The Political Arguments of Podcasting

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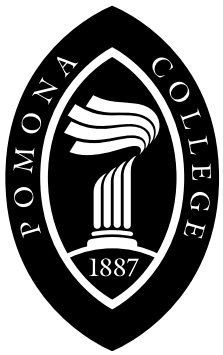
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of
Bachelor of Arts in Politics



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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who graciously and tirelessly supported me through all the trials of my college career, of which throwing out most of my studies junior year to interrogate journalism was certainly one of the most dramatic.

It is also dedicated to Susan McWilliams and David Menefee-Libey who, since then, have shown me what a political voice actually looks like.

Preface

At first glance, podcasts appear to be a relatively unimportant form of journalism. There are no podcasters who are "breaking the news," a role now exclusively reserved for online print and Twitter. The form of podcasting is often reserved for post-hoc commentary or one of the newest and most maligned trends in journalism, "explainer news." And yet, all signs point to a medium continuing to grow. 11% of Americans had listening to a podcast in 2006, versus 44% last year.[1] There are currently 660,000 actively maintained podcasts on iTunes,[2] and despite real fears of over-saturating the market, there are no signs that production has begun to slow. There are many *simple* motivations for podcasting's explosion; the ubiquity of smartphones, the pivot to on-demand media, and screen fatigue are all commonly cited rationale. This thesis not only accepts those, but also purports more complicated and *theoretical* explanations as well.

This thesis theorizes podcasts as a return, specifically along three dimensions: a return to narrative form, a return to the spoken word, and a retreat from politics mediated by technology. Political theory has longs postulated about speech. Aristotle said that "Spoken sounds are tokens of affection in the soul."[3] Hannah Arendt believed that "speech is what makes man a political being."[4] Taken in this tradition, how podcasting orients, captures, and distributes speech forms an interesting new set of questions for political theory on speech to consider.

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[1] Pew Research Center, "Trends and Facts on Audio and Podcasts."

[2] Ross Winn, "2019 Podcast Stats & Facts (April 2019)."

[3] Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 1.

[4] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 3.

Acknowledgements

I first want to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Susan McWilliams. One year ago, I was finishing my first class with Professor McWilliams, “Political Journalism,” and I knew then it would change the course of my life. In that class, McWilliams both taught and exemplified the key skill of journalism: skepticism. Professor McWilliams taught me how to ask questions, and for that, I will forever be grateful.

I would also like to thank Erica Tyron, director of KSPC, for her constant support in all technical and logistical aspects of this thesis-podcast’s success. From use of the KSPC studio, to her investment in multiple pieces of recording equipment, to her feedback on my audio editing, Erica was a constant and consistent source of support.

To all the students, faculty, and staff who offered time and thought in interviews with me, I want to express my appreciation for their willingness to trust me with their words and ideas.

Introduction

Podcasts as a Return

Reading Rebecca Mead's November 19, 2019 *New Yorker* article "Binge Listening," I stepped away with an uncanny sense that podcasting was significant in ways previously unconsidered. Weeks later, while retrieving the story online for use in this thesis, I was—in a bout of beautiful irony—prompted to listen to it instead. The service was provided by the start-up Audm, which is wagering that a combination of audio's convenience and screen fatigue will make articles read by professional voice actors a compelling alternative.[5] The company Curio is following with an identical business model, just with a different set of publishers. The firm Luminary is jumping into the mix this summer, offering an add-free subscription service akin to the "Netflix of podcasting."[6] Swedish music streaming service Spotify decided to go all in on podcasts this year, purchasing distribution platform Anchor and the independent production company Gimlet. Podcasting insiders seem to believe the buyout of Gimlet solidified a bright future for the medium.[7]

Business is good for podcasters, and at a surface level, that is good indication of on-demand audio's current appeal. Due to the now nominal price of equipment and ease of setting up distribution channels, the barrier to entry for podcasting has all but vanished. Just about anyone can sit behind a microphone, start talking, and assemble some subset of people who will listen. But the medium of podcasting has both more broad-based and complex implications for today's politics. Those implications extend far beyond the latest capital flows or acquisition strategies, because as cutting-edge as podcasting may seem, it is—in most ways—a return. Specifically, podcasting is a return to narrative form, a return to the spoken word, and a retreat from technology.

Considered on this scale, the significance of podcasting is not that the former Obama staff led start-up Crooked Media is turning their back on venture capital money. Individual success stories abound, but I am more interested in the *implicit* arguments of podcasting: what it means to make a podcast rather than write an article; what it means to listen rather than read; what it means that we silently ride the subway everyday with disembodied voices speaking directly into our brain. Marshall McLuhan famously argued that "The medium is the message."[8] Some of his examples are as arcane as clothing, clocks, and light bulbs. In all of our objects, McLuhan believed there

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[5] Perez, "Audm Turns Long-Form Print Journalism into Professionally Narrated Digital Audio."

[6] Barnes, "With Big Stars and Paid Subscriptions, Luminary Aims to Be the Netflix of Podcasts."

[7] LaForme, "Spotify's Purchase of Gimlet Could Change Podcasting's Future."

[8] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 7.

were inherent arguments about capacity and scale. Podcasting, viewed in this light, brings forth a whole continuum of new questions.

Such a continuum can be extremely daunting; I do not postulate a new theory of democracy every time I listen to *The New York Times* "The Daily." Broad questions are ever-present, but sometimes the best way to initiate inquiry is through engaging tiny slices rather that postulate the whole thing. Sometimes, broader concepts only come into focus in relief against individual, even unimportant, moments. So I set out to capture the specifics too. I made my own podcast, and it has taught me as much as my reading. The show is called The Discussion Collective, or as I once thought was a stroke of pure genius, DisCo. I first had the idea for The Discussion Collective walking through the streets of Washington, D.C. in the fall of 2017. I had just finished a class at the Claremont McKenna semester in Washington program. Departing our office suite on 17th and L and beginning the evening's short walk back to my apartment in Chinatown, I found myself unable to engage my housemates walking alongside me.

All they could talk about was how angry class had left them, how incensed they were at those with whom they had been arguing, how stupid the points people were making had been. The debate was—by all standard metrics—a resounding success: provocative points, biting counterpoints, heated gesticulations, off-the-cuff citations, invocation of famous quotes. In fact, the debate may have been the best in class yet. And I was confident *nothing* had been transferred between the participants; no understanding, no meaning, maybe not even remembrance of words exchanged. I had soured on debate. Turning onto Massachusetts Avenue two blocks before our apartment, I told my housemates I was stopping at the grocery store for a late night snack, but once I rounded the block I headed due south for the Capital Mall where I wondered aimlessly for the next few hours, rambling away into my phone's voice recorder, trying to articulate what would eventually become DisCo's mission statement. I did not make it home until 1am.

> Equal parts skeptical and vulnerable, The Discussion Collective, or DisCo, is a podcast meant to question life at the Claremont Colleges by having the conversations that we typically avoid. With an understanding that the personal and political are deeply intertwined, DisCo combines one-on-one interviews, panel discussions, and audio storytelling to open up campus issues, and consider broader political movements as they relate to our undergraduate lives.
>
> It's all premised on the idea that a good discussion really only demands one thing: we accept the possibility of being wrong. With DisCo, I want to acknowledge the limitation of my own positions. Instead of proving a point, I want to advocate for the process of discussion itself. The difficulty of translating ideas into words, the tension in respectful disagreements, and the discomfort of asking candid questions. I believe these experiences have inherent value, separate from proving our own intellect or changing the minds of people around us.

> This isn't an easy thing to do, though, and it requires a constant dedication to specific techniques: separation of person from their position, charitable interpretation of opposing arguments, and a healthy dose of old fashioned listening. By doing this, I hope DisCo can become a place where members of the Claremont community—students, faculty, and guests—can practice these techniques among encouraging and invested peers. And I'm not using any fancy metrics to measure success. I just hope to encourage us all to have more frequent, respectful, and insightful conversations of our own.[9]

That idea existed almost six months before the first episode was released. In perhaps a strange inversion of normal "founding narratives," I was sure of the tone long before the topic. The topic, eventually, became the intersection of campus and national politics. But I remain firm in belief that determining what an entire show "is about" is a somewhat foolish task. What a show is about is just a crude amalgamation of what each episode is about, which are themselves just a collection of interviews, which themselves are just a series of question and answer. Each of *those* contain not only specific ideas, phrases, and words, but also belying intonation, divulging body language, and most importantly, silences. Silences can say as much as the words in between them. If politics is about how individuals assemble into collectives, how pieces relate to their wholes, making a podcast often felt like much the same endeavor.

The Current Problem

Without a doubt, this project was motivated by the ascendance of President Donald Trump. I took my first course in politics at Pomona College, "Campaigns and Elections," during the Fall of 2016. The class was taught Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The first person I saw after the most surprising Tuesday night of my life was my professor. 48 hours earlier, he had promised what had happened could not possibly come to be. His truth had failed us all, he said, and apologized, holding back tears. My politics will be defined by the 2016 election, by the line between possible and impossible being completely erased, by total skepticism and uncertainty.

While writing this thesis—though this may reveal the depth of my concern for our current situation—I took great solace that these authors did not seem to agree on the aims and methods of the news. Questions of what is evidence or opinion, information or storytelling, and fact or fiction abound. Saturated in past battles of thought, I was able to hold out hope that today's political landscape may not be as unprecedented as it sometimes feels.

If there was one unequivocal truth to be deduced from reading exclusively about journalism for a year, it was this: 2019 is not the field's first crisis. I take small solace that in 2004, Karl Rove told journalist Ron Suskind that politicians no longer live in the "reality-based community." I was darkly reassured that the "Pentagon Papers" revealed the incredible extent of the "credibility

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[9] Cohen, "The Discussion Collective - DisCo."

gap" between Johnson's and Nixon's administrations and the American public during the Vietnam War. I was actually happy to read from Walter Lippmann's 1922 book *Public Opinion* that newspapers "cannot produce the amount of knowledge which the democratic theory of public opinion demands."[10] None of these proclamations are uplifting, but they give the current tumult an antecedent. They show, at the very least, we kept on going. Furthermore, if we are to give equal credence to these historical fights over truth, the most useful premise may be that truth does not exist. That is to say, seemingly the only point of agreement between these authors was that defining a singular, "capital-T" truth was at best, futile, and at worst, dangerous. This is undoubtedly a daunting notion, but "post-truth" seems to be the go-to lamentation of our time.

I too worry what a politics without truth may look like, but not for the reasons some might. We do find ourselves with a president who makes a statement on Monday just to lie about it Tuesday,[11] a military who impersonates clerics on social media to incite ethnic cleansing,[12] and a family who fabricates science to conceal the lethality of the drugs they sell.[13] Some, like literary critic Michiko Kakutani, point to these instances and blame those at the end of the 20th who supposedly played fast and loose with the truth. "Postmodernist arguments deny an objective reality existing independently from human perception, contending that knowledge is filtered through the prisms of class, race, gender, and other variables."[14] She then situates the postmoderns in opposition to everyone else, the Enlightenment, Christianity, Marxism, and even the Scientific method. To a degree, she might be right, but the question becomes: were postmodernist challenging such structures for the sake of it—to hell with the consequence—or because they were actual contentions to be had? Kakutani seems to believe the former. "Postmodernist arguments would clear the way for today's anti-vaxxers and global warming deniers, who refuse to accept the consensus opinion of the overwhelming majority of scientists."[15]

To be clear, the President's tweeting, sectarian Buddhist cleric's hatred, and the Sackler family's callous enrichment should not be mistaken for post-truth. Even when grafters and charlatans like Mike Cernovich, the alt-right conspiracy theorist, invoke postmodern theory—"I don't seem like a guy who reads, Lacan, do I?"—that does not mean they do so correctly.[16] These are incidents of lying, and lying, I fear, may be the least of our problems. To me, lying acknowledges the existences of something that needs to be obscured, something that—if revealed—would likely

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[10] Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 195.

[11] Leonhardt and Thompson, "President Trump's Lies, the Definitive List."

[12] Mozur, "A Genocide Incited on Facebook, With Posts From Myanmar's Military."

[13] Meier, "Sacklers Directed Efforts to Mislead Public About OxyContin, Court Filing Claims."

[14] Kakutani, *The Death of Truth,* 130.

[15] Kakutani, 134.

[16] Marantz, "Trolls for Trump."

lead to agreement. The solution to "post-truth" is not as simple as building consensus on how to deal with liars.

The solution cannot be that simple because the problems are far more fundamental and systemic. Here, I use the word "systemic" to invoke theoretical systems of politics more so than material systems of government. How to adjudicate challenges to libel law, legislate public interest standards for media organizations, or find a sustainable revenue model for journalism are all questions of extreme urgency and importance, but they are not the main concern of this thesis. My hope—though this may be naive—is that by having a better grasp on the theoretical questions that undergird more tangible problems, we can do more than implement short term solutions. We can *all* consider our role in the system's long-term success.

Etymology

With those objectives in mind, I have found two methods of inquiry useful in my thinking. The first is etymology. When discussing theories of journalism, the system of language is the first to be implicated. In 1946, George Orwell warned that we "ought to recognize that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language."[17] Orwell believed language was equally capable of both concealing and revealing thought. He supported the latter but feared that both malevolence and negligence were contributing to the former.

Words, being one of the building blocks of communication (along with sound, syntax, and other features when dealing with podcasts), become worthy of study and definition. 20th century political theorist Hannah Arendt frequently redefined commonly understood words to make larger political arguments. One of her techniques was splitting binaries into sets of three. For instance, in *The Human Condition* she proposes something "very simple…nothing more than to think what we are *doing*" [emphasis added].[18] In this process she delineates doing into three distinct categories: labor, work, and action. This elegant process implicitly highlights one of the key features of words, they are often best understood in opposition what they are not. In the case of Arendt, her "very simple" idea is far more powerful than she lets on. *The Human Condition* was conceived out of a project called the "Totalitarian Elements of Marxism." Arendt means to imply that Marx's definition of labor is bloated and imprecise.

Labor is "the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body... The human condition of labor is life itself."[19] Labor is what is needed to live—eating, providing oneself the ability to eat, ensuring oneself the ability to provide for oneself, etc. Such obligations are incessant and never ending, and correspondingly, labor is cyclical and constant. Her major

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[17] Orwell, "Politics and The English Language," 10.

[18] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 5.

[19] Arendt, 7.

contention to Marx was that new means of production would beget the worker's revolution and freeing them from the binds of labor, even though Marx earlier claimed that it was labor itself that defined humans. Arendt shows the contradictions apparent to labor's centrality to being human.

Work, on the other hand, is "the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human condition," or the means by which humans shape nature into something unnatural. A word that might closely hue with work is craft, art, or technology, all items humans make not to survive but to turn their environment into something of their own volition. Finally Action is "the only activity that goes on directly between men without an intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world."[20] If this reminds you of Arendt's definition of politics, that's because she thought they were the same. Action, along with speech, was the way by which individuals differentiated themselves from collective and distinguished themselves to one another.

By summoning two more words and siphoning off distinct meaning into each of them, each gains first more clarity (by defining fewer ideas), and second, more nuance (by the implicit relationship of *not* being the other two words). Arendt says it best: "all our definitions are distinctions…we are unable to say what anything is without distinguishing it from something else."[21] Ferdinand de Saussure agrees, writing, "Concepts are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristic is in being what they other are not."[22]

To be fair, all language is ambiguous. In English, the word that takes the prize for most ambiguous is "run."[23] In the next Oxford English Dictionary, it will have 645 definitions. One explanation put forward for this is the proliferation of technology: iPhones run apps, cars run on gas, you can run up your credit card. That being said, "run" is still rarely a political word outside of "running for office." Others are in constant contestation: consent, queer, and rights, just to name a few. Beyond the definition of singular words, however, the larger political battles often arise over who can speak, and when, and which sets of words they can use when they do.

One word that desperately needs an Arendt-like treatment is "truth." This analysis is not an attempt to redefine truth (though perhaps I once though it was). For the sake of clarity, however, there is value in delineating a number of "truth adjacent" ideas into their own distinct definitions. I will start with the difference between "truth" and "fact." American philosopher John Dewey wrote in 1927, "Many persons seem to suppose that facts carry their meaning along with

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[20] Arendt, 7.

[21] Arendt, 176.

[22] Saussure et al., *Course in General Linguistics*, 117.

[23] Winchester, "'Run,' a Verb for Our Frantic Times."

themselves on their face. Accumulate enough of them, and their interpretation stares out at you… But the power of physical facts to coerce belief does not reside in bare phenomena. It proceeds from method."[24] He then goes on to describe methods of verification, assemblage, and interpretation.

This concept aligns well with the one offered by current historian Jill Lepore, who argues that the American concept of truth never really existed either, as if waiting to be found.[25] It has to be constructed—deconstructed, and reconstructed again, continuously. In 2019, this is the crucial notion that seems to be eroding: we ourselves must agree upon patterns, procedures, and even codified rules of how truth is to be made. Kovach and Rosenstiel write in their seminal work on journalistic theory that "Truth requires commitment, a dedication to a process of verification," calling it both the most important and least understood principle of the field.[26] Truth is not an adherence to an impossible-to-define standard such as fairness or balance, but a disinterested method by which every story is approached.

Though exploring all the different approaches to the truth/fact distinction could fill one hundred theses, I'll generally abide to this paradigm when distinguishing between fact and truth. A fact is a faithful account of an occurrence in the real world. Facts are typically small, unambiguous, and agreed upon: the politician's tie was red; the call came into dispatch at 2:14 AM. The truth is a process of combining, ordering, and discussing facts such as to create broader understanding. Walter Lippmann said in *Public Opinion*, "if each fact and each relation had a name that was unique, and if everyone agreed on the names, it would be possible to communicate without misunderstanding."[27] This statement concedes two things: first, that we think of facts as unambiguous, but second—and more important—moving from a "set of facts" to "the truth" remains vexingly difficulty. I see truth as the naming of facts and relations. It is in no way arbitrary, but there also exist a multiplicity of methods by which to proceed. Attention to and consistency in such a process is what distinguishes truth from falsity.

Epistemology

The second method useful for this analysis is epistemology. This "knowledge about knowledge" feels to me like a critical intervention in today's news media landscape. We no longer know how we know what we do. Ideas, and our capacity to transfer them among one another, has taken on an additional relevance today thanks to incredible technological advances. Arendt also writes in *The Human Condition*, "the 'truths' of the modern scientific world view, though they can be demonstrated in mathematical formulas and proved technologically, will no longer lend

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[24] Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 1.

[25] Lepore and Lippman, *MLTalks*.

[26] Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*, 61.

[27] Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 36.

themselves to normal expression in speech and thought."[28] She wrote wearily of a world in which we were "unable to understand, that is to think and speak, about things which nevertheless we were able to do."[29] James Bridle, writing today about the relentless advancement of technology, is even more alarmed: "Software is unable to distinguish between its model of the world and reality—and, once conditioned, neither are we."[30] If we no longer know *how* we know, how can we act responsibly on that which we do know?

To make these questions more concrete, I will briefly consider the example of Twitter. When it comes to Twitter, I am less concerned than most that Russian robots are impersonating people. I am more concerned that we cannot collectively decide on the role of Twitter in political conversation to begin with. Were we to be able to agree on the role of Twitter in politics, removing bots would seem to me a relatively simple task. We know how the Internet Research Agency uses Twitter to spread disinformation; that is not the issues. The issue is we don't know how our exposure to misinformation on Twitter affects our politics, our habits, and our overall conception of the world.

Perhaps one of the issues is that we seem to insist all "non-bot" Twitter account are themselves "real." Yes, they are operated by humans, but is the ecosystem of Twitter not a powerful and coercive artifice in and of itself? Does a Twitter thread rally have all the same attributes of a Town Hall? Free speech advocates want you to believe it does. Social media is the new public square, and should be protected as such. But I am not convinced we should want our corporeal conversations to be treated the same as our online ones. In fact, I am terrified by the degree our face-to-face political conversations have begun to resemble our political discussion in faceless, 50-word increments.

We should reasonably assume that slight perversions of fact transpire every time an occurrence is recorded, transported, and, ultimately, interpreted between individuals. But my concern is that the systems by which this happens—primarily mediated by technology—are becoming both more drastic and obscure. In some ways, we have to confront the issue head on; we must remember that, as Lewis Lapham says, "all news is fake." Fake in the sense of being fabricated, constructed, "not what happened yesterday; a story about what happened yesterday."[31] Like a ridiculously high-stakes game of telephone with seventeen intermediaries, the modern news media is responsible for facilitating what we know about American politics. The news is the epistemological aspect of politics; it is how we know what we know.

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[28] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 3.

[29] Arendt, 3.

[30] Bridle, *New Dark Age*, 136.

[31] Lapham, "Advertisements for Reality."

The End of The Beginning

Just as no journalist's copy is ever without some degree of bias (at the very least, bias of omission and simplification), no data point can account for *all* features of the item being measured. When we forget this, every subsequent decision is liable to that initial oversight. Lippmann defined "fiction" not as a lie, but a "representation of the environment which is in lesser or greater degree made by man himself."[32] For Lippmann, all fiction had some fidelity to fact. As long as the degree of fidelity could be taken into account, fiction was a perfectly workable standard. In fact, he believed fiction was all we had.

Contrary to some pundits, the problems of journalism existed long before Donald Trump's presidency or the invention of the internet. These problems were present from the very beginning; in many ways, they are inherent. So when I say, "podcasting is a return," I do not mean to imply we should "restore journalism" to a constructed past that never actually existed. This thesis does not peddle in nostalgia, the blind belief that the past was better than the present. It more closely hues to historicism, which—though a contentious term in its own right—at the very least, acknowledges that how we understand the past has bearing on the present, and it can, in limited capacity, provide insight for the future.

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[32] Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 8.

A Return To Narrative

If we are to return to narrative, it makes sense to go all the way back to the first one. But what is the first narrative? It's a bit of a strange question. The answer could perhaps be traced to 1615, when Miguel de Cervantes finished *Don Quixote*. Calling it the first "modern novel," Yale literary critic Herald Bloom says, "*Don Quixote* is a mirror held up not to nature, but to the reader."[33] Cervantes wrote such that the reader had to determine for themselves what to make of Quixote's trials and tribulations. Sometimes, however, the title of first novel is sometimes attributed to *The Tale of Genji*, written by Japanese lady-in-waiting Murasaki Shikibu 500 years earlier, because of its descriptive and psychological realism in capturing Japan's Heian Era imperial court. But we can keep on going. Storytelling can be found in every culture and society throughout written history, all the way back to one of the first ever piece of writing, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, written approximately 2100 BCE. The epic documents the journey of Gilgamesh, Sumerian king of Uruk, and Enkidu, a creature created by the gods to foil him. Even then, however, this fails to capture to ubiquity of narrative in oral history, i.e. prehistory.

Such prevalence has led countless scholars to hypothesize about the power of narrative form. What about stories distinguish them from other forms of rhetorical construction such as argumentation or explanation? There are a couple of key elements. The first is a narrator, who by definition, has his or her own point of view. The type of narrator can vary widely, from a depersonalized, omniscient presence to a specific character whose partial perspective is easily recognized. Another aspect is narrative voice, or the way by which the narrator conveys the story. Again, this can be objective, a simple reciting of what the narrator experienced, or it can be highly interpretive and even unreliable. The last aspect of narrative is time. Again, time can flow in a linear fashion, but is frequently warped, doubled back, or purposefully ambiguous as well.

Many of these concepts may seem anathema to a conventional understanding of journalism today. Events are supposed to recounted in detail, in order, without interpretation, but this conception hardly captures the variety of journalistic practices that have existed throughout history. Narrative journalism is, in fact, a recent invention, but I argue that more so than creating anything new, it is actually a return to this ancient tradition of storytelling. Podcasting furthers this journalistic pivot, usually for better, but also at times for worse.

Three Types of Podcast

Apple Podcasts, the industry leading platform in podcast distribution, reported 660,000 actively maintained podcasts last month. As such, there are podcasts about just about everything. Broadly speaking, however, I believe all podcasts with significant followings could be fit into one of

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[33] Bloom, "Harold Bloom on Don Quixote, the First Modern Novel."

three categories: guided dailies, open discussion/interview, and serialized narrative. Though the third type employs the most aspects of narrative structure, the most successful in any of these categories all contain at least one element of narrative structure.

The most popular daily produced podcast is aptly named "The Daily." Hosted by the *New York Times's* former political correspondent Michael Barbaro, "The Daily" brings one (and in rare cases two—I've never heard three) headline stories to the fore each weekday. Unlike other dailies such as NPR's "Up First" (which is a condensed version of their longstanding morning news program, "Morning Edition"), "The Daily" is not focused on running through every headline. Shows typically follow one story for 20 or more minutes, and then leave at most 60 seconds to tell you "what else you need to know today." The way the producers typically fill the episode is by interviewing the reporter whose name is on the byline of that day's front-page story. This choice is a subtle but powerful use of narrator and narrative voice. By discussing the story with the journalist who wrote it, episodes are often as much about the *making of* the news as what the news *is*.

For example, when Julian Assange was arrested on April 11 of this year, "The Daily" had on Scott Shane, national security correspondent who has been following Assange's saga for the past decade, to discuss the moral quandaries people around Assange have to contend with (or in other words, what Shane himself must deal with). "The Daily" has become famous for its informal tone and interrogative nature. For instance, Barbaro asks about Assange's cat and Shane readily admits about Assange that when extradited to the U.S., "he'll face God knows what."[34] Barbaro plays the role of listener for us, earnestly asking the basic questions we would likely never admit we didn't already know. *The New Yorker*'s Rebecca Mead describes him as "a well-informed, sensitive, funny, modest friend—the kind of person who has as many questions as answers? [A nod towards millennial vocal fry]"[35] On each episode of "The Daily," we are offered what feels like a back stage pass, or better yet, post-show drinks with the band. With "The Daily," we not only learn what happened that day, the experts tell us the story of exactly how it came to be.

Though the differences may seem subtle at first, this is a notably different way of consuming the news, especially when compared to cable television. In "The Daily" the narrator is a reporter and their voice is humble, hesitant, and skeptical. On cable news, the narrators are opinion makers and analysts, who speak with authority, flourish, and enmity. This distinction is because of narrative construction—which story each must tell. Reporters talking to Barbaro only have to tell their own story: what they've seen, what they know about it, and what they don't. Opinion makers and analysts, however, have an entirely different story: they have to prove a definitive narrative, vanquish their roundtable foes, and rally the audience to their cause.

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[34] Michael Barbaro and Theo Balcomb, "The Moral Complexities of Working With Julian Assange."

[35] Mead, "An Appreciation of Michael Barbaro and 'The Daily.'"

The second categories of podcasting is the interview or panel discussion show. Popular examples include "The Joe Rogan Experience," "WTF with Marc Maron," or the litany of new shows coming out of Crooked Media, the unabashedly liberal rallying cry started by four former Obama staffers. To be sure, these shows have zero narrative structure: no protagonist, obstacle, climax, or resolution. In fact, I often wonder what keeps listeners coming back at all. The answer is the narrator. These shows all thrive via cult of personality. The hosts of Pod Save America, the "Obama bros," are barely thirty, good looking, former frat boys who also ran the world with Obama for the past decade. Marc Maron is a damaged man with seemingly no filter, spinning his drug habits and romantic tribulations into dark comedy for the entire world. Joe Rogan is a psychedelic connoisseur, mixed martial artist, Second Amendment advocate, who meditates in sensory deprivation booths. He prides himself on his ability to book an eclectic panoply of guests: Alex Jones, Jack Dorsey (who banned Jones from his platform, Twitter), Neil deGrasse Tyson, Jordan Peterson. The list goes on 1200 strong.

Whether or not Rogan's exercise is fully honest is another question. He is critiqued for not adequately pressing his guests on the more contentious of their decisions. "By 'just asking questions' while rarely asking tough ones, by touting his esoteric guests while rarely booking anyone who might trouble his governing assumptions, Rogan gives the impression of breadth while depriving his listeners of depth."[36] To individuals on the left especially, Rogan lost his credibility when he re-invited Alex Jones to his show after Jones was de-platformed by many across the internet. To Rogan's listener base, however, this only bolstered Rogan as a protagonist —the hero, the outcast, the everyman. Because of decisions like this, each episode itself becomes part of a larger story, Joe Rogan, the truth-teller, locked in battle with an ignorant world.

The final type is the serializes narrative. The best example is Sarah Koenig's "Serial," which I'd argue is the podcast that changed podcasting forever. Apple acknowledged that "Serial" was the fastest podcast ever to five million downloads. It took one month. When Ira Glass's *This American Life* (the parent production company of "Serial") started releasing podcasts, it took five years to reach 5 million downloads total.[37] One of the more ironic observations about Serial at the time of its release in 2014 was that it would set the stage for the "Netflix for audio." This seemed to imply that podcasting would become more like TV, following a cast of characters through episodic journeys of conflict and resolution. But what was heralded as a new development, was really a completing of the circle. "Once upon a time this was the most popular form of entertainment in the country," says Robert Thompson, director of Syracuse University's Bleier Center for Television & Popular Culture. "Before TV develops in the 1940s, radio did cop

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[36] Peters, "How Joe Rogan's Hugely Popular Podcast Became an Essential Platform for 'Freethinkers' Who Hate the Left."

[37] Carr, "'Serial,' Podcasting's First Breakout Hit, Sets Stage for More."

shows, sci-fi, soap operas, game shows, reality shows—everything that's on TV now."[38] This is all further proof of the ubiquity of narrative form. Narrative audio is 70 years old, but to be sure, non-fiction narrative audio is a relatively recent transition. To understand how this came to be, I will recount the long-arc, broad-strokes history of developments in journalistic method.

Changing Conceptions of "The Press"

The oldest model of the press is antithesis to what most Americans' would first think of today. Fred Siebert calls it the authoritarian model as "it came into being in the authoritarian climate of the late Renaissance, soon after the invention of printing."[39] The model functioned from the top down, with the ability to define truth concentrated in those with the most knowledge and power. It may appear archaic, but the model has persisted until the present day, where autocratic governments such as China's Communist Party still retain near complete control over the press. Though the model had benefits of stability and unity, by the middle of the 17th century, dissenters would start to challenge governments who, in their view, unnecessarily quashed dissent in the name of cohesion.

The most famous critique is John Milton's speech *Areopagitica.* Given to English Parliament in 1644, Milton argued against one of the most common techniques of control in authoritarian press systems, the requiring of licenses for the right to print. Milton was shrewd in his approach, conscious that the government would not readily give up its ability to license without some other form of assurance. They would not readily relinquish their control of the narrative. Milton had just met with Galileo Galilei in Florence, who had been jailed for declaring the Earth actually revolved around the Sun, not the other way around. He worried that England's licensing may lead to forces far more inquisitional. So he intoned the concept of truth in a new way (of course, with his still distinctly protestant conviction). He tried to convince parliament that though truth will never be known until The Second Coming, we must spend the interim searching for fragments. "From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the carefull search that *Isis* made for the mangl'd body of *Osiris*, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall doe, till her Masters second comming." By providing God with the fragments, he would, "bring together every joynt and member, and shall mould them into an immortall feature of lovelines and perfection."[40]

Milton argued that the free circulations of opinion would give God the most source material and would inch closer to the truth quicker than a system of licenses set up by fallible humans. "Truth and understanding are not such wares as to be monopoliz'd and traded in by tickets and statutes,

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[38] Mattise, "Serial's Transformation of Audio Journalism Is Just Beginning."

