Media and Communication
2025 • Volume 13 • Article 9066
https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.9066

ARTICLE

Open Access Journal

Intimacy, Trust, and Justice on *The Greatest Menace*, a Podcast Exposing a "Gay Prison"

Siobhán McHugh

Faculty of the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Wollongong, Australia

Correspondence: Siobhán McHugh (smchugh@uow.edu.au)

Submitted: 29 July 2024 **Accepted:** 4 November 2024 **Published:** 14 January 2025

Issue: This article is part of the issue "Balancing Intimacy and Trust: Opportunities and Risks in Audio Journalism" edited by Mia Lindgren (University of Tasmania), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.i467

Abstract

In the tradition of narrative podcasts exposing historical injustices, *The Greatest Menace* (TGM) examines how a government-run prison in Australia used those imprisoned to study the causes and treatments of homosexuality. Hosted by gay Arab-Australian journalist Patrick Abboud, TGM interweaves Abboud's struggle for acceptance in his homophobic community with his forensic documentation of lives ruined by a society where homosexuality was illegal till 1984. Gay men entrust Abboud with their experiences of aversion therapy and estrangement from family; a former cop reveals how he entrapped, then arrested, gay men; a trans woman runs away to New Zealand after being imprisoned. TGM charts the palpable intimacy between Abboud and most of his informants, but as this article explores, the podcast also held potential for the privileging of activism over ethics. The cop could have been depicted as evil, but in pursuit of fairness, the TGM team settled on a more nuanced portrayal. An evangelical interviewee conflates "homosexual" with "paedophile" to Abboud's face; he retaliates by recording his meta-fury and writing it into the script. Intimacy and trust are intertwined as Abboud and his mother navigate the shame and fear that shadowed his coming out. Using textual analysis, semi-structured interviews, iterative scripts, reflexive practice, and theory of audio storytelling and podcast intimacy, this article analyses, from an autoethnographic insider/maker perspective, how the producers of this acclaimed podcast (17 awards) balanced intimacy and trust while exposing historic queer true crime in all its messy humanity.

Keywords

audio documentary; audio storytelling; ethics; intimacy; narrative podcast; podcast production; queer studies; trust

1. Introduction

The growth in popularity of the podcast medium has seen a burgeoning of analysis focused on the narrative podcast/audio documentary genre. In the 2017 edition of the landmark anthology *Reality Radio*, co-editor Biewen hails "a new flourishing of nonfiction audio, a new wave—a tsunami, really: of podcasts" (Biewen & Dilworth, 2017, p. 1). The audio storytellers he features make a blend of art and documentary: "It's not enough to convey facts. They gather words and sounds and music, and assemble them, painstakingly, into an *experience*" (Biewen & Dilworth, 2017, p. 5, emphasis in original). US radio studies scholar Bottomley also emphasises affective and aesthetic aspects of this growing form:

> The greatest advancements in radio as an art form have occurred in the area of audio storytelling, a broad category of fiction and nonfiction programming united by the use of narrative and other dramatic techniques, as well as a composed sonic aesthetic. And these developments have principally happened through the emerging practice of podcasting. (Bottomley, 2020, p. 175)

Bottomley argues further that:

> Much of the industry growth and audience enthusiasm surrounding podcasting both before and after the breakout success of *Serial* in the fall of 2014 has occurred around the broad genre of "storytelling podcasts"—which is little more than a new name for the old form of the narrative radio feature-documentary. (Bottomley, 2020, p. 175)

But while an excellent narrative radio feature-documentary and a premium storytelling podcast do have common aspects, such as being sound-rich and demonstrating adeptly crafted sound production, one signature quality distinguishes the latter: its seriality. A feature-documentary is usually a self-contained audio work, not composed of the numerous episodes over which a narrative nonfiction podcast unspools a true story. This longform serialised format allows makers to take a "deep dive" into a topic, as Dowling and Miller (2019, p. 173) point out:

> Podcasts deepened the way we engage with narrative, raising nonfictional storytelling to new heights….Perhaps the best-suited journalistic genre for podcasting is the serial documentary, which showcases absorbing nonfiction narrative that can expand on the stories behind headlines and probe deeper than breaking news.

Exemplary narrative podcasts can be a form of digital literary journalism, with the makers adapting print journalism techniques to the aural/podcast medium:

> The real people they depict are developed as characters and interviews are quoted as conversations; deep research and analysis is conveyed as plot and reconstructed scenes; and the writer employs fresh, descriptive language to place the reader at various locations. (McHugh, 2019)

I have cited above esteemed publications concerned with what might be termed the artistic end of narrative podcasts: for instance, those that win prestigious awards such as Peabody, Pulitzer, and New York Festivals. Exemplars include *Stolen* (Walker, 2021–present), *Wind of Change* (Radden Keefe, 2020), and *You Didn't See*

Nothin (Lacour, 2023). Given that *The Greatest Menace* (TGM; Abboud, 2022–2023) has won 17 peer-reviewed awards, it seems apposite to include it in this category. As counterpoint, I will also parse it with reference to two emerging scholar-practitioners in the field.

Smets (2023) and Shane (2024) are contemporary audio producers whose writings and audio works engage with a mix of personal storytelling and documentary (both also the currency of TGM) from very different perspectives. Belgian audio producer Katharina Smets comes from the radio feature-making tradition, a culture that started at the BBC in the late 1920s and flourished post-war as other European state broadcasters developed versions of the pre-recorded radio feature. This imaginative format could be a blend of documentary, dramaturgy, and fiction (Madsen, 2023). The audio feature is still nurtured at events such as Prix Europa, Prix Marulic, and the annual International Feature Conference, re-badged as the Audio Storytelling Festival (Reková, 2024). Practitioners focus on the poetics of audio: its liminal ability to evoke a visceral response as the sounds artfully woven by a producer/auteur hover between mind, memory, and imagination. As she experimented with moving from didactic radio reportage of current affairs to a more intentional, creative process that allowed a dialogic relationship with a listener, Smets studied acclaimed audio makers for her doctoral thesis, *Between Me and You: On the Attitude of the Audio Documentary Maker* (Smets, 2023). Smets cogently describes her own aspirations:

> The artistic form I was drawn to, and sought my voice in, was a composition of true-life encounters with voiceovers edited into a narrative story form. I saw it as the work of an independent author who nevertheless pays homage to reality and the ethical questions that come with it. (Smets, 2023, p. 62)

Jess Shane, a Canadian audio producer, takes a more pointed position on the audio documentary ethos. After learning the radio documentary trade at CBC, the Canadian public broadcaster, she moved from believing that telling stories of marginalised people was liberating for them and helpful for society because it would build empathy and connection, to questioning the fundamental ethics of documentary-making in a capitalist society (Shane, 2022). As part of a master's thesis, she embarked on a creative nonfiction podcast called *Shocking*, *Heartbreaking*, *Transformative*, published by the Radiotopia network (Shane, 2024). She describes the series as follows:

> [It] problematizes the use of personal stories in the documentary industry and examines the power dynamics between documentary-makers and their subjects….It also dives into the behind-the-scenes decisions required to tailor individuals' life experiences to conform to industry standards of what makes a "good story." (Shane, 2023, p. 3)

In a perplexing development that Shane partially critiques in the podcast, *Shocking*, *Heartbreaking*, *Transformative* departs from its own task of centring the "rights" of the subjects. As Shane admits to US producer Rob Rosenthal, she ends up exploiting the very people she set out to serve:

> Jess: Yeah, I totally did! I also exploited myself….I'm making it within a market system that has these sort of inherently, I think extractive policies, like I'm always going to be somewhat of a hypocrite….So yeah, I exploited them. But like, everybody's exploiting everybody all the time. Welcome to capitalism. (Rosenthal, 2024)

The principles and pitfalls explored by Smets and Shane in nonfiction audio storytelling provided helpful grounds for reflection as I developed my analysis, below, of our own production process on TGM. In this article, I will adopt an autoethnographic approach. This follows principles developed by Ellis et al. (2011, p. 1): "Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience." This approach "treats research as a political, socially-just and socially conscious act" (Adams & Holman-Jones, 2008, as cited in Ellis et al., 2011, p. 1).

