoyment to try to picture the characters and visualize the stories.
3. Often the stories are so personal and specific to the individual telling them that I can't help but form details in my mind about what they may or may not look like, etc.
4. I guess the format helps me to visualize the people involved - the show is so conversational. Ira is usually descriptive enough for me to picture the setting and the people involved.
5. I guess I'm content with it being verbal -- I wouldn't say that my attention is diverted -- it's very engaging. I just don't add visualization to it...
6. I like the mystery.
7. because the show tend to have the people in the stories tell the stories first-hand, hearing the way they talk and the pieces of information they include (intentionally and unintentionally) helps to visualize the story. also, the host and reporters are really good at making sure what details to include to help make the story more colorful, not too much details to bog down the story but the important pieces that keeps the story captivating.
8. I find the descriptions evocative enough that the visualization comes pretty naturally.

9. Whenever I read or listen to a story, I always visualize what is happening. TV fills in the pictures so following a typical program, like a comedy, can be more passive, but not necessarily less engaging.
10. how can you not? it is like reading a book and not imagining it in your mind.
11. I get fully absorbed into the stories. The descriptive approach to storytelling, the tone of the speakers, the background sounds often included, as well as the music just lend themselves to me imagining visually what's going on.
12. I don't think I really visualize what's happening like it's a movie in my head, and I'm definitely connecting with the story-teller on many different levels.
13. I'm a very visual person, when I read or listen to radio shows such as TAL I always visualize what is happening in the story
14. I don't do well with mental imaging, but most of the stories that I hear I can repeat after just one listening.
15. hard to explain. i just like the effect of hearing voices coming out of the dark..
16. I'm naturally a visual person. When reading books, I often find it difficult to continue reading if I have not yet visualized the setting, characters - like as if I was setting a movie. I often can do this much faster with TAL because so much description is given, as well as the added benefit of sound effects.
17. The stories are so intimate and in-depth; I only listen when I can give the program my full attention. I often find myself visualizing the story tellers telling their stories, and I often visualize the stories they are telling. I think this is because, like reading a book, there is so much detail and the stories can be SO funny or SO emotionally intense, I tend to savor the programs fully and become totally absorbed. I guess the book analogy is the most effective way to describe the experience, it is totally engaging. I only get this experience when I DO give the program my full attention, which is why I only listen to it when I can. If I get distracted, I'll pause the program and revisit it another time.
18. Visualizing the people and places in TAL happens with ease. The writing and interview process is so thorough and in depth that you can't help but get sucked in to the most base of stories.
19. The descriptions are so heavy that you cannot help but let your imagination paint a mental picture. The sound clips mixed with ambient noise I think are the key ingredient that makes this show so engaging mentally.
20. The voices are sufficient. One of the reasons that I like radio more than TV is that my mind can conjure up images if it wants to, but it doesn't *have to* think about images, or be guided by someone else's images.
21. I suppose I visualize the stories the same way I might visualize the characters and settings in a novel. I don't actively pursue an image: it just pops up.
22. The stories provide clear descriptions and series of events that allow me to visualize myself at the event(s). The open emotion shared by those interviewed make the stories all of our stories.
23. The way the stories are produced encourages visualization. Also, I tend to form images in my head with any talk-radio program.
24. Hmmm. I don't know why. I visualize everything that I listen to or read. I thought everybody did. :)