[39] Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press,* 2.

[40] Milton, *Areopagitica*.

and standards." Truth was not just divine, it was pre-ordained; human's best chance at finding it would be getting out of the way. "See the ingenuity of Truth, who when she gets a free and willing hand, opens herself faster then the pace of method and discours can overtake her."[41] It was a strange transition between the authoritarian model and the libertarian model to come. Unlike the libertarian model, which prioritized the individual above all else, Milton still intoned a higher good. That idea would become less relevant in the founding of the United States, but the idea that freedom to pursue truth as one chose remained.

The press would be given special privilege in America even before the constituting of the country. In 1735, Andrew Hamilton successfully defended Peter Zenger against a libel lawsuit on, what were at the time, very peculiar grounds: a journalist cannot be indicted for libel if the slander is true. Eric Burns, in *Infamous Scribblers*, argues that this verdict was the first recognition that both jury and newspapers could be the "conscious of the community." He continues that Hamilton was not arguing "merely for freedom of the press; he seems, rather, to be pleading for freedom from the caprice of authoritarian rule."[42] Truth was foundational for reason, a key component in the transition away from monarchal government and towards a liberal one.

That being said, Harvard historian Jill Lepore saw the trial and less consequential, arguing that it was more of a victory for partisan slander than truth.[43] The idea of "evidence" was not prioritized by the press during America's founding. Actually, writes Lepore, "[the founders] were entirely and enthusiastically partisan. They were not especially interested in establishing facts; they were interested in staging a battle of opinion."[44] As Eric Burns shows, facts were not going to be a liability for the free press. The first ever American newspaper, *Publick Occurrences*, published by Benjamin Harris was often accused of being "based in hearsay as opposed to verifiable fact."[45] It was a strange transition, simultaneously prioritizing and

But even in the country's founding legal documents, a purely-objective or "higher" truth was not intoned. Such a power sounded far too much like a king. Madison, describing the design of the Constitution in Federalist 51 wrote that "if men were angels, no government would be necessary."[46] As such, factions would need to be established with power distributed between them. According to this design, "society itself will be broken into so many parts, interests, and classes of citizens, that the rights of individuals, or of the minority, will be in little danger from interested combinations of the majority." Tyranny of the majority was the next greatest fear after tyranny of a monarch. This was the Greek definition of tyranny, not necessarily cruel or

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[41] Milton.

[42] Burns, *Infamous Scribblers,* 110, 111.

[43] Lepore, *These Truths*, 63.

[44] Lepore, 145.

[45] Burns, *Infamous Scribblers,* 30.

[46] Madison, "The Federalist No. 51."

oppressive rule, but simply referring to rulers with arbitrary power, "not required to give an account of himself."[47] America's founding was an experiment in ruling without absolute power, but was it also a foray into a political ideology that did not necessitate absolute truth? Authoritarianism necessitated that the leader lay claim to something his or her subjects did not posses, usually taking the form of divine right or absolute knowledge, i.e. a hegemony over truth. Control over truth has never been requisite of democratic systems, only requiring agreement of 50% plus one. Lepore argued the following at the MIT Media Lab on April 24, 2018.

> I would contend here again, attempting to offer a provocation, that facts, which come from the realm of the law, that the end in working with facts and discerning facts, is truth…We're trying to find out what happened, the end of knowledge is truth in the realm of the fact. In the realm of the number, the end knowledge, again as I've defined it, is power. It tends to be the power of the state. I can make that claim beginning with the founding of representative democracy, with the idea that the people exist and that the people can be represented numerically.[48]

The Constitution outlined a system run by ratio, not by any truth claim. America's truths are delineated in the Declaration of Independence, and are supposed to be self-evident: equality, natural rights, consent of the governed. These feel written in stone today, but the young republic certainly had enough hand-writing to suggest assured truth was hard to come by. The lens of history belies a false inevitability about the fate of the country, but doubt of the young democracy abounded. It would take only four years before Madison would begin to doubt his own words in Federalist 51, questioning the Constitution's ability to maintain such factions. The country was becoming too big, and public opinion was becoming too difficult to ascertain. Geographically dispersed individuals were no longer be able to share their ideas amongst each other. Most factions were incapable of even knowing of the others' existence. The power in faction felt less inherent if they acted like silos. Knowledge transfer between and discussion across factions was what gave them power.

Federalist 51 always had a crucial exception, slipped in penultimate sentence: "provided it [society] lie within a practical sphere." In a dispersed country, factions could not serve their crucial function of protecting individual and minority rights. The solution was newspapers. A "circulation of newspapers," Madison wrote, "facilitates a general intercourse of sentiments" and effectively shrink the ever-expanding nation.[49] This might just keep the hope of liberty alive. It was a bold proclamation and a harbinger of many similar arguments to come. The telegraph, the radio, the television, and most recently, the internet have all had their proselytizers who talked of the power inherent to connectedness. Newspapers might not have exactly achieved the goal of

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[47] Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III - Chapter 7.

[48] Lepore and Lippman, *MLTalks.*

[49] Madison, *The Papers of James Madison*.

shrinking the country, but they did work wonders to unite individuals of like minds. Starting with the Federalist Papers, pamphlets and papers would instantiate and maintain the American two-party system. The first American press consisted of exclusively party papers.

Though Hamilton waxed poetic about truth in the 1730s, only a century later did the concept of "the fact" manifest in a cohesive way. One newspaper that happily embraced "the fact" was *The New York Sun*, first printed in 1833.[50] Using the newly invented steam powered press, The Sun was able to produce at an immensely higher rate that previous papers, allowing for a completely different business model. Instead of mailing the paper to party loyalists for six cents, they would be available every day at public newsstands for a mere penny. Pandering to reader's partisan loyalties would no longer work because the paper had no way to know who its readers were. Though this may seem like a step backwards, this subtle distinction actually changed the entire incentive structure of the newspaper business. Where the value proposition in news had previously been indulging party preference, it now had to shift to something else. Facts—though often sordid and provoking—became the coin of the realm, the only currency with broad enough appeal when the newspaper's going price was a single cent.[51]

Alexis de Tocqueville would remark extensively on these endeavors. "[Americans] study facts of their own senses," never deferring to or relying on "any man's authority."[52] Tocqueville saw facts as bridges and catalysts. They "enlarged hearts," "developed minds," and when spread through "reciprocal action between men," allowed democracy to flourish.[53] The sharing of ideas is what combined individuals, who had rendered themselves "independent and weak" by their own dogma of equal sovereignty. Combined individuals made associations, and associations reclaimed the social power to act.[54] What is central to Tocqueville's idea of a fact, however, is not that it held inherent value. He saw the value of facts insofar as they provided a foundation from which to engender meaningful, directed action. What form that action took—vigorous debate, dogmatic study, or angry revolt—did not particularly matter.

Take, for instance, his analysis of the jury. He first discusses it with some amount of condescension as a legal apparatus, "the jury was first established when society was in its infancy and when courts of justice merely decided simple questions of fact." In terms of determining what is true: assembling evidence, considering testimony, and judging occurrence of an event, he was unsure of the jury's ability to do so effectively. "The jury is, above all, a

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[50] Lepore, *These Truths*, 211.

[51] This topic is taken back up in section three of this thesis. Can you imagine how Facebook would be different if it did not mine our every preference? Does public opinion research—which certainly existed before social media too—undermine a disinterested pursuit of truth?

[52] Alexis Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II 3.13.

[53] Tocqueville, II 2.6.

[54] Tocqueville, II 2.5.

political institution." Tocqueville believed this because, "Laws are always unstable unless they are founded upon the customs of a nation: customs are the only durable and resisting power in a people."[55] By picking jurors from the citizenry, the people themselves welded custom and law together. One again, authority was derived only because the letter of the law was linked to the practice of it; facts were powerful because of the process by which people constructed and then utilized them.

Without thoughtful communication—acts of verification, explanation, and debate—associations would fragment and lose efficacy, our actions would lack coordination and impact, and our representatives would become less accountable. "Newspapers," Tocqueville said, "make associations." It is perhaps unsurprising that de Tocqueville believed that newspapers not only "serve to guarantee freedom, they maintain civilization."[56] When newspapers could not provide the facts, every other aspect of democratic society was stymied. Facts were crucial, but not because they led to truth, but because they led to action. Was this another case of American democracy functioning without necessitating an agreed upon truth?

Even if it were, the next century would herald radical changes in technology and journalism, and any notion of "from many, one" would be rattled to its core. The country expanded at breakneck pace, gained control of the Pacific Coast in 1848, connect two oceans with 10,000 miles of train tracks and five times as many miles of telegraph wires, and then wrench itself apart in civil war. More connection did not inherently lead to more debate. "Liberty is meaningless where the right to utter one's thought and opinions has ceased to exist. That, of all rights, is the dread of tyrants," Frederick Douglas would proclaim in 1860 in Boston, "Slavey cannot tolerate free speech."[57]

His speech, in response to the violent attack on an abolitionist meeting the week before to which the Mayor had turned a blind eye, would be recounted in William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator.* Lepore writes of the time, "the seventeenth century battle for free expression" had been fought by Milton, "the eighteenth-century struggle for freedom of the press" had been fought by Franklin and Zenger, and "the nineteenth century's fight for free speech had been waged by abolitionists opposing souther slave owners, who had been unwilling to subject slavery to debate."[58] Each century had its own adversary: government licensors, litigious politicians, and bigoted farmers. The twentieth century, however, would upend the American conception of speech entirely, largely in response to radical technological change.

Pulitzer had taken over *New York World* in 1883. Hearst began publishing *New York Journal* in 1895. Concurrent with the development of the social sciences, "journalism" as a field and

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[55] Tocqueville, I 2.8.

[56] Tocqueville, II 2.6.

[57] Frederick Douglas, "A Plea For Freedom of Speech in Boston."

[58] Lepore, *These Truths*, 291.

profession only developed at the turn of the century. By the time Walter Lippmann was writing *Public Opinion* in 1922, and debating John Dewey about the provocations therein, communications technology and those wielding them, Pulitzer and Hearst's "yellow presses," were drastically complicating American political debate. Further technological developments, including radio, movies, and television, would continue to augment the power of mass media. Advertisers would increase their influence over the media's business model. With increased ability to quantify and understand what readers enjoyed and which stories sold, the "Miltonian" notion of truth emerging from a web of opinions by its own virtue was starting to seem permanently debunked. It would have to be expedient, entertaining, and profitable. The deck was being stacked too heavily against truth's favor. This was what *Four Theories of the Press* called the Libertarian Model, and Lippmann was, in small part, the last nail in the coffin.

The very idea of a "theory of journalism" is an unwieldy one. There is a trove of literature on "journalistic ethics," but that is only a small sub-category of what I hope to explore. Looked at historically, journalistic ethics is a mere blip in millennia long history of political writing, a somewhat feeble attempt at professionalization in the 1880s when the modern scientific university was beginning to take hold. Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* is a work of political psychology as much as it is a work of political science. His main anxiety was the inability to reconcile private conceptions of reality with a set publicly agreed upon ideas necessary to a functioning democracy. The operative word in *Public Opinion* is largely concerned with a beautifully philosophical concerns of around "fiction." By fiction, Lippmann does not mean lies but representations of environment, the "portraiture which arises spontaneously in people's minds."[59]

Lippmann goes to great length to discuss the quantity and variety of impediments that exist between an individual and an occurrence that happen outside their immediate experience. He talks about the imprecision of encoding the telegraph, the meager time available in an average person's day, the limited vocabulary which we must use to describe our impossibly complex world. He also discusses stereotypes, a concept this book is largely credited with formalizing and popularizing. His acknowledgement of the interplay between interpretation and experience feels relevant even today, when so much of our communication is in symbols, images, and references. Most cogently, I think Lippmann's stereotype can be defined: "we do not see then define, we define and then see."[60]

The political implications he draws from this are many. In a self-contained community, like that envisaged by James Madison in his 1791 pamphlet *Public Opinion*, the only real disagreement would be in judgements about the same set of facts. Neither source of information nor source of morals would have to be independently verified because it would already be assumed to be the

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[59] Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 8.

[60] Lippmann, 43.

same. The chief end of intellectual training would be "the power to draw deductions from a premise, rather than the ability to find the premise" and "truth could be obtained by liberty within these limits."[61]

Lippmann unequivocally believed this was not the environment which described America in 1922. Without a so-called self-contained community, he was nervous that truth would never simply emerge. There would be no way to rectify all various accounts, opinions, and stereotypes of both those who make the news and those who read it. Quite simply, he proclaimed, "News and truth are not the same thing, and must be clearly distinguished."[62] The function of news was to bring the public's attention to a particular topic or occurrence. It simply was not capable of making sense of it. The function of truth was to discover facts, put them into conversation with one another, and make a workable narrative from them. Lippmann did not think newspapers had the capacity to work with this kind of truth.

His seminal fear was, simplified, that democracy and truth were irreconcilable. He saw nothing inherent in democratic systems that bent toward truth or surfaced fact. Facts would materialize only when politically advantageous, and truth would be whatever a majority of the politically franchised said it was. Observing the Scopes trial of 1925, Lippmann, had in Lepore's words, "thought his way into a problem the Constitution had not anticipated."[63] If a majority of Tennessee citizens wanted to teach creationism—a human narrative that much more resembles "accident and force" than "reason and choice"—could a trade off be avoided? Either truth was sacrificed or democracy was. It was the end of era where a free press could necessarily be trusted to leader to a truer press. It was a dispiriting and humbling diagnosis for journalism, one that called for its minimized importance in political systems. "At its best the press is a servant and guardian of institutions; at its worst it is a means by which a few exploit social disorganization to their own ends... It is no substitute for institutions," Lippmann wrote.[64]

If Lippmann killed libertarian model, then the response was the social responsibility model. As Theodore Peterson argued in his section of *The Four Theories of the* Press, "The social responsibility theory, on the other hand, was developed in the 20th century, and it reflects the doubts with contemporary social science and contemporary thought have cast on the rationality of man."[65] Newton's laws of physics were the scientific antecedent to the libertarian model. The American Constitution was a Newtonian machine; it would perfectly balance human forces against one another and harness that kinetic energy to power itself. Milton believed the same of the press. Allow them to battle one another in open contest, and truth would emerge, an

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[61] Lippmann, 43.

[62] Lippmann, 194.

[63] Lepore, *These Truths*, 420.

[64] Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 197.

[65] Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press*, 100.

inevitable byproduct of a perfectly free and rational system. In the 20th century, Einstein precipitated the social responsibility paradigm.

Einstein's Theory of Relativity was far less universal; everything could chance depending on one's vantage point. Politically, your abilities and perceptions were dependent on what you could see and what you already knew to look for. This was Lippmann's stereotype. These theories were products of their time. World Wars had sewn immense doubt that we could find our way when left to our own devices. A sense of public accountability emerged, (supposedly) separate from advertising revenue or political axe-grinding. By the mid-20th century, Siebert wrote that objectivity had gone from an ambitious goal to a "fetish," but the model was not accepted blindly either. Elmer Davis, a radio commentator at the time, discussed the extreme difficulty—and power—this would put back into the hands of those whose job it was to make the news.

> The good news broadcaster, must walk a tightrope between great gulfs—on one side the false objectivity that takes everything at face value and lets the public be imposed upon like a charlatan with the most brazen front; on the other, the "interpretive" reporting which fails to draw the line between objective and subjective, between a reasonably well-established fact and what the reporter or editor wishes were fact. To say that is easy; to do that is hard.[66]

Policy would be used effectively for some time to manage these complications. The Radio Act was passed in 1927 by the Federal Radio Commission, and would regulate, with both success and failure, the airwaves. By 1949, the FRC had changed from "Radio" to "Communications," creating the FCC known today. It required all broadcast dealing with political topics to adhere to some degree of "public interest." In method, it was a far cry from the journalism of the nation's founding. The idea of a public mandated standard for journalism would have been utterly laughable. But in aim, the doctrine may have rung more true. The purpose was to expose readers to a diversity of viewpoint.

Voracious reading and rigorous debate, ultimately leading to political participation, no longer seemed to exist as emergent behavior. Such exposure only seemed plausible when required through legal mandate. This angered just about everyone, but often for very different reasons. Young activists such as Gil Scott-Heron, deeply engaged in the Black Arts Movement, found American's passivity disdainful. Having written two novels by age 21, he had little patience for those unwilling to think and act for themselves.

"The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," the song for which Scott-Heron would become famous, was initially released on Small Talk as spoken word over congas and bongo drums. Re-recorded for Pieces of a Man with a full band, including pianist and flautist Brian Jackson, "Revolution"

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[66] Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm*, Four Theories of the Press*, 89.

would quickly gain attention for its biting critique of—just about everyone. It included standard opponents: politicians, law enforcement, corporate tycoons, but goes further implicating well-intentioned "allies" as well: "brothers" who "lose [themselves] on skag and skip out for beer during commercials" and "hairy armed women liberationists" just to name a few.[67] The lyrics, and Scott-Heron in subsequent interviews, reserve a special contempt for unwitting, complicit individuals, possibly making "Revolution" the first critique of "arm-chair activism," now often called "slacktavism" or "clicktivism."

Conservatives also hated the insinuated passivity of the Fairness Doctrine, but for exactly the opposite reason. Whereas Scott-Herron lamented that people were enjoying mass media too much, with its ameliorating blend of uncontroversial stories and incessant advertising, the Republicans cited an entirely different problem: people were not enjoying their news enough. Advances in opinion measurement had finally given this opinion validity; they had the ratings to prove it. By 1987, public interest was no match for market interest, and the FCC unanimously voted to kill The Fairness Doctrine. Joan Didion would begin reporting on politics the following year, helping to solidify a type of reporting distinctly different from everything that came before in one key aspect: narrative form.

Stories Return: New Journalism

In 1971, Tom Wolfe wrote *The New Journalism*, attempting to put a name to a trend in the literary world that had been developing slowly over the past decade. The term would eventually describe the likes of Joan Didion, Norman Mailer, Hunter S. Thompson, and Gay Talese, who around the middle of the 20th century shifted the literary equivalent of "finding gold, striking oil"[68] from the novel to the work of literary nonfiction. This proximation of fiction and non-fiction was, and remains, uncomfortable for many. Would literary journalists focus more on rhetorical flourish, minute plot details, and character exposition at the expense of the journalistic staples: who, what, when, where, how? As Lawrence Weschler would later articulate:

> I am interested in the fictive elements of nonfiction writing. I take for granted, not so much objective truth (which of course doesn't exist), but things like fairness, accuracy, and reportorial rigor. But that's just the beginning. What's really interesting to me is irony, voice, freedom, form—all things that are literally made up. So I believe that writing can lead to provisional truth, human truth.[69]

A quote like this would leave a beat reporters quaking in their boots. Not all literary journalists, however, are as dismissive of objective truth. Ted Conover, the infamous practitioner of

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[67] Gil Scott-Heron, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised."

[68] Wolfe and Johnson, *The New Journalism*, 8.

[69] Boynton, *The New New Journalism*, 432.

immersion journalism—he has quit his job to drive cabs, lived out of hobo cars, and enrolled as a prison guard to obtain stories—once said, "I believe in the literal truth of nonfiction, as opposed to the philosophical truth of fiction." Common to both of these quotes is their "adjectivation" of truth. One on side, there exists "objective" and "literal" truth, and on the other, there is "philosophical," "provisional," and "human." I trot out these variations on the theme not because I think I can assess each one and definitively asses "The" truth (thought a year ago I likely did). I do so more to show that concepts of truth can, do, and perhaps maybe even *should* vary. New Journalism acknowledges, and even encourages, this process.

Joan Didion spent the '60s and '70s writing scathing critiques of American counter-culture and the optimism of the West Coast. At 54, she was asked to write about the 1988 presidential election for *The New York Review of Books*. She had never written on politics before. That lack of experience—or by another interpretation, indoctrination—would allow her to produce a clairvoyant assessment of the following political decade, the decade that produced the American media landscape we find ourselves in today. Having never been steeped in "the beltway narrative," she was never inculcated into the "understandings, tacit agreements, small and large, to overlook the observable in the interest of obtaining a dramatic story line."[70] What she does observe, carefully curated from a seemingly encyclopedic trove of original quotes, implicates politicians and pundits in equal stead. Didion's subjects are rendered naked by their own words.

If journalism is about the collection of facts—facts being interviews, government sources, and policy shop datasets—then Didion did nothing of the sort. But if journalism is about seeking the truth, I would argue her pieces for *The New York Review of Books* are not only one of the most truthful pieces of journalism of recent. For one piece, "The Lion King," Didion's argument largely rests of a simple grammatical proclivity: the fact that D'Souza almost exclusively wrote about President Reagan in the active voice. She employs this fact as if asking, "Why does D'Souza feel the need to constantly remind us of Reagan's agency? Is he overcompensating for that which does not actually exist?"[71]

She calls Reagan "a man for whom historical truth had all his life run at twenty-four frames a second," carrying out his daily schedule "as being something like a shooting script." She points how his speeches on his policy are more celebrated than the policies themselves. But Didion never vilifies Reagan in the same way so many of her liberal colleagues do. He, after all, is simply playing the role of president. Replace Reagan, who saw his role as "illusory, like a play" with Trump who purposely obscures any distinction between fact and fiction, just like the genre of television from which he came.[72] Reagan was of mid-century Hollywood; Trump is of turn of

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[70] Didion, "Insider Baseball."

[71] Didion, "The Lion King."

[72] Didion.

the millennia cable TV. In Didion's writing, simple observations suddenly seem profound: people are products of their past.

Such simple pronouncements only become more necessary as the internet age further pummels us with more information than we can grasp. Such overload makes contradiction the norm and instead encourages us to rely on more instinctual heuristics, like affect, identity, and group. Didion gives us none of this. In lieu, she provides her observations: flawed, incomplete, perhaps not "all-encompassing, capital-T" Truth, but likely as honest as journalism could be in this new era. Didion's is a back to basic approach. It might just be the best one in a time perhaps best described by Karl Rove to *The New York Time*'s Ron Suskind in 2004. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out."[73]

Rove may indeed be right. As discouraging as it can be, journalists will continue to study all realities—bringing them together, contesting them, and learning from what comes of it. The result will not be Truth, but truth was never waiting to be found in the first place. Truth in America is more like a process, partial and incomplete, undertaken in a myriad of different ways over the past centuries. Whatever methods and practices are chosen next is perhaps less important, as long as we ensure the process of trial and error continue. Today, faced with a strengthening contingency for whom a public record of reality is nothing but an impediment, the work of journalism remains as important as ever.

Podcasts are poised to continue the Didion tradition. They give producers the leeway to assess events on their own merits and craft an incomplete narrative as they see it. Didion broke with the contrived ideas of false equivalency or "just the facts," allowing the room for reporting that took into full account the perspective of the person conducting it. The podcaster who has imitated this most closely is Sarah Koenig, of *This American Life*'s "Serial."

The Benefits and Dangers of Stories

Even though it has been months since I listened to the third season of "Serial," the sounds of the Cleveland Justice Center remain with me. With access to the entire building at all times, the producers of "Serial" immersed me in the criminal justice system in a way that written reporting or commonly cited statistics can only begin to capture. I specifically remember episode two and the recordings of Judge Daniel Gaul telling defendants, "Pull your trousers up," or spitting at them, "[Your father], he deserted you and the family, yeah?" or chastising them for their parenting decisions, "18. Was that a smart move?"[74] Statements like this are not captured in

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[73] Suskind, "Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush."

[74] Sarah Koenig, "Serial 3.2 - You've Got Some Gauls"

criminal justice articles or think tank reports. Hearing the dynamics of Judge Gaul's "responsibility" lectures, and the feelings that they leave with defendants and their families redefines ones entire conception of the system. The criminal justice system, in its overwhelming entirety, can seem like an inevitability when it manifest to people as nothing more than incomprehensible statistics. Injustice begins to feel like an unstoppable force with an unknowable cause, more a law of nature than millions of individual, path-dependent decisions. Showing that individual moment, however, reverses all of that. We, as listeners, know intuitively lectures such as Judge Gaul's, because we've all had one ourselves. We know what it's like to be unfairly impugned, to be forced to grovel, to be shamed. Individual stories gains power and persuasion in our ability to recognize it in our own lives.

As Didion before, Koenig makes herself known throughout the reportage, Didion offering her own dry interpretations of that which she sees, and Koenig with her trademark judicious skepticism and hesitancy. As Rebecca Mead writes of the first season of Serial, "the show's real innovation lay in capturing Koenig's psychological process—her inward struggle about what to believe."[75] This centering of the individual solves what novelist Salvatore Scibona alludes to as the problem with historicity. Speaking of the Vietnam War, which his most recent novel had been about, "A Vietnamese historian of the siege of Khe Sanh, writing today, would place the center in a different place than Walter Cronkite did, on television, in 1968."[76] History and politics, he argues, have a geometry problem. Once you initiate a conversation at a certain point, the diameter can only ever grow so large, and thus everything outside the circumference of the circle simply cannot be comprehended by those who are conversing inside.

To put this in political science terms,[77] Scibona is gesturing toward "The Overton Window," which argued that the viability of public policy is largely determined by whether it falls adequately far within the poles of public debate. While the Overton Window postulated a single range of discourse and recommended shooting for the middle, Scibona admits a messier reality: "This continuous and necessary argument over competing histories is much of what makes politics so fraught and exhausting. There is no right center around which to draw the circle." It is an analysis fitting for today's times of polarization to the point of paralysis. He sees a solution in narrative, which he finds in fiction, though I believe exists in equal stead in narrative non-fiction as well. "But in fiction I think there can be a right center: the individual person…the individual's experience is the source of her relevance. She only needs to be somebody. If she's everybody, she's nobody. You're writing cliché or propaganda."[78] By centering a story on an individual, arguments can be made, and then assessed. They do not stand for the full truth, but maybe

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[75] Mead, "Binge Listening."

[76] Davidson, "Salvatore Scibona on the Difference Between Fiction and History."

[77] Something this thesis may have benefitted from doing more.

[78] Davidson, "Salvatore Scibona on the Difference Between Fiction and History."

nothing today can. Perhaps the more responsible approach is to acknowledge the limits of stories, allow them to take us to one perspective, and then debate the merits. The alternative: proclaiming an false omniscience that no longer has purchase and being disregarded seems no better.

Walter Benjamin was examining this exact process inherent to narrative in his 1936 essay "The Storyteller," which reflected on the work of Nikolai Leskov. In it, he lamented "the evolution of the 'short story,' which has removed itself from oral tradition and no longer permits the slow piling one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers which constitutes the most appropriate picture of the way in which the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings."[79] For Benjamin, each retelling of a story added to its overall impact, brining in the perspective of yet another narrator, accruing more truth with each narration. Benjamin had no love for pure information, for him "just the facts, ma'am" (a quote erroneously attributed to Joe Friday from the 1950s police drama *Dragnet*)[80] would simply not do. For Benjamin, "the value of information does no survive the moment in which it was new… it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself to it without losing any time." In a complete 180, "a story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strengths and is capable of releasing it even after a long time."[81] By being retold indefinitely, a story could in essence, live forever.

The final season of Serial's third season, however, "Some Time When Everything Has Changed" presents problems for this paradigm. The endings of "Serial" have always produced conflicting emotions for me. I feel like I've been promised something that never arrives. The end of season one hit me like a ton of bricks; "we still don't have the facts, Sarah? What was the point of listening to all of this?" I think I screamed at my phone when she said so. Only with years more of listening, have I been able to place the source of my distress. Serial's producers craft a narrative so compelling that listeners desire a story's ending: the triumph, the closure, but at the very least, a conclusion. That, however, is exactly what journalism cannot provide. With Serial, it can be hard not to feel misled. Which is what makes Sarah Koenig's monologue at the end of season three so interesting. Season three did not focus on a single story, nor as Koenig says, "the egregious injustices."[82] They focused on "normal cases," the everyday occurrences, the unremarkable details, in other words, "just the facts." Even still, the narrative construction in her final plea shines through. Through eight intricate, beautiful stories, she has gained the listeners trust and now she is telling us what she would do differently, he unsolicited advice for what could be done about criminal justice in America. They are just her suggestions, the most important of which is "doubt more, rest on laurels less." It's hardly a clarion call, but it's not

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[79] Benjamin, "The Storyteller."

[80] David Mikkelson, "Dragnet 'Just the Facts'."

[81] Benjamin, "The Storyteller."

[82] Sarah Koenig, "Serial."

strictly objective either. Critics have called moves such as these “activist journalism,” sacrificing integrity and pursuit of truth and hiding it in the veneer of just telling a story.

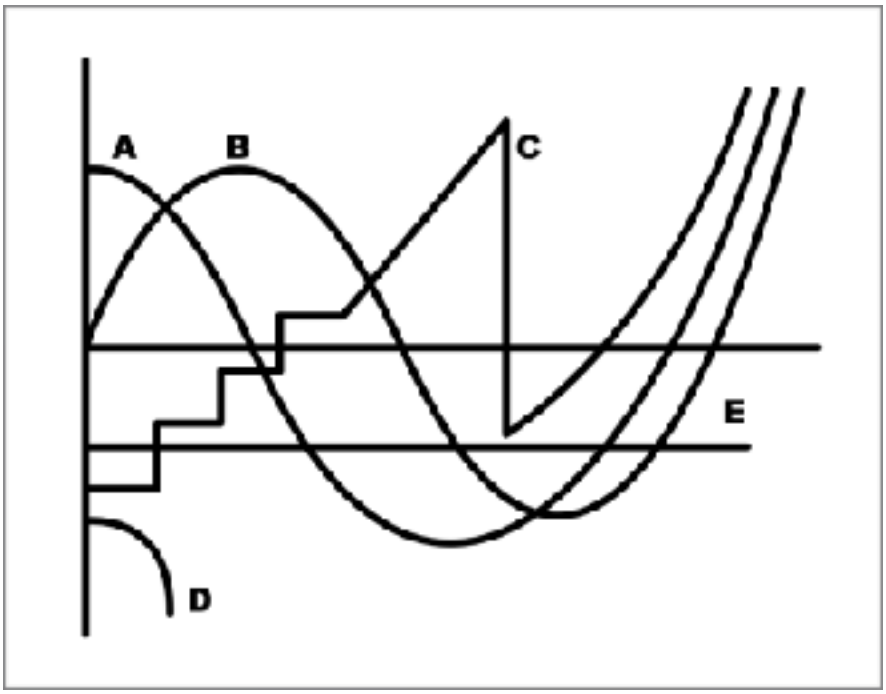

Figure 1: The Shape of Stories

Above is a recreation of Kurt Vonnegut’s graph which he called “The Shape of Stories.” The axis are very simple. The y-axis, from top to bottom, tracks good fortune to ill fortune. He calls it the G-I axis. The x-axis, from left to right, measures time. He calls it the B-E axis, and which he labels with a wry smile, “Beginning, Entropy.”[83] The five lines each represent a class of story and are as follows:

A. Man in Hole
B. Boy Meets Girl
C. Cinderella
D. Metamorphosis
E. Hamlet

Throughout the lecture in which he presents this material, it can be hard to discern whether Vonnegut is serious about what he is saying, though apparently it was his rejected masters thesis. He maintains the perfect composure of half professorial prophet and half sardonic Cassandra. “Man In Hole” is ubiquitous, he says. It is about some one who (1) loses what they have, (2) regains it, and (3) learns something in the process such that they end up even better than when

[83] Kurt Vonnegut, “The Shape of Stories.”

they started. “Boy Meets Girl” is similar, the only difference is that the thing lost has to be gained first. Cinderella has a slightly more complex structure, a piece-wise ascendance into good fortune, only for it to be taken away in the blink of an eye, and eventually reinstated to the point of infinite happiness. In his book, *A Man Without a Country*, he notes Cinderella’s similarity to the New Testament. For all I can understand, Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* might just be included for comedic effect: “very pessimistic. Starts down here. There is this rather unattractive, not particularly nice looking, not very personable, young man who has a really lousy job and disagreeable relatives. And so it’s time for him to go to work again, and he is turned into a cockroach.”[84] The end.