My own bias is acknowledged: I am a cisgender heterosexual woman and supporter of LGBQTIA+ rights. I have known podcast co-creator Patrick Abboud professionally for about 20 years, having taught him audio storytelling when he worked at the Australian public broadcaster, SBS (Special Broadcasting Service). I met co-creator Simon Cunich for the first time while working on TGM. Abboud and Cunich are also staunch supporters of LGBQTIA+ rights, while Abboud has been a public LGBQTIA+ rights advocate through his work on television as the "face" of Mardi Gras, the annual Pride Festival held in Sydney.

The purpose of this article is to examine and make transparent critical editorial, artistic, and journalistic decisions our team of three made over the long (three-year) gestation of this podcast. By revealing our process, it is hoped that scholars, teachers, and students of narrative podcasts with a social justice focus will gain a deeper awareness of the form, to help them appraise other exemplars more critically and perhaps be moved to produce their own. At an industry level, those involved in such productions may also learn valuable practical insights.

The article will also have relevance for those studying narratives of marginalisation. Specifically, it helps illuminate the ethics of telling queer histories in documentary work, and makes a small contribution to a field led by Aguayo's work on documentary and social justice (2019), Pullen's historical analysis, *Documenting Gay Men* (2007) and Coon's *Turning the Page* (2018), an insider analysis of how three non-profits empower LGBTQ people via their storytelling.

For TGM, we set out to harness best practices in narrative podcast production as outlined above, while also being driven by a fervent determination to expose and seek accountability for a historical injustice. As a commercial endeavour (commissioned by the Audible platform), we also had a responsibility to hold our listeners' attention. Our overall aims aligned with Dowling and Miller's assessment (2019, p. 173) of what some narrative podcasts can achieve: "Thus narrative suspense, subjectivity, a commitment to justice, interactivity, and transparency drive podcasting's industrial evolution toward sticky content: material designed to attract and engage audiences." In our case, we sought to blend artistic excellence and editorial gravitas to craft a rigorously researched and deeply moving story, which would thereby prove compelling to an audience.

2. Methodology

This article examines issues related to trust, ethics, and intimacy which we encountered while investigating the thorny subject of our podcast: a "gay prison," or rather, an Australian jail established in 1957 exclusively to house men arrested for "crimes" of homosexuality. It was not decriminalised in New South Wales until 1984. Using a mixed methods approach (textual analysis, semi-structured interviews, iterative scripts, reflexive practice),

I explore the journalistic collaborations that underpinned the podcast series: between co-creators Abboud and Cunich, who worked on it for three years, and between Abboud, Cunich, and me, who worked closely for the last two years. My role, consulting producer, was to "provide advice on script, structure and optimal storytelling through sound on the podcast" as the contract declared; it was negotiated as a commercial research collaboration through the University of Wollongong, where I was then associate professor in journalism. It specified that I could draw on our working materials for research and educational purposes. Thus, from the outset I held a dual role, as co-producer and also participant-observer of the production.

My methodology follows the action research model for digital journalism studies set out by Grubenmann (2018, p. 1), which notes that "action research starts with the reflection on practice with a view to improving it." My first intention in adopting this model was to carefully document our production process, so as to create records I could later analyse when writing or speaking about the making of the podcast. I have shared versions of these observations of process in guest lectures, seminars, and conference settings. In so doing I hope to help those unaccustomed to making serialised storytelling podcasts to grasp the differing elements to be weighed in pre-production (sourcing and conducting revelatory, relevant interviews; honing and editing them; conducting ancillary research to develop historical background) and post-production (how core elements might be synthesised for optimal aesthetic and narrative impact).

My role as consulting producer allowed me to blend my decades of audio documentary production experience with my scholarly research, which interrogates dynamics of journalistic interviews and the affective power of sound and voice (McHugh, 2012), critical analysis of crafted audio storytelling (McHugh, 2024), and its evolution within the podcast landscape (McHugh, 2022). The TGM project allowed me to undertake action research in an industry-relevant way, as Grubenmann recommends: "Applied in professional contexts, action research offers practitioners an approach to improve their practice and adapt it to the changing environment" (2018, p. 3). Further, "action researchers act on the epistemological assumption that knowledge is uncertain and ambiguous" (Grubenmann, 2018, p. 3): This tallied with our slow journalism approach to research, which relied partly on gathering long (often two or more hours) interviews with a wide range of informants to build a sense of how a gay prison had operated; their memories and assertions were later fact-checked and leads followed up via conventional archival research.

The project focuses particularly on the strand of research culture that Grubenmann, following Stringer (1996, p. 15), labels a "collaborative approach" (Grubenmann, 2018, p. 2). To this end, this article draws on reflexive work journals I maintained that charted our ups (e.g., a fresh source found) and downs (e.g., an interview declined), and analyses iterative scripts, team email/Google Docs discussions, and audio drafts of the podcast. Most pertinently, it sources a post-production interview I conducted with Abboud and Cunich at a public talk (Hub for Innovation in Podcasting, 2022), held the week of the podcast's publication, when memories were still fresh and emotions high. The 90-minute interview was semi-structured, based on questions I devised in advance after reviewing my production journals and draft podcast iterations. It also allowed for spontaneous reflections by our team on any aspect of the production process and included responses to questions posed by our hybrid (online/in situ) audience of approximately 50 podcast studies academics, students, and industry personnel. Online participants attended from Europe, North America, South America, Central Asia, and Australia. Any unsourced quotes from McHugh, Cunich, and Abboud are derived from a transcript of this talk and have been edited for clarity. Henceforth, Abboud will be referred to as "Pat" and Cunich as "Simon," to reflect our close working relationship.

3. Background to TGM

The Greatest Menace: Inside the Gay Prison Experiment (Figure 1) is a nine-episode narrative journalism podcast, six hours and eight minutes in overall duration, with individual episodes from 35–50 minutes. The original eight-part series was published globally on the Audible platform in February 2022, with a follow-up episode a year later. It is free on Audible, described as follows:

> Tucked away amongst snow-covered mountains is a tiny Australian town with a dark secret. Journalist Patrick Abboud hears whispers that it was once home to the world's only "gay prison." A prison that specifically incarcerated gay men. His investigation…reveals the full story for the first time…a covert government operation to eradicate "the greatest menace to society": homosexuality. (Abboud, 2022–2023)

Although co-creators Pat and Simon had had lauded careers in screen-based media, neither had produced a narrative journalism podcast. Recognising that serialised audio storytelling was a distinct form, the pair commissioned the author to be consulting producer. The pre-production phase amassed a trove of documentary records and interviews that explored the podcast's central question: Had the state government established a prison exclusively to house homosexual men, and if so, who was sent there, and why? The challenge was how to convert 102 hours of interviews and 24 hours of actuality into around six hours of compelling, ethically produced episodic storytelling. In so doing, we set out to leverage qualities increasingly associated with the podcast medium: trust and intimacy (Euritt, 2023).