25. the storytelling on the show is great and the images they paint are vivid...i don't understand how someone could not get fully engaged in the show and not visualize the stories.
26. i don't care about their visual appearance, i focus only on their voices
27. generally the descriptions of people or places in the show along with background noises put a mental picture in my head of who or where they are. and the stories are very intimate. it would be impossible not to visualize the person or place.
28. I listen while running or driving. I just hear the story; if I imagine the setting (someone talking into a microphone, etc.) it'd ruin the mood
29. the description is so colloquial it creates a picture very easily
30. i get really involved with the show. like i listen a lot when im doing things for school but i get really wrapped up in the stories and time passes without me noticing.
31. The stories told are always so personal and uncontrived. They feel natural in that they're so real, but are captivating because they're told better than most "regular" people can tell a story. The music (and the production in general) tends to make the show/story set even more of a mood (i.e., somber music during a lonely moment, etc.). The inherent nature of what I LOVE about TAL is that they take something so normal and regular and everyday and they make it meaningful. That's why it's so easy to connect with.
32. I tend not to need to visualize what is going on in a given show. The words themselves are powerful to me, and connecting them with a visual never seemed to be a high priority.
33. It happens automatically.
34. As any avid reader may picture or visualize what the author may try to portray, I do the same when listening to TAL. I can also be physically doing other things while listening though.
35. The stories are often engaging and captivating and it is very easy to feel like you're in a room with friends relaying a story to you. The stories are well structured.
36. i engross myself in the show. It's not a question of visualizing the characters so much as empathizing with them, of enjoying the poetry and wittiness of the writing and dialogue.
37. Depends on how well context is set up, if I have personally been there, or if the speaker reminds me of someone I know
38. I visualize any narrative that doesn't have pictures of it's own included. An oral narrative or a literal novel, both have descriptive elements that provoke visualization of the characters and the story.
39. The words are enough. I don't seem to need specific phenotypes of people or places, the genotype is enough to enjoy the story.
40. The language used is rich enough to provide a vast mental picture on all the programmes.
41. The type of story I am listening to, and the voices within the story helps me visualize people and actions. The narrator usually describes the people or places in the story and, just like in a book, I will use the image of something I know for the people and places in the stories.
42. I visualize the people being talked about or interviewed very similarly to the trailers I've seen for the new television show. It's a very dreamy, movie-like image because these stories are so engaging in a way that a television show is not.

43. The stories are told so well, and the interviews are handled so well, it's easy to picture the people and situations.
44. It's almost impossible not to visualize the characters or settings.
45. I usually listen to TAL when doing something mundane like driving or lying in bed. I don't so much visualize the interviews as much as the action. Or David Sedaris's stories.
46. I'm not a visual person. When I learn I find lectures to be far easier than visual aids (slides, etc.). Similarly, when I read and listen to the radio, I can engage without actually visualizing the characters and settings.
47. not sure why, but it often happens that I try to relate the stories to things I already know firsthand.
48. Because the interviews feel so personal and less passive than on other radio shows and the subject matter is usually more descriptive and/or engaging.
49. i don't have a "visual" mind, my thoughts are more like words in my head. so i'm totally connected w/the ideas of TAL, but without pictures.
50. the stories are so interesting and well-described, it is impossible for me to not visualize it.
51. Actually I'd answer both B and C. Mostly I'm just listening to the voice, and when I remember the story later I remember the voice, the words, and the music, but I don't remember a visual to go with it. Sometimes I do create one. The stories are told so well that mostly I'm waiting to hear what happens next, or thinking about why something is so moving, or listening for the more subtle changes in the voice that make it feel so intimate, and not trying to picture the scene. Also, the stories don't necessarily provide "wide shots". We don't always get a description of the setting.
52. ruins it to put a face to the voice
53. Generally the only ones I visualize are the ones I've actually seen - either in person, or pictures of them.
54. I think visualization is a standard part of good storytelling, and TAL is excellent at storytelling.
55. I think that I tend to visualize the setting and the action but not necessarily the people. This may have to do with the fact that I listen to lots of radio (mostly the CBC), and there is a lot of chat and interview--those things are standard radio to me. It's when people are telling stories that I visualize/spatialize the settings and actions.
56. the stories are usually presented in such a way that it is easy to do so.
57. I am not a visual person so I don't tend to visualize things that way. I am almost always totally absorbed in the show however, and I only listen to it during long walks, car rides, bus rides, etc...

Question 6: Please select the answer that best describes your listening habits:

	Response Percent	Response Count
a. I prefer to listen to TAL when I can pay full attention to the show.	48.6%	35
b. I listen to TAL when doing other things that also	13.9%	10

require my attention.		
c. I listen to TAL while doing other things and pay attention only when I hear something of interest.	9.7%	7
d. Other (please specify)	26.8%	19
Answered Question		71