The inclusion of *Hamlet* is what makes “The Shape of Stories” such an important meditation on narrative. Though much happens in *Hamlet*, Vonnegut’s line never changes along the axis of good or ill fourteen. In his lectures, Vonnegut walks us through the plot in detail: Prince Hamlet talks with the apparition of his late father, he stages *The Murder of Gonzago*, manically stabs Polonius, and finally, most of the royal family dies. But none of this registers as either good nor bad. Vonnegut explains, “There’s a reason we recognize *Hamlet* as a masterpiece: it’s that Shakespeare told us the truth, and people so rarely tell us the truth in this rise and fall here [indicates graph]. The truth is, we know so little about life, we don’t really know what the good news is and what the bad news is.”[85] It seems as if Vonnegut is putting narrative in direct opposition to truth. To assume one can make a normative judgment about what has happened if beyond the realm of human capacity.

Benjamin also celebrates this lack of assessment in Greek history. “Herodotus offers no explanations,” he writes, “His report is the driest. This is why this story from ancient Egypt is still capable after thousands of years of arousing astonishment and thoughtfulness.”[86] The wonder of a story without explanation was that it would be interpreted again and again in perpetuity, thus accusing more meaning over time. Like “seeds go grain which have lain for centuries” story’s “retain their germinative power to this day.”[87] Benjamin and Vonnegut’s analyses raise important questions. If the best stories offer no interpretation about what has happened, why is the story necessary in the first place? Or slightly modified, if a story is supposed to be nothing more than a blank slate on which each listener draws their own meaning, how does such a paradigm not descend into a vapid, anything-goes relativism? The answer cannot be deduced in entirety, but the path to answer begins by remembering the process of storytelling: first recounting what happened and making sense of what happened, and then immediately questioning that very account and sense-making, in perpetuity.

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[84] Kurt Vonnegut, The Shape of Stories.

[85] Vonnegut.

[86] Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” 90.

[87] Benjamin, 90.

A Return To Speech

In *De Interpretatione,* Aristotle says "spoken sounds are symbols of affections in the soul."[88] The statement maintains a beautiful resonance as a standalone quote, but Aristotle is specifically situating spoken sounds between mental experience and written words. All affections of the soul are the same because they are the response in similar people to objects in the real world, he argues. The relationship between affections in the soul and the spoken word, however, is completely dependent on contextualized community. He was aware that spoken language exists in multiplicity, denoting reference and implying meaning in different manners depending on how each individual and group decides. The transfer to from spoken to written beget even another act of translation.

These ideas may seem self-evident, but such questions would underpin the entire academic fields of linguistics and semiotics in the 20th century. Ferdinand de Saussure, sometimes called the father of linguistics, greatest contribution to the field was his posthumously assembled book, *Course in General Linguistics*, in which he writes about how sound and thought become indistinguishable: "An idea becomes fixed in a sound and a sound becomes the sign of an idea."[89] Though a detailed analysis of linguistic and semiotic theory are beyond the scope of this thesis, throughout this chapter, I will try to show how these ideas have continued to shape conversation about the politics of speech to this day.

In this sense, the most obvious element of a podcast may also be one of its most profound. The substrate of a podcast is the spoken word. But what are the constituent parts of speech? The human voice operates at the nexus of two complex systems of meaning making: language and sound. This analysis will focus on three elements at this nexus: tone, cadence, and position. The spoken word reveals how intimately speech is tied to the character who speaks it. It is one person's voice coming from one place, rather than a "person-less" voice coming from nowhere. Furthermore, speech is continuous and of indeterminate length. When being spoken to, you are at least temporarily beholden to the entirety of what you are being told. There is no way to skip pages.

The spoken word is also significant for what it is not: an image, or written text. Underlying my entire analysis is a concert taken right out of McLuhan's *Understanding Media*. As I said in the introduction, the content of podcasts is in no way meaningfully distinguishable from that of a printed newspaper, cable news, or a news website. But in choosing to speak that news to you, rather than show you images of what happened, or have you read an account, subtle yet powerful arguments are being employed. While images are too defining, the written word, lacking the

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[88] Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 1.

[89] Saussure et al., *Course in General Linguistics*, 117.

elements of sound, is rendered too ambiguous. Even though text often contains attribution, one is not simultaneously confronted with speaker and speech in the same way as when listening. In political analysis, the connection of speech and speaker is a crucial different between the spoken and written word. Some linguists hypothesize that oral language could be 100,000 years old, making it a precursor to everything else discussed in this thesis: technology, politics, and even history. Podcasts are just people talking to one another, but in that alone, they invoke arguments from pre-history.

Speech Acts

Emmanuel Lévinas, the 20th century philosopher, argued an unconventional interpretation of conversation in his two seminal works *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*. The root of Lévinas's ethics started between you and one single individual. This person he called "the other." "To approach the other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it."[90] Approaching the other in conversation for Lévinas was a monumental task but not a complicated one. Though you would approach with a simple conception of the other, like assessing a book only by its cover, the other's expression would prove just how incomplete your understanding really was. "It is therefore to receive from the other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity."[91] The other is unknowable, not unlike the concept of the infinite. In such a presence, one had instant and complete responsibility.

It's a radical proposition in multiple ways. Lévinas believed approaching the other was an incomprehensible act, like opening a book and realizing it contains an entire world which your conception of the cover could never understand. As such, every attempted conversation, every act of "saying" had its own implicit argument, the Hebrew word "Hineni," which can be translated "here I am or" or often "behold me." The word Hineni is first spoken in the Hebrew Bible by Abraham when asked by God to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. He says it three time during the story of his almost sacrificing his only son.

> [1] And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.
>
> [7] And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

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[90] Lévinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, 51.

[91] Lévinas, 51.

> [11] And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. [12] And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.[92]

Abraham welcomes both God, his son, and the angel with the same complete willingness to obligate himself to them. Leonard Cohen included the word is the titular song of his final album "You Want It Darker." Growling "Hineni, hineni, I'm ready my lord" each chorus above the dark drone of the Quebec-based Shaar Hashomayim choir. When asked why he included it he responded:

> That 'hineni,' that declaration of readiness no matter what the outcome, that's a part of everyone's soul. We all are motivated by deep impulses and deep appetites to serve, even though we may not be able to locate that which we are willing to serve. So, this is just a part of my nature, and I think everybody else's nature, to offer oneself at the critical moment when the emergency becomes articulate. It's only when the emergency becomes articulate that we can locate that willingness to serve.[93]

Responding with "hineni" means the emergency of existing with others is brought to the fore. Conversation melts all ego and brings one into total obligation to those around them. Lévinas furthers his argument by writing that "language as saying is an ethical openness to others." Lies, for Lévinas included a said without saying; words are exchanged, but without any implication of openness to hear from whom you are imposing yourself on. Unfortunately, it seems as if more of our conversation take the manner of said without saying, especially online. Luckily, Lévinas hypothesized the presence of "the other to the other" as well; he called them "the third." In the presence of "the third," interaction becomes more complicated. "The other" demanding complete responsibility now seems simple, but there is no way to be completely beholden to two people at once. Our responsibility to "the other" is a simple ethic, but "the third" introduces politics, the mediating of our ethical obligations to multiple people.

"Saying is ethical sincerity insofar as it is exposition…But man can repress his saying, and his ability to keep silent, to withhold oneself, is the ability to be political."[94] I agree with Lévinas insofar as silence is political, but I do not think is opposite to ethics, as he seems to imply. Choosing when one can or cannot, or should or should not speak, can be an ethical necessity depending on the situation. The problem occurs when we continue to produce to speech, "the said," without respecting the implication of our speech act, "the saying." To speak is a specific kind of act, and necessitates specific care. Podcasts, regardless of the content, give one a way to

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[92] Genesis, 22: 1-12

[93] Mason, "Three Iconic Musicians on Artistic Creation — and Its Importance Now."

[94] Richard Kearney, 29.

behold the act of saying. They are a way to model forms of conversation and the implications therein. They are a way to asses what speech itself can do.

In the prologue to *The Human Condition,* Arendt warns of a time when we can no longer speak about that which we can do. This liability remains ever-present. The first transatlantic radio broadcast was sent by Guglielmo Marconi in 1902, and the first public broadcast was of the New York Metropolitan Opera in 1910. As the medium reached saturation in the coming decades, Joseph Goebbels would recognize the medium's profound new power. "We live in the age of the masses; the masses rightly demand that they participate in the great events of the day. The radio is the most influential and important intermediary between a spiritual movement and the nation, between the idea and the people," he says in 1933.[95] German technologists had invented a new, extremely cheap radio receiver, the Volksempfänger, which made it possible for even the poorest German to afford a radio. Geobbles took advantage of this newfound ability (and the German citizens complete inexperience with it) to help incite World War II and The Holocaust. This dark examples reminds us of the implications in thoughtless acts of speech.

The Two Way

Speech is only half of the equation, though the reciprocal action, listening, is more rarely considered. In early radio, these two functions were clearly delineated by the technological limitations at the time. Transmitters and receivers were separate machines with different functions to play in moving signal between locations. In the 1920's, the first machine was made that could do both. Called a "transceiver," the device was built with circuitry that was able to both encode and decode radio signal, finally allowing for "two way" conversation. Radio was simply mimicking what we know, but sometimes forget, about ourselves: a willingness to contribute and consider are necessary for successful conversation.

Over the past two year, I have paid a new attention to how the contours of speech manifest in conversation and discussion. I have likely conducted nearly 100 formal interviews over the past two years. I have interviewed fellow classmates, professors, students and teachers at other colleges. I've also been forced off the college campus, interviewing residents of retirement communities, foster youth, and chief executives.

I will focus on the patterns that ran throughout each conversation. What answers did interviewees keep returning to? What topics were impossible to broach? What made for a great interview? What killed it? Every conversation had an arc on which it travelled. And while each was distinct, the primary influence on where each discussion went was me: my idea of what I wanted to hear, my preconceived notions of who the other person was, and my biases—even when unknown to myself—about why I was talking to them in the first place.

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[95] Joseph Goebbels, *Der Rundfunk Als Achte Großmacht.*

Many of the interviews were conducted for a class on Human Centered Design, which foregoes one-size-fits-all solutions, and instead lets the specific experiences of the individual guide the design process. So when interviewing, I found myself asking a lot of follow-up questions. Conversations were fast-paced, and typically long. Who doesn't love talking about themselves? The design guide to interviewing emphasizes asking open-ended questions, focusing on emotions, and giving time for the interviewee to collect their thoughts. A lot of the people I talked to contradicted themselves, but from that tension, often arose the crux of the problem at hand.

One issue with focusing on emotion is that affect rarely captures the entirety of what one is trying to convey. Dean in *Blog Theory*, is careful to point out the difference between the "signifying aspect" and "affective prompts" within language, which is embedded in the Lacanian psychoanalytical framework fo separating "enunciated" and "enunciation" (which itself tied back to Emmanuel Lévinas).[96] Emotion is one aspect which speech conveys better than written mediums, but not because it is *more* present. Writing can be saturated with emotion, and online, rage is often the most common. Speech is better because it conveys *more nuanced* emotion. Navigating each conversation, I learned to pay attention to emotion not to follow it blindly, but to utilize those cues to layer my understanding of the mere words I was hearing. Podcasts have the benefit of allowing listeners to hear this emotion in speech without, as I was having to, provide a remedy or solution to the issues being discussed.

There was another limitation to interviewing for design. I always had a filter. No matter how hard I tried to just listen, I could not do it. After all, it was my job to design a product for the person to whom I was talking. No matter how much I just wanted to hear their story—in all its complexity and nuance—I had to identify the problem, and then, propose a solution. This forced me to oversimplify what they said, to take the free-wheeling nature of conversation and boil it down to a clearly articulated paradigm. Being forced to offer a solutions is, in fact, a liability to truly getting to know another person. People are more than the summation of their immediate needs. They have experiences from the past and aspirations for the future. They have innumerable stories that, as we all know, deteriorate when stuffed into a Mad Lib like structure. I loved every interview I did for my design class, but I couldn't shake the feeling that there existed another layer—one that I could not attain through the design framework alone.

I also did over fifteen interviews for an article on *The Claremont Independent*, the lone conservative publication at the Claremont Colleges. Despite continuous calls for boycotts of the paper and widespread condemnation of the staff, they tirelessly report on incidents of liberal bias which occur on the Claremont College campuses. For the piece, my co-author and I interviewed people on all sides of the issue. We talked to their editor-in-chief and a former staff writer who was kicked out for not towing the party line. We tracked down the founder, who started the

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[96] Dean, *Blog Theory*, 101.

publication in 1989, and a writer who had only been on staff for a matter of months. By the end of a few month's worth of interviewing, I was relatively confident I knew more about this publication than just about anyone.

I had not, however, learned much of anything about the people with whom I had talked. In fact, as the piece progressed, I learned less and less from each conversation. The more the article coalesced in my mind, the more I began ignoring information which did not confirm that idea. Especially when interviewing members of the publication themselves—who often assume everyone just wants to "expose" them—I found myself actually trying to influence what they said. I would think to myself, "if only we could get the editor of The Independent to admit to x, y, or z" or "our piece would be made if we had a quote which said a, b, or c." Was it dishonest journalism to push our interviewees to say publicly what we believed to already be true? I don't pretend to have the answer, but I was surprised by the degree to which we had to make editorial decisions in just about everything we did. Even my best attempt at objective reporting suffered the most prevalent kind of bias—bias by omission. In an interview I did with Natalie Bau Tram Lee, a Campus Reform Correspondent. My questions were long, and often leading.

There is only one lesson that I am confident applied to every single interview: meet people where they are. That may mean ambushing an author while they are signing their own book or driving across Los Angeles to meet for dinner at a Jack in the Box. Meet people where they are—and appreciate them when they do. Sitting down with a complete stranger and talking candidly is not easy. I was constantly humbled by people's willingness to share their stories with me. Even when my ultimate aim was to call into question what I was being told, as was the case while reporting on *The Claremont Independent*, a respect for the process itself was necessary to candidly exchanging ideas. Regaining this appreciation is inevitably a lengthy, iterative project, largely predicted on good-faith effort and slowly-established trust, the kind that can only come when we stand behind our own words and acknowledge the full person who is speaking with us. The medium of speech is well poised for this task.

Speech-to-Text

Today "Speech-to-Text" refers to a branch of study at the nexus of linguistics and computer science where computational programs translate audio signal into the written word. The field is sometimes abbreviated STT or called automatic speech recognition (ASR). The process involves three computationally intensive steps: recording, phoneme modeling, and language modeling.

First, a microphone translates analogue sound waves into digitally comprehensible binary encoding, an extremely long series of zeros and ones. This is also the first point of information loss. Sound waves are known as longitudinal waves meaning they displace the medium through which they move in continuous, alternating cycles of compression and rarefaction. The digital world, however, is discrete. There only exists on and off. Digital audio must try to capture

continuity through frequent repetition. Like a video mimics continuity of motion by taking 30 pictures per second, so does digital audio reproduce its analogue counterpart by taking frequent sound "samples." Today's most common rate is 441,000 samples per second. Though for many, a rate of sampling this high is "psycho-acoustically indistinguishable" from analogue sound, some audiophiles adamantly believe vital information will always be lost in this transition from the continuous to the separate.[97]

The next step is to take the digital audio, coded in binary bits, and run it against an acoustic model, a statistically weighted algorithm which matches common patterns of acoustic information to well-known phonemes in the target language. Advancements in convolutional neural networks (better known as "deep" machine learning) have drastically improved this pairing process. By the end, there exists a chronological set of the smallest sound units in language. Examples include the /b/ sound in "boy" or the /sh/ sound in "fish." Similar types of modeling have also been implemented with extreme success by companies such as Shazam, which can identify an entire song even with only a few seconds of audio.

In the final step, the set of phonemes has to be mapped to actual words in the target language. While this may seem like the simplest translation, the remarkable ambiguity of language is quickly revealed in the difficulty of this process. Computational linguists do not have to look far for their favorite example of this phenomena. As you can see, "recognize speech" (rekəgnaız spi:tʃ) and "wreck a nice beach" (rek eı naıs bi:tʃ) have remarkably similar phonemic transcriptions. Unless the clarity of the original audio is second-to-none, it is likely that these phonemic transcriptions may be indistinguishable from one another. To decide which to chose, programmers implement a third translation layer, called a language model. Language models asses all of the words around the phonemes in question and attempts to deduce which set of the words in the target language has the highest relative probability of occurring. By analyzing massive troves of language that have come before—dictionaries, literary cannons, and my personal favorite, the leaked Enron emails from the 2001 scandal—programmers can deduce which words typically come after one another. It's all just probability. For instance, if a language model were trained on all of Obama's speeches, it would always assume one word to come after "yes we."

A description of machine translation may seem out of place in a politics thesis, but I include it for two reasons. The first is practical. As these processes are further refined, accuracy increases and computational burden decreases. As already evidenced by the explosion of smart speakers, Speech-To-Text systems will soon become ubiquitous. Speech data was once outside the purview of easy interpretation by digital machines but is becoming as easily digested as text and location data. It will be the next treasure trove for our information-ravenous digital ecosystem to ingest.

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[97] Keith Howard, "Ringing False."

The second reason is more philosophical. Machine translation, as a specific subset of translation more generally makes an interesting argument by omission. While powerful, there are many functions of translation that remain outside the capacity of machines. Here is a list of news headlines that all have multiple meanings depending on information that reside outside the words themselves.

> Iraqi Head Seeks Arms
> Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant
> Stolen Painting Found by Tree
> Kids Make Nutritious Snacks
> Local HS Dropouts Cut in Half
> Obesity Study Looks for Larger Test Group
> Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges
> Hospitals Are Sued by Seven Foot Doctors
> British Left Waffles on Falkland Islands[98]

These sentences expose the cases where all three steps of machine translation have worked perfectly: sound is translated to binary bits, which are translated to phonemes, which are ultimately translated to the written words. The fidelity is perfect. The words transcribed exactly match the words uttered. And yet, there is still one unresolved aspect: meaning.

In 1923, Walter Benjamin wrote the essay "The Task of the Translator." Though Benjamin would contribute numerous works to translation theory and, more specifically, intertextual theory, his seminal work has become the most famous. For Benjamin, "the relationship between content and language is quite different in the original and in the translation."[99] "Surface content" he says rather flippantly, is easily "extracted and transmitted."[100] Surface content include items that traditional journalism pays the most attention to: who? what? when? where?, the facts. But for Benjamin, "fidelity in the translation of individual words can almost never fully reproduce the meaning they have in the original." Translations which employ "a literal rendering of syntax"—as machine translation does—"completely demolishes the theory of reproduction of meaning and is a direct threat to comprehensibility."[101] Meaning, for Benjamin, did not reside in the individual words themselves.

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[98] Slides provided by Pomona Professor of Computer Science, Dave Kaucheck.

[99] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of The Translator."

[100] Benjamin.

[101] Benjamin.

Benjamin writes, “Without distinguishing *intended object* from the *mode of intention*, no firm grasp of the basic law of philosophy of language can be achieved” [emphasis added].[102] In plain English, this means that “what you say” and “how you say it” should always be analyzed separately. He gives an example of referencing the word “bread” in both French and German. The *intended object* is the same: a warm, leavened, loaf of flour, but the *mode of intention* is different. The most obvious difference is spelling and pronunciation, but those words also have their own sets of ideas separate from the object itself and distant from one another. When translating “pain” to “brot” those *modes of intention* come into conflict with one another. Discussion of bread is self-evident, but what bread *means* in each language is forced into contention.

Benjamin believed that the act of translation was a near sacred act, which would ultimately propel us towards a “pure language” which is “supplemented and reconciled in their mode of signification.”[103] In other words, all meaning from various language is harmonized into one central truth. I, as did Benjamin, doubt the likeliness of this ever happening. That being said, his analysis, if applied explicitly to journalism makes an interesting political statement. What if instead there were “The Task of The Journalist,” and that task was to translate experience from the site of occurrence to individuals who were not there. To extend the metaphor further, instead of *intended object* and *mode of intention*, there were instead the words “denotation” and “connotation.” Denotation could be thought of as “the facts,” the “who, what, when, where” of the situation, or to use Benjamin’s example: the bread. Connotation is everything that those fact imply when reported on in different ways, the *mode of intention* of different reporters. For Benjamin, this is the difference in how the French and German people signified bread. For this metaphor, it could be when Fox and MSNBC might chose to define an event as terrorism. Even when reporting on the same denoted events, these two run the opposite direction with the connotations.

Translation, in this paradigm, becomes systematically trying to move through different interpretation of the same events. Every speech act is in some ways an act of translation. It both denotes a topic and includes a connotative argument as well. With each conversation, individuals circle the topic at hand, exchanging connotations and layering them into their own understandings. Speech has to be more than the simple transfer of information, because that ignores the most critical aspect, the inherent argument over meaning. This is ultimately what podcasts reintroduce with the return to the spoken word, an ecosystem which brings connotation back to the fore, allowing for understanding to be constructed in a more complete manner.

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[102] Benjamin.

[103] Benjamin.

A Retreat From Technology

Of all the "returns" that podcasting presents, returning to a time before technology perhaps makes the least sense on its face. Podcasting is a product of advances in technology, most specifically the technology this chapter will critique most pointedly, the internet. The first podcast (though this title is disputed by some)[104] was "Open Source," produced by Christopher Lydon at WBUR beginning in 2003. The need for an alternative to radio or written news was driven by the coverage leading up to the Iraq War. Lydon expressed interest in a bi-directional conversation that was not hemmed in by "false balance."[105] "We thought that the internet could erase the limitations of radio," producer Mary McGrath said to *Wired* in 2017. This argument feels typical of the internet boosterism prevalent at the turn of the millennia.

For McGrath, podcasting was an alternative conversation to the mainstream likes of NPR. Speaking of the present day, she said, "One of the reasons I think podcasting is having another moment right now, just like it was during the Iraq War, is because of the Trump campaign: people need help processing where we are in America, and where we're going." On the one hand, I agree with her. The Trump era, like the 9/11 era before, is proving impervious to comprehension. It's not just another in our broader conception of America politics, seemingly *every* event challenges our entire paradigm, forcing us to rewrite the rules in real time.

But the explanation for today's podcasting "golden age" is different in one crucial way. Today's podcasting resurgence is not *because* of the internet, it is *against* the internet. That is not because podcasting as a medium has changed, however, but because the internet has. In 2003, the web was a vastly different place. A majority of the U.S. population had just come online in the past two years.[106] None of the platforms which now mediate our entire online lives even existed: smartphones, Facebook, and Twitter. All Google did was search. 2003 was when the internet was called "The Information Superhighway," the structure by which we would all become more informed, more connected, and more free. Mark Andrejevic, Pomona professor of media studies discusses how in only one short decade, the internet forced us to reconcile anew with the incomplete nature of our own understanding. "It is not just that there is more information available, but that this very surfeit has highlighted the incompleteness of any individual account. An era of information overload coincides, in other words, with the reflexive recognition of the constructed and partial nature of representation."[107] The internet's exponential explosion far outpaced our capacity to make use of it in any meaningful way. Savvy entrepreneurs seized on

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[104] No one contends that Lydon was the first to release syndicated audio over the internet via RSS. He just didn't call it podcasting at the time. BBC Journalist Ben Hammersley is credited with creating the word in February of 2004.

[105] Locke, "The First Podcast."

[106] Internet Live Stats, "U.S. Internet Users."

[107] Andrejevic, *Infoglut*, 15.

that discrepancy and found ways to help us navigate the swarm. They gave us useful heuristics like algorithmic sorting, digital public squares, and augmented reality overlays. The widowed down what we actually needed to consider to a very small subset of decisions, “like?,” “search?,” “scroll?,” while convincing us that we were still making informed, rational choices.

There is one belief, espoused by no technologist but readily considered by historians and columnist that “our digital technology is still too new”[108] or more pessimistic yet, to borrow Ross Douthat’s April 13m 2019 article in *The New York Times*, “The Only Answer Is Less Internet.”[109] History, coinciding with the beginning of writing, began with the invention of clay tablets roughly 5000 years ago. Lapham points out other monumental steps: the codex (1700 years old) and moveable type (1000 years old). Facebook was founded in 2004. Maybe, quite simply, we haven’t figured out how to accommodate it. “The internet is blessed with undoubtedly miraculous applications, but language is not yet one of them.”[110] Podcasting, predating all of that, provides a medium which was withstood those forces. Podcasts are not ripe for going viral. They are addictive like graphical interfaces. They are not easily distilled for comprehension by ranking algorithms. The digitally mediation of the internet has obliterated the line between political speech and action by attempting to smash them into one another. Political theory understands the implications of time and space in mediating political spaces. When digital media tries to change that, all other structures buckle as well. Podcasting, by returning to a time before that, re-instantiates some of those former structures.

Prometheus and the Myth of Progress

The legend of Prometheus was likely first recorded by Hesiod in *Theogony* around 700 BCE. Prometheus’s name combines the Greek word máthisi or “learning” and pró or “before / in front of.” His named is typically thought to imply “forethought” or even more so, “one who looks to the future, who discovers.” He is most famously remembered in his capacity as discovering fire and providing it to humans.

There is a much less frequently cited version of the legend as well, the one Protagoras told Socrates in the dialogue recorded by Plato. In this dialogue, Protagoras introduces two lesser referenced characters, Epimetheseus, Prometheus’s brother and Hermes. Epimetheseus exists as a foil, he signifies afterthought rather than forethought. The brothers are tasked with the creation of humans from “a mixture made of earth and fire”[111] and after doing so, to “deal to each the equipment of his proper faculty.” Epimetheus—using his proclivity towards wisdom, remembrance, and deliberation—asks his brother for the responsibility of giving each animal its

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[108] Lewis H. Lapham, “Word Order.”

[109] Douthat, “The Only Answer Is Less Internet.”

[110] Lewis H. Lapham, “Word Order.”

[111] Plato and Lamb, *Plato*, [320d].

faculty. He does so in his typically methodical way, via the "principle of compensation." A gazelle can be fast, but does not obtain strength, a bear vice versa; no one can have it all. The schema works well until all animals have their abilities, with one oversight. Epimetheus had forgotten to bestow any faculty to humans. Protagoras recites, "Now Epimetheus, being not so wise as he might be, heedlessly squandered his stock of properties on the brutes; he still had left unequipped the race of men and was at a loss what to do with it."[112]

For this mistake, Epimetheus is often cast as careless or even apathetic to the fate of humans. He leaves humanity hamstrung, necessitating they "constantly struggle to exceed [their] abilities to survive."[113] To this condition, Prometheus, valiant savior, provides the remedy, continuing: "Then Prometheus, in his perplexity as to what preservation he could devise for man, stole from Hephaestus and Athena wisdom in the arts together with fire—since by no means without fire could it be acquired or helpfully used by any—and he handed it there and then as a gift to man."[114] This haste is what is celebrated in Prometheus; from "perplexity" he has a stroke of genius, a moment of inspiration, seeing a possible future and enacting it to become the present. Some are satisfied with this reading and see it as a charge for humans to emulate the cunning of the god who kept them alive. Bernard Stiegler has a different view, writing in *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* that we should be wary of the negative connotations in Protagoras's rendition. First, Stiegler reminds us that humanity's existence is the "fruit of a double fault—an act of forgetting [by Epimetheus], then of theft [by Prometheus]." It is as if to say that our neglect can only be remedied by our tools, a promise made two millennia ago and still today by the latest smartphone apps. What happens next, however, is perhaps the most significant—and almost never mentioned. "Now although man acquired in this way the wisdom of daily life, civic wisdom he had not, since this was in the possession of Zeus."

Prometheus had stolen wisdom from Athena and the technology of fire made up for the lack of innate ability. But neither of these individual capacities alone allowed humans to thrive. We were capable of banding together, but that did not mean we lived in peace. "Now as often as they were banded together they did wrong to one another through the lack of civic art, [322c] and thus they began to be scattered again and to perish. So Zeus, fearing that our race was in danger of utter destruction, sent Hermes to bring respect and right among men." Here we see that Protagoras was already delineating three separate concepts about humanity: hindsight, foresight, and civic art. They are conveniently linked to the names of the gods: Epimetheus, Prometheus, and Hermes. The etymology of Hermes is, in fact, the most telling. As professor Alexander R.

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[112] Plato and Lamb, *Plato*, [321b].

[113] Bridle, *New Dark Age*, 133.

[114] Plato and Lamb, *Plato*, [321c].

Galloway writes, “This is why politics is always a question of the ‘hermeneutic community,’ that is, the ad hoc translation and interpretation of real political dynamics; it comes from Hermes.”[115]

This interpretation of the Greek myth about humanity would seem to suggest that conversation is not only innate to human survival, but also separate and distinct from wisdom about the past and intelligence to predict the future. Conversation is politics, and politics is what is needed to build society.

Network Effect

This centering of conversation in founding myth made my biggest revelation while making DisCo all the more startling: almost nobody here in Claremont actually wants to talk. Well, of course, they want to talk generally—to their friends, on Facebook—they just do not want to talk to me, the guy with the recorder, who is apparently hellbent on exposing them to the world.

The reticence to reordered interviews spanned the entire college community. There were plenty of students who would confide in me personally, but rather not have their (likely minority, likely dissenting) view espoused to the world. This, I am sure, is a common problem for reporters. There has no been a time in recent memory where government, the United States leading the charge, has been so openly hostile to reporters. On April 22, 2019, White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders set a new record for time without a press conference, 42 days. She has only conducted two this year, and has not even totaled an hour of taking reporter’s questions. She even admitted under oath to the Mueller investigation that she had lied to the press. The Trump White House obviously has zero regard for the works of journalists.