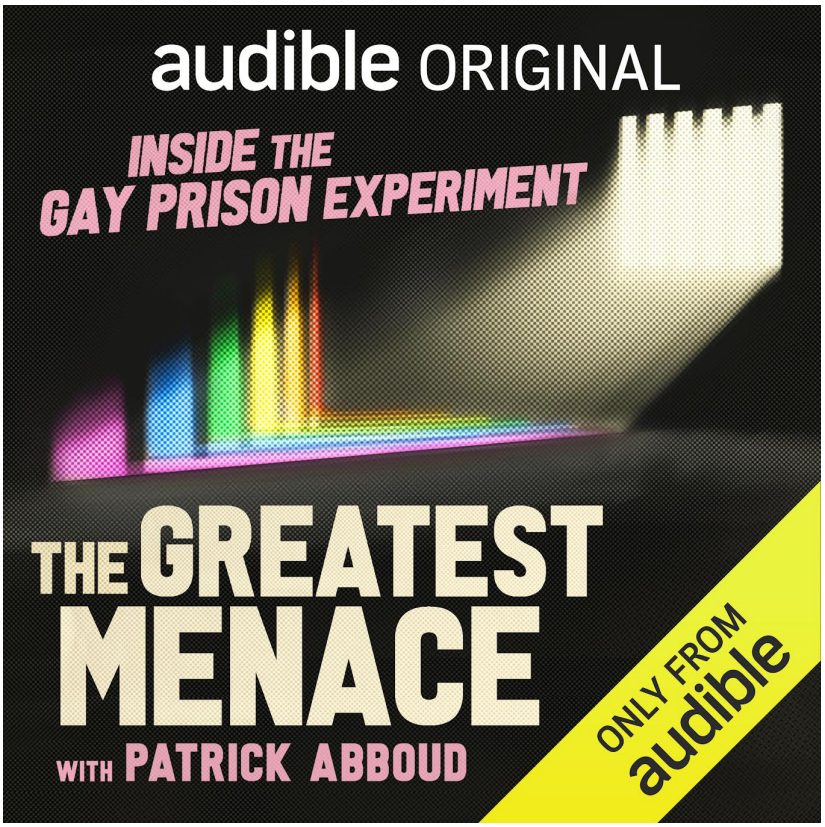

Figure 1. Artwork showing TGM on the Audible platform.

In recent years, scholars such as Fink have identified the declining trust in media as a pressing issue for democracy. "The single biggest challenge facing journalism today is the public's lack of trust in it," declared Fink, citing a poll on US media consumers that found "only 28 percent of respondents believed news organizations supported democracy 'very well' or 'well' " (Fink, 2019, p. 1). However, podcast listeners have a very different attitude, especially when it comes to consuming news and politics. In 2024, a Voxtopica survey of US registered voters found that "85% of registered voters surveyed trust podcasts more than any other news and information source" (Podnews, 2024). This vaunted trust in podcasts relies partially on the strong parasocial bond developed between podcast host and listener over long, 1:1 listening sessions, a connection buttressed by the long recognised affective intimacy of voice (McHugh, 2012, p. 12). But another key factor of podcast intimacy Euritt identifies is its mediation through "sounding the domestic" (2023, p. 65). Thus, chat podcasters might deliberately record their podcasts in their living room or kitchen, the poorer-than-studio sound quality a sort of inverse badge of honour that proclaims their authenticity. But as Euritt notes, "sounding the domestic is not only about the literal sounds caused by the space, but also by the quality of conversation they spur" (2023, p. 65). Since TGM's aesthetic was not that of a chatcast, but a highly crafted narrative, we would not adopt a kitchen ambience for narration. But we did draw on aural domestic spaces as grounding contexts in which to situate our key interviewees: Thus we hear the contented mewing of gay couple Terry and John's prizewinning cats (episode 1) before we meet the pair in depth; encounter the cluttered rooms of ex-cop John Bond's home (episode 1); "see" trans woman Jacquie's living room and dog before we hear her full story:

> Pat: As soon as we get inside, Jacquie kicks off her shoes, falls back into a leather recliner, and puts her feet up.
>
> Jacquie: Ahhh…this is my spot.
>
> Pat: Her white Shih Tzu Chloe curls up at her feet.
>
> (Excerpt, episode 7, TGM)

This intentionally conversational form of scripting captures podcasting's "codification of intimacy as a host speaking directly to the listener" (Euritt, 2023, p. 61). The setting of these delicate interviews in the subjects' own homes, we hoped, would encourage them to feel more comfortable about revealing difficult aspects of their personal lives than they would in a sterile studio setting, further facilitating trust. In this way, we are also seeking to use domestic space to "spur" the quality of conversation (Euritt, 2023, p. 65).

Trust can however be jeopardised, especially when a podcast treats a topic or guest without due care and attention. This is often evident in the popular true crime genre, where some shows show scant interest in providing a balanced, thoughtful investigation, instead opting for a salacious, often second-hand, summary. Even where reporters do apply primary research, such as the deep investigative journalism employed in *Serial* (Koenig, 2014–present), the ethics of their storytelling has been challenged. *Serial* investigated a cold case murder and questioned whether the young man imprisoned for the crime was in fact guilty. The combination of a compelling plot (did he/didn't he do it) and fully-fledged "characters" (the main protagonists were well realised, often speaking directly to listeners) had audiences enthralled; but scholars argue that the *serialisation* of the story hugely amplified its impact: "Serialization, then, unleashes the considerable power of a desiring,

anxious, and invested audience in stories that continually defer closure. This combination is particularly volatile when united with the serial narration of true crime" (Haugtvedt, 2017, p. 9).

TGM would seek to harness the storytelling allure of seriality: "the idea that there is always more to discover," as Haugtvedt notes (2017, p. 9). But while our podcast used the shorthand descriptor of "queer true crime," TGM is not true crime in the traditional sense. "The genre of true crime…centrally concerns questions of contested guilt, typically in the context of a legal case," explains Haugtvedt (2017, p. 10). TGM is not a "whodunnit" seeking to identify a perpetrator. The perpetrator is known—the state government. The victims are more shadowy, the former inmates of a gay prison, whose voices we will seek out. And there is no legal case to answer, just an exploration of how and why a government established this prison and what its advisory committee reported.

Given that our parameters were not those of conventional true crime podcasts, we were not overly concerned by the ethical dilemmas that genre can pose. Instead, we considered TGM to be a work of rigorous investigative journalism: As such, we were committed to the highest standards of ethical journalism in general. To this end, in production, we employed the code of ethics devised by the Australian journalism peak body, the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance. Much refined since its inception in 1944, the code now has a subsection "to assist journalists to deliver respectful coverage of LGBTQIA+ people and the issues they face" (Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance, 2024).

Fink linked the growing lack of trust in journalism to the overbearing way journalists are perceived to treat the public: "Journalists often do not recognize the power they wield over members of the public, and thus fail to treat them with sufficient care and respect" (Fink, 2019, p. 1). We pledged as a trio that on TGM we would accord our informants care and respect, representing them fairly and giving voice to a range of opinions and perspectives, even where we disagreed with them. This would lead to some heated discussions over the production, as outlined in the following sections.

4. Trust and Intimacy: A Coming Out Story

At our first production meeting, a whiteboard was used to loosely sketch episode content. Figure 2 shows four episodes delineated vertically and episode elements depicted in colour-coded post-it notes. This provides a quick visual take on the abundance or paucity of each element, with a vibrant mix needed to deliver audio texture. Light pink outlined Pat's investigation into the prison. Other, occasional, notes in a darker pink depicted his personal journey coming out as a gay man in his culturally homophobic Arab-Australian community.