1. almost every day
2. Online when I can (aver. 1 every 2weeks)
3. I listen to several episodes in a row from the website whenever I have time, every month or two.
4. varies from several episodes a week to less than once a month
5. I download podcasts, purchase episodes from iTunes, and listen when I take trips.
6. usually i forget to listen for several weeks and then listen to several online for a day or two.
7. sometimes 2 episodes a day, sometimes not for weeks, depends on how busy i am
8. i tend to listen in spurts via mp3/podcast
9. i listen once a week and have listened to all the archive shows too
10. Probably just once or twice a month, but multiple episodes online.
11. les than once a month
12. Since I've been caught up on pretty much the entire library, I've been listening once a week.
13. Used to listen weekly, but grad school cut my listening to almost never :(
14. i'm actually going w/once a week. but it's ONLY ON npr once a week! i live in chicago, and it's a chicago public radio show!
15. when theres a new episode
16. I used to listen to it daily online. But I changed jobs and now I don't have the luxury of listening. But I do listen whenever I can on the weekends.
17. Usually once a week, but for awhile I was listening to at least five a day, while at a extremely boring day job. Pretty much listening to all the past episodes in order.
18. Every week when I am in my home town, once a month - rarely ever when I am at school
19. I listen to them all, but not necessarily when they originally air. I download them as a podcast and listen when I get the chance.
20. it depends on how busy I am and how well my internet connection is, so right now it's at least 3 times a month.
21. I listen to TAL while doing other non-verbal things like running or drawing. I feel like I can give it my full attention despite multitasking.
22. I listen in the car while driving. I can listen at home, but I find that driving really makes the story come alive for me.
23. I listen to TAL while I drive.
24. i listen to rebroadcasts while falling asleep
25. I prefer to listen to it with all of my attention, but even though I most often listen to them at work, I am able to focus my attention on them.

26. I prefer to listen to TAL when I can pay full attention to the show AND when doing things that require some degree of mindless attention - i.e. washing dishes, doing laundry, cleaning, driving
27. I listen to TAL when I can give it my full attention but I'm usually doing something else like cleaning or bike riding.
28. I like to listen to the show when doing my weekly household cleanup, it gets my full attention and keeps me entertained while doing something otherwise tedious
29. i prefer listening when i can give my full attention, but unfortunately don't always have the time to do so
30. i sometimes do things, but mostly things that dont require much thought or attention.
31. I pay full mental attention, but like to listen while doing physical tasks like housework.
32. i never do just one thing, but i'll often listen to episodes i enjoy more than once
33. I listen to TAL (like all NPR) predominantly when driving in my car.
34. I listen to TAL while driving, so I am doing something else, but it's not tasking.
35. I listen whenever I can catch it.
36. I listen when I'm doing something that doesn't involve the same sort of thought process, like cleaning the house, driving, or cooking dinner. I don't listen while doing any sort of work.
37. I listen to it at work, and often miss parts, so I generally listen to an episode 2 or more times so I can actually absorb all of it.
38. I listen while I drive - so it seems to be both b and c

Question 7: Finally, please select one answer from each of the following statements:

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	Rating Average	Response Count
The use of music helps me visualize the stories.	30.6% (22)	27.8% (20)	40.3% (29)	1.4% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.13	72
I enjoy the way TAL threads together the story topics.	53.5% (38)	43.7% (31)	2.8% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.49	71
I find the personal narration helps me become engaged in the stories.	65.7% (46)	25.7% (18)	7.1% (5)	1.4% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.44	70
The selection of stories is one of the show's most appealing	63.4% (45)	33.8% (24)	2.8% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.39	71

aspects.							
Answered Question							72

APPENDIX E

Profile Addresses of Listeners Found on MySpace and Friendster

1. http://www.myspace.com/astral_loba
2. <http://www.myspace.com/dewhurstbelcher>
3. <http://www.myspace.com/digitalboy13>
4. <http://www.myspace.com/donnelbn>
5. <http://www.myspace.com/erinkill>
6. <http://www.myspace.com/iremembermontreal>
7. <http://www.myspace.com/rodgre>
8. http://www.myspace.com/shes_evocative
9. <http://www.myspace.com/thedollymama>
10. <http://www.myspace.com/thejessicagore>
11. <http://www.myspace.com/argetsinger>
12. <http://www.myspace.com/deanabbott>
13. <http://www.myspace.com/maurathegreat>
14. <http://www.myspace.com/mundanelunacy>
15. <http://www.myspace.com/okidoki>
16. <http://www.myspace.com/seemoreglass83>
17. http://www.myspace.com/weasel_1313
18. <http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=100883425>
19. <http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=10467437>
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23. <http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendID=108289821>
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