I was surprised that so many well-meaning liberals at Claremont took a similar attitude. I can be relatively confident their unwillingness did not stem from their lack of trust in their own words. Proclamation of political stance through Facebook posts and comment wars seems to be a part-time job for some on campus. Their hesitancy seemed to stem from a lack of trust in my ability to represent what they said. To relinquish control of the narrative to me, who could twist recordings of their words any way I pleased, seemed not worth the risk. But I wonder if speaking directly into the digitally-networked void ultimately treated their words any better? According to Byung-Chul Han in *In the Swarm*, digital media has propelled us into a period of “Demediatization,” or in other words, a total purge of any middleman. Journalists who may misrepresent quotes, press agents who may deny access, and broadcast producers who may cut an interview short are all quickly becoming relics of the past. Now everyone is their own publicist and press agent. Social media removes barriers between the individual and the world.

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[115] Alexander R. Galloway, “Brometheanism.”

"General demediatization is putting an end to the era of *representation*. Instead, everyone wants to be *present* personally and directly—to *present* his or her opinion without a middleman."[116] Han sees this trend towards direct presentation as troubling for politics. "Representation," he says, has "altogether salutary effects."[117] It allows for filtering and refinement of ideas before implementation. They allow politicians to "insist on a standpoint" and "walk ahead of [constituents] with a vision,"[118] a sense of future that is not flattened and destroyed by the immediacy of the immediacy of digital platforms like Facebook.

I understand that lambasting Facebook is in vogue. It's dangerous for our children.[119] It's making us all lonely.[120] It's even "ripping our society apart."[121] Pundits, scientists and even former Facebook executives have all tried to explain the detriments of the site, but we each have personal experience that suggests otherwise: "I use Facebook, and I'm fine!" It's hard to see how Facebook might actually be a cause to society's current problems because in admitting that fact, we also have to implicate ourselves. It's easier to ignore Facebook's obvious shortcomings, giving ourselves a free ride in the process. But there are now 2.7 billion people on a Facebook run platform, almost one third of the world's population. Two in three users check the site every day.[122] The aggregate of each of us turning a blind eye to our use of Facebook—or any digitally mediated communication network—quickly becomes willful negligence on a global scale. Further examination reveals some of the problems and shows the distinction of podcasts.

New York Times technology columnist Farhad Manjoo, in a macabre half-joke, once called Facebook's News Feed "the most influential source of information in the history of civilization."[123] Dark humor is funny because it reframes uncomfortable truths. The internet has codified an age in which there is too much information for us to process. There are 440 million actively maintained blogs, not to mention 500 million tweets per day.[124] Rather than spending all day scouring the web for the best content to consume, we instead have to rely on shortcuts. Perhaps we put our trust in a name, like *The New York Times* or Sean Hannity. Another option is an algorithm. The Reuters Digital News Report for 2017 found that 64 percent of people under

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[116] Han, *In the Swarm*, 16.

[117] Han, 16.

[118] Han, 17.

[119] O'Keeffe, Clarke-Pearson, and Media, "The Impact of Social Media on Children, Adolescents, and Families."

[120] Marche, "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?"

[121] Vincent, "Former Facebook Exec Says Social Media Is Ripping Apart Society."

[122] "Facebook Users Worldwide 2018."

[123] Manjoo, "Can Facebook Fix Its Own Worst Bug?"

[124] "Twitter Usage Statistics - Internet Live Stats."

35 had their news selected by an algorithm, while only 34 percent had the stories they read chosen by an editor.[125]

Algorithms are not inherently bad. They are powerful tools that can expedite repetitive processes and augment difficult human decision making. But make no mistake, the algorithm that decides what you see on Facebook is optimized for one goal alone—to ensure that you "engage" with whatever is put in front of you. To that end, Facebook has become remarkably effective. Revenue generated per user climbed 27 percent in 2017. Executives have even started warning investors that they are running out of room in which to show us ads. Facebook's economic model was prescient of the digital age, one where we ourselves—our interests, habits, and patterns of behavior—became the product. The payoff made a college dropout one of the wealthiest people in the world in little over a decade. Unfortunately, as the litany of Facebook scandals over the past two years have exposed, we are only beginning to reconcile the consequences of this new business model. In section one, I discussed the implications of the penny press on the partisan press in the early nineteenth century. As the steam powered press made the price printing negligible, newsstands became the more profitable method of distribution over mailed subscription.

The result, however, was that editors no longer had a way to know who was reading their paper. Pandering to partisan loyalties now became a liability rather than a boon. The real value proposition of Facebook, however, is intimate knowledge of you, the user. Editors (and advertisers) now have a multi-vector, machine-learning enhanced, big-data portrait of exactly who you are and what you want to see. To add insult to injury, I struggle to see what users receive in return: free access to a service riddled with flaws. The platform has enabled, to degrees previously unseen, an unwitting passivity in how we see both ourselves and the world around us. It is clear that Facebook is not an accurate representation of real life. We all know the site induces the imposter syndrome, the idea that when we constantly compare our internal conceptions of ourselves to the highly manicured online profiles of our friends, we cannot help but feel inferior. We can logically deduce that our friends' profiles are not real, but when peering through the online veneer, this is easy to forget.

Catalina Toma, an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, discovered something I find even more troubling. Toma found that after only five minutes of scrolling through Facebook profiles, people often experienced a significant boost in self-esteem.[126] We know that our own profiles are not real. Yet, they are where we turn for affirmation — not our close relationships, accomplishments, interests, or passions — to make ourselves happy. It is as if we only take comfort in the conception of ourselves which we constructed for everyone else. Speech, as described in the previous chapter, does the exact opposite. It intimately ties us to the

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[125] Nic Newman et al., "Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018."

[126] Toma, "Affirming the Self through Online Profiles."

words we produce, laying bare to ourselves the incompleteness of our own thought. Facebook, on the other hand, exasperates a kind of voyeurism in which we gaze upon a world, assembled by programmers to exploit confirmation bias, and statistically weighted to ensure that we keep coming back. We resign to expressing our autonomy in "likes" and 12-word-comments, and hide in a self-conception that, while technically made by us, belongs to everyone else. We now know that opportunists are actively exploiting the site to delegitimize our political speech. Yet, we continue to participate in what Debord calls "integrated political spectacle."[127] We'd rather look at ourselves being looked at, than actually engage in the complexities that come with real voice.

Jodi Dean, Professor of Political Science at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in New York, does an excellent job of showing how our personal decisions online are actually part of collective political structures in her 2010 *Blog Theory.* Though blogs now seem like a bygone era and in 2010, Facebook only had one fifth of the reach it has today, her works remains prescient of today. Her argument rests of the defining of a new sociopolitical system she calls "communicative capitalism" which "is the economic-ideological form wherein *reflexivity* captures creativity and resistance so as to enrich the few as it placates and diverts the many"[128] [emphasis added]. What is reflexivity? Reflexivity is the fact that we "create our own capture" by participation in the "affective networks" such as social media.

Breaking Reflexivity

Reflexivity is what Dean believes we default to in light of the complexity and uncertainty wrought by the exponential growth of the internet. "Lacking answers, ever more uncertain, we become mesmerized by our own looking," and because we can never find the objects we are looking for, we instead opt "to looking at ourselves as objects." She concedes that we still "configure the worlds we inhabit" but that they are "ever less what we desire but haven't reached and ever more what we cannot escape yet still enjoy."[129] Reflexivity is enabling our own capture and enjoying doing so. For me, Dean's concept is the best descriptor yet for understanding the political paradox wrought by the digital network we live in today. It's a world so big, we have to shrink it back to almost nothing for our own comprehension.

One problem with the reflexive nature of information networks is that it threatens one of the older interpretations by which truth is found. Dewey wrote almost 100 years ago that one of the only "objective fact[s]" is that "human acts have consequences upon others, that some of these consequences are perceived, and that their perception leads to subsequent effort to control action so as to secure some consequences and avoid others."[130] Put more simply, Dewey was arguing

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[127] Jodi Dean, *Blog Theory*, 108.

[128] Dean, 4.

[129] Dean, 123.

[130] Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems, 37.*

that we can deduce truth by looking to consequences; causes lead to effects, we can interpret the effects and use that to deduce the cause. But what if we flip that proposition on its head?

Friedrich Nietzsche 50 years before Dewey, wrote, "Human beings do not so much flee from being tricked as from being harmed by being tricked…Truth, too, is only desired by human beings in a similarly limited sense. They desire the pleasant life preserving consequences of truth."[131] Nietzsche believed that truth itself held no inherent purchase. For him, the effects might lead people to hypothesize about the causes, or they might not care at all. If the truth preserved a good life, it would be accepted, but if lies or trickery did so better, that would suffice all the same.

I will admit this to be a somewhat cynical and unpopular view, but it is the logical conclusion of tying a conception of truth only to observable consequences. Remember, "the news" by Lippmann's postulation, are simply transmissions about the world beyond our own experience, "ideas in our heads." By definition, if the news is actually consequential to our life, it is *not* news, it's our own experience. If we accept both Nietzsche and Lippmann, there is no way to distinguish between true news and fake news.

Podcaster Jad Abumrad seemed to have intuitively arrived at a similar place after a decade of making one of the most acclaimed podcasts to date, WNYC Studio's RadioLab. He said to Guardian podcast producer Miles Martignoni in 2016, "There is like a fucking ocean of difference between explanation and experience and I feel what I'm always trying to do is cross the ocean – I'm trying to get to the experience…the kind of journalism that forces you to experience what someone else is going through."[132]

The news can be defined as information about events, individuals, and forces outside the realm of one's immediate, knowable reality. The news media, then, are the means, methods, and mediums (media being the alternative plural) by which this information transfers from its origin "out there" to you. I highlight this process of information transfer because the incredible capacities afforded by digital technology have obscured it so well. The information arrives instantly, making it seem as if it never traveled at all. The information arrives unrefined and raw, making it seem objective. And the information can be produced by anyone, making it seem democratic, equal, and fair.

But it is important to remember that "technological affordance," a key concept of Zeynep Tufekci's, is nothing more than that, just a possibility.[133] Technology itself does not do anything. That being said, Jodi Dean cautions us with technological historian Melvin Kranzberg's first law

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[131] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense."

[132] Martignoni, "Radiolab's Jad Abumrad on Podcasting's Uncertain Future."

[133] Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas*, 6.

of technology, "Technology is neither good nor bad, neither is it neutral."[134] Much like proponents of firearms point out that "guns don't kill people, people kill people," tech executives often cite their product's passivity as a way to deflect responsibility. Facebook is just a platform. Just because technology does not act itself, it still establishes the boundaries of those who do, "altering the social architecture of visibility, access, and community."[135]

Take for instance, machine learning, which now mediates almost all of our information spaces. Machine learning, as James Bridle argues in *New Dark Age*, machine learning is providing a wide open frontier for considerations of theory of knowledge. As computers harness artificial intelligence to "learn" how do different tasks (sometimes better than humans), defining what constitutes as knowledge is a newly troubling question. "What can we know about what a machine knows?"[136] Bridle asks. In terms of the AI we are using today, not much. As Zeynep Tufekci said of Google's machine learning algorithm AlphaGo defeating Lee Sedol in the ancient game of go in March of 2016, "We don't really understand what the system learned. In fact, that's its power. This is less like giving instructions to a computer; it's more like training a puppy-machine-creature we don't really understand or control…We don't know what this thing is thinking."[137]

This is because the machines are predicated on probabilistic models which scour troves of data beyond the scale of human comprehension, picking up on patterns and relations that imperceptible on human scale. This was not inevitable, however. Bridle, tracking the history of development of artificially intelligent systems, talks about the intellectual battles between the "connectionist model" and "symbolist model." Alpha Go, like almost all artificial intelligence today, is connectionist, the belief that "intelligence was an emergent property of the connections between neurons" whereas symbolists argued that "intelligence is the process of manipulation of symbols."[138] The distinction may seem unimportant, but has led us to a method by which meaning has ignored for the sake of result, where our capacity has outstripped our understanding.

In the last decade, many of these alterations have occurred at such unprecedented scale, the landscape they have rendered seems littered with contradiction. The internet has provided so much information, what it has really caused, according to Dean, is a scarcity of knowledge. When quantity of knowledge no longer becomes an issue, veracity does. Tufekci provides an illustrative example. She describes the lifecycle of a *140journos*, a crowdsourced journalism collective that came to life around 2012, when Turkey was persecuting the Kurdish people in the

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[134] Sacasas, "Kranzberg's Six Laws of Technology, a Metaphor, and a Story."

[135] Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas*, 6.

[136] Bridle, 136.

[137] Tufekci, "Transcript of 'Machine Intelligence Makes Human Morals More Important.'"

[138] Bridle, *New Dark Age*, 138.

south with military violence, but the state-owned media was, of course, not covering any of it.[139] Though the logistics were difficult and the danger high, *140journos* mission started out very simple: use Twitter to get around government censorship.

In the last few years, *140journos* has had to pause operations and reconsider what value they can continue to provide. Just in the last five years, the digital news landscape had shifted underneath their feet. They used to have to probe huge webs of contacts to find someone who could photographic, film, or report on the events the government was trying to censor. Now, news goes viral before they even know it is happening. Within a matter of minutes, photos can be shared, altered, faked. Trolls would descend seemingly out of nowhere, simply relish in chaos. Bots would amplify the most outrageous. Any attempt to add original reporting would only be lost to a torrent of noise. The notion that all content is the same already shakes a fundamental premise of journalism. If a rigorously researched, impeccably sourced, neutrally written piece is the same as a sensationalist fabrication made by a Macedonian teenager trying to make advertising revenue on a fake website, the hope of average citizens being able to make sense of the world are slim. Take that one step further however, and you have McLuhan's "The Medium is The Message."

Understanding Media is famous for producing the line "The Medium is the Message." Apparently, when the first edition was printed, the type-setters misprinted the section as "The Medium is the Massage." McLuhan loved it, feeling it proved his point perfectly. His foundational claim is that there is no distinction between content and the medium by which it is provided. In fact, he writes that "the content of any medium is always another medium."[140] He discusses the telegraph, which contains printed material, which itself contains words, which is the vehicle for speech. Words allow for speech to be immortalized; the printing press expands degree to which words are spread; and the telegraph eliminates any barrier of time or space. At each step, he points out, there is a "change in scale, pace, or pattern." Aside from that, however, nothing is different; the content itself is of no import.[141] This paradigm reminds me of a concept I learned of in computer science: recursion, or the idea that a thing can only be understood when defined in terms of itself. Remember, to McLuhan, any medium's content is just another medium. This produces a kind of "onion peel" layering effect that goes all the way down. What is at the center (or to return to the computer science metaphor "the base case")? The title is the clue. We are.

The last three decades of digital technology innovation have indeed been unprecedented. But we have become so enamored with our own creations we seem to have forgotten that they were indeed created. As such, the information received from them will be altered in critical ways. Contrary to some journalists, the internet did not kill journalism. And contrary to some

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[139] Tufekci, 42.

[140] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 8.

[141] McLuhan, 13.

technologists, the invention of the internet did not eradicate long-standing problems. Technology and journalism are not irreconcilable, but as the two are increasingly mediated as a single entity, our understandings of each need reevaluation. If politics is the study of power to structure society, then technological innovation will always be a worthy and urgent political concern. The word "technology" can denote so many different tools, structures, and phenomenon. A helpful heuristic to make sense of it all it to ask what each technological development affords, and to whom, and how is it different from the structure that existed previously. Expanding on Churchill's adage, "we shape our buildings and afterward our buildings shape us,"[142] McLuhan said, "we become what we behold."[143] Technology changes capability, and without knowledge of our capabilities, they instead exert their capacity over us. Podcasts provide a medium that has resisted, to varying degrees, the all-encompassing pull of these new technologies. They provide a method that still operates in a way we can comprehend, giving us a small window into media that still "deliver messages" rather than "just circulate."[144]

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[142] Winston Churchill, "House of Commons Rebuilding."

[143] McLuhan, *Understanding Media,* 68.

[144] Jodi Dean, *Blog Theory*, 121.

Conclusion

In the midst of what could have been the 60th interview I had done in the past three semesters, I had a realization that caused me to momentarily, yet completely, forget the conversation at hand. The revelation swept across me not in any intelligible, ready-made phraseology, but as an intuitive wash—a kind of realization that left me second guessing what I had experienced directly prior, like a double-take for my entire sense of the world. The person sitting across from me was a student at Pomona, an Advocate for Survivors of Sexual Assault, and she had just told me that the first person who she had ever truly hated was Pomona's Title IX Coordinator.

With rational retrospection, I can place her hatred. The dean had just played the central role in disbanding the Advocates program for the remainder of the semester, citing confidential and legal reasons unknown even to the Advocates themselves. As a group who self-identifies as a watchdog on the college administration, this unilateral decision-making must have felt like a double injury to the Advocates. I myself am no fan of the administration or the slew of seemingly uninformed decisions they had made during the 2018-2019 school year, but I had just been sitting across from this dean a few days prior—and she had seemed so nice. Did this student across from me say this dean was the *only* person for whom she had felt true loathing? I was not upset on the dean's behalf or offended by this student's comment; I just felt unmoored in my own understanding. Had I been a sucker for this dean's general congeniality, or worse yet, their familiar Southern draw? Had I not been adequately critical, lulled into a false complacency, or downright fooled?

After that interview with the Pomona Advocate, I took stock of every interview I had done. I had spoken to the editors of *The Claremont Independent* and the leaders of the undocumented students organization. I had spoken to an alumni who never contacted the college since their graduation. Once in the same week, I spoke with a dean and a student who both claimed the other had refused to speak to them. Quickly, I assembled multiple pairings of people whom I had both spoken with, but that I was confident had never spoken to one another. I began to wonder: what if they only ever heard one another through my episodes?

A podcast offers the ability to listen, but they are distinctly *not* a conversation. Podcasts are a different model, not putting yourself into conversation with another, but simply sitting with their speech. A person-to-person conversation can be an invaluable tool, but they are not guaranteed to result in shared understanding. A live conversation can beget earnest listening and active engagement, but it also gives people the ability to interrupt, to attack, or in public settings, to shame. I began to wonder if the largest benefit my podcast wrought was giving people a way to listen to one another without consequence.

I thought back to the advocate who had claimed to hate the Title IX Coordinator. My interviewee's admissions were not without guilt. I watched the student express her conflict between her fundamental belief that the dean had to be an earnest, well-intentioned person and her interactions with her, which inexplicably caused "indescribable" and "uncontrollable" rage. Would a "test run" conversation with me as an intermediary tilt her internal scale in favor of understanding? Could I help my listeners hear from people for whom they may otherwise never lend an ear?

Witness

Emmanuel Lévinas seems to have understood just how dynamics are in play with a conversation, especially when acknowledging that factors outside the two individuals are always at plat. I believe we are failing at contending with this ever-present "third." The third brings a whole set of considerations that are not present in the relationship between you and "the other." Our speech is no longer about asking "the other" to behold us, but can take a whole host of functions: distracting with entertainment, rallying to a cause, or indoctrinating with propaganda. I fear, however, we have instead opted for one of the most insidious. We use "the other" to *signal* to the third; those with whom we speak are simply a conduit to indicate our judgements to everyone else. This action—the using of "the other" for benefit in standing with "the third"—is shame.

As novelist Salvatore Scibona wrote in the *New York Times* on March 9th of this year, "We are undergoing an industrial revolution in shame. New technologies have radically expanded our ability to make and distribute a product. The product is our judgment of one another."[145] He wonderfully captures the function of shame in our new digitally connected networks, linking shame to outrage. Outrage, he writes, "promises injustice," a "strange bait" because "It can feel wrong not to take it."[146] Our current political discourse almost seems to obligate our anger because to look away, to be invited to the scene of the crime and still chose to pass by, would make us—as the Dictionary.com word of the year was in 2017—complicit.[147] Counterintuitively, however, complicity requires shamelessness, a strange feature when we seem to be at an all-time-high of attempted shaming.

This conundrum is caused by the fact that shame has two distinct forms: noun and verb. The noun form reads, "a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior."[148] "To shame," the verb, is an attempt to produce that feeling in someone else. Bret Stephens wrote on April 12 this year that "the annihilation of shame requires

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[145] Scibona, "The Industrial Revolution of Shame."

[146] Scibona.

[147] Bill Chappell, "'Complicit' Is The Word Of The Year In 2017, Dictionary.com Says."

[148] "Shame, n."

two things:" nerve and public acquiescence.[149] Stephens's lament is not that the same as Scibona's, but they are the two sides of the same coin. Scibona decries the increase in *shaming others*, the verb form, and Stephens laments the decrease in *feeling shame ourselves*, the noun form. Like a perfectly inverse relationship, increase in attempting shaming seems to decrease our collective ability to feel it.

The dual nature of shame is widely apparent at Pomona. The concept is closely tied to speech, a feature that is explored in the oft-cited phrase "silence is violence," the rallying cry of many protests on these campuses. In a way, I agree. To be aware of an injustice, and still chose to not bear witness to it, is complicity, and complicity is a key ingredient in violence. Injustice, tyranny, and violence often pervade as much by indifference of those opposed than by the ingenuity of the actors themselves. But silence does not always have to be violence. The distinguishing factor is understanding the definition of witness. Scibona, in his piece, shows us examples of "witness" as a distinguishably powerful force. He turns to what he knows: literature. Talking about the authors who shape his views, Scibona writes, "When they describe in detail a conflict that cries out for us to take a side but hold back from explicitly taking a side themselves, they are not overlooking the moral stakes. They are compelling a moral response from us that's more challenging than approval or disapproval. Under the influence of their restraint, our conscience is engaged in a new way, as a witness."[150] He cites Joan Didion, who in an essay on self-respect included in some of its constituent parts approaching others with "love" *and* "indifference."

The abject failure of constant judgement is apparent when we remember to look for it. Sean Hannity and "Lefty Twitter" share a common denominator in the joint package of account and analysis. We are put in the impossible position of having to know what to *think about* something concurrent to simply learning *what* it actually is. Scibona, by trying to "releases us from the tyranny of our own estimations," shows the benefit in once again separating judgement and witness.

Listening

We have all had conversations which we loved, and we have also all had conversation that were cut short. Interruption is another method of dialogue for which the act itself is more important than the content it contains. The content of an interruption will almost always be self-evident; it's contrary to whatever was said directly proceeding it. But *the act* of interruption can signal a wide and diverse variety of meanings. Between individuals, it can be a powerful signal of disagreement of even distrust. Between more acquainted friends—or perhaps student and mentor—interruption can be the exact opposite, a sign of engagement and even respect. When mediated in a public sphere, as so many online conversations are, it can be an even more effective way to

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[149] Stephens, "Trump and the Annihilation of Shame."

[150] Scibona, "The Industrial Revolution of Shame."

signal to others. Sometimes you interrupt to re-engage. But if your sole reasons for interruption is to prove to those around you that you were capable of rendering your interlocutor silent, you have engaged in the callout.

"Callout Culture" is a ubiquitous aspect of life at Claremont, to the point where lamenting it has become banal in and of itself. What I find most interesting about callout culture is the name. It invokes the most active form of speech, to bridge a gap of silence between two individuals by "calling out" to them. If only that were the way we proceeded in actuality. I have never seen some one called out to their face. Callouts seem to occur exclusively online, silent text used to shame (the verb form), which inevitably spills out into to real life's public interactions which, in turn, are rendered even quieter. Certainly, you can interrupt a podcast too. You can rip out your headphones in frustration, shout "STOP!" at your smart speaker, or bang on your car radio. But you cannot callout the individuals on a podcast. You cannot signal your virtue to people around you, you cannot shame the person who you are listening to. In a way, that may be the most powerful capability podcasts have that other media do not. You can listen to individuals with whom you may normally not—without the pressure, the sense of obligation, to interrupt or correct them. You do not *need* to prove yourself right because you *cannot* prove yourself right. In some ways, it is a less burdensome position to be in.

To be sure, TV and books have this non-interactive quality as well. The ability—or even demand—to pass judgment on what one consumes does seem to be a specific byproduct of the internet age; retweet rather than assess the original content, follow the link before finishing the piece, or worst of all, post the article instead of reading it. TV, books, and podcast/radio all have unidirectional information flows, but only podcast and radio allow one to listen to the completeness of another's thought without having to prepare their own response. When I first envisioned the mission statement of DisCo, I wrote that "It's all premised on the idea that a good discussion really only demands one thing, we accept the possibility of being wrong." I thought I'd bring people onto the show and remind them that "instead of proving a point" we would have conversations that exemplified the "inherent value" in "the process of discussion itself." I never considered the role of the listener.

Luckily, I had the chance to hear from arguably the most famous podcaster ever about what he thinks listening should entail. As it turns out, the founder of *Radiolab*, the two-time Peabody winning podcast and radio show, Jad Abumrad, himself a winner of the MacArthur "Genius Grant," has a fondness for Tocqueville's American epic. Though he is not a political scientist, he can certainly claim the title of someone who has thought through the implications of listening. Speaking to a small group of Pomona students in April of 2018, he invoked Tocqueville explicitly. "One of the things he says about America, which has always stuck with me is the—he calls them habits of the heart. One of the habits of the heart that makes America what it is, is the

ability to move through a variety of perspectives and identify with all of them, but give in to none of them."[151]

In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville would interchange the word habit with the word more, which he defined as "the mass of those ideas which constitute their character of mind."[152] He talked about how such habits were politically important, just as important as law in setting the parameters of public life. Religion was first among these. Americans, he says, "regarded it as the first of their political institutions; for if it does not impart a taste for freedom, it facilitates the use of it."[153] Education, he observes, also has a powerful cvic element. "Instruction which enlightens the understanding is not separated from the moral education which amends the heart."[154] Anything which contributed to custom, Tocqueville saw as essential to keeping American's democratic experiment alive, to keep it from slipping into tyranny. "If I have hitherto failed in making the reader feel the important influence of the practical experience, the habits, the opinions in short, of the customs of the Americans upon the maintenance of their institutions, I have failed in the principal object of my work."[155]

This was all the more troubling, as Abumrad, with a smirk both wry and doleful, said he doubted whether such habits were still part of the American character. But this doubt did not lead to apathy. Though he could not motivate an example of habits of the heart in our current political conversation, he did hold out hope that it might happen in our listening. He hoped that *Radiolab* could revive that exact set of habits. "I want that to be the experience of listening, you're moving through a series of perspectives, identifying with each person—feeling what that person is feeling—and then stepping back from that, through a series of points and counterpoints and then arriving at some synthesis that is uniquely yours."[156] Tocqueville was enamored with Americans' ability to form associations, a process that necessitate discussion and deliberation, but the other side of the coin has to be present as well: listening and interpretation.

For Abumrad, successful listening was not an easy task. He specifically addressed its requisite parts. Speaking of what he hopes listeners walk away from a Radiolab episode with, he said, "it's empathy in part but it's also critical thinking, in another part, but it's also a kind of multiplicity at its whole… I want the multiplicity of truth to be there in the aggregate." I do not mean to imply that if we all just stayed quiet and listened to one another, truth would coalesce out of nothingness, an emergent property from collective silence. But given that talking and listening

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[151] Pomona College, Master Class with Jad Abumrad.

[152] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* I.17.

[153] Tocqueville, I.17.

[154] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* I.17.

[155] Tocqueville, I.17.

[156] Pomona College, Master Class with Jad Abumrad.

are almost always mutually exclusive, Abumrad makes a strong case for the benefits of pushing the ratio back in the direction of listening.

Silence

By definition, podcasts demand silence. As Lévinas says, every act of conversation is a signal: whether it's an invitation, a demand, or even a challenge, a "hear what I have to say," or even "prove me wrong," there is an act of welcome, a hineni, a "Here I am." But a podcast does not, for it cannot, ask you to do that. All it asks for is listening. There is no way an audio file can "behold you." In doing this, not only is conversation redefined, but silence is as well. Silence can obtain a positive definition. It is not simply the lack of conversation, but also a radical form of comprehension. Silence is no longer cast as complicity, but a process of understanding liberated from the demands of conversation.

Silence also plays a central role in podcast's ability to challenge the relentless march of modernity, to kink the linear arrow of the progress narrative. Modernity, Andrew Sullivan, wrote in *New York Magazine* necessitates noise. "We became a civilization of getting things done — with the development of America, in some ways, as its crowning achievement."[157] Technology aids and abets this process. Again Sullivan argues, "The smartphone revolution of the past decade can be seen in some ways simply as the final twist of this ratchet…the tiny cracks of inactivity in our lives are being methodically filled with more stimulus and noise."[158] Noise is the tell-tale sign of doing, and nothing is worse for progress than absence of action. But doing without thinking might be even more calamitous in the long run, and despite the promises of the multi-tasking revolution, thought and action might indeed be impossible to do at the same time. "'The new means of communication are remarkable, but they cause tremendous noise.'" Byung-Chul Han writes, quoting Michel Butor. Han then adds, "The medium of thinking is *quiet.*"[159] Silence should retain some sanctity beyond "an anachronism, even a symbol of the useless superstitions we had left behind."[160]

And podcasts might, in fact, do this too. There is a concept in audio production called "room tone," where the reporter records the sound of the room—some guides say for up to 90 seconds —before the conversation ever begins. At first, this struck me as strange. Why would you record empty space, pure silence? Because, as is readily apparent when listening to recorded conversation, every silence is different. Inevitably there will be the hum of a refrigerator or fluorescent light bulb, and it will reverberate off the walls, and the layout of the walls will be different such that the reverberation will also be unique. Even in a single room, there are infinite

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[157] Sullivan, "My Distraction Sickness — and Yours."

[158] Sullivan.

[159] Han, *In the Swarm*, 19.

[160] Sullivan.

factors that will alter the way the silence sounds. And as such, the sound of that silence will never be the same. *That kind* of silence is room tone.

A reporter records room tone for practical purposes. Anytime they may need to transition in and out of the recording of the interview, fading the room tone in and out is needed to make transition between scenes seamless. Even during the interview itself, the room tone will re-emerge in the slight pauses between words or between question and answer. Room tone is contextualized silence. It is not the same as lack of sound. What at first seems irrational, recording for minutes before anyone has ever said a word, eventually takes on metaphorical significance as well. All conversations are going to be contextualize by the locale in which you have them, by the things that happened before, and by the experiences that each individual brings to it.

Silence is not necessarily complicity. Silence can be whatever the circumstances of the room are, working themselves out in individual's minds before they contribute. It's an acknowledgement of the setting, not unlike Scibona's concept of witness: you have to understand the antecedents before adding your own interpretation. By listening to differences in silence, you learn to bear witness. You witness who is across from you, the setting that brought you together, and most importantly, you realize the ways in which you have brought yourself. You realize that the conversation you are about to have—and the progress you hope to make therein—is inextricably rooted in what used to be. You acknowledge the cyclical rather than linear nature of understanding. In silence, however brief, you can return to what came before. Returning from your return, you can begin.