Pat hid his sexuality from his family at first. He told us how his Lebanese-born mother, Marie, cried when she heard, and wondered what she'd "done wrong." Mother and son had gone back and forth for years before Marie, after much soul-searching, became reconciled to Pat being gay. When I heard this story of personal growth and compassion, I knew it would make an affecting counterpoint to our macro-narrative of societal attitudes towards homosexuality, especially delivered via the individualised consumption mode of the podcast medium. As Lindgren notes, audio storytelling is "perfectly placed to explore lived, personal experiences…intimately whispered into our ears" (2016, p. 24). So I asked Pat if we could include a "beat" of his identity journey in each episode. It was something Simon as producer had considered but refrained from

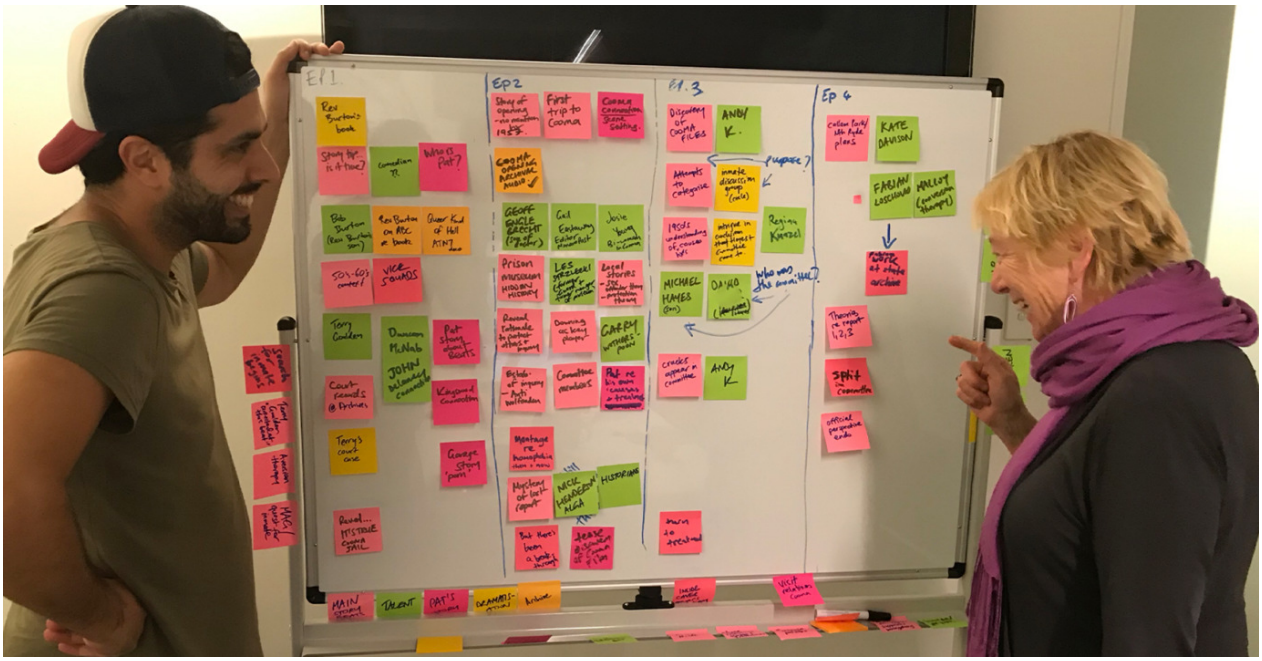

Figure 2. Production meeting of TGM, July 2020, showing early colour-coded episodic structure. Notes: Patrick Abboud, left, and Siobhán McHugh, right; green = "talent" (interviewees); light pink = main story beats; dark pink = Pat's coming out story; orange = archival source; yellow = dramatisation.

pushing because it was fraught. My position as incoming story consultant provided fresh impetus. After reflection, Pat agreed, notionally. As the production unfolded, we recorded scenes: Pat talking to his mum about visiting the jail; Pat telling her he was hunting down the report, led by a professor of psychiatry, William Trethowan, into ways to "treat" homosexuality. In one scene, he and Simon visit a favourite aunt, Mary, who plies them with tasty Lebanese food. But it is the meta-commentary that Simon records afterwards that so illuminates the situation, as Pat can now appreciate:

> We were sitting at the bottom of Mary's driveway. And I was really frustrated—because I wanted to tell her that I was happy, I'd bought a house with my partner who I've been with for seven years, and having a kid. And I couldn't do any of that stuff because I was still really too scared. I didn't even know if she knows that I'm gay. It was very clever of Simon to get these moments, because it was a genuine response…it all really hit me in the moment. (Hub for Innovation in Podcasting, 2022)

This revelatory scene—and there are many throughout the series—is entirely predicated on intimacy and trust. There is the intimacy we as listeners feel, being made privy to the distressing emotions Pat suffers. That intimacy is made possible because of the trust Pat places in Simon to document these vulnerable moments; Simon's empathy in turn allows Pat to feel safe enough to debrief. A host interpolated into the story has become a trope of narrative podcasts since Sarah Koenig fronted *Serial*, but as journalistic practice, this was new to Pat: "I'm not somebody who puts myself at the front of a story; I've never done that in anything I've made for the TV or whatever medium." In this instance, Simon pressed Pat to be reflective in order to deepen the storytelling: "Simon [would] talk me through and make me understand: 'Pat, listen to this moment, it's real, dude! You said those words because you felt them'….It was actually a really poetic moment."

Later, in post-production, Pat must trust me and Simon to shape this reveal with care in the script—not exploit such emotion for cheap "thrills." Pat also had journalistic concerns: Would he appear unprofessional, even narcissistic, by featuring his own lived experience? Pat recalls his constant vacillations:

> Simon and Siobhan were "let's put the personal in" and I would pull it out. That was the constant to-ing and fro-ing and they really convinced me by the end that it wasn't indulgent personal vomit—it was actually really important. And I've never been prouder of anything.

In the end, the trust and collegiality we had developed over months of robust but respectful debate allowed Pat to expose his feelings. "I've never trusted anyone like I've trusted Simon with a story," he laughs. "He's genuinely brilliant." The evolving relationship between Pat and his mother is deeply moving, precisely because it is so honest, and difficult. The series ends with Marie reading a letter to Pat, embracing his sexuality and praising his LGBTQIA+ community. As joyous coda, we hear Marie playing with her giggling grandson, baby Zayd.

5. Trust With Interviewees: Framing the Ex-Cop

American writer Janet Malcolm excoriated journalists for practising a "seduction and betrayal" model when seeking subjects to profile (Malcolm, 1990, p. 5). Such a potential scenario arose as Pat tried to locate one of the undercover "Vice Squad" officers we knew had been deployed as "bait" for gay men: If they responded, they would be arrested. Court records showed jail terms resulted from such encounters. Serendipitously, I recalled a former policeman, John Bond, whom I had interviewed years before, who had been associated with the Squad. A garrulous man, he agreed to another interview, this time with Pat and Simon. On tape, John detailed the "come on" procedure, as the script excerpt in Figure 3 shows.