Appendix

Episode 1: Rules Unspoken

Release Date: October 15, 2018

Guests: Sullivan Whitely, Audrey Jang, Dr. Lisa Wade

Description: Eli and Sully think about hookup culture at The Claremont Colleges. They talk to experts. They talk to students. They talk to themselves (but not like that).

Reflection: This being the first episode I ever produced, the learning curve was incredibly steep and it took me almost two months just to produce the episode. The first thing I noticed was just how challenging it is to work with raw conversation. People do not speak in linear fashion. Furthermore, a lot of speech is referential and meaning resides outside of the words themselves (gestures, cadence, and tone). As such, pulling quotations for use in a podcast is harder than one would expect. Most self-contained thoughts only existed in two types, either a five second soundbite or a minutes long speech. Neither are particularly useful for podcasting. A laundry of soundbites does not build to anything meaningful for a listener, but more than 30 seconds of a single speaker can be difficult to follow.

My goal in this episode was to practice those editing techniques. I attempted to combine my two primary interviews with Audrey and Professor Wade, in a method similar to *The New York Times* "The Daily." As Audrey had brought Professor Wade to campus, that would provide the meta story over my interview with Wade herself. There was the narrative of why Wade studied what she did, and then the conversation with Audrey would show why this topic was relevant to Pomona specifically.

Transcript

Sullivan Whitely: [00:00] What's up everyone you're listening to DisCo. Are you ready to fucking groove? Hey, if you think disco music's groovy, wait until you listen to this podcast.

Okay, it's Thursday afternoon you're in your lecture you're on your phone because you're not paying attention on a Thursday afternoon. What are you doing on your phone?

Eli Cohen: [00:51] Probably tender, maybe grinder?

Sullivan Whitely: [00:53] Maybe Bumble but you're scrolling through

Eli Cohen: [00:56] All the all the good kids are on bumbled.

Sullivan Whitely: [01:00] You're trolling the internet for someone to love, or at least to lust after for a night. And then Thursday night rolls around, maybe get to a party, scan the crowd. No luck. You go home alone, you go to sleep, wake up, rinse, repeat, baby. What is this called? Hookup culture, or at least it's a part of it. And for our very first episode of DisCo Eli and I are exploring the sticky and maybe harmful world of hookup culture launched right along with us.

Eli Cohen: [01:31] We actually got to interview an expert on the matter. Lisa Wade, a sociologist at Occidental College, came and talked to a number of Pomona students on the topic and we were lucky enough to get a personal interview with her. And yeah, that is the basis of this episode, she brought up a lot of really interesting points that I personally had never considered on the topic before. You know, it usually starts with a pretty Do you like it, do you not? And then we don't often get much past there. But today, we're trying to do exactly that.

Sullivan Whitely: [02:05] So let us know what you think. Tune in, give it a listen. Let's explore hookup culture to get her hands on hands. Because what's better than being intimate and being intimate all together?

Audrey Jang: [02:24] My name is Audrey Jang. Identify as she her hers. And I am the President of the Student Union. I'm the incoming president, I'm getting trained. I'll take over this ship next year.

Eli Cohen: [02:43] Oh, hell yeah. Do you hear that listeners? We have the president in the house.

Audrey Jang: [02:51] Incoming

Eli Cohen: [02:52] That's sick. Why did you decide to put on this specific event?

Audrey Jang: [02:55] Well, it was Valentine's day week. And we always like to plan events that are relevant to the happenings of that time. And it was essentially like starting as a chat and chew, which is the conversations that we have in Frank dining hall, every other week. But then we decided that hookup culture is something that a lot of students don't know how to talk about. And we thought we would bring in a guest speaker. And Lisa Wade, she's a professor, a sociologist at Occidental and super close. So it was sort of a last minute decision to bring her over. But it turned out great.

Lisa Wade: [03:40] My name is Lisa Wade, I'm an associate professor at Occidental College, and I wrote a book called American hookup about the new culture of sex on campus. I've been studying sexuality since I was in college. I took my first human sexuality classes, a freshman at UC Santa Barbara. And I basically joined the kind of of

peer sex education type groups all throughout undergraduate. And then I went and got a master's degree in human sexuality from NYU, right after college. Fast forward a number of years, and I end up with this PhD in sociology, and I'm at Occidental, and I'm teaching classes to first year students that is sex are sexuality themed.

So I'm, you know, paying attention to what my students are saying about hookup culture, which is, is fascinating and insightful. And they are this really diverse group of people with all kinds of interesting perspectives and values that they bring and experiences that they're having. And I'm also paying attention to the media coverage of hookup culture, which doesn't reflect at all how, how just intelligent and lovable and, and how quickly learning my students were. And, and diverse to. Just the media coverage was so focused on this one type of student.

And so I was, I recognize that there's a real disconnect there, there was a there was a problem. And the media coverage was also just failing to bring a sociological imagination to the problem. So it was all about individual people's decisions and whether they weren't good or bad. And often, it was like, women's decisions, right? So one side to be like, women shouldn't be doing this, because it's going to make them sad. And the other side was saying, like, Don't tell women what to do. And I'm like, this is not really a helpful conversation. So as a sociologist, I felt like I had something to bring.

And so I did my first round of data collection, getting students to write journals about their experiences in hookup culture for the length of a semester. And that data was so fantastic. The students were so earnest and open, and their experiences were just so rich. And I realized at that point that I had a book because we needed an intervention in the in the conversation that was happening. I had the sociological imagination, and the students had the stories, and I wanted to give them a platform to help change the conversation.

Eli Cohen: [06:14] I liked what you said about how conversations were like, do this to make you happier, don't do this, because it'll make you sad. That's definitely something that I was thinking a lot about while reading a few of the pieces that you had put together. Hookup culture, you said it's it is somewhat about what is actually happening, but the data on like how much sex college students are having, or what types perhaps isn't that different, and it can also be a lot more about the pressures, or the the mindsets are what should be happening, that kind of idea has changed.

Lisa Wade: [06:52] This is probably a very over determined outcome, right? That the mental health or mental health problems with probably lots of things that contributing to it. But we know that sexual culture as part of the problem. So studies when we asked them, are your sexual relationships causing you emotional distress? They say yes, right.? So we absolutely know that that's part of it.

But I do think that a lot of it is related to part of what makes it a hookup culture is that students feel like there's only one way they're allowed to engage with one another sexually. And so if you don't fit in that mold, if that doesn't feel comfortable to you, then you either have to opt out and feel like you're not participating at all or doing college right. I had one student who said, if you don't have sex, you're not in the community. So you feel isolated, you feel left out, or you opt in and you do so with mixed feelings and mixed experiences. And then you have to struggle to with with those that disconnect.

You know, what's funny, and you're right is the the sexual behavior itself is not that different. Young people are if you if you met by sexual intercourse, young people are having the same amount of sex acquiring the same number of sexual partners as their the baby boomers did, in fact, somewhat less than Gen X. What's changed is the frame for how they think they're supposed to feel about sex. And so as the frame has changed, if you if you're a young person in a hookup culture, you have to then resolve that tension.

Audrey Jang: [08:29] I think that Professor Wade honestly, like, articulated something that I have noticed, in terms of coming into college and encountering hookup culture, honestly, for the first time.

Because in Korean culture, which were, which is where I'm from hooking up is still very much stigmatized, like sex before marriage, definitely not something that people readily like talk about. And, like, I thought it very interesting that people here seem to predicate their social status on like hooking up, especially in your first couple weekends, when you're a first year like after having brunch, like, the main topic of conversation is who hooked up with who and who scored who, and it's, it just like made a lot of sense, Professor Wade's framework of hookup culture being about power rather than pleasure when the whole like liberation movement was supposed to be about like, expanding the realm of like sexual pleasure to all different types of people.

Eli Cohen: [09:49] I completely agree. And I tried to ask her about that thinking, you know, if, if Pomona is so dedicated to teaching us things and talking about ideas of how to, you know, deconstruct these power structures that currently exist, how come hookup culture, and and some of the things that are the most intimate seem to be excluded from that kind of critical thought process? I kind of found that, I don't know based on the things that she said, I thought about our own community here, and how that sometimes, those two things might be at odds.

Audrey Jang: [10:29] It seems as though we're not like really trained on how to positively think about things like at Pomona, we're taught to deconstruct we're taught to criticize, we're taught to say, say, like, look for the problematic things that are in our societal institutions. And I think that, especially when it comes into like, advocating for

consent culture, and advocating against sexual assault, there's a lot of criticism, like and validly so.

But we often find it hard to create anti-culture, so like a different type of culture that's positive and like, it's better and it's good. And I see that in not just like conversations about hookup culture, but about like capitalism or neoliberalism, you know, the buzzwords, the -isms that people throw around and like to critique and problematize as the founding like source of human misery, think that talking about how to reform, like our understanding of hooking up and how to go towards a more cooperative model of a hookup culture, as Professor Wade likes to put it, I think it's like, a really important, not reform, but change.

I like wonder is not really a formed, complete coherent thought, but I wonder, like, what can be done on the student level to like, start creating a hookup culture that's not predicated on, like power, like, that's not predicated on extracting pleasure from another person. And I think it comes from communication skills. And it comes from being able to talk about these very personal aspects, with your friends and sort of understanding what you feel that hookup culture is asking of you and what you want yourself because the whole thing about empowerment is being able to identify and understand what you yourself want and terms of sexual romantic relationships. And being free to pursue that.

Lisa Wade: [12:59] I think it's really important that to state that I think that all of the good ideas that we need to fix hookup culture, students already have them. I studied them, like I said, they're, they're really intelligent, they have all kinds of great ideas. They're open minded, they're, they're good human beings, and they want connection with other people. And so I think the two things we need one is we needed a kinder, safer hookup culture. And we need more diversification of sexual cultures on campus, students have it within them to make that happen.

And institutions just need to clear out the space such that they can do that. And one of the things are going to have to do in order to make that happen is even the playing field, which means taking power away from this small segment of students that that do control those party spaces, which like I said, on most campuses are typically, extensively, heterosexual white men who have those spaces. Um, so I think like I've, you know, I've here here at Pomona, and I've heard people talk about various people that throw, groups that throw parties, and that they aren't all those guys, there are groups that represent all kinds of different students on campus. And I think that's probably one of the ways in which we could start to even that playing field.

Eli Cohen: [14:20] Okay. I, your last point, I was thinking a lot about and trying to find a good way to ask this question, which is, you did acknowledge that there is kind of an

amazing amount of privilege inherent within this hookup culture that is kind of, in some ways, it's the same old boys club dressed up perhaps, and kind of like an hiding in plain sight of like sexual liberalization. And I'm thinking at a place like Pomona where we try to fight that on so many fronts. Why then, is hookup culture, something that's so intensely intimate, a place where it's so hard to achieve?

Lisa Wade: [15:00] Yeah, it's interesting, because I had a student who identified as pensexual, and she talked about how in class she would be in classes where students would be having these really sophisticated conversations about feminist theory and queer theory and, you know, critical disability studies and, and critical race theory, and it would just be amazing. And then as soon as, as soon as night fell, and the party started, everyone was, she said, like, hyper heterosexual and hyper masculine, and like, all that stuff fell away. Um, you know, I think part of it is that this gets lost, I think part of it is that college students, traditional age college students really aren't that many years past puberty.

And 50% of students are virgins when they get to college, maybe more at very elite schools. So young people just don't have a lot of experience with sexuality. A lot of what is playing out in these places where you see hooking up is, is, is people just trying to get the basics down? You know, how do I get somebody to kiss me? How do I kiss somebody? How do I? How can I can I get through this interaction of making out without making a fool out of myself. Like, they're not playing Mozart, they're plunking out Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.

So to ask people who are just at the very beginning of trying to learn how to do this sphere of life that is held up with such importance, and which, which is a way in which we gauge whether or not you're a good or bad person and a weird or not person, and a lovable or not person. I said a lot of pressure to be experimental. So a lot of pressure to try to innovate, right.

And so it's safer in the classroom to talk about queer theory, a lot safer than it is to try to play that out in real life, and aspect. And so I think that i think that's part of why students have such a hard time bringing that into actual sexuality, because they're real, at least students feel like they're real consequences to getting it wrong. We really penalize people that do sex wrong, right? Being good at sex is something that everyone's afraid they're bad at it right. Um, and when and when you're bad at it in the wrong way. You're a pervert, you know, you're discussing it mean, I think I just think it's a lot to ask students to, on their own be able to be so sophisticated and mature when they're really just at the beginning of a long journey.

Eli Cohen: [17:47] Definitely, we can make this the last question, but I just wanted to pick up a little bit on that idea of like the fear of being wrong. Yeah. Which definitely

seems to definitely spoke to me. And I wanted to ask specifically, it seems like in a hookup, there's always, it's important that there's always that plausible deniability that kind of like, if it doesn't go how you intended, you know, maybe you were drunk, maybe whatever you can, you can ghost the person. And as we talked about, sometimes kind of put them down. And you can kind of go on your way. But if you are just going to ask someone say, you know, would you go on a date with me? And they say, No, you can't really retract that. It's not like, Oh, well, I didn't mean it.

And I'm curious, this, what do you think? Is that the root of that fear? Or what do you think could be done, to kind of ameliorate some of that that would make a healthier sexual culture?

Lisa Wade: [18:51] You know, it's always safer to be the person that doesn't care. And that's what cool actually is cool. Being cool, is not caring. That's why the fashion models never smile at you. They look so cool, because you can tell they don't care. You're nobody to them. Right? Smiling is an invitation. It's a desire, it's and I want to be friends, right? So to be cool is to not care. And it's always safer to be on that end.

But, but it's it's, it's in the long term, it's a losing strategy, because you don't get what you want. You have to be brave, to be open, and to put yourself out there. But being brave is the only way to actually get the beautiful parts of life that come with caring about anything.

So I think we need to, I guess, start talking more about about how impressive it is when anybody is able to actually be open about desire of any kind. And learn how to just reward that kind of openness. Have a have a better way, maybe if of being accountable to other people's desires, even if even if you don't share them, I guess a conversation about about that might be helpful about how, what a beautiful thing it is when someone's able to open up and how that should be rewarded and not punished.

Eli Cohen: [20:40] Thank you so much to Evelyn Landow for letting us use her songs. Everything you heard on this episode is her band DETAILS, which was made exclusively of Claremont students. You are currently listening to Loved Letter, and we opened with your thing, both of their 2015 album, My Teeth Shine. It's on Spotify, SoundCloud, band camp, and YouTube.

Everyone should go listen. Honestly, this album is the musical score to my time here in Claremont. And I know it plays that role for so many. Huge thank you to Professor Lisa Wade for coming to Pomona and for specifically making the time to speak with me. Her insights opened up so many incredible conversations, as we are sure that they will continue to do, thank you to Audrey for making the event happen and working with me

throughout this entire process. And then, of course, my partner in crime, Sullivan Whitely, the path was circuitous to say the least. But we got this one out there. Thank you. And here's to many more.

Episode 2: Transition Stories

Release Date: October 22, 2018

Guests: D.D. Maoz, Ahana Ganguly, Sam Sjoberg

Description: Between February 22nd and March 8, The Hive and DisCo put on a series of podcasting workshops, where participants got to make their own collaborative podcast over the course of just three workshops. They did the interviews, created the storyboard, and two brave first-timers even produced episodes all by themselves. The topic: Transition.

Reflection: I, along with D.d. Maoz, a Pomona senior and staff member of The Hive, put on a series of three podcasting workshops where participants got to make a collaborative podcast – from interviewing to storyboarding to editing.

We both love podcasts, but beyond that, we wanted to convey why the process of making them yourself can be so valuable. We wanted to show how the different aspects of making podcasts can urge us all to be better listeners, intentional conversationalists, and mindful storytellers. We wanted to re-value the creative process itself. We wanted to create a low-stakes environment for people to actually make a podcast without grandiose expectations or the fear of failure. We wanted people to learn by doing. We hoped to provide participants with the technical confidence that will allow them to see this medium as their own. We wanted to make room for stories – for people to tell them, to realize the importance of seeking them out, and to grasp the power of handling them with care.

The basic premise was this: We would create three workshops that would walk participants through three stages of the podcast-making process: interviewing, storyboarding, and editing. Through these different stages, we would focus on different interpersonal skills: empathetic and active listening, communicating, and storytelling.

Workshop #1 – The Interview

In the first workshop, we emphasized empathetic listening and recording confidence. We opened with two audio excerpts from Chimamanda Adichie's TED Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story" and an interview with David Issay in the TED Radio Hour's "The Act of Listening." They taught us about the responsibility entailed in choosing which stories are told, the presence listening commands, and the power of being heard.

We outlined five active listening principles, which we compiled from the Human-Centered Design course tips for empathetic interviewing, and Celeste Headlee's 10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation. They were: be present, do away with assumptions, enable meaningful conversations, go slow, care for the process.

Then we reviewed the technical details of the recorders, considering basic tips for making a good recording. The topic we chose for the interviews was "Transition," and we urged people to recall specific stories and emotions from different periods of transition in their own lives. Then, for the rest of the session, in groups of three, we interviewed each other and made space for each other's stories. We came out with eighteen recorded ten-minute interviews, and the affirmation that giving people the time and excuse to talk and ask questions was one of the most powerful things we could have done.

Workshop #2 – Storyboarding

In the second workshop, we tackled the challenge of walking people through the whole storyboarding process in 1.5 hours. We brought on Isaac Watts (PZ '18) and Jeremy Snyder (PO '19) to help facilitate the session. In small groups, we started by taking time to listen to the 4-5 interview clips each group was assigned. Then, we took 10 minutes to share out our impressions with the group. From there, we took 5 minutes to construct a narrative arc, thinking about the common themes, and the surprises that came up from the clips.

For the final stretch of the session, using post-it notes, we constructed a storyboard that detailed what should happen at every moment of the podcast by creating mock tracks that resembled the audio editing software – one for interview clips, one for narration, and one for accompanying sound. We concluded the session with participants recording a live narration of the podcast, following the storyboard to tie clips together and communicate the narrative and themes to the listener.

We came out with a very rough draft of three podcast episodes, one by each of our three groups. We also realized that, while confusion is an essential part of the creative process, making a clear structure to guide the process along was essential to eliminating overwhelming, paralyzing confusion.

Workshop #3 – Audio Editing

In the third workshop, Ximena Lane (PO '19) joined the team and walked people through the fundamentals of audio editing together with Eli. We decided to step back from the project at hand and instead work with isolated examples of basic audio design. In the end, we highlighted four concepts: vocal clarity, quality over quantity, layering with care, transition is everything.

We also introduced the participants to the basics of audio editing software, such as how to navigate the timeline, work with multiple tracks simultaneously, and utilize basic audio effects. We created a one-pager describing each of the four overarching concepts and gave a few tangible techniques – altering amplitude with compressors or normalizers and changing the tenor of one's voice with equalization – to help achieve them. We left a small amount of time at the end to practice these techniques on the project itself.

Reflections on the Process

Each workshop required a different structure and varying amounts of guidance, and all of them required that we admit one simple thing: we were not experts. In planning and facilitating these workshops, we were simply creating the space for everyone – ourselves included – to experiment and learn by doing. We were often pushed to seriously think about group process more than the podcast-making process, and about how to enable a comfortable and intuitive sort of creation and interaction with the group. We realized that there's something freeing about just jumping in, with no time to fear mistakes. We realized how important our roles as facilitators were in planning sessions that gave participants room to engage with the creative process in ways that allowed for a healthy – but not overwhelming – amount of confusion.

Ultimately, we couldn't prepare in advance for every possible scenario, and so the process was largely about being present with the rest of the participants and going where the process invited. We started these workshops knowing that the podcast-making process mandates the sort of intentionality that should be lived out in everyday life. We ended with the added realization that the same holds true for the process of planning these sessions, which demanded we be present, open, and intentional. Most importantly, the creative process demands time. Time to be confused; to ruminate; to revisit and rework; to adjust; to bring oneself to the table fully in order to enable a true collaboration. While our workshop provided opportunities for participants to tap into many aspects of the creative process, time was not one of them. Instead, we got to engage with each other, to tell stories, to create, to construct, to edit, and to collaborate. Overall we got to see how these tools are something that anyone can use. When we compromised time to give room for other aspects of the creative process, we accepted the fact that the final product will not be polished and that it might not make sense.

Since we stepped back from the project for our final workshop, some participants took on the responsibility of editing the episodes beyond the workshops, relying on the original storyboard that was made in under 1.5 hours. The episodes came out to be exciting rough drafts, which give you all a glimpse into what a narrative that was created so quickly sounds like.

Transcript

Eli Cohen: [00:00] Three workshops podcasts.

D.d. Maoz: [00:09] This is not keywords, no. We need connecting sentences

Eli Cohen: [00:03] Three.

D.d. Maoz: [00:04] Podcast.

Eli Cohen: [00:05] Workshop.

D.d. Maoz: [00:05] Interview

Eli Cohen: [00:07] Story.

D.d. Maoz: [00:07] Board.

Eli Cohen: [00:08] Empathy.

D.d. Maoz: [00:10] Love in the world.

Eli Cohen: [00:13] World peace.

D.d. Maoz: [00:14] I'm D.d., I'm a senior at Pomona majoring in media studies and I really like podcasts and the process that goes into making them.

Eli Cohen: [00:40] My name is Eli. I'm a junior at Pomona. I study politics and a little bit of computer science and I love Pusheen, the little gray fluffy cat who lives on Facebook Messenger.

D.d. Maoz: [00:53] So we basically did three workshops that walk people through the podcast making process. So for the first stage, we showed people how to interview and to listen to each other and the second stage we engage with the storyboarding process and in the third, we did some sound editing with Audacity. There's still some work to be done. But no, we did a thing.

Eli Cohen: [01:14] That's absolutely true though, I guess right for the first episode we gave them the prompt of transition, which was I think it was good that it was so vague because that allowed people to really take it in their own direction and make it their own. And then in the second workshop, we forced them to find the themes and the stories and what people had said and try to bring it together into one cohesive narrative, and I guess we broke into three groups to make that happen. So three. Very different podcasts will come out of it. But that's good. And then yeah last night we--I guess we kind of step back a little bit last night and just focus more on the techniques themselves.

D.d. Maoz: [02:04] And basically the final product is what you are about to hear.

Eli Cohen: [02:07] So this is a down-and-dirty process. I think in total they had about four and a half hours to put together what you're hearing now. Honestly, though most of that, they were just learning how to do it. Some of the folks who join these workshops had no previous experience, but this is what they put together and honestly it's pretty amazing.

D.d. Maoz: [02:28] It's pretty good. This also is part of the process itself because it's not a finished product, but it's sort of a chance for people to listen get a snippet of what it looks like to make a thing and four and a half hours.

Eli Cohen: [02:38] That's right. We hope you enjoy. And if you don't just stay quiet.

D.d. Maoz: [02:42] Yeah, don't tell us just give us a five

Eli Cohen: [02:46] Gold stars are appreciative.

D.d. Maoz: [02:47] Yes. Hey, I'm D.d.

Eli Cohen: [02:49] And I'm Eli

D.d. Maoz: [02:50] What you're about to hear is the result of three workshops where students got to engage in the podcast making process for the first time from interviewing to storyboarding to editing the final product. These mini episodes were created in under four and a half hours.

Eli Cohen: [03:02] The workshops were process-oriented with a bias towards just going for it with no fear of messing up or getting it wrong. The first of Three episodes features the voices of Priya, Sam, Emmequet, and Tanya. The narratives of this episode were created by Emily, Kira, Su Yun, and with final production credits going to a Ahana. We hope you enjoy.

Workshop Participant: [03:29] Oh, um, well me and my friends do like a family breakfast on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So I had some scrambled eggs some vegetarian sausage granola and Greek yogurt. That's some solid. Thanks.

Ahana Ganguly: [03:49] This is Disco and I'm Ahana, your host for this mini episode about transition. You just heard Priya a student at the Claremont colleges talking at the Hive's podcasting workshop. We interviewed each other about transition. And since it's such a broad theme people talked about all kinds of things.

You'll be hearing from Priya first. Here She is again.

Workshop Participant: [04:13] Yeah can't go wrong with pancakes ever exactly. This you said this is your family. It's like we call it the family breakfast.

Workshop Participant: [04:22] How does the idea of family change being at home versus in Clermont?

Workshop Participant: [04:29] Well, I'm much more distant with my actual family now. I don't call them as much as I should my friends are like a very good support group I have and I would consider them like a little family. They know pretty much everything about me, which is really nice.

Ahana Ganguly: [04:45] When we go through these transitions in our relationships, it sets of even more transition in the ways. We think in the ways, we feel and form our opinions

Workshop Participant: [04:52] some of my friends they, since I came from such a conservative town, I was like also some is like the conservative beliefs resonated with me a bit more than I do right now just because I don't think I fully understood what I actually thought but I just like bounced off of what other people were telling me. So. In that way like having more conversations with my friends about things like any social justice issues, really.

I've like talked a lot about them and I've expect I like told them. Well, I never liked quite understood this aspect of feminism and they've just like taught me much more about it and I really like that. And I don't know if they really challenge my beliefs too much which is nice. They just like built up built on them.

Ahana Ganguly: [05:46] Sam another Claremont student experienced a similar kind of expansion but in a very different piece of his life

Workshop Participant: [05:52] I'm supposed to be narrowing down because I figure out a major and it's just getting broader. So I guess like the specifically like the transition is kind of this transition away from science as the answer to my problems and like the world's problems and realizing the value in a lot of the things that like I used to completely dismiss.

Ahana Ganguly: [06:21] So for a lot of people our age transitions fuel additive, but transition can also involve emptiness and law. Here's Tanya founder of a children's nonprofit called project CHELA talking about that.

Workshop Participant: [06:32] I think as we get older every year, we're at the point where we're moving into the empty nest phase of life. So the transition is now from being a mother of four to having a lot of time to do the things that I want to do. From previously, my whole life is dedicated to my kids. So for all the women out there is a take care of yourself. Always. I think the old rule of thumb was at we give everything like The

Giving Tree book. Would you give your whole self? And then at the end there's very little left. We have to continue to work on us whole Mind Body Spirit.

Ahana Ganguly: [07:15] It's difficult for us to find our footing when we're faced with emptiness. Tanya was firm and defiant as she talked about this her determination to care for herself, but she couldn't help talking about her children's needs too.

Workshop Participant: [07:27] We need someone to says you were born. Where are you? I want to see you. There's something really special about you. There's something you're going to give to the world and I want to be a part of giving you all.

Ahana Ganguly: [07:41] Tanya was talking about children, but we all need what she's given her kids to the confusion of transition with their lives getting fuller or emptier, we all need to be seen to be taught and talk to and to support ourselves. Thanks for listening and thanks to everyone who participated in the Hive's podcasting Workshop. They music used in this episode was Dialysis Wayne's. Oh My Life. This has been DisCo follow us on Soundcloud to hear more.

D.d. Maoz: [08:13] Hey again, there are two more mini episodes they came about from these workshops. You can find them on the Hive's online blog.

You'll also find D.d.'s and I's extended conversation on the process of making these workshops as well.

D.d. Maoz: [08:24] If you want to learn more about the workshops themselves, check are written follow-up on the hive blog

Eli Cohen: [08:29] Until next time.

D.d. Maoz: [08:30] Hey, I'm D.d.

Eli Cohen: [08:31] And I'm Eli.

D.d. Maoz: [08:32] What you're about to hear is the result of three workshops for students got to engage in the podcast making process for the first time from interviewing to storyboarding to editing the final. These mini episodes were created in under four and a half hours.

Eli Cohen: [08:45] The workshops were process-oriented with a bias towards just going for it with no fear of messing up or getting it wrong. The second mini episode features the voices of Ahana, Jamie, Isaac, Katie, and Julia. The narratives of this episode were created by Tanya, Anam. Olivia, Priya with final production credits going to Sam. Happy listening.

Workshop Participant: [09:04] I found myself asking a lot more frequently frequently. Like am I satisfied. Am I fulfilled? Am I happy.

Workshop Participant: [09:11] I felt really lucky that I got to go. Like I don't know what else is gonna do with my life if I didn't get into Pomona.

Workshop Participant: [09:17] I've heard all of these sort of horror stories about people like just being like what the fuck am I doing?

Sam Sjoberg: [09:28] This is Sam Sjoberg, and you're listening to Disco. Welcome to the Discussion Collective, where we talk about and examine all aspects of life at the Claremont Colleges. Today. We are hearing stories of transition: transition from high school to college, transitions within families, transitions to the real world. These stories depict the crazy and complex life students are just thrown into in their four years in college. People coming from all over the US and the world with vastly different backgrounds and experiences yet somehow, it seems to all come together one way or another. We're going to take a look at just a few examples of this difficult and wild shared experience from people going through transitions at all different stages of the process first we're going to hear from Katie who is just starting her journey as a first year at Pomona.

Workshop Participant: [10:25] It was definitely like a really sudden like very opposite kind of transition. I'm from a small town in Southeast, Texas. So it's a very different political climate, and also just like culturally like I live in a rural rural area with you know, everyone has a farm and my neighbors are cows. So we coming to Claremont, like I know people complain about how small Claremont is but it's like there are store's here, you know, so it's very different

Sam Sjoberg: [11:02] But it wasn't only the physical transition. That was so weird for Katie. There were some ideological shifts as well.

Workshop Participant: [11:09] But also coming from a place where most people are conservative and Republican and I was always like I stuck out like a sore thumb to kind of people like the opposite of that. Which has been weird and cool but also kind of made me realize how valuable it is to have the experience of being around people who disagree with me.

Sam Sjoberg: [11:33] Now, let's take a look at another transition, Isaac's transition from college to adult life.

Workshop Participant: [11:41] For the for like a year before now, I was kind of like wow, like I need to figure it all out. Like what am I do like, I almost had that anxiety a

while ago and now there are opportunities appearing and things I'm working towards and it's like actually planning things out.

It doesn't feel like this hugely, that I'm going to be totally lost in really it's more feeling like time. You know, I feel like I'm processing it and that it's sad. I'm like, wow, I could just like walk over to my friends house like constantly be around all these people that I built these relationships with that's not going to be not going to see these people. I'm not going to have. As many kind of like. day-to-day mind-blowing changes experiences, whatever I won't be learning in this way.

Sam Sjoberg: [12:51] Clearly. These shifts aren't always easy and there are so many different aspects of transitions. Sometimes just getting there can be the hardest part. Here's Jamie story of getting into college.

Workshop Participant: [13:03] I guess I'll go back to my senior in high school. I applied to ten colleges. I got rejected by 9. But when I was my second choice in like that and I got I didn't end up applying to McGill in Canada. I'm Canadian, or I was in Canada. And I would get rejected by nine, waitlisted by Pomona and then I got the extended waitlist for Pomona. And then I ended up end up being the final person to get in, which was like really intense really intense because it was after the extended waitlist. It was July 18th. It's kind of eerie because I've met people who like recruits who are ya I met recruits who were accepted it like the same time for next year's class, which was like was interesting.