We were jubilant at having secured this crucial testimony regarding police entrapment and surveillance. It set up high narrative stakes. As Pat notes, "without John Bond, a whole lot of other story beats couldn't have happened." But when I listened to the episode's first draft, I blanched. John's selected excerpts made him sound more dastardly than I knew him to be. His views were typical of the time—e.g., describing homosexuals as "deviant"—and clearly obnoxious today. But I also knew that John had a moral code that had seen him stand up to police misconduct at times, a side of him completely missing from the draft. The issue centred on the age-old storyteller's dilemma: editing.

Editing seeks to distil the essence of an exchange: to cut away verbal flab and thereby sharpen the narrative. As Smets (2023, p. 52) notes, "editing recordings means interpreting content and giving it shape." But it also carries heavy editorial responsibilities, not to misrepresent the subject. In response to my concerns, Pat and Simon reviewed John's unexpurgated interview and added a section where he describes standing up for an Aboriginal man a colleague tried to speciously arrest (Figure 4). Pat's revised narration alludes to John's "gentle" side and moral compass. These small inclusions round out John's character from cartoonishly malevolent to the more messy human reality. Thus was trust maintained between us as production team, while simultaneously honouring the trust John placed in us to represent him accurately.

At the height of Vice Squad operations against homosexuality, John was a young, eager cop at the start of his career.

John Bond: I was assisting people in the vice squad, when they were doing surveillance of gentlemen's toilets, directly related to sexual behaviour of unacceptable standards.

Pat: Who was engaging in those acts?

John Bond: Well, men who preferred to have sexual encounters with other men...rather deviant type people.

Pat: So, gay men, you're referring to?

John Bond: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Pat: So, what did you do? What did that work involve, John?

John Bond: You would spy from a vantage point, without making it obvious that you were there for some other reason than to use the toilet. You obviously were working in plain clothes.

Pat: So, you were undercover?

John: Yeah, you could say that.

Pat: How were the arrests made?

John: Well, when you found men behaving with other men

Pat: Having sex?

John: Yes, or preparing to do so preparing to do so

Pat: Making advances…

John: Yeah, yeah yeah… they'd be arrested.

Figure 3. Excerpt, episode 1, TGM. Note: Blue represents Pat's narration.

For all his gun-wielding bravado, there's something gentle about John.

Pat: What would you say was your greatest achievement while you were a police officer?

John Bond: Doing good.

John tells me about a time he pulled up another cop for randomly detaining a First Nations man.

John Bond: I said, "Could you tell me why you've arrested him?"

And he said...we'll work it out on the way back to the station…

I said, "if that's the best you can tell me, get your hands off him."

John says he was always guided by...

John Bond: My own rules of right and wrong.

A policeman doesn't have to report you for everything. The policeman has the power of discretion.

At the height of Vice Squad operations against homosexuality, John was a young, eager cop at the start of his career.

Figure 4. Excerpt, episode 1, TGM, amended to round out John Bond's character. Note: Blue denotes Pat's narration.

6. Trust and Fairness: Navigating Friends and Strangers

In day-long script meetings, we constantly challenged each other to justify why a certain section was in or out, or to seek more nuance in a line of script. In making these interventions, we drew on our collective experience of documentary-making—experience which sometimes directly shaded how this current production unfolded. For instance, as a TV personality who had hosted Sydney's Mardi Gras and Pride Festival, Pat's prior acquaintance with the LGBTQIA+ community set the ground for some warm exchanges with TGM interviewees. This is very evident in episode 5, when we meet Fabian Loschiavo. We get to know Fabian as an accordion-playing collector of religious shrines, before we are introduced to his alter ego, a political performance activist for gay rights, in which he dresses as a nun from the satirically-named Sisters Of Perpetual Indulgence. The episode moves on to an extended dinner scene, during which Pat and Fabian discuss joyous aspects of their personal lives along with the emotional burden suffered by gay men who come from conservative families. Pat then leads the conversation on to the appalling aversion therapy Fabian experienced.

This process, of recording deep, rambling interviews that ranged from the ostensibly trivial (dog overcoats, lasagne recipes) to the hyper-intimate (we learn that Fabian volunteered for aversion therapy, out of societal pressure and shame), is for Pat a valuable and defining aspect of *podcast* journalism: "To run a three and a half, four-hour long interview with a person is not possible in television. You can't have that much material—it's going to make your life hell." Because of Pat and Fabian's long, affectionate association, it was easy for us as story editors to shape Fabian into an endearing "character." It is much harder to find that connection with a stranger. But gut feeling plays a part in the development of trust and intimacy too, as when Pat and Simon immediately warmed to interviewee Michael Hayes. He was the son of a deceased parole officer, Frank Hayes, who had been on the infamous Trethowan prison committee. Much hinged on this interview: Michael could either shine a light on the era or be defensive. Pat conducts it in a manner that is open-minded, allowing Michael to vigorously contest the material Pat adduces, and listening to his counterarguments rather than closing them down—an approach Smets also came to uphold:

> I have the power to document real encounters with the people I interview, as well as a continued dialogue with my audience. In this search for "I" and "You," I have found my own attitude in my work; an empathetic exchange with the other to enrich my view of the world. (Smets, 2023, p. 128)

As the interview unfolds, Pat reveals to Michael that his father studied how jailed gay men in his care could be "cured" of homosexuality (Figure 5).

We deliberately retained that entire exchange to honour the nuance of Michael Hayes' appraisal of his father's historic role in the gay prison. A more partisan producer might have cut it at Michael saying "I would use the word 'rehabilitate.'" The narrator could then decry this as someone seeking to excuse homophobia. Instead, we wanted to show the complex dialectics.

Inside the prison, Frank's first experiment is taking shape. It's basically Homosexuals Anonymous...a kind of proto conversion therapy.

Frank Hayes: Nothing can be done until the individual faces up to his own problem.

Frank considers the inmates in his group to be *remediable.* **They just need to** *make a socially acceptable adjustment* **and to be prevented from** *returning to the accepting society of other homosexuals. A prison like Cooma does impose on staff a hardship in trying to control sexual deviants.*

Michael: Ok, this is pretty serious stuff, isn't it.

Beat...atmos...awkward pause

Pat: What are your thoughts?

Michael: This is not the F.D. Hayes who I knew. This is a new way of thinking for me. A new way of remembering.

Beat... atmos...awkward pause

Michael: He seems to be sort of accepting the paradigm that homosexuality is a crime. At the same time there's also an echo, it's more than a whisper, it's an echo coming through that he wants to look after these guys.

Pat: By curing them?

Michael: Well, um, I would use the word "rehabilitate." Rehabilitation was the thing my dad was totally into....I'd just bring a word of caution to you, Patrick, because what we see in that situation...

Pat: I can understand you wanting to protect your father's legacy...

Michael: No, no, no, please! The word's not "protect," the word's "understand." Ok? That's important. And this is something that the whole society was kind of struggling with, and it's very hard for us to kind of make a judgement on them. Now, I'm not excusing him but I'm just saying that we've also got to be fair, that what we're looking at here is a moment in someone's evolution.

Figure 5. Excerpt, episode 4, TGM. Notes: Blue depicts Pat's narration; green is sound design/music notes; italics is text from notebooks kept by prison officer, Frank Hayes; dialogue is between Pat and Michael Hayes, son of Frank Hayes.

7. Building Trust Over Time and Distance: Jacquie, Former Drag Queen

In contrast to the instantaneous connection Pat and Simon felt on meeting Michael Hayes, ground had to be slowly built with other interviewees. Sometimes this relates simply to personality: An introvert is less disposed to talk easily to strangers. But where a person's traumatic past is likely to be navigated, relationships need to be handled with enormous care. Such was the case with Jacquie Grant, a trans woman and former youthful inmate of Cooma Prison, now living in New Zealand. It took over a year of meticulous research before word of Jacquie's existence surfaced, through social networks. Pat called me that day, exuberant—hers would be

the first personal inmate account. “She was quite forthcoming and she just kept dropping these little nuggets,” Pat recalls. It was during the pandemic and overseas flights were cancelled. We faced a dilemma: Should we record an online interview with Jacquie? Or wait indefinitely to meet her in person? We unanimously opted to meet her on her own ground. “She was really good [on a call],” Simon explains, “but it still felt like it didn’t have the energy we needed, that intimacy of being in the room with her.” And as Jacquie noted in that first conversation, “I think some stories need to be told—but they’ve got to be told in a way that people actually believe them.”

It took a whole year before Pat and Simon could visit Jacquie in Hokitika. Her remarkable story would take up an entire episode (episode 7). After being arrested for “being a drag queen” and serving time in prison, including three months in Cooma in 1961/1962, Jacquie migrated to New Zealand:

> Offensive behaviour was the charge. For a man to be in women’s clothes was offensive to society in general….Cooma was known as the prison where they put all the gays and sex offenders, paedophiles…and because you were in drag you were a sex offender….We were all just lumped into the category of perverts. (Jacquie, episode 7)

The bare biographical facts of Jacquie’s life were mind-blowing enough—she rattles off her various occupations: “chef, zookeeper, sailor, sock machine maker, farmer’s wife, foster parent, I’ve been on the Human Rights Tribunal, I got made an officer of the New Zealand order of merit….Oh, and I’ve had night clubs.” Over decades, Jacquie fostered 72 children, the first trans woman permitted to do so in New Zealand. But aside from Jacquie’s seemingly endless colourful anecdotes, what preoccupied Pat and Simon was how to depict the emotional truth of her life while respecting her own boundaries:

> Pat: I think Jacquie’s an incredible human—she’s been through so much and she’s got lifetimes of stories in her. But she’s got this kind of bravado and she’s stoic, but we know that that’s a coping mechanism of some kind. You don’t want to diminish that—if that’s her armour you can’t remove her armour. That’s her choice, not ours. But at the same time, you also want to make people understand that there’s still so much pain there, because of what she’s endured.
>
> Simon: Yeah, we were conscious of not wanting to fit her into a simple victim narrative, which is really easy to do in these stories—you’ve got the injustice, the perpetrators; her role is just the victim.
>
> Pat: It was a real balancing act.

Pat and Simon used their time in Jacquie’s ambit not just to interview her at length, but to observe her at home, with her Shih Tzu dog, Chloe, and at work, where one of her many friends, Mayor Bruce Smith, pops into her sock machine shop/museum (Figure 6).

Through a mixture of fly-on-the-wall scenes, thoughtful, descriptive writing, and probing interviews, episode 7 builds an absorbing portrait of a resilient life. But it is Jacquie’s unflinching willingness to face both the darkest moments in her past (such as the death of her best friend and fellow drag queen Gina from a drug overdose following aversion therapy) and to call out the hypocrisy and injustice of every community she has lived in, that creates a sense of intimacy, of getting to see the real Jacquie—who is *still* taking on the bigots, in her late 70s (Figure 7).

Mayor: Do I know any other 77-year-old entrepreneurs?

The local mayor, Bruce Smith, has just popped into the shop.

Mayor: Who sets up a bloody sock museum in Hokitika? I mean, you wouldn't do it would ya!

Bruce and Jacquie have been friends since she arrived in town 24 years ago.

Mayor: She arrives in a pink Mercedes with 'Tranny 1' as the number plate. You could imagine. We're a conservative town.

Jacquie laughing in background

I'd never come across anyone with such a fierce energy.

She's a bloody tough old bird.

Shop atmos, cash register

Figure 6. Excerpt, episode 7, TGM. Notes: Blue represents Pat's narration; green depicts sound design/music notes.

Car interior atmos

Jacquie: … when I first came here, I went to the local business association and asked them to declare Hokitika a gay-friendly town. So, we put a rainbow flag in every shop window.

Pat: Did you get resistance?

Jacquie: Oh yeah, yeah. There's always resistance. That's what makes it fun! … I just took two locals to court a few weeks ago on gender discrimination. I got a landmark ruling.

The two men harassed Jacquie on social media for years, misgendering and dead naming her.

Jacquie: Calling me "him" and all this sort of shit.

Pat: So where do you think this kind of activist streak in you comes from?

Jacquie: Probably from when I was young. You sort of had to be a bit tough to survive in Sydney. And a lot of people didn't survive of course.

Car on gravel

Figure 7. Excerpt, episode 7, TGM. Notes: Blue represents Pat's narration: green depicts sound design/music notes.

Jacquie put enormous trust in the team, to tell her story with integrity. It was a relief when Simon got an email after she'd listened to the podcast: "She loves it! She just said she 'didn't realise she swore so much.'"

8. Intimacy Gone Wrong: The Unexpected Homophobe

As Smets (2023, p. 1) pithily observes of the documentary interview, "real encounters cannot be fully directed." While on location in Cooma, Pat and Simon interviewed a range of locals, seeking to build a picture of the small rural town that had, unknown to most residents, been home to a "gay prison" for years. Among those they ran across was Brian Curzon, a church volunteer who had visited the prison in the 1990s. This was after homosexuality had been decriminalised and the prison had been transformed into a prison for child sex offenders—a horrifying development, as homosexuality and paedophilia had earlier been associated in law. This further conflated them in the public mind.

Because Curzon had rare eye-witness knowledge, Pat and Simon quickly decided to record a longer interview. This was a departure from the usual procedure in which subjects are extensively pre-vetted. "We didn't really know that much about him beforehand, so it was all revelatory," Pat recalls. "Things just happened." Figure 8 shows the transcript of the interview, which was run almost as live. "There wasn't a lot of editing in that scene; that really is how that played out," Pat explains. It is worth listening to the excerpt (episode 4, timestamp 28.46–31.30mins) before proceeding to analysis.

This harrowing scene shows the inversion of intimacy. It starts with Brian Curzon telling Pat he is not averse to homosexuality, provided it is kept discreet. Pat senses things may turn nastier: "I knew very quickly that this person would say things that will be horribly offensive." Struggling to maintain his equilibrium, Pat kept close eye contact with Simon, who was recording:

> The first time he dropped a really horrible comment, I said to myself, compose yourself, take a breath inside and let him say every single word—do not react. Because the second I react, he will not say what he actually thinks and feels. (Hub for Innovation in Podcasting, 2022)

Pat's urge to defend himself as a proud and committed gay man was battling with his professional journalistic instincts:

> Of course, you want to get the best interview from whoever you're interviewing, but I don't think objectivity really played a part here. It's very difficult to sit and listen to that and not want to get up and just jump the guy! And in the car I literally just went AAAAAGH….Simon and I debriefed for a very long time, driving down the highway, talking through the interview.

Although he hates hearing the interview back ("I feel my blood boiling listening to it, every time"), Pat is glad he was able to contain himself—using the time-honoured technique of giving an interviewee enough rope to hang himself. The team subtly moulded the interview in post-production: Pulsing music comes in as Brian Curzon makes the egregious suggestion that "homosexual" and "paedophile" are the same, building narrative tension. As Smets (2023, pp. 87–88) notes of another unsavoury interviewee: "My revenge was having the last word in our exchange—my weapon, the microphone. I was not distorting reality, but I was appropriating the story in the voice-over." Similarly, Pat reclaims agency by writing around the "live" interview : "I'm NOT

going to let him finish!" The final, spontaneous outpouring to Simon in the car is hugely cathartic, for listeners as much as for Pat in the moment. There was never a question of cutting it out.