Sam Sjoberg: [13:53] So we've heard a few stories about transitions as they relate to college as we all know, there's so much more to the experience. Ahana talks to us a little bit about some of the emotional struggles of living in a new place.

Workshop Participant: [14:06] I find myself asking a lot more frequently frequently. Like am I satisfied and fulfilled in my happy and it's a good thing. But also if it's too constant it can get to like asking that question can just be kind of it can get you frustrated and you can't like it's impossible to be fulfilled all the time or like satisfied all the time. So asking that question constantly can kind of highlight the lows and make you appreciate like the highs less. But I think the conclusion from all of that, It's just sitting to think. Is that it's a really privileged question to be asking like, you know, what's your favorite school? Like what's your dream school? Where did you like the vibe the best because that implies certain factors don't have to be as important for you.

Sam Sjoberg: [15:24] I think Ahana's voiced some of the thoughts that a lot of students have on a day-to-day basis. How we decide to act or communicate these types of thoughts or what shape our journey through college. Isaac and Julie are closing in on their last few

weeks as Claremont students and as they see the finish line, they reflect on the impact of their time is spent at the Consortium.

Workshop Participant: [16:03] Yeah, man. I've really started to appreciate. like the guidance that that people tend to have given me here like. Especially as I'm like really trying to plan things out like I've been much more engaged with like meeting with different teachers and being like, oh, wow, it's not just about being in these classes, but it's really about connecting with who I'm learning from and like understanding how they've approached their life.

One of my favorite books is Reading Lolita in Tehran and have you read it? Okay. Wonderful. There's a great there's a quote in it, It's like something along the line. It's like near the end and it's something along the lines of like you'll not only miss the people you love but but you'll miss the person you are right now in this time and place because you know, you'll never be the same.

I think the I'm very much someone who is able to have really good relationships in the present moment with the person there. I'm not very good at keeping in touch with old friends or yeah with I guess with past friends. And so I think for the future I would like what like do it better like calling people on the phone or like doing letters or even doing email chains or something like some fun way or even like what you were saying with your dad is like just have some fun activity. It's a sort of link people like me with with my friends who are like physically far away.

Sam Sjoberg: [17:52] You're navigating transitions through life all the time. And I think it's important for us to take a moment and reflect on what these transitions mean to us and how they shape our lives, especially during our college years. Listening to other people's stories can help guide us through transitions on our own life. So I appreciate you taking the time to listen and I hope you come away with a little bit more insight than you did when we started. I'm Sam Sjoberg. Thank you so much for tuning into DisCo.

Special thanks to Eli Cohen D.d. Moaz, Ximena Lane, and The Hive. Will see you next time.

D.d. Maoz: [18:49] Hey again, there are two more mini episodes they came about from these workshops. You can find them on the Hive's online blog.

Eli Cohen: [18:56] You'll also find D.d. And I's extended conversation on the process of making these workshops as well.

D.d. Maoz: [19:01] If you want to learn more about the workshops themselves, check are written follow-up on the hive blog until next time.

D.d. Maoz: [19:07] Hey, I'm D.d.

Eli Cohen: [19:08] And I'm Eli.

D.d. Maoz: [19:09] What you're about to hear is the result of three workshops for students got to engage in the podcast making process for the first time from interviewing to storyboarding to editing the final. These mini episodes were created in under four and a half hours.

Eli Cohen: [19:21] The workshops were process-oriented with a bias towards just going for it. With no fear of messing up or getting it wrong.

D.d. Maoz: [19:28] The narratives of this episode were created by a Emmequet, Jamie, Caroline and Ivan and final production by Eli.

Eli Cohen: [19:33] Happy listening.

Workshop Participant: [19:38] Hi everyone, Welcome to our podcast phases of the moon the college journey. So today, so we're going to be talking about transition. Ends in and out of college and the exciting but overwhelming time that college can be for a lot of students both coming from high school and entering into the real world.

Workshop Participant: [20:08] Yeah. It's really different. I'm an only child. So my life was incredibly structured when I was living at home with my parents. I was at school from 7:30. In the morning to about 6:00 at night and then I just go home and get all my homework done sleep and go to school the next day. I didn't make a ton of decisions because all of my time is just spent doing things that were planned out for me.

Workshop Participant: [20:32] Now, I feel. a little bit different from probably when I was doing my college apps and over the summer trying to kind of get in those last bits of high school life before moving to California and just being with friends who I've known since.

Workshop Participant: [20:53] So Claire told us a little bit about her life before college, which was extremely structured where she didn't have to make many decisions about what she would do every day. And Anam told us of his journey from New York to California how excited that that transition made him. The excitement of experiencing the unknown and this this huge move at a lot of high school students are really looking forward to.

Workshop Participant: [21:48] So in our podcast today, we're going to be talking about people's experiences of college, which can be exciting. But at times also overwhelming.

Workshop Participant: [22:07] I was just so busy. I wasn't even thinking about it just busy getting through orientation busy going to all these events busy like getting classes and going to them and I almost didn't, I wasn't thinking about the transition because I was just so like one track minded and just trying to get everything done and it almost happened without me noticing the transition for me.

Workshop Participant: [22:35] It felt very much like not a transition because I think that I was very much in the moment. And so I couldn't feel the different forces shifting around me and from where I had come to where I am now, I couldn't really feel, I didn't really stop to think and reflect on the difference and how it felt really coming to school here, and I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing, but I just kind of lived.

Workshop Participant: [23:08] I guess my parents were like a constant for me. They went to work and came home at the same time everyday. I could kind of predict what they were doing. Whereas here, nothing is really set in stone. People are coming and going going about their own lives that are more disconnected from mine. So, I think it's hard to, like established like very reliable things that I can always count on. Its just seemed really be more plausible ways to adapt to like whatever comes at me.

Workshop Participant: [23:43] But at the same time feel the connection and to them and then motivated to change and grow. One of the statements being overwhelmed, not noticing the transition didn't feel like a transition. Didn't stop to think, adaptation is necessary, college is always fast-paced and changing.

Workshop Participant: [24:25] If I think my sister was a bigger influence, I have an older sister like she's in grad school and just like I basically just follow everything that she does, and I think she's helped me like understand scientific research. Like I understand like enjoying the environment. And she helps me a lot with showing me like what's out there in the world and she'll just like send me things which thinks I'm interested in and I'm like, I don't know if I'm interested in this just because you say I am like I am like I don't really care if. I think my sister was a bigger influence.

Workshop Participant: [25:11] And the students were interviewed told us about how they eventually learned to slow down and listen to themselves to see what their bodies were asking for, more rest or more emotional connection. And these students that before were too caught up and “hecticness” of college then learned.

Workshop Participant: [26:02] The students we interviewed learned that discomfort is a part of growth and transitioning out of college into the and into the real world.

Workshop Participant: [26:20] It's clear that college is a confusing time and it's easy to get overwhelmed. But we also see that. That can be an important part of personal growth and change.

Workshop Participant: [26:39] For after college, well, I got a job this summer building trails in the Rocky Mountains, so I'll be living in a tent and hopefully in the backcountry station like 8,000 feet on a mountain. We were like eight days on and six days off and I'm super excited about that.

Workshop Participant: [27:02] I've also gotten used to doing phone calls with people which is something I never really used to do at all. I thought phone calls were kind of awkward and you calling you like Hi, how are you? I can't see you. But but they become like very comfortable now and I was talking to one of my friends from a while ago, and I was on the phone and we talked for so long. It was nighttime and I just like watch the moon like kind of go across the whole sky because I was sitting in the same place for such a long time talking on the phone which is which is really cool to be able to do.

D.d. Maoz: [27:45] Hey again, there are two more mini episodes they came about from these workshops. You can find them on the Hive's online blog.

Eli Cohen: [27:54] You'll also find D.d. and I's extended conversation on the process of making these workshops as well. If you want to learn more about the workshops themselves, check are written follow-up on the hive blog

Eli Cohen: [28:04] Until next time.

Episode 3: A First Attempt at Something Else

Release Date: November 15, 2018

Guests: Becky Hoving, Emily Coffin, Molly Keller

Description: On October 4th of this year, Pomona College’s Dean of Students sent an email banning the use of anonymously-created lists that kept students out of campus events. Some people were furious, others were relieved, and many students were learning about the practice for the first time. Though many specifics about these lists remain unknown—how long the practice had been in place, how many groups were using such lists, or how many names had actually been submitted—moral stances on “The Lists” became one of the most salient conversation in campus politics. The practice was first implemented so that survivors of sexual assault could name their perpetrator and prevent them from being at the same gathering, without fear of retaliation. Critics, and ultimately the Pomona administration, seemed to fear these lists could be used for more insidious purposes as well. To start off this four part series on “The Lists”, we try

to learn from students what they were, why they were made, and if they are really so different from practices that have existed outside the Claremont bubble for some time.

Reflection: After a bit of a tumultuous beginning of the school year in terms of finding how I would consistently produce my podcast, I finally decided to go it alone and officially make it part of my thesis. This process alone taught me much. Partnerships—either with other students, with campus organizations, or even with employers who pay you—can be a blessing and a curse. After each one of these avenues fell through, I cam to the realization that even though my vision was a new conduit for discussion, the ways in which I wanted to approach it were singular enough that I would need to produce the podcast on my own.

By that point, the topic that seemed to have the most buzz on campus was the use of anonymized online lists to manage guest entry into campus events. Though the practice has been known to occur for almost five years, most of the time it was relegated to private gatherings of friends who did not publicize their practice. This semester, however, seemingly every Facebook event openly invited submissions at the bottom of their description. It did not take long until the administration took notice, precipitating the first of many all school emails which would throw the student body into anger and unrest.

I did not know at the time that my pursuit of this topic would become the overriding thrust of DisCo. I have learned of myself that I am terrible at self-imposed deadlines and closure. I always prioritize the unanswered questions—and sometimes even the unasked questions—over brevity and consistency. Maybe this means I am better suited for longford reporting. Maybe this means I need to be more self-disciplined. My hunch is somewhat of both.

This topic quickly proved to be one that individuals wanted to talk about least, and I think that, in part, may have been the attraction for me. It was something that everyone thought about, but few were comfortable talking about openly. “The lists” were the archetypal example; a deeply divisive topic that was almost never discussed in public. There was the fact that the simple reporting of the facts was harder than most topics. It would have been inappropriate for me to seek our survivors of sexual assault and proposition them for their stories. Similarly, the only way to find some one on a list was advertising myself as open to conversation and hoping they would identify themselves to me. The topic was perhaps the most shrouded in secrecy I could have selected.

The decision would ultimately reduce the quantity of episodes produced, but I believe it greatly challenged, and thus expanded, my ability to report thoughtfully on topics for which that is hardest to do.

Transcript

Eli Cohen: [00:00] Hi, I'm Eli and this is DisCo. Short for Discussion Collective, DisCo is a political podcast about life at Claremont. That may seem a little bit weird. But hopefully by the end of the year, I'll have convinced you that most of what we do here is pretty political. The daily choices we make, the disciplines we studied, and the conversations we have with one another every day.

For Episode One, I want to start with a debate that has taken Pomona by storm over the past month. You might have heard about it but even if you have, you likely don't know too many details. The whole point was kind of to keep a low profile until the Pomona administration made that all but impossible. I'm talking about the email sent out by Pomona's Dean of Students, Avis Hinkson, and cosigned by Pomona's Title IX Coordinator Sue McCarthy on October 4. It said Pomona funded organizations which used a list to manage guest entry into their events would be punished. The email and part read like this.

Reader: [01:16] While we recognize many factors may have led to the use of such lists on campus--

Eli Cohen: [01:21] This obviously is not Dean Hinkson, just one of my friends volunteering some voice acting. These are not her views, she's just reading the script.

Reader: [01:30] --the practice of barring bullying or otherwise punishing students in this manner must end immediately, as it is inconsistent with the college's commitment to equity and due process. The use of anonymous allegations of misconduct to socially isolated or exclude students should not take the place of the college's established procedures which encourage reporting, provide support and ensure that all involved parties are treated fairly.

Eli Cohen: [01:54] That's right. Pomona funded clubs, Sigma Tau, The Pomona Events Committee, the Latinx Alliance, and others were all using Google Forms that encourage people to submit names of other students who they did not want to attend for any reason, anonymously. The event description for one Sig Tau party read like this.

Reader: [02:18] Safety is our primary concern at Boot. In order to make sure that everyone has a good time, we have a Google Doc, where you can submit the name of anyone who could potentially come to the event that threatens your or your guests safety. All answers are anonymous, and only one member of Sigma Tau has access to the list. If someone named on the list shows up, they will be asked to leave the event. Once a name has been submitted, it will remain on the list for all future ST events. We appreciate your work helping keep the Claremont community safe.

Eli Cohen: [02:47] And to be perfectly honest, when I first learned that these lists were a thing. At that moment, when someone showed me one of the party invitations and told me what was going on. There was a fleeting moment where I honestly wondered, could I be on a list? I mean,

when I've been told to steer clear of people, for reasons ranging from violent assaulter or to shitty romantic partner ,to saying something stupid in class. I mean, yeah, we've probably all done the last one. And word of mouth may be one thing, but when any accusation can be codified into permanent consequence, without even having to justify why, that seems scary enough to me.

Now, by now, I know a lot of my fellow classmates will be 99% sure that I have no business talking about this issue. I'll agree, the way I have framed these lists so far is not the way you typically hear in our campus conversation. But you may be surprised just how many people have disclosed opinions like this in private, and I'm not just talking about the disaffected white guys either.

Now, on the other hand, if you are just thrilled with what you have heard so far? If you were ecstatic to have seen these blacklists go, then I'd also suggest you reevaluate your position. Because though the lists may have been banned, the problem which they were trying to solve: sexual assault on these campuses, is still just as real. And even if sexual assault is something you've never experienced, someone you know, has, I can, but guarantee it.

And I should say, now, I am not a survivor. I cannot claim their experience. And I hope this episode doesn't do that. I can attempt to understand. And in that capacity, I'll try my best to do this story justice. Because the story of sexual assault on these campuses, and everywhere is not new. It is always existed side by side with the abstract concepts of due process, innocent until proven guilty, and the likes. The only difference is today, survivors are speaking out. And people are starting to listen. So at least consider that these lists are in fact, very complicated. It's a personal subject, and at times, hard to hear, so listen at your own discretion. But I hope you walk away. appreciative that you did.

Becky Hoving: [05:58] My name is Becky Hoving, I'm a sophomore at Scripps. I'm from Westport, Connecticut, which is about an hour outside of New York City. And I'm the news associate editor for the student life here at Pomona.

Eli Cohen: [06:10] So let's just start with the basics then. As best you know, how many lists are there? To You know, how many names are on these lists? Who has access to them? All these kinds of things?

Becky Hoving: [06:23] Yeah, so um, obviously, it differs by organization, because there's no like “master list.” Each organization like Sigma Tau, or the organization you put on Dezi Beats, different organizations that throw parties on campus have used these lists in the past, but they're just kept on like an individual organization basis for the Dezi Beats event, which was last year, they reported that they had zero submissions, which I'm not sure like, if that's an outlier, or if that like kind of represents like the other lists, but I think it definitely varies by organization.

Eli Cohen: [07:01] Had you ever heard any instances of like clubs, cross referencing lists with each other to try to like figure out that everyone's, you know, accounted for anything like that?

Becky Hoving: [07:10] Yeah. In terms of the vetting process, it seemed like student organizations hadn't really gotten that far in terms of like cross referencing. I'm not sure, like, legally, how that would like where that would fall. But no organization that I talked to reported that they had cross reference with any other organization, because I really think that it's kind of like, case by case basis where like, for this specific event by this specific organization, at this time, when you may not want these people.

Eli Cohen: [07:39] What about enforcement? And have you ever heard of how they can be enforced in theory, or any methods of enforcement that have been carried out?

Becky Hoving: [07:47] Yeah, so Sigma Tau, I talked to you most extensively about how they use their lists. And the President Ethen Lund mentioned that students and administration obviously agrees with this, that students don't have the right to bar other students from, like, on campus organization, hosted parties, like parties that are funded by the school, in a sense, students don't have the right to like completely bar someone.

But what they did do is like, if someone was on the list, they would reach out to them prior to the event and say, you know, your name appeared on this list, please don't come to the event. Like if you have any questions follow up, obviously, you could still show up, but you're kind of showing up with the knowledge that like you're not wanted there. So kind of like the social pressure versus actually being like, officially banned from an event.

Eli Cohen: [08:38] This idea of social pressure came up in a lot of my interviews. And I want to bring the topic up early, because I think it's central to understanding how these lists actually operate. Right? Because at the end of the day, Claremont is not the kind of place where these lists really could be enforced with any real certainty. You're not going to have the linebacker stand outside your club event like a bouncer and decide who can and can't get in. And they're not a legal process. That was the whole point, right? The formalized processes like Title IX weren't working in the first place. The lists by design were meant to operate in the sphere of social influence. And I think that's critical to understanding how they actually function

Emily Coffin: [09:27] Hi, I'm Emily. She, her, hers. I'm a senior at Pomona public policy analysis, chemistry major. I've been an advocate since I was the first year.

Molly Keller: [09:38] I'm Molly, I'm also she, her, hers. I'm a senior at Pomona majoring in religious studies. And I've been an advocate since my sophomore year.

Eli Cohen: [09:47] What role do you see the advocates playing on this campus kind of generally. And then also, in light of the email from Dean Hinkson, kind of the issues that have brought been brought up since then.

Molly Keller: [10:00] To respond to your question. First of all, we support survivors. And that's our biggest priority, always has been and always will be. So that direct survivors support is kind of our core, but then we're also really big on education, and conversations about rape culture, how other people can support survivors in the more day to day life, just in friendships. And then we also kind of act as a liaison, I think, between the student body and the administration, which gets more to the email in the forums. But that's something I think we've always kind of done, be in contact with the Title IX Coordinator, Dean of Students.

Emily Coffin: [10:37] Right. Yeah, I would say that our functions really fall into the three fold division is an important one. But I think that one way to look at it as well as there's two buckets, essentially, the first being the service that we provide, to the student body in the sense of we we have education and, and providing this peer support as the form of advocates, but then there's also the component of activism where we're proactively working with the administration on policy reform, looking, attending sort of these forums and whatnot, and really going over sort of these methods, methods and seeing which are the most effective, but also, which can come from true student organizing.

Eli Cohen: [11:24] I really liked Emily's framing of there being these two buckets, though, in the time since we've talked, I've started to conceive of it slightly differently. She mentioned providing services and engaging in activism, which for me, feels related to the distinction between survivor support and responding to the incident. Because proponents of the list, often tout the benefits of creating entirely safe spaces for survivors, while critics cite the damage done to the individuals who are barred. We tried to discuss this entanglement support and response, and whether or not the two can ever really be seen as separate.

Emily Coffin: [12:07] I think that the decision to report, on a very, uni-dimensional perspective looks like it could be like “the right” decision, I put quotation marks around that as it is, as far as how the school can support you, you can seek, like consequences for a perpetrator because it's a policy violation. You'd like someone has essentially violated an institutional policy against you.

The issue of most Title IX violations and issues of sexual assault is that they're much more intimate, and much more painful than I think a Title IX policy violation gives them credit for. The process of Title IX itself is an entirely different subject where those cases are not tried in accordance to actual Title IX nine policy, whether it's timeline, whether it's the resources that are given to students, or spoken directly to students.

So as far as going through the reporting process, that's an incredibly tiring, exhausting thing to endure that might not even be “the right” way to heal. And like I use quotation marks again. And I think like that is what is critical and understanding here is that seeking justice through a policy violation isn't the cure, you know, like, that's not the end all be all of healing from an instant from a from an issue like this. And I think that is something important to understand as a community is like, if we're if we're talking about support and healing in these ways, we have to understand that that is a decision of the survivor and itself are themselves and I think that I the the role that the administration wants to take and really assigning what is sort of the right way to heal from one of these from an instance of sexual assault or violence. That in itself completely misses the point.

Eli Cohen: [14:20] If we could talk about a separate but related issue. I've heard that there is trouble with the funding for advocates as well, right now. And so I just I just want to hear it from y'all yourselves. What What is that looking like? Where Where is that headed? What's going on with that? As much as you'd like to say.

Emily Coffin: [14:41] There's multiple issues, I would say right now, I think the one I've been an advocate. Advocates has been very central in my experience at Pomona. I've been a part of it since the beginning of my time here. But I think the what has been really interesting to me is I took on the role of doing a lot of the work with the administration when I was a sophomore especially, and was kind of learning the ropes from older advocates in the organization. And you just notice burnout, really quickly from the people who kind of do that work. And I would say 100%, I experienced it myself.

It's really exhausting kind of working with the administration, this year has been sort of a new level of not only does it feel like what the work that we're doing isn't being recognized or isn't being really honored. It feels as if that work is kind of being under siege this year.

Eli Cohen: [15:44] What do you mean by that? Do you mean that the administration is keeping you from doing your job as you see it?

Molly Keller: [15:51] The the finances, in particular, I think, speak to what Emily was talking about, about the frustrations. So that's one area where we do have to talk to the administration, and where communication has been really bad. So advocates weren't paid until three years ago, right, and that's because advocates who came before us at advocated obviously really hard on our behalf to get that student labor recognized by the administration. But even since then, we've never been able to find out what our budget is. We're hired and we're on payroll, but we don't know explicitly where that money comes from that pays our paychecks. And it means that students have to pay out of pocket under the assumption that they'll be reimbursed, which doesn't make advocates as an organization as accessible as we'd like it to be.

We obviously want students from all backgrounds, all genders, all socio economic statuses, race, sexuality, etc. Because that helps us support as many people as we can. But when we have this financial issue, it kind of limits the extent to which people can participate.

Eli Cohen: [16:59] Later in the conversation. I asked Emily and Molly about a specific critique that I had been hearing a lot at the time, which wasn't even so much about the consequences to the individuals who were on the list. But that the lists themselves acted as a kind of social signaling, a sort of way to imply to people that if they didn't get on board with how people were thinking about this issue, they might as well not participate at all.

Molly Keller: [17:25] What I would say to that is, I agree it's a problem. And you should be able to come forward if you have kind of a new and nuanced perspective. But what I would say is a lot of the people who come forward criticizing the list don't propose an alternative. And so they join the conversation as a naysayer. And their point may be valid. And it may be valuable for us all to hear it and consider it because again, this isn't necessarily a perfect way of handling the issue. But what we're looking for is for them to say, here's my problem with the list, and with this process. Here's how I think could be better. Or here's an approach that I think might help keep survivors safe, and not be so alienating or not lend itself to the kind of potential misuse. So that's not something we see a ton. And I agree, it can be intimidating for people to come forward and say that stuff, but usually the people who do don't necessarily kind of engage further than the criticism.

Emily Coffin: [18:27] The thing that I find great about the list is that it is like the least in your face performative method of activism that has come across this campus in a while. And I think like it is a very silent action. And it allows for a message of solidarity, especially being given by peer groups or organizations and whatnot. But it is not a place to be up on your soapbox spewing like whatever your opinion is, like and it really is not a tool used to silence the naysayers or silence the people who might have a polarizing view. It is a very, like quiet piece of activism at the end of the day, I find it and and I think that is like what, what it's intended to be in a lot of ways. And I think that it really is is made that way to further protect and center survivors. Understanding this is an intimate issue that people do not want to be put on blast and Claremont.

Eli Cohen: [19:29] So it is 945. I just checked. So I'll stop asking questions. But if there are things that you thought of that you think are really important that haven't been said, or or thoughts that have come up in the course of the conversation, as seriously, I mean, if if I've got I've got nowhere to be. So yeah, shoot.

Molly Keller: [19:50] I think just a couple things. To make clear. I mean, we said this in the forum, but advocates doesn't hold list. We're not against the practice. We know that organizations do hold like concrete, written lists. We don't do that because of the very liability reasons that have been raised by the administration.

And then another thing is that just Emily, and I don't stand to speak for the whole organization. We're also two white advocates, so I think that's worth saying. So we don't want it to seem like we're speaking on behalf of everyone in the organization.

Eli Cohen: [20:26] I really enjoyed my conversation with the advocates. They explained their view of the situation lucidly and convincingly, so much so that actually had a little bit of trouble understanding why this issue was so contentious. The following week, I interviewed both Dean of Students, Avis Hinkson, and Title IX coordinator, Sue McCarthy. I don't have any recordings because they asked to be off the record. But I started to see subtle yet important differences in the way in which different groups on campus view this problem of sexual assault.

In a later conversation I had with Molly, she put it in really cogent terms: “It's a matter of the administration pushing a legal technicality. She said out of liability fears. Whereas because we put survivors first, we are committed to confidentiality, in spite of whatever policies may or may not prohibit that. There is a fair amount of legal ambiguity for the administration, that is something to fear. For us, that seems like an opportunity to capitalize on a gray area that could help advocates better support survivors.”

And if we're going to talk about the law, we have to talk about the people who are going to get the final say.

TAPE (Leahy): [21:58] What is the strongest this memory you have? The strongest memory of the insert something you cannot forget? Take whatever time you need.

TAPE (Ford): [22:12] Indelible in the hippocampus is the laughter. The uproarious laughter between the two and they're having fun at my expense.

Eli Cohen: [22:29] The other part of this that we can't forget about, the email banning the lists was sent exactly a week after the Ford-Kavanaugh hearing. An FBI investigation had just ended, and Judge Brett Kavanaugh, a man accused of sexual assault by three different women, was confirmed the following day. Here was Pomona asking survivors to play by the rules, go through the process, trust that the system is fair, all while the country was appointing an alleged assailant to oversee the systems. Quite literally, were Title IX to be legally challenged and appealed to the Supreme Court. Judge Kavanuagh would get to be part of that ruling, and we all can guess where his sympathies would lie.

Plenty of people can have and will continue to quarrel over Kavanagh's legal faculties, but the political signaling matters in and of its own right. In the wake of this confirmation, a lot of us wondered, why didn't the republicans just pull their nominee, find someone with a clean record, maybe they could have even been more conservative. And likely, they still would have been nominated without a hiccup.

But it's possible that Kavanaugh ended up being nominated, not in spite of his allegations, but because of them. The message could not be more clear. Speak out all you want, but see what actually changes.

TAPE (Fisher): [24:06] So we were all comparing notes, and there were a handful of names we all came up with right away.

Eli Cohen: [24:11] That's Molly Fisher, the host of the cut on Tuesdays, you're listening to a section right now.

TAPE (Fisher): [24:16] But less than 24 hours after that, I got an email that I'm still thinking about a year later. It had a link to a Google spreadsheet called shitty media men, and when you opened it up, what you saw was a list of men's names with anonymous accusations entered next to them. These ranged from things like sending creepy messages to sexual assault, so it was a pretty wide range. At first there weren't that many names. A lot of them were the same ones my friends and I had come up with right away, but by that night and included dozens of men, and all the women I worked with were talking about it.

Eli Cohen: [24:51] You should really listen to the whole episode produced by gimlet media. But here's just another small section of Molly and other journalists that she knew discussing their initial reactions to the spreadsheet.

TAPE (Fisher): [25:02] Sorry to bug you. There's a breaking story I think we need to address she writes, Hi, I'm in London, I read Oh, fuck, there's a list being generated of men in media who have done shitty things to women. And Rebecca said, I'm looking now and they said oh, man, do you think we should cover this? She says I don't know. It's such a weird mix of I had shitty lunch date with this dude to man hits woman.

TAPE (Spencer): [25:23] I remember looking at it and feeling like I shouldn't even be I shouldn't even be looking at my list.

TAPE (Fisher): [25:29] That's through Spencer, another editor at the cut. Why not?

TAPE (Spencer): [25:32] Because it felt like watching whispers happening live in real time. And also it was a story that was as live as it gets, like watching a spreadsheet get filled in like that. Well, yeah. really unbelievable. All the different cells lighting up with different colors, you know, just seeing the different avatars and the top right hand corner.

TAPE (Fisher): [25:50] Anonymous marmoset. Anonymous, aardvark, they got to the really obscure animals because so many people were looking at.

TAPE (Spencer): [25:56] And just watching it happen. It was it was totally overwhelming was like, I don't even know what this is yet. Yeah, like thinking about it as a story. But also, what are

we even talking about? What is this document? Yeah, I remember I saw on the list the name of somebody who had sexually harassed me at a previous job, but I didn't put him on the list. But the allegation that was next to him was what had happened to me. And I remember thinking, like, you know, I knew people were sort of aware, but like, wow, the whisper network really is alive. Yeah, have enough so that, you know, women are actually adding allegation stuff has happened to me, you know, we're all really aware of what has happened to each other.

TAPE (Fisher): [26:34] But had you ever talk to anyone about it before? Had you ever worn anyone, just sort of people that I used to work with who all who all new, but I hadn't. I hadn't been like advertising it by any means.

Eli Cohen: [26:48] For a little bit more context, the list they're discussing existed for about 12 hours on October 11 of last year, it was created by New Republic editor, Moira Donegan. Here she is describing her rationale. In an interview she did with the New York Times.

TAPE (Donegan): [27:08] I created a Google spreadsheet called shitty medium, and that could be shared and anonymously edited. The idea was that women could use it to name somebody who had behaved badly towards them, whether through sexual assault or rape or harassment. I shared it with some women colleagues and friends in my industry, whom I knew had stories. And then from there, they sent it to people they knew had stories, and they sent it to people they knew had stories. And by the time I was forced to take it down to about 12 hours after I created it, there were more than 70 men named and 14 had their names highlighted in red to denote that there were more than one woman who were accusing that particular person of violent physical assault.

If you are accepting this as just the way things are, then you're sort of accepting that you're going to be treated badly, and your colleagues are going to be treated badly. And you know, women you've never met are going to be treated badly. And I didn't want to accept that anymore. So I decided to make a first attempt at trying something else.

Listen, I made the decision to create this spreadsheet. So its flaws are my fault. But there was this obstacle because the conventional reporting avenues for women who have experienced sexual harassment or assault or rape, or really not good once the document that I made was designed to be private, but it very quickly went viral.

I want to emphasize that I don't even know who saw it, who had added to it those women are anonymous to me as well. But at the same time, I could see that what was going on on this the spreadsheet was also this act of real solidarity and community among the women who work in this industry to attempt to keep one another safe.

Eli Cohen: [29:14] To be sure, the spreadsheet made by Donegan, and the lists which have been used here in Claremont are not the exact same, but I do believe they fill a similar purpose. As Donegan said, a first attempt at something else.

They are not meant as malicious hit jobs, or celebratory exposures. They're meant as calls for protection, born out of a threat of very real danger. And like any first pass at making something better, there will be other damages rendered along the way. We look into that and part two of this series. But for me, making part one did make one thing crystal clear. Just reverting to the way things were is not an option.