In the 90s' a child sex offender rehabilitation program was run out of Cooma prison, keeping the conflation between homosexuality and pedophilia alive. Brian Curzon ran a Christian fellowship program inside the prison at the time. I'm back at his house in Cooma...

BC: If you were two homosexuals, it goes all against my Christian values, but who am I to judge. As long as you keep it to yourself. Don't go out and display it and hold hands in bloody Oxford Street.

Oxford Street in Sydney being where one of the biggest gay pride events in the world happens, which I happened to host on TV for years...

BC: Would I be wrong in saying that you are a homosexual?
Pat: I am.
BC: Right.
Pat: Do you think I chose to be homosexual?
BC: Yes.
Pat: And what might have made me make that choice?
BC: I'd have to know more about you... Are you the male or the female in the relationship?
Pat: I don't really know how to answer that question. I'm a man, my partner is a man, we're both men.

BC: I'm not against homosexuality. If you love one another, that's between you and God. But don't touch kids.

Beat

Brian: Is there a difference between a homosexual and a pedophile?
Pat: So you think there's no difference between a homosexual and a pedophile?
BC: They're very close. I think that they jump the gap. They jump the barrier.
Pat: I'm not sure what you mean.
BC: If you let me finish…

I'm NOT going to let him finish.

Beat

Just before we walk out the door...Brian asks to give me a hug...

BC: Do you know why I wanted to hug you?
Pat: Why?
BC: A hug says 'I like you'.

Because of Covid restrictions I politely decline.

Car door closing

[Actuality in car] Pat: What. The fuck. Was that??!

Pat screams…"oh my goooodddddd"

Pat: I don't think I've ever been so offended, amused, and shocked at the same time...

Car speeds off.

Figure 8. Excerpt, episode 4, TGM, interview with Brian Curzon (BC), a volunteer at Cooma Prison in the 1990s. Notes: Blue is Pat's narration; green depicts sound design/music notes.

I have played this excerpt in settings from academic conferences to podcast industry events. Almost everyone looks shocked at the line, "Don't touch kids." We know such bigotry exists, but it is usually siloed. How powerful to let it unspool in the raw—as almost a form of perverted intimacy, rather than as "grabs" served up by an outraged narrator:

> We could have painted him to be this horrible homophobe—but you don't need to because he does all that work himself; you just have to gently let it unfold. So rather than react in the moment, the gaps, that little moment of tension, was super important, to make it clear that of course we're not going to let him continue with this garbage that homosexuality and paedophilia, it's okay to conflate those things. We didn't have to SAY that though…it was really important to let that scene just completely breathe. Play it out. (Pat, Hub for Innovation in Podcasting, 2022)

9. Limitations and Weaknesses

The autoethnographic approach was constrained by my limited involvement in the production process. I was not present in the first year of development and did not attend the recording of interviews, so was unable to gather observational data during these encounters. Instead, I drew conclusions by studying the unexpurgated audio tape, supplemented by our team discussions.

I am not part of the queer community; neither is Simon. This, no doubt, limited our sensibility in some areas. However, Pat wanted TGM to have a broad audience reach, which we could mediate, while also upholding a loyalty to queer lived experience, which he could provide. We also solicited critical listeners, from industry executives to friends, to provide robust feedback, which assisted us as we made final tweaks to content and form before publication.

Regarding future related research, discussions are underway to see if the original interviews on which TGM is based can be preserved as a research collection. This archive could then be used by scholars to obtain deeper context on TGM and its themes, to assess its synthesis, content, and format, and to mine this valuable oral history for ancillary information on themes such as police/LGBQTIA+ history of conflict, historic gay "beats," and family homophobia.

The action research process followed had strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, it does not facilitate the creation of data along pre-ordained parameters, as a conventional methodology might employ. Instead, the researcher has to work with the materials organically created from a production imperative—e.g., interviews are gathered and informants selected using criteria determined not by their suitability to be studied but by their usefulness to the story. As Grubenmann notes, "in action research, scholars surrender some of the control that they normally try to maximize in more formal research" (2018, p. 11). But so long as the researcher can be nimble and pay careful attention to circumstances that can unfold spontaneously on a journalism-driven project, there is much to be gained also: "Research is not only about systematic data collection, because interesting talks and observation can serve as a valuable inspiration and/or trigger insights" (Grubenmann, 2018, p. 3). This was exemplified in sections 5–8 above.

10. Conclusion

The TGM project demonstrated that it is possible to achieve a successful and marketable audio narrative without exploiting informants' trust or adversely manipulating their stories and responses through selective editing. For those living in homophobic cultures, especially those from Middle Eastern backgrounds, like Pat, TGM offers a model from which to draw hope and comfort, as they hear how Pat's mother journeyed from shock and rejection to acceptance and love. Several of TGM's contributors expressed deep gratitude for the sense of liberation the podcast brought them: It enabled David, subject of the bonus episode, to come out as a gay man for the first time at 86 years of age. That, and the expunging we co-organised of the criminal record imposed on him 60 years before for the "crime" of homosexuality, were transformative, as he emotionally declares at the end of episode 9: "Sixty years' worth of guilt has just been wiped away….I feel like running on the beach, except I can't run anymore [laughs]. It means more to me than anything else in my life."

Hundreds of comments on the Audible platform showed how deeply moved listeners were:

> "Powerful, emotional and ultimately full of hope": What a brilliant journey! Thank you for such an incredible story. So much strength and integrity from those interviewed, and so much empathy and kindness (not to mention all the research!) from the producers and commentators. (Amazon Customer, 2022)

> "Powerful and beautiful": An incredibly important story about part of Australia's history the authorities would rather we forget. Abboud puts in amazing work tracking down evidence of the world's only know [sic] prison specifically for criminalised gay men. In spite of cover-ups, misting records and shockingly overt homophobia from some of his interviewees. Harrowing accounts of police entrapment and inhumane conversion "therapy" practices are balanced with poignant moments of humour and relatable anecdotes from Abboud's own life. This is incredibly important history that all Australians need to know about. (William, 2022)

As this anatomy of TGM's production process shows, trust and intimacy are the cornerstones of authentic storytelling in this narrative nonfiction podcast. But a caution: In unethical hands these qualities can be feigned, to the detriment of those featured. On this point, that documentary storytelling can be extractive/exploitative, Shane and Smets are somewhat aligned: "There is a thin, razor-sharp line between taking a story and telling it. At best, listening can be a gesture of love, but it is also an act of power" (Smets, 2023, p. 101). Shane's Manifesto advocates a "Third Podcasting" system, that eschews the neutral journalism dictates of legacy media ("first podcasting") and artier, auteur shows ("second podcasting"), instead comprising "activist podcasting in an age of social justice capitalism" (Shane, 2022, p. 5). She explains: "The third podcast is sceptical of the award-winning formula of pressing social justice issue + commercial narrative form = commercial hit" (Shane, 2022, p. 7). On Shane's grounds, TGM is a conundrum, because it achieved both critical and mainstream acclaim, while striking a strong blow for social justice. Among the awards it received was Best Social Justice Podcast at New York Festivals. At Audible, it had a remarkable 4.9 out of 5 stars from some 501 listener reviews—an unusually high rating, especially because the reviews came from a cross-generational audience. Its ethical journalism standards were roundly endorsed when it won Australia's highest accolade, a Walkley Award for Excellence in Journalism, as well as the Walkley Media Diversity Award.