These will be the fastest credits you have ever heard in your life. The songs in this episode were Agitations Tropicales by L'Impératrice. Eyes Closed by BadBadNotGood. Long Ride Home by Zane McFarland. He's a Pomona grad, he makes amazing music and he's releasing an album soon. It's gonna be awesome. The audio you heard was provided by The Student Life, CSPAN, Gimlet Media, and New York Times. And of course, thank you to the following people for absolutely crucial support as PC Senate for help with funding, Jeremy, Sabine and Soleil, for willing help and sage advice. Erica Tyrone KSPC for unwavering assistance. And of course, Susan McWilliams for spiritual guidance, sanity saving dark humor, and allowing me to actually call this my senior thesis.

Episode 4: Named But Never Heard

Release Date: November 27, 2018

Guests: Anonymous Student

Description: In the second part of our series about sexual assault on campus, Title IX, and “the lists,” I talk with a person who understands these lists in a ways most of us cannot—he’s actually on one of them. Our original conversations were held in private, have been transcribed, and are reproduced here by a voice actor—all identifying information has been removed. We talk about the experience of being on one of the lists, how he thinks Title IX could be changed, and what he thinks accountability looks like. While this interview is in no way exhaustive, his perspective and experience is an important part of understanding how issues of sexual violence are being handled at the Claremont Colleges. Please send all thoughts, questions, and concerns to eli.cohen@pomona.edu.

Reflection: This single episode probably changed my thinking on the topic of sexual assault more than any other occurrence in my life. To have a student on one the lists reach out to me personally caught me off guard. We spoke twice for over an hour each time. I could not help but feel like a real investigative reporter, finding stories and perspective that others did not—and would not—know had it not been for my reporting. With the source, I discussed providing them with anonymity (which quickly felt warranted). We also debated what I could include from our interview (in which I provided slightly more of a fight, though ultimately acquiesced to just about every request as well).

There was a tangible emotional force to being in the room discussing the topic with him. I found it hard not to empathize with some one recounting how their life had descended into constant terror. I almost felt the need to comfort and assure them during the interview, which contradicted with both my preconceived ideas that a reporter is supposed to remain disinterested and that members of the Pomona community are supposed to forsake perpetrators of sexual violence.

All of this to say, I was ultimately let down by the episode's reception, which is to say, there was none. I felt like the conversation was an important and nuanced contribution to the campus conversation on how to deal with sexual violence, and I had some naive hope that by virtue of this fact, it would gain listeners, influence thought, and maybe even provoke conversation. It accomplished none of that, and I began to understand just how long an 18 minute podcast appears to something who has not made their main priority understanding the topic.

Transcript

Eli Cohen: [00:00] Thanks for tuning in to the second episode of DisCo. Last time, we talked with a number of people about the topics of combating sexual violence, the Title IX process, and one measure, the lists, that were an attempt to bridge the gap between the two. We looked inside our own campuses, and outside as well, to try to see what was being done about this pervasive and disturbing topic.

If you haven't had a chance, I'd recommend giving that a listen first. Today, I want us to hear from another voice that was conspicuously absent from part one, someone who has actually been put on one of these lists. After all, they are the people who are most intimately aware of how these systems actually operate. While producing episode one, I made it generally known that I was looking for such a person in hopes that someone would come forward and offer to speak with me. And someone did. We talked at length, and decided it would be better if our conversations stayed confidential.

To preserve this confidentiality, I transcribed our conversation and had a reader reenact a condensed and edited version. To be clear, the voice you are about to hear is not the person with whom I spoke, the voice you will hear is simply reading a script. One other clarification. While I removed the parts of our conversation, which could reveal the interviewees identity, you should know something about his specific situation. He does not know who put him on the list, and is even unsure of why they might have done so. I do not mean to imply that his experience speaks to every case. Just like I do not think this episode comes close to an exhaustive conversation about this difficult topic.

Eli Cohen: [02:04] Can you describe the experience of being on this list and how it has changed your life in any facet?

Anonymous Respondent: [02:12] The the first impact of this list really was a profound sense of guilt and shame. I'd assume that be considered positive for them. It's kind of in part what they want. So it was kind of it was torturous to imagine what I had done. This, like uncertainty of you've done something wrong, but you don't know what it is can make you think of the worst case scenario. Yeah, it's, it's torturous, for sure.

Then the second effect its had is sort of social paranoia. It is, to some extent real because I thought everyone that everyone hated me. I thought I didn't want to be on this campus. I thought I was seen as a rapist and a monster and right, I thought myself that I was a monster.

Eli Cohen: [03:01] So what do you want to see happen going forward? What would those next steps look like? Are you going to seek some kind of retribution?

Anonymous Respondent: [03:08] I'm on my side, I don't, I don't want to seek anything. I just, I just continue to handle my guilt and shame as well as I can, having conversations with my friends about what this is meant.

Because I'll probably have to deal with this in most of my friend like relationships throughout my time in college, I mean, I have to address it, because I don't always. Well, there's always a fear that they've already been told him or perpetrator, and you don't know how they will react. But they're just conversations so that I'll have to have. And the last ingredient is a little bit like my own accountability, trying to own up to what happened, and I do want to own up to it, it doesn't seem like advocates would believe anyone in my position saying this from the sort of rhetoric they use but but I do care.

I care that I fucked up, I care that I heard someone, I don't understand how they think it's so easy to just brush off an accusation. Making you doubt your worth as a person is something that hits you really hard. Obviously, from from now a number, step number one is to be a lot more aware, and all my relationships in the future, about consent, and be really careful about how I treat others be really careful in my drug consumption and, and that of others. But in the sense of trying to be more accountable, I don't know what I can do. Because at some points, I've even wished I'd been reported. So we could actually actually, you know, know what happened and address it and take responsibility for it and and try to do something. But for now, it's just, I mean, I'm in the dark. So I don't know what can do other than just do better in the future.

Eli Cohen: [05:04] So on the one hand, I find it remarkable, that sometimes you wish you had been formally accused. And and that's telling to me about how difficult this likely has been. But on the other hand, I can see a critique of what you're saying, which would go something like, of course, someone in your position would want to be formally accused, because because everybody knows that people who go through the process, usually get off with minimal consequence. What would you say to a critique like that?

Anonymous Respondent: [05:43] So I think this all comes from frustration about how complicated the Title IX processes and also some legitimate suspicions that the school doesn't have a big incentive to really address sexual assault because they want to protect their reputation.

And I mean, those are really legitimate concerns. What I don't think is that there can be an alternative system. And if you want to handle this better, we just have to put pressure on on the school, and hopefully this has, but then again, advocates need to want to engage in that conversation. And it doesn't seem like they want to do that right now.

Eli Cohen: [06:26] What would be one of your major critiques of the list?

Anonymous Respondent: [06:30] There's an underlying demand for punishment. Because you're sharing this list and you were defaming someone, and even though they think it's for the protection of survivors, I think they're just taking justice into their own hands. They said this before, like, what we want is justice, and the school and Title IX doesn't give us justice. Right. But I think it's pretty insidious to hide your will for vengeance under suppose protection of survivors.

Eli Cohen: [06:55] Let me ask a question about one specific in what you said earlier, which is right, lot of these lists purportedly are not shared, they're managed by one person and one person alone. the privacy of the list is paramount. And, and the consequences of being on the list is supposed to be exclusion from a singular discrete event, or series of events, and nothing more. But what you're telling me definitely does not confirm that. So I think a lot of this is kind of predicated on how seriously the confidentiality of these lists is taken. And when people say that there's not a consequence for for being on the list. Are there other consequences that are very real, but that the the makers of the lists don't publicly say?

Anonymous Respondent: [07:45] I mean, I think it could be the case that I've been put on every list out there. I don't know, so I can't say anything. But when I can say things about it's, it's about literally an advocate herself coming up to me and telling me I've been accused. So I, how the fuck are you defending privacy? And this is the person I respect, the person I actually know as well intentioned, but how do you misunderstand your own systems so profoundly, that you think that that's acceptable?

I've had people not only coming up to me, but someone's coming up to my friends, my friends and my relationships, and people are going out to friends of mine, people around my circle and telling them I'm a perpetrator, and that they should stay away from me.

Eli Cohen: [08:33] Can I ask you a question about that last part, which is about that label of perpetrator, even though you don't have evidence to that label, you you use it on yourself? Can Can I ask you what your thought process is there?

Anonymous Respondent: [08:51] So you said that, though there's no evidence, I am still considering myself a perpetrator of sexual assault? I Yeah, well, for one, I am in the eyes of many people. So that's done. And two, I do believe I heard someone it's just better as a working hypothesis, I guess. Otherwise, like, what am I? I'm just this victim of a witch hunt? Like, I don't think that doesn't take me anywhere. So I think it's better to just admit that I'm flawed, and that I hurt someone and then try and work from there. And then these categories of perpetrator and survivor, I think, I think I understand this is an attempt to be empowering for those who've suffered violence. But I think it's dangerous to put people in these categories and create sort of a sort of identity around which side you're on. It seems to go against the literature that this is a systemic problem.

Eli Cohen: [09:57] Let me propose a hypothetical, not because I I think it's actually that useful, but just because I think it could be important for people to hear your thought process with which is, if this had been handled differently, say instead of just being put on a list, kind of shunned, but instead, you had been approached for some kind of discussion. How would you have wanted that? How would you have wanted this to potentially be handled differently? And and what would you have done? Were that the case?

Anonymous Respondent: [10:28] Well, first of all, I don't think there's any perfect way to handle this. And you suggested having a discussion. But it's really complicated, because you can't have a discussion. One, you can't expect the victim to come out and talk about it like that. Generally, people want to keep that privacy, and they don't want to address their perpetrator directly, which is understandable. So I don't think that would be great. I understand that the Title IX processes is really taxing them people and that people don't want I do it, and people have to get in front the perpetrator directly, and they have to deal with a lot of formality from the administration.

But I can't really see another option. I I don't think there's another option. I don't think that there's another way of, I mean, I'm sure that there could be improvement on Title IX, that they can make sure it's more supportive, that they can make sure that people feel heard or that there's a more empathetic people involved in the process. But it's the only way to impart some sense of justice, if you want to impose punishment.

And I just, I do think that going through a process is really important, because although we believe survivors, and I do myself, like, I believe that I hurt someone. I'm sure they don't go out there to just just level basis accusations, and that doesn't mean that you can just throw any sort of process out the window. Survivors are believed in the context of a process.

Eli Cohen: [12:13] Right, but that that process itself is so flawed. We know that people go through the process all the time, and have zero accountability. What does accountability look like to you?

Anonymous Respondent: [12:29] You know, I don't think it would have been much less devastating if I had been formally accused. So if that's what you're looking for just just go through the system, and then you can actually do something about it. But yeah, there there can be uncertainty in the system, and there's the possibility of not doing anything about it.

So for me, trying to own up to it, it's just accepting that I did something wrong. And and after that, well, I don't think my owning up to it is this, my owning up to it is what I do in therapy, and what I do every day trying to accept my guilt. It's not this, I wouldn't want to conflate the two.

I do think I'm trying to help give my perspective, but doesn't really seem to satisfactory, I guess. What I am worried about is that people will consider that this is an attack on the advocates, but you know, I don't believe survivors or that I don't support survivors. And that's not true. That's just not true. I do think that they're trying their best. But just fucked up on this. This is just wrong. And this is really misguided. And this is really poor thinking. And I don't think this is helping them either.

But the problem is they don't allow for any sort of debate. They don't allow for anyone to question their, their policies and their ideas. So I had to do this anonymously. But yeah, those those are two different things. And I think also a little bit, to maybe show that perpetrators can feel their guilt and engage with the shame that, that that is, having done what we did. It's not downplaying the wrong of it. But I think it's better for people to speak about it and handle it, and then just leave it in the back and let it rot and develop more and more hatred against anyone that accuse them. Because I don't think that's going to help anyone, I think we did something wrong, and we have to learn to be better.

Eli Cohen: [14:58] I want to go ahead and respond to a very real concern that I know many of you will have with this interview. The fact that I'm giving an alleged sexual assailant, a platform.

I can understand the platforming argument. But I actually disagree with its fundamental premise. I believe you can listen to people, engage with people, and even broadcast people, when you do not agree with everything they say. That's not to say that words don't have power, and in some circumstances, can inflict real pain. If I didn't believe in the power of words, I wouldn't be doing this.

But precisely because I believe in that power. I want everyone to know that disco will continue to be an open space for anyone who is willing to sit down with me, consider the questions I asked, and of course, respond with questions, concerns, and critiques of their own.

You are listening to Sonate Pacifique, by L'Impératrice. The episode opened with long ride home by Pomona alum, Zane McFarland. And again, huge thank you to Jeremy Snyder, Erica Tyrone, and Susan McWilliams. For the next episode, we take a step back and ask how did we get here?

Episode 5: (Dis)orientation Adventure

Release Date: February 11, 2019

Guests: Sam Rubin, Professor Ken Wolfe, Professor Thomas Sandoval, Daniella Sada, Gray Butler

Description: When Orientation Adventure—Pomona's four-day outdoors trip for incoming students often called OA—was cancelled, campus activism sprung into rare form. Petitions were circulated, meetings were held, statements were drafted, and alumni were notified. Within exactly one week, the Dean of Students Office retracted their decision. Many students were relieved, but an equally large contingency was furious. Where was this mobilization for the issues that really mattered: mental health resources, affordability issues, Title IX policy changes? Choosing to rally around OA but not other topics, they believed, was negligent, hypocritical, and privileged. It's been approximately two months since the initial decision catalyzed the outrage, then the counter-outrage. Three forums have been held to discuss the future of the Orientation Adventure program, but attendance has been sparse and the discussions vague. We talked to students, professors, and alumni, but the question remains: where do we go from here?

Reflection: At the end of first semester, the Pomona administration did something truly startling. The got rid of OA without telling anyone. The email announcing the change set off a rare display of student unity (quickly followed by the more typical online vitriol). I took the opportunity to attempt a breaking news podcast. I drafted a storyboard that included drum-heavy, cable-news-inspired interludes. “This just in, Pomona administration cancels OA,” “live from the protest,” “I just left a meeting with Dean of Student, Avis Hinkson, and…” Once again, however, I proved unable to keep pace with the events as they unfolded. While waiting for an interview with a student who was a vocal critic of the OA proponents on Facebook, the administration reversed their decision.

It only took them one week, and just like that, my story had been rendered moot. An episode about OA being cancelled and then everything going back to exactly how it had been didn’t seem very interesting. However, the following semester, I decided to do exactly that. Though OA had indeed been reinstated, things were not the same, and I tried to make that the peg of the episode.

One aspect of the OA discussion that drew me was that, for the first time, I felt like I was in my own wheelhouse. During my first and second years at Pomona, I had been president of On The Loose, the Claremont outdoors club. Much of the work I had done in that capacity was resisting the encroachment of the administration—namely the OEC—on the club. Though I had been complaining about this issue for years, moving OA was what was needed to obtain the attention of the rest of the student body. I saw this as my chance to garner new attention to my older arguments about who really had control over student’s time at Pomona.

Additionally, the determinism of Pomona discussion became most apparent during this issue. For the first time with OA, I felt like I could state my opinion without hedging it against my "lack of experience." To speak of Title IX required acknowledging I could only know so much not being a survivor myself. To speak of mental health resources on campus I could only make certain claims as I was not currently utilizing therapy. I believe this will remain a persistent issue with Pomona political discussion that should be discussed more openly. If every contribution must be proceeded with a laundry list of increasingly-specific identities and experiences, conversation will continue to become splintered into non-overlapping groups of students. I fear we are quickly approaching a precipice where almost no cross-cutting conversation remains. Speaking with some one who you have not previously vetted to agree with you simply won't be worth the risk.

Transcript

Eli Cohen: [00:00] Orientation Adventure, Pomona's four day outdoors trip for incoming students, affectionately called OA, was canceled last December for almost exactly one week.

On December 5, 2018, Dean of Students Avis Hinkson sent an email to the entire student body. Yes, we have started podcast like this before. She sent an email to the entire student body, alerting everyone that OA as we knew it would cease to be. She instead recommended an alternative, a sophomore Orientation Adventure, which doesn't make sense semantically or conceptually, but that's beside the point. The interesting part is what happened next.

Sam Rubin: [00:53] My name is Sam Rubin, I am a senior at Pomona. I went on OA my freshman year, I was an Orientation Adventure leader and Sponsor my sophomore year and I was an Orientation Adventure leader this past year. Since the email has come out, stating that OA is going to be cancelled for first years and move to sophomore year, I have decided that I want to do something about this.

And I've sent Dean Hinkson an email setting up a meeting for tomorrow, Thursday, and have started to collect student responses for why they believe this decision was a bad decision and what suggestions they have for improvement?

Eli Cohen: [01:35] Why did you feel compelled to do that?

Sam Rubin: [01:37] Well, first of all, this survey went live about five minutes ago. And I'm already at nine responses. And so if that continues until I meet with her in about 12 hours, we're going to have over we're going to have the whole student body respond. And I know that's a false statement. But I just I feel like this decision came without any discussion with any students at all.

Students were not contacted before this, the even faculty have stated that they have felt like they weren't part of this decision making.

Eli Cohen: [02:07] That was Sam, on the very day that email was sent out. And his thought about the entire student body responding. He was kind of right. 440 students would end up responding. Keep in mind, that's over a quarter of the Pomona population. And not one person had been made aware of this decision.

And we talked to the faculty too.

Ken Wolf: [02:34] I've been on the committee for a long time and regularly, questions come up about what are we going to do about OA and its relationship to orientation? Because it does seem a bit like some big mountain right in the middle of orientation that's very different than the landscape around it. Right?

Eli Cohen: [02:51] That's Ken Wolf, 30 plus year Pomona professor, chair of the classics department, and most relevant, the one faculty member on the orientation committee. This was his reaction about the news on OA.

Ken Wolf: [03:04] I reacted right away. My the subject line on my email was what question mark exclamation point. And, and I and I started rolling back in my mind thinking, I don't think we really understood what we were facing when we had our last conversation. It was not a conversation, that where the Dean was in the room, the Dean of Students doesn't isn't a part of the orientation committee. It's made up of people who work on her side of Alexander Hall and a few others, including a faculty member, and that's me.

So, for something that abrupt and different, I would have expected a little bit more presence on the part of the dean in that meeting, saying I really think this needs to happen. Work with me on how we might come up with alternatives. And now I now I think that there's a perception that the decision was made without significant input. So yesterday at the faculty meeting, I felt like I needed to speak because I figured people would look at me and say, you're on the orientation committee, you must have approved this. But but that's not at all what happened.

Eli Cohen: [04:14] I assumed if anyone outside of the dean's office would have been involved in the decision making around LA, it probably would have been Professor Wolf. I asked him about it. And and what I've come to learn is typical style. He answered very thoroughly.

Ken Wolf: [04:30] He first day of November, I guess shortly before that. We met as a committee. And one of the things we talked about this was in the context of reviewing the previous orientation, which then we we wait a month or so then we get started with a review process and designing the next year.

And so in that review, one of the things we looked at was, you know, is there still more things we can do to shorten to make less dense to, and and so we looked at the possibilities of what we might do with our way, we systematically eliminated all of the ones except for what we had. And

we basically said, it's the one thing that is almost universally acclaimed by the students who go through it. And there's nothing else on the orientation schedule that gets even half the kind of kudos that that that program gets. So we really need to leave it alone and work around it.

Eli Cohen: [05:22] Asked about student input, he also drew a blank.

Ken Wolf: [05:26] I am not aware myself of any student input. The dean of students did say that in all of her conversations with students, and she's gotten here, that everyone has complained about the length and the exhaustion associated with with orientation. But I don't know if that was an official survey. If it is unofficial, anecdotal, I don't know I am sure that students are exhausted by the time classes began. I but but I believe that would happen if you gave them 24 hours orientation, because they'd stay up all night.

And the more days, they're there, the more nights are going to stay up with their newfound friends. So I don't know that exhaustion is really significant factor here, in real terms, but but that's largely what the dean with the support of the President believes is the driving force behind this that they're they're doing students ultimately a favor by by creating an orientation that's that shorter that way.

Eli Cohen: [06:26] And so that's the weird thing about it. As best I can tell, the deans really did think that moving away to sophomore year would be better. Barring some secret ulterior motive, the decision to cancel OA really seems to be one of ignorance, not malice.

It felt more like the administration trying to design their way into a solution. We've got some problems first years are tired. Oh, we we've got another problem. sophomores are sad. Oh, whoa, we just move away from freshman to sophomore year. Two problems, one solution. I mean, I can imagine where the administration was coming from.

For me, the only real offense was that was the purview of the administration in the first place. Few people, not even most students seem to know, but OA was not created by the college. It was created by the student outdoors club on the loose, usually just called OTL. There was no Outdoor Education Center for orientation review committee. It was just some friends. Here's one of them.

Derek Churchill: [07:37] Yeah, so my name is Derek Churchill. And I went to Pomona from 1992 19, graduated in 1994. And I got involved in On The Loose my freshman year.

Eli Cohen: [07:52] So Derek, and I hit it off instantly. Full disclosure, like Derek, I also started helping run OTL, my first year Pomona. But that experience was largely one of frustration. We often spent so much time coordinating with the Pomona administration, other school's clubs, or even other school's administrations, that it took away time and energy from the club's point in the first place: getting people outside.

I was so excited to talk to someone who had just made away because they wanted to. I envisioned this halcyon age 25 years ago, where every student had the perfect work life balance, they would all go on trips all over the state, everybody's club would be well attended and vibrant and successful. It would have been the perfect rejoinder to the Dean's decision to cancel OA. Look, just let the students do it. They can always do it better. If only that's what Derek had actually said,

Derek Churchill: [08:51] On The Loose was kind of almost collapsed or almost sort of ran out of steam. Basically, when I joined, there was a sort of cadre of people running it, they are graduated. And then I with a couple other people said, hey, let's resurrect this at this one tradition.

And so I was able to get a kind of get a lot of new people involved and worked with the Dean Quinly to sort of give the the club a big boost. And then, as part of that some students, couple students under me had the idea of OA. And so that started the year after after I left.

Eli Cohen: [09:31] And I want to pause here because what Derek basically said is the experience that we're all pretty used to clubs wax and wane with student interest. Things can be pretty inefficient, redundant, for lack of better words. It's a little bit messy. But the more Derek told me about OA's origin, the more I realized the crucial role that messiness actually played,

Derek Churchill: [09:58] I went abroad my first semester, my junior year, and when I came back, the club was kind of basically, you know, there was no one left really who was that interested in running it and, and so I remember thinking, well, I don't really have the energy to like, do this, you know, this call just to kind of let this club die.

And then I remember picking up the actual book On The Loose, which I hope you have read. And I remember reading it and just being and I'd read it before, but I read it again, it was just, again, just so inspired, and it's still one of my favorite books. And thinking, you know, I can't I can't let this club die.

Eli Cohen: [10:34] And I lit up when I heard that it was the book On The Loose, which convinced Derek to keep the club alive, and eventually led to the formation of OA. Because that book written by Renny and Terry Russell over 50 years ago remains of vital part of the club's identity. To start out the book is an incredible exploration of California, and the American West, full of essays, quotes, and beautiful photography taken in Yosemite point raise the High Sierra, the great base in Glen Canyon.

But it's more than just the namesake of the club. Derek hoped that I had read it? I have my own copy. All of the leaders do. In it, are page long notes from some of my closest friends. We've read from it allowed under star filled Joshua Tree nights. I've read it by myself freezing alone in my own tent.

The administration is now holding open forums to discuss how best to change OA for the future. I went to the first session, and despite the best of intentions from everyone present, there was a glaring problem. Only six students actually attended.

But to me, and we're going full opinion here. The cause is so obvious. away has never been the product of working groups, committee reports or learning objectives. It's propelled by ideas in students heads, ideas they have exploring new places, trying new things with new friends they're just making for the first time. My unsolicited advice on how to address OA going forward. Well, don't take it from me. Derek has a couple decades more credibility.

Derek Churchill: [12:26] Yeah, and I'll just say one last thing that I encourage the new dean and I'm happy to write her a letter to, I don't know, if you have a copy, but I would take her a copy of On The Loose and say, “Hey, before you, you know, cancel this program, you know, just like you to read this book” and understand kind of what to me is I was in the spirit of the what what I think inspired lots of students at Pomona was to just to get out outdoors and that sense of wonder and exploring you know, combined often with that sense of environmental activism or, you know, you you develop this relationship with nature, and that sort of found a lot of students involvement in in, you know, environmental issues across the board, or just trying to try to make the world a better place.

Eli Cohen: [13:22] And this brings us to the second part of the episode, what to do now. Remember, OA was reinstated. The class of 2023 is going to do Orientation Adventure. But the craziness of that week, left a mark. There were the petitions, there were the meetings with the deans, there were the viral posts, lots of viral posts. Many of them were from upset students, but not just students upset with the administration. A lot of the frustration was geared at fellow students.

Daniela Sada: [13:57] So my name is Daniela Hinojosa Sada. I'm a senior at Pomona College. And I've been heavily organ, heavily involved with several organizations such as IDEAS the Undoc Organization and FLI, the first gen low income organization.

Eli Cohen: [14:11] Awesome. Thank you. So to go back to that crazy week in December, you know, what was that reaction that you had, when you saw that away was going to be moved from first year to second year?

Daniela Sada: [14:26] Yeah, I felt the same frustration that probably everybody else felt all the other currently existing students, alumni, it was confusion as to why there was no student input. And I think that was why there was so much lash. The reasons as to why they were moving OA to second year, stuff about making sure that sophomores were able to socialize still, about first years coming back and being super tired. They didn't really make sense. And they weren't coming from the students. So that's why I was also like, frustrated along with everybody else.

Eli Cohen: [15:02] Totally. So then as the week kind of progresses, and right there's there's becomes a big student pushback and the faculty meetings, you know, and kind of the things begin to develop, how to, if at all, did your thinking begin to develop as well?

Daniela Sada: [15:18] Um, so as things started to escalate, I along with many of my, for instance, low income peers were beginning to feel like a little bit like alarm, like why is there so much push to change this policy, when there isn't this much push to change, for instance, policy for off campus therapy? Why is there no campus wide lash when there's a terrible injustice with regards to sexual assault?

Like there was previously with the same Dean Dean Hinkson, she had made this policy where there can no longer be blacklists against students at parties who had been perpetrators of sexual assault for the express purpose purpose of basically protecting Pomona and protecting the students so that Pomona couldn't get sued with disregard for protecting the safety of the student.

So everybody was wondering, why is there this anger for this basically, like recreational while important event, it's important for socializing and making friends and making those initial connections. OA Was really important to me, but also, it's really important to make sure that your fellow peers are getting access to the mental health resources that they need, that they feel safe when they're at parties, that they feel safe on campus, and that they feel that their peers are going to support them to the same extent or more that they're, you know, lashing against this OA policy.

Eli Cohen: [16:41] As you can tell, Daniela's is thinking about the OA controversy is much broader than the single decision itself. And she's exactly right. There is a pattern of administrative decision making and student response here in Claremont, which OA captured perfectly, but as part of a much broader and my more troubling overall trend. So I talked to Professor Sandoval, who helped explain what he sees as the relationship between OA and these larger campus dynamics.

Thomas Sandoval: [17:13] Sure. Thomas Summer Sandoval, I'm an associate professor of Chicano Latino Studies and history at Pomona College. My first level of concern is, is that we're getting rid of something that we know as some proven track record, without any sense of what the replacement is. And more importantly, without any sense of what we're going to do to fill in, in that first year experience the benefits of the program.

And for me, the the two sort of overarching ones are, that is one of those really deep impact ways that we model very early on what our expectations for our community are, that it's a multiracial group, students who don't know each other and are diverse in every way, having to collaborate with each other and form some kind of community in this kind of intense way. That's, that's a, that's a good model for what we're hoping for, you know, starting that first day of the semester.

That kind of diversity is in was a two way street to right. I think everybody who's participating in OA, that that is one of the benefits that they draw from it, being there with a diverse group of students, that is not one of their own design, and that one of their own making a choice. And, and, to me, those are important benefits of it.

As somebody who's gone on OA in the past, as a faculty member, I knew how difficult it was for me, right, somebody who didn't grow up doing a lot of outdoors things and, you know, being with a bunch of students who I didn't know, you know, and, and having to step out of my comfort zones, and I recognize that, that a lot of that history, and is sort of balled up into some of the negative response inside of our larger student of color community, with with OA, but but generally, I think away is, is something that's designed in a way to handle that. It is it is for for first generation students of color, it's not just them stepping out of their comfort zone, but the outdoors is is something that is steeped in privilege, historically, and that is often racialized this white, in in that way, the outdoors is a mirror of what Pomona Colleges is, right?

And in that four day experience, you're somebody who is coming back successfully. I mean, we don't lose anybody. I OA and so and so, you know, for the vast majority of us, it is a success at that level. And, and I think what that communicates to to those students is is that they have the the sort of social, intellectual, emotional wherewithal to, to face what they're going to have to face in the next four years. Right. And not just over that four days. To me, it's also a microcosm of that.

Eli Cohen: [20:22] One thing that I've noticed in the wake of the decision is that as some students have tried to voice their concern about the program, or the methodology by which the program has been changed, a number of other students have been quick to point out that mobilization does not seem to happen equally here, that that certain issues will engender a lot of support very quickly, and a lot of mobilization very quickly, while others do not. And the disparity in what those issues are, happens to follow along long known and tired lines of privilege. To make that concrete, I know, one major concern has been the email that the dean said, at the beginning of the year, making big modifications to mental health support at the colleges, with little mobilization after that, or the emergency grant program, or changes to the funding for advocates, and the work that they do around Title IX.

Maybe campus mobilization is not something that you care to speak to. But, um, if so, what do you think about those disparities?

Thomas Sandoval: [21:23] I mean, in the examples that you you mentioned, I'm only familiar tangentially with the with two of them. And I mean, in general, this is obviously something that our students, 100% of our student body have gone through and participated in. And so there's a lot more knowledge and connection to it.

And, and that that partly, you know, can explain the that kind of response. Most political issues, most issues that students or faculty see as as that they may be very passionate about may be very invested in very few of those campus issues, have that sort of benefit as a starting point, right, where every single student has participated in it, knows what it is, and has a view on it. That's, that's, that's, you know, probably making student voice on this a little louder, a little bigger, then then, other kinds of issues and recent memory.

You know, there have been political issues. Over time where, where a lot of students do speak out, they tend to be ones where they're such an overriding investment in them, either in the larger political context, like about immigration, or or, or changes in curriculum. That that, that, that you can get that kind of huge responsibility. Well, um, but but I mean, very often, we're talking about, you know, something that's sort of a truism and how our community works and creates change. It's it's often small groups of people who care a lot about something that get out there and do that.

That doesn't mean that others don't benefit from it, of course, and it doesn't mean that others don't necessarily have the same stance at the end of the day. Right. But but there's very few things that that's such a critical mass of people that we ever get to there being a critical mass of people who are definitely involved in it already have an opinion on it.

I mean, I imagine inside of the student population that you've talked to, there's still students who are a little bit like whatever, right? Like when it comes to this right. Even after going through it there they are neither strong lovers of OA or strong detractors of it, they're like, I'll take it or leave it kind of kind of thing, right?

Gray Butler: [24:00] In all Honestly, I wasn't super invested in it.

Eli Cohen: [24:07] This is great Butler, Pomona Junior, for whom OA was cool, but not the life or death matter that it became for some.

Gray Butler: [24:14] Just because like, in my own experience with OA, it was like it was an important experience. And I feel like I was told that's kind of what made Pomona, Pomona but if I was being really honest, that entire week, I was just confused and a lot was going on. But as I was like, I didn't really care so much. But then when I like sat and thought about it, it was my like later kind of reaction. I don't know if this is like going into another question. Like I started to get like growing resentment, because it was less about the decision. And more about the like, quick reaction to the decision.

Eli Cohen: [24:54] Yeah, okay. Tell me Tell me. Tell me more so.

Gray Butler: [24:57] So Dean Avis, it or Hinkson is cutting like these things or like Quest is getting low funding, and just hearing all of these things come up. And knowing that I had been posting about things. And the fact that there was not a comprehensive response, and then to see

OA within 24 hours to sell, before they even wrote an article being like, here's our pre article to our article, we're on this like, it was like breaking news, like we are investigating like, like, it was so fast.

And I couldn't help but feel like, like, I guess the sentiment that I had from all these other things, you kind of have this habitual feeling of it doesn't matter where first gen low income students, we don't have power. And it kind of gives us idea that student change doesn't necessarily work because no one's paying attention.

Eli Cohen: [25:54] Here's Daniella again, with a similar sentiment,

Daniela Sada: [25:57] A frustration that I felt was when this this kind of situation of like, why are we lashing so strongly against away and not against? You know, these other injustices on campus? Some people, including Sam, were very like, "Oh, you're right. Like, this is not a good thing. Like, how can we actually--look what can we do to like, make this better?"

Like, and then other people were saying, like, well, you're, you know, you're just detracting from this cause you're like, hurting the movement, and you're really not doing yourself any favors, when in reality, it's like, no, we're here to support you. Like, we also think that there's this OA like this, this policy change without student input is no good. It's just another example of like, not taking student input and creating policy. Like, we're 100% here for this.

We also and you know, making the statement about please help your low income students, please help your peers on campus, that's not going to detract from a movement with hundreds of students on it. Fortunately, though, most of the students I think we're very, like, willing to listen and be like, okay, we need do something to like, make a campus wide, like, make everybody feel safe, make everybody feel like their voices are being heard and overall address the situation of not having students and faculty being addressed having their opinions when there's these policy changes that are, you know, affecting a lot of people.

Eli Cohen: [27:18] Yeah, no, I think that's really well said, right, that it, it almost across the board, it's better to have the attitude of like, a "yes and" approach to organizing around different causes rather than this, you said that people kind of accuse you of detracting. I would be curious to hear a little bit more of what they said, I don't quite see how that makes any sense. Because I don't see organizing as a zero sum game, in which energy for one event necessarily has to take energy from another. But But I am curious what those critiques were? I mean, yeah, how you felt about that?

Daniela Sada: [28:00] Yeah, exactly. Um, we, I felt the same, a lot of people who are engaging with the same dialogue held the same like, like this person, these people are not quite understanding that like, this is not again, like you said, a zero sum game, like, we're here to help you, and you're here and help us. And so when we actually start engaging with these

conversations, like, there were people who, you know, kind of were like, after talking to them, and being and kind of making our point of like, how this is not detracting how this is kind of, in hopes of adding to this cause of, you know, asking for student input whenever these these changes. Fortunately, most of the people were really receptive.

But some people reacted by kind of saying, like, Okay, well, in that case, like, “tell us how we can help you.” Like, let me help you, that sort of like, like, that sort of idea when, like, for a really long time, like, students have been kind of saying, like, how people can help, you know, financially, like just by if they don't have the resources, like through their voice, you know, like, how they're voicing their opinions about the OA policy change.

It's like, not really the responsibility of those students to like, let you help them like we've been asking for help, like, we've been telling how to help. So it just felt kind of, um, I don't know, it just felt like the people who had that kind of attitude were very, what's the word, they are begrudgingly willing to help, it didn't feel like they were feeling very like wholehearted about it

Eli Cohen: [29:32] Gray explained a similar dynamic, in particular to one topic, changes in funding for mental health care on campus.

Gray Butler: [29:39] Part of the issue, particularly with what was happening with the therapy stuff is that it's a group of like overstressed mentally ill folks. And part of the problem is the actual capacity to put in that work, when we are not able to get the actual support that we need in order to be able to mobilize.

And that's such a critical thing. And that's such a critical area of where allies are really needed to be paying attention. Because the nature of being like mentally ill and not having access, like this has access to things to be able to function. And, and, and so just a feeling that, feeling from a community that like, supposedly cares about a lot of these things, it definitely felt like oh, because it's affecting, like particular communities on campus, like particularly privileged communities on campus, the resources are there, the responses there, and it's in. My frustration was less that people took action with OA and more with the just silence or just like not being concerned, because it doesn't directly affect them.

Eli Cohen: [30:56] I could understand this frustration. We've all probably thought the tension between different groups on campus, and it can take so many different forms. Ignorance is an ever present hurdle. Many conversations happen in closed Facebook groups, or self selecting clubs. I think it's worth noting, the place where these OA discussions first surfaced, probably the most cross cutting forum in all of Claremont is Meme Queens of the Five C's, the Facebook meme group.

Beyond that, oftentimes, it takes the form of distrust, whoever I'm talking to, I don't believe that they're really going to listen to what I have to say. Often, there's too much presupposition. I assume that you've already made an assumption about me, and it's just not going to work.

And sometimes, oftentimes, actually, I think it's even simpler. A simple fear of screwing it up. I asked Daniela, if this rang true to her.

I think I think that there are a number of people and I don't even think it's in terms of just the dynamic of assisting marginalized groups, I think it's a dynamic between pretty much all groups and even between individuals on this campus, which is a fear of doing something wrong, that that one's action, whether it be support, or voice or or in any kind of, you know, even in class, and you know, just contributing to class, that doing it wrong is such a kind of ever present kind of thing in the back of your mind that it is sometimes the safer call is to just not get involved at all.

Is that a dynamic that you've ever experienced? Or that rings true to you? And if so, or if not, you know, what does it make you think?

Daniela Sada: [32:49] Yeah, so that's the sentiment I hear expressed very, very often, especially when you get kind of like, especially when you get first years coming in, who are kind of learning how to voice their opinions for the first time. There's this idea of, Okay, if I say something wrong, the SJW's, the social justice warriors are going to shut me down like, I will be blacklisted, like, it's going to be on my permanent record forever. When that's not true.

You know, I have like, met lots of people who you know, who said some shady things during the first year. I have said shady things during my first year! But the important thing is to grow from that. Like, if you acknowledge that you did that you hurted people, you hurt people, you grow from that, like you learn what you did wrong, you apologize, honestly, it's fine. Like, it's, it's more, I think there's a fear more of owning up to what you did wrong.

To kind of like apologize and acknowledge that you did something that could have potentially been hurtful, like, again, this idea of impact versus intent. That's what's important.

Nobody's going to hate you, if you say something wrong, like every, you know, like, everybody comes in with misconceptions, preconceptions, like, nobody, not everybody has accesses access to this, like, you know, lexicon of, like, being politically correct. Like that, in of itself, requires as a sort of privilege. You have to come from a certain kind of environment, you have to come from perhaps a certain kind of wealth, to, you know, know how to voice your thoughts without hurting people. And the most, um, I guess, financially reasonable way to do that is to, you know, voice those thoughts, have somebody come up to you for free, and say, Hey, you know, that hurt me. And then you say, I'm sorry, like, I realized that hurt you, I'm going to move on, and then you just kind of like, be conscious of that in the future.

A lot of times you find that low income students, students of color, you know, they're making the same same mistakes as well, and even more because they didn't have the resources to kind of like be super like PC. And, you know, it takes a lot of pain and suffering and struggling to talk about that. They just kind of don't really announce it to the world that much, I think. So I really like urge people like, if, you know, like, talk, talk to people about these things, like top of staying silent, is just kind of like not really going to contribute to growth. If you make mistakes, like it's this idea, perfect, perpetual idea. Like, if you make mistakes, you're going to grow. Like a mistake isn't going to stay with you forever. Like, you can move past it. You can you know, become closer with the friends that you hurt. You don't even need to be closer to them, but you can just you know, stay on respectful grounds with them.

Eli Cohen: [35:46] Thank you to everyone who was willing to be interviewed for this episode. The decisions around OA have both affected a large number of people and have affected everyone in a number of different ways. Many views are still left unsaid, but such a comprehensive image could not have been made without your input. The music you heard on this episode include in order A Couple Acres Greener by Mipso, Ronald Gregory Erickson The Second, by STFKR, Sound And Color by The Alabama Shakes, roll ride roll, and Memories of Nanjenzi by Mark de Clive-Lowe on his days old album, Heritage.

And thanks to you for listening to another episode of disco. As always, please reach out with questions, comments, or concerns and keep an ear out for upcoming episodes. There's a lot more in the pipe headed your way very soon.

Episode 6: Title IX's Constant Cycle of Crisis

Release Date: April 2, 2019

Guests: Chloe Ortiz

Description: On February 13th of this year, The Pomona College Advocates for Survivors of Sexual Assault, the 15 year old peer-to-peer support program, was unilaterally disbanded by the Pomona Administration. Though the program is slated to be reinstated in the coming school year, many questions remain. Why exactly did they need to be disbanded immediately? When they are reinstated, what form will the program take? Why weren't the advocates given forewarning? The decision felt drastic, and without clarity around the impetus behind the choice, left many students confused and angry. But when viewed in context of the last decade of Claremont's constant cycle of crisis around Title IX, the decision feels more inevitable than unprecedented. Pomona College's President's Advisory Committee on Sexual Violence Intervention and Prevention, or PAC-SVIP, it is the third working group to revise Pomona's Title IX policy in just six years. Three of the five colleges have been named in investigations filed by the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. These are the kinds of investigations where if the federal

government believed the colleges weren't complying, they could pull federal funding. Since Dear Colleague, the Claremont College's have been sued by students on eight separate times. That's a lawsuit a year, and some of them are still being appealed. For the third installment of our series on Sexual Assault at the Claremont Colleges, we're a simple question without any straightforward answer: how did we get here?

Reflection: This episode was the hardest to produce. As you see in the transcript immediately, the topic that I was trying to cover—the disbanding of the advocates—occurred on February 13th. I was unable to release the episode until April 2nd. The main essence I was attempting to capture was this: the disbanding of the advocates felt unprecedented. I, nor any other student, could have foreseen it happening. But I also had done enough reporting to have a sense that the contours of the Title IX debate changed drastically and rapidly. I wanted to know just how big of a development this was in the context of the history around sexual assault, from a national political and campus organization perspective. I ended believing the exact opposite. The disbanding didn't feel unprecedented; it felt inevitable.

It felt like a revelation almost as important as talking to the person who had been one of the lists the semester before. I made an interactive spreadsheet with over 40 different developments in the understanding of Title IX to accompany the episode. I attempted a miniature civics lesson on how the law had come to be understood in each branch of government. I highlighted sensational aspects to draw attention, like how Pomona and CMC are still tied in litigation from a botched Title IX case my first year at Pomona.

Nothing stuck. Once again, without a far more persistent advertising conduit, no one was willing to sacrifice the half hour to attempt to follow my circuitous journey to a new conception about the law. Inevitably, this was a disappointment, but not enough to lead me to begin online advertisement. I maintain a conviction that such an effort would indeed increase the number of "click throughs" to my page, but would have increased the number of people who fully engaged with my episodes by almost none. Clicking on a link while scrolling through Facebook is not a posture of commitment and critical thought, the stance I still believe listeners would need to make it through my (often contradictory and at times even unclear) three part series on the topic.

Transcript

Eli Cohen: [00:00] On February 13, of this year 2019, the Pomona College advocates for survivors of sexual assault, the 15 year old peer to peer support program was unilaterally disbanded by the Pomona administration. The program is slated to be reinstated in the coming school year, many questions still remain. Why exactly did they need to be disbanded immediately when they are reinstated? What form will the program take? Why weren't the advocates given forewarning? The decision felt drastic, and without clarity around the impetus behind the choice, it left many students confused and angry.

But when viewed in the context of the last decade of Claremont's constant cycle of crisis around Title IX, the decision almost begins to feel more inevitable than unprecedented. The president of Pomona's Advisory Committee on Sexual Violence Intervention and Prevention, or PAC-SVIP is the third working group to revise Pomona's Title IX policy. in just six years. Three of the five colleges have been named in investigations filed by the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. These are the kinds of investigations where if the federal government found that the colleges were not complying with Title IX, they could pull federal funding, all but ending the operation of the college.

Since the Dear Colleague letter in 2011. The Claremont Colleges have been sued by students on eight separate occasions. That's a lawsuit a year, and some of them are still being appealed. For the third installment of our series on sexual assault at the Claremont Colleges, were asking a simple question without any straightforward answer. How did we get here?

Chloe Ortiz: [02:08] So when we were starting to research the issues around Title IX at the Claremont Colleges, we started to notice patterns about how this whole process worked in terms of student activism and changes that were made both in Claremont at the at the national level, so we thought it'd be important to highlight some past events that have happened on these campuses.

Eli Cohen: [02:35] That's Chloe, Pitzer student who's been helping produce the last couple of episodes of DisCo. You'll be hearing her voice throughout the remainder of this episode, and most future episodes of the show. Here is a very condensed interview that gives you a brief glimpse of who she is.

Chloe Ortiz: [02:52] My name is Chloe Ortiz. I'm a sophomore at Pitzer College. And I just recently become involved in this discussion collective project.

Eli Cohen: [03:07] They might as well spare the time. Anywho? We're getting off track, what do you study?

Chloe Ortiz: [03:12] I am undeclared. I tell people that I'm majoring in environmental justice and corporate finances a joke. But it's actually kind of working out to maybe be that way in real life.

Eli Cohen: [03:30] Well, how is corporate finance a major at Pitzer?

Chloe Ortiz: [03:33] No, it's not and neither is environmental justice?

Eli Cohen: [03:36] It's what else do you think people need to know about you?

Chloe Ortiz: [03:40] This summer I crossed the country by Greyhound bus, and just documented it in a few different ways through photography and through collaborative journals and through just talking to people recording some things. But I really, I loved it.

Eli Cohen: [04:01] Sweet. How do you feel about that interview?

Chloe Ortiz: [04:07] Good. Yeah, definitely a lot of stuff that people don't need to know.

Eli Cohen: [04:11] All right. To really understand the climate on campus today, we have to begin at the beginning. And the beginning, when you're talking about Title IX is 1972. That's when the law was passed. And it has since become famous for requiring colleges to provide equal funding for men and women sports teams. But that provision, the one related to college sports wasn't even actually part of the original legislation. Title IX was actually a follow up to Title IV, which was passed concurrently with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and prohibited discrimination in higher education based on race, color, and national origin. It failed, however, to address sex. So in formal legal terms, that's what sexual assault is. It's discrimination based on sex.

The next law you've probably heard of, is the Cleary Act. It's been discussed a lot recently, the law was passed in 1990, named after a Lehigh University freshmen, Jane Cleary, who was raped and killed in her own dorm room. The law requires colleges to report all campus crimes, and its main proponents for Cleary's parents, who believe that forcing colleges to report their crimes would lead them to take it more seriously.

Now, keep in mind, these are not the only two laws that legislate how these cases are handled. In 1994, Congress passed The Violence Against Women, which established new protections for women victims of violent crime. But it doesn't stop there either. Do you remember FERPA, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, you might remember it from when you were applying to the Claremont Colleges. And we're asked to waive your FERPA rights in regards to your letters of recommendation. That's because your Letters of Rec are part of your college record. And FERPA protects that record, ensuring that you always have access to it, and that everyone else never does. Well guess what? Title IX complaints are part of that educational record as well. And sometimes access to that record can become a critical matter in certain cases.

So there are four different federal laws. But here's the crazy part four federal laws, but we're just getting started. That was all before 2011. Before the Dear Colleague letter, those were simpler times. Not necessarily better times, but definitely simpler.

TAPE (Kipnis): [06:48] It's a good goal. But they issued these things called Dear Colleague letters that--

Eli Cohen: [06:55] Laura Kipnis, Professor of Media Studies at Northwestern in a 2017 interview with Dave Reuben.

TAPE (Kipnis): [07:00] --were guidance to institutions of higher learning that got federal funding and threatened that if the schools didn't comply with these very vague guidelines that their federal funding could be withdrawn. And you know, most schools get, you know, tons of their funding from the government and research grants and that kind of thing. So all campuses were required of Title IX offices and officers and implement these this guidance, and it had to do creating processes for sexual misconduct complaints.

Eli Cohen: [07:35] A little more context on Kipnis. She's become pretty infamous in this debate. In February of 2015, Kipnis wrote a critical and at times downright mocking essay about Northwestern firing of her fellow Professor Peter Ludlow, after he was accused of sexual assault by two students. His firing was the culmination of a number of Title IX filings and counter filings. Some lawsuits, failed arbitration. Though this seems to all be standard procedure today, it was at the time, a high profile, multi-year legal mess.

And it's what happened next that was truly startling. Kipnis herself became the subject of a Title IX investigation because of her essay, because in her original article, she had dismissed the students who brought the original title nine complaint, Kipnis was accused to have created a hostile environment for all students on campus. Of course, Kipnis seized on the opportunity, now able to use her own experience in her constant critique of Title IX. She has referred to the entire ordeal as her Inquisition.

I bring up Katniss because she embodies some of the more sensational aspects of what Title IX has become. Title IX proceedings have resulted in real justice for real people. But when they don't work, the processes that are brought to bear can be punishing. Sometimes the closing of a Title IX investigation, which can be trying in and of their own right, leaves no one feeling satisfied, understood or healed. And in those cases, things can escalate very fast.

I'm talking about when accused students decided to sue the school, or when survivors launch an investigation through the Department of Education. The Claremont Colleges are no exception. As I mentioned at the beginning of the episode, three of the five Claremont schools have been investigated by the Department of Ed, because the survivor believe their case had been mishandled. And the college's have been sued eight times by accused students who feel the same way. All of this to say, when it seems like the colleges are making decisions about sexual assault, and Title IX to cover their ass. Well, they are because they have to.

For what it's worth, here's my take on the legal landscape right now. You've got an overlapping hodgepodge of statutes defining with sexual assault is, remember four different federal laws bare minimum. So from the outset, letter of the law is unclear. Then you've got executive guidance, the Dear Colleague letter in 2011, from President Obama, the rescission and alteration of the Dear Colleague letter by Betsy DeVos last year and the year before, which only further complicates how the law is actually enforced.

And then you have judicial challenges, the lawsuits and the court cases, which are slowly rendering different interpretations of the law, all across the country. Most recently here in California, a USC football player's Title IX case was overruled because he was not allowed to cross examine his accuser. That's now the interpretation for the entire state. Claremont McKenna has already updated their policy to comply, but none of the other schools have. Why? It's hard to know, in a legal landscape, this murky, what the law actually is this kind of game of hedging your bets.

You stick with what you've got, until your lawyers tell you otherwise.

Okay, legal stuff aside, thank God, right. The campus understanding of sexual assault hasn't remained constant over the last decade either. In fact, it changes for more rapidly than the law does. And we've tried to understand that as well. Because if you don't understand how the campus conception has evolved, how could we even make sense of what we're talking about today? Here's an overview of the major events that have shaped the campus discussion about sexual assault over the last 10 years.

Yeah, go ahead and buckle up. Just looking at the past six years, we found well over 30 notable events: forums, protests, many of which felt like they could have happened yesterday, repeated over and over again.

Chloe Ortiz: [12:28] check check check.

Eli Cohen: [12:35] So I guess the first thing that happens is in 2004, this is actually long before the Dear Colleague letter was even released, the Pomona advocates were the first Claremont college to initiate a peer to peer support program.

Chloe Ortiz: [12:50] So then in 2013, the college's begin to discuss unifying their Title IX policies and thinking of creating a Seven C Title IX resource so that there are less inconsistencies between the colleges.

Eli Cohen: [13:10] It's actually so funny this event featured all Dean of Students, Dean of Students from all colleges and happened at The Motley. The idea of that happening today is just so wild.

But that was only it was only six years ago. Okay, right around that same time, also March of 2013. The first Title IX working group at Pomona released recommendations. This these were things like setting up a Title IX coordinator position to begin with, or even having a Title IX office I mean, these big changes that were necessitated by the 2011. Dear Colleague, it took Pomona two years. Oh, it was also conducted by Tiombe Wallace, a central figure who's still pretty integral to sexual assault support in Clermont.

Chloe Ortiz: [14:08] I believe she does she trained the Scripps advocates?

Eli Cohen: [14:14] That would not surprise me she's an alum of scripts Scripps 95 actually, and I know that she's she's helped train Pomona advocates in the past. You want to talk about TAP? I love TAP.

Chloe Ortiz: [14:24] I guess this was before my time but TAP was a weekly party at Pomona that highlight it was hosted by the Title IX coalition as a student group to draw student attention to Title IX and consent awareness on campus.

Eli Cohen: [14:47] It replaced the somewhat infamous Wednesday night party Pub, which was hosted by KD one of Pomona's fraternities. I guess this was back when Title Nine was still cool. Everybody wanted to be a part of it. So yeah, this thing called the Title IX coalition, which I have since see no recent reference to would put on these these parties that kind of popularized consent culture.

In kind of, I guess, one of the main efforts of the unification process was to launch a website called Seven C's sexual Misconduct Resources. Although now it's been renamed Seven C Support and Prevention, which is perhaps a little bit interesting. But all five colleges got on board to help create this website as a centralized place to understand the Title IX landscape on the college's. This website still exists, but I have to say that with each college's policies never having actually converged. It's a little bit tricky to navigate.

Chloe Ortiz: [15:53] And then in 2013, we see the Scripps advocates group being founded, which would be followed a year later by Pitzer.

Eli Cohen: [16:07] Yeah, and CMC as well, actually, so all three colleges, it was impossible to find the exact start date of Harvey Mudd's advocates, but my guess is they were also somewhere in that 2013 2014 range.

Chloe Ortiz: [16:23] And then we also see the creation of the Teal Dot bystander intervention program at the Claremont Colleges, which is modeled after a national training program called Blue Dot? Green Dot called Green Dot, which trains students. It's a voluntary program, although later on, Pomona president made it mandatory for incoming first years to prevent sexual assault incidences.

Eli Cohen: [16:58] Yeah. Yeah, so that was in August of 2014. A year later, I think it's fair to say was the first real Title IX related crisis at the Claremont Colleges. Yenli Wong was a graduating senior at Pomona, and upon walking across the stage to receive her diploma, she handed President then President Oxtoby a list of demands, essentially, you know, kind of charging Pomona to change their Title IX policies, specifically, referencing her own series of Title IX cases that were mishandled.

A significant portion of the senior class stood up and turned their backs on the president while he gave his commencement speech, people taped over their mouths to represent the silence that Wong had had to endure. She wrote op-eds in the Huffington Post, she was picked up by Slate. It was it was a nationally recognized protest.

Chloe Ortiz: [18:11] And then over the summer, following the Yenli Wong protest at graduation, President Oxtoby released a statement highlighting the work that the college had already done and programs that they had already implemented, and then also sharing some new programs for support and prevention that were beginning and one of those being Callisto, which do you want to explain?

Eli Cohen: [18:38] Yeah, Callisto was created by a Pomona alum of 08. And it's essentially I guess, a website and an app in which survivors can anonymously report their perpetrators. And if the system find matches, i.e. someone who is accused multiple times, it raises the level of awareness and if those records match up, the school can begin to take action.

Chloe Ortiz: [19:07] Then also that fall of 2015, Pomona launches their second Title IX and working group kind of was more behind closed doors, as we've seen more recently compared to the open panel at The Motley.

Eli Cohen: [19:20] Yeah, it was and it was a working group created directly in response to you only Wong's protest because in addition to that protest, she became the lead complaint on a Department of Education investigation launched into Pomona for its mishandling of sexual assault. So the second working group which was not done voluntarily what but was precipitated by very real accusations or complaints made into the the lack of functionality of Pomona's process

Chloe Ortiz: [19:58] 2016 January 1, the Empower Center opens, which is a big stepping stone because it's the first Seven C physical building resource for Title IX support. And they have drop-in hours as well as classes and trainings. And then later that year, they receive a grant from the Department of Justice to expand their programming.

Eli Cohen: [20:28] It was no small sum of money $750,000 given directly to the center for a three year, three year tenure of programming and support. But that three year grant was given in 2016. So actually, this year 2019. The grant is slated to come to a close, so it'll be interesting to see what the next steps are for the Empower center. You want to take these next two?

Chloe Ortiz: [20:57] In fall of 2016 at Pitzer, a list of names of alleged perpetrators were written in several bathroom stalls. And some of those names were people in the Advocates group.

Eli Cohen: [21:10] Advocates group meaning current advocates?

Chloe Ortiz: [21:14] Yeah.

Eli Cohen: [21:14] Wow.

Chloe Ortiz: [21:15] And they were eventually painted over by facilities. And a few days later, advocates hosted a town hall meeting to discuss the incident. And the Title IX coordinator for Pitzer, Koreen Vorenkamp released a statement basically saying that this way of dealing with Title, with perpetrators is not good for the community and is in violation of Title IX.

And instead, as kind of an institutional response to seemingly to this incident, Pitzer launched an internal audit of their Title IX policies led by Koreen Vorenkamp.

Eli Cohen: [21:59] Oh, and Tiombe Wallace

yeah, this is right. In a way, this is like, the original list. I mean, it's not it's not even a private list. It's just a public written on a bathroom stall I mean.

Chloe Ortiz: [22:18] And for all the like the we've heard so many complaints about the more virtual list systems that clubs and organizations have, but they're like real predecessor to those were public lists that have existed for a long time you frequently in bathroom stalls.

Eli Cohen: [22:38] Okay, the open letter. That's important. Do you feel like you can talk about this?

Chloe Ortiz: [22:43] Yeah, it was just a, an open letter in a scripts student publication detailing how a student that wrote the letter anonymously, how Pomona inadequately handled her Title IX complaint. And she was forced to interact with her perpetrator several times on campus and then encouraged by the administration to leave campus.

And then so there was a following that letter, I believe there was a petition send around to students and a protest on December 7, of 2017, on Pomona's campus,

Eli Cohen: [23:29] The name of that protest was the no more violence protest. And I think the reason, right, it was a Scripps student who's perpetrator was a Pomona student, if I understand correctly. And I think that's notable because oftentimes, right, the most difficult contentious cases are happen between two different colleges. And this was certainly no exception. Okay, so fast forward a year, fall semester of 2018, last semester. And the lists the the official list hosted by clubs, those lists were were banned by the Pomona administration in the now all too common all Pomona emails.

But really in in the context of the last six to seven years, it it makes sense that that that kind of this constant re-litigation of what is acceptable organizing around sexual assault, and what is deemed unacceptable, seems to change with alarming frequency, which is even blown out of proportion by.

Then this semester, February of this year, 2019. Two months ago, the advocates for even were even banned temporarily, they don't currently exist, and they will not exist again until next the following school year, this coming school year.

There 's speculation that that their disbandment is still a result of partly of the fallout from from the lists from last semester. But we know that there were a whole host of reasons, though some of them are confidential, that the administration decided they needed to temporarily disband the Pomona advocates.

Chloe Ortiz: [25:21] And basically, according to the email, they'll only be reinstated in the fall once they've received verified confidentiality training from project sister, which is a local nonprofit.

Eli Cohen: [25:35] Yeah, I mean, it's interesting to note, right that the Pomona advocates were the the first advocate program to begin in 2004, I have to imagine they might have been one of the earliest advocates programs in the country. And they were also the first to be temporarily shut down and and re-managed. So in that way, I guess they're always kind of at the forefront of know, I mean, for real.

Chloe Ortiz: [26:03] That's such a Pomona comment.

Eli Cohen: [26:05] It's not it's not i'm not saying it's a good thing, but it's like it's the they seem to be the group that under undergoes things. First, I mean, who's to say what what the hell happened to the. That was a kind of a classic Pomona comment.

Chloe Ortiz: [26:22] You can see how it's like just exactly about every year, every six months, there's some new crisis that thrusts the phrase Title IX back into the public sphere and the general average students awareness, like the issue of the lists and lists being banned, and then the Pomona advocates being disbanded. It's just a, like a yearly cycle we're on.

Eli Cohen: [26:48] Yeah, yeah. So no, that's exactly right. CMC released an interim Title IX policy actually exactly two weeks ago, in which accused students will, through a bit of a roundabout process, but accused students will have the ability to, to cross examine those who accuse them, which is something that has only been allowed since Betsy DeVos came into her office of the Department of Education, and rolled back the 2011 Dear Colleague letter. She initially did that in 2017, it was at the end of last year 2018, that she put out provisional guidelines of her own, the public comment period for those comments actually just ended at the end of January this year 2019. So the kind of codifying of the DeVos guidance on Title IX is only now really just coming into play.

And you can see that in cases like CMC as they begin to alter their own policy. I think I think it's notable that the only college that has escaped some form of legal action on Title IX is scripts. All

of the other four have either been sued by survivors who are dissatisfied with their Title IX process or perpetrators, or accused students, who were dissatisfied with their Title IX process. Many of those cases are still very much up in the air, at Pomona at CMC, which is pretty, pretty impressive. Some of them have lasted almost three years in duration. So so the legal morass, that kind of clouds over all of these schools is very real and very eminent most of the time.

Chloe Ortiz: [28:40] Just so wild to have just just like yet another complication of having the five college consortium is there five times as many incidents like complications with this and events and stuff.

Eli Cohen: [29:11] Well, there is Episode Three for you.

If you're still a little bit lost, don't worry about it too much. We've got all of this information and more that we didn't include in the episode on our website, discussioncollective.org. Go to the episode page. We've got a live document that chronicles all of the major events: court cases investigations, campus activism, forums, protests, you name it, we tried to find it and we recorded it in that sheet. Feel free to comment on that sheet. Anyone should be able to will try to keep it as up to date and accurate as possible.

Another huge thank you to Chloe for the research and thinking that she contributed to this episode. And to Lauren Eisen who wrote an incredible article about Title IX in TSL last year. The songs you heard it in today's episode include Playground Love, xylophone version by Air, Lady Brown, instrumental version, by Japanese composer Nujabes, Valteri by German composer Oscar Schuster, and the winding epic Bob Dylan's 115th Dream. Hey, this guy won the Nobel Prize in Literature okay.

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