Grubenmann (2018, p. 12) notes that for action research to be effective, it should operate "at the intersection of technological, social, strategic, and political dimensions." TGM received fulsome acknowledgment of such political/social impact when it was mentioned in New South Wales state parliament as having helped trigger an Apology (Figure 9) from the premier to the LGBTQIA+ community for laws that criminalised homosexuality (Hornery, 2024). Pat, Simon, and I were invited guests, who listened along with Jacquie and gay couple of 55 years Terry Goulden and John Greenway, who feature prominently in the series, as politicians of all stripes spoke of their regret at the demonisation visited on the LGBTQIA+ community until 1984 (Figure 10).

Figure 9. State apology 2024.

Forty years almost to the day that homosexuality was decriminalised in the state, we laughed, cried, and applauded, as our meta-narrative concluded.

Figure 10. Outside Parliament House, Sydney, 6 June 2024, before the apology. Notes: Left to right—Terry Goulden and his husband John Greenway; Paul Horan, executive producer, Audible; Jacquie Grant; Simon Cunich; Pat Abboud, beckoning to Siobhán McHugh to join the photo rather than take it.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank Patrick Abboud and Simon Cunich for their collegiality, rigour, and generosity throughout the production of *The Greatest Menace*.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Abboud, P. (Host). (2022–2023). *The greatest menace* [Audio podcast]. Audible. https://www.audible.com.au/pd/The-Greatest-Menace-Audiobook/B09S169W9J?source_code=AUDOR02802142200QT

Aguayo, A. J. (2019). *Documentary resistance: Social change and participatory media*. Oxford University Press.

Amazon Customer. (2022). Powerful, emotional and ultimately full of hope [Audible review on March 2, 2022]. https://www.audible.com.au/pd/The-Greatest-Menace-Audiobook/B09S169W9J

Biewen, J., & Dilworth, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Reality radio: Telling true stories in sound*. UNC Press Books.

Bottomley, A. J. (2020). *Sound streams: A cultural history of radio–internet convergence*. University of Michigan Press.

Coon, D. (2018). *Turning the page: Storytelling as activism in queer film and media*. Rutgers University Press.

Dowling, D. O., & Miller, K. J. (2019). Immersive audio storytelling: Podcasting and serial documentary in the digital publishing industry. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*, *26*(1), 167–184.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, *36*(4), 273–290.

Euritt, A. (2023). *Podcasting as an intimate medium*. Taylor & Francis.

Fink, K. (2019). The biggest challenge facing journalism: A lack of trust. *Journalism*, *20*(1), 40–43.

Grubenmann, S. (2018). Action research: Collaborative research for the improvement of digital journalism practice. In M. Karlsson & H. Sjøvaag, (Eds.), *Rethinking research methods in an age of digital journalism* (pp. 160–176). Routledge.

Haugtvedt, E. (2017). The ethics of serialized true crime: Fictionality in *Serial* season one. In E. McCracken (Ed.), *The* Serial *podcast and storytelling in the digital age* (pp. 7–23). Routledge.

Hornery, A. (2024, May 30). Terry was arrested when he was 21. Next week the premier will say sorry. *Sydney Morning Herald*. https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/terry-was-arrested-when-he-was-21-next-week-the-premier-will-say-sorry-20240530-p5jhuo.html

Hub for Innovation in Podcasting. (2022). *Inaugural HIP talk: The making of The Greatest Menace with Patrick Abboud and Simon Cunich*. https://hippodcasts.org/talks

Koenig, S. (Host). (2014–present). *Serial* [Audio podcast]. Serial Productions.

Lacour, Y. (Host). (2023). *You didn't see nothin* [Audio podcast]. USG Audio; The Invisible Institute. https://invisible.institute/ydsnpodcast

Lindgren, M. (2016). Personal narrative journalism and podcasting. *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, *14*(1), 23–41.

Madsen, V. M. (2023). Illuminated radio: Imagination and affect in the tradition of the audio 'feature,' 'acoustic film' and radio documentaire de creation. In H. Chignell & K. McDonald (Eds.), *Bloomsbury handbook of radio* (pp. 95–111). Bloomsbury.

Malcolm, J. (1990). *The journalist and the murderer*. Knopf.

McHugh, S. (2012). The affective power of sound: Oral history on radio. *The Oral History Review*, *39*(2), 187–206. https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohs092

McHugh, S. (2019, October 8). Subjectivity, hugs and craft: Podcasting as extreme narrative journalism. *Nieman Storyboard*. https://niemanstoryboard.org/stories/subjectivity-hugs-and-craft-podcasting-as-extreme-narrative-journalism

McHugh, S. (2022). *The power of podcasting: Telling stories through sound*. Columbia University Press.

McHugh, S. (2024). The invisible art of audio storytelling. In M. Hilmes & A. J. Bottomley (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of radio and podcasting* (pp. 321–338). Oxford University Press.

Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance. (2024). *MEAA Journalist Code of Ethics*. https://www.meaa.org/meaa-media/code-of-ethics

Podnews. (2024, September 19). *Registered voters trust podcasts above all other media* [Press release]. https://podnews.net/press-release/registered-podcasts-voters-trust-above

Pullen, C. (2007). *Documenting gay men: Identity and performance in reality television and documentary film*. McFarland.

Radden Keefe, P. (Host). (2020). *Wind of change* [Audio podcast]. Crooked Media. https://crooked.com/podcast-series/wind-of-change

Reková, T. (2024). *European radio documentary: A history of the format and its festivals*. Springer Nature.

Rosenthal, R. (Host). (2024, May 7). Shocking, heartbreaking, transformative…and ethical? [Audio podcast episode]. In *Sound school podcast*. PRX; Transom. https://transom.org/2024/shocking-heartbreaking-transformative-and-ethical

Shane, J. (2022). Toward a third podcasting: Activist podcasting in an age of social justice capitalism. *RadioDoc Review*, *8*(1). https://www.uowoajournals.org/rdr/article/id/108

Shane, J. (2023). *Shocking, heartbreaking, transformative* [Unpublished master's thesis]. City University of New York. https://academicworks.cuny.edu/hc_sas_etds/1065

Shane, J. (Host). (2024). *Shocking, heartbreaking, transformative* [Audio podcast]. Radiotopia. https://www.radiotopia.fm/podcasts/shocking-heartbreaking-transformative

Smets, K. (2023). *Between me and you: On the attitude of the audio documentary maker*. Royal Conservatoire Antwerp; Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts, University of Antwerp.

Stringer, E. T. (1996). *Action research. A handbook for practitioners*. Sage.

Walker, C. (Host). (2021–present). *Stolen* [Audio podcast]. Gimlet Media. https://gimletmedia.com/shows/stolen/episodes

William. (2022). Powerful and beautiful [Audible review on March 23, 2022]. https://www.audible.com.au/pd/The-Greatest-Menace-Audiobook/B09S169W9J

About the Authors

Siobhán McHugh is a multi-award-winning producer of narrative journalism podcasts and critic who founded *RadioDoc Review*, the first journal of critical analysis of crafted audio storytelling. Her book *The Power of Podcasting: Telling Stories Through Sound* (Columbia University Press, 2022) analyses the aesthetics and production practices of narrative podcasts. She has published widely on the affective power of audio storytelling and the impact of podcasting as a new medium. She is honorary associate professor in journalism at the University of Wollongong.