

## **Millennial Research Project Ethnography Overview**

### **Project Overview**

Millennials comprise the largest generational segment in the United States. Having recently passed Baby Boomers, there are now more than 78 million people categorized as Millennials – or as they’re also labelled, Gen Y.

For media, brands, and marketers, this group represents the future. Public radio is no exception. While the plethora of data illustrate that Millennials have a different orientation toward the way they access and use media, there is little understanding of the motivations behind the actions they take when choosing and using media. And in fact, their attitudes and actions are often incorrectly stereotyped and usually misunderstood.

The ethnographic portion of the Millennial Research Project is designed to provide a deeper look at their behavior, through a personal exploration into the daily lives of Millennials that are public radio listeners. The torrent of quantitative research, data and percentages only tell part of the story. In focus groups, respondents provide some perspective, but fail to illustrate how the ebb and flow of daily life impacts media and technology usage and habits – and how they’re rapidly changing.

Conventional research methodologies are challenged to uncover the reasoning, motivations, and actual behavior of Millennials. With the ethnographic approach, we will be able to observe them in their “natural habitats,” thus developing a deeper understanding of actions and reactions to media and technology throughout the course of an average day.

Our “fly on the wall approach” will observe and capture on video the behaviors of these individuals as they go through their day – from getting ready for work through their evening routines – and then interview them to better understand why they took certain actions, including the media they selected, the devices they utilized, and why they turned a station, source, or story off. Or on.

The result will be a unique view into the lives of Millennials, providing rich context and a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for public radio, and the strategies station leaders need to consider in order to effectively connect with this important generation.

## Guiding Questions

The purpose of this project is to attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How do Millennials access news media on an average day – are there different devices used at specific times and at various locations? And what drives these behaviors?
2. Are there differences in their expectations of the various forms of information and entertainment – audio, print, online, mobile?
3. How do they “pinball” from one news source to another? What motivates them to change news sources?
4. How do they discover news stories (social media, friends, search, radio listening)?
5. When they find a topic of interest, what are the ways in which they dig deeper, check other sources, or search? What captures their attention and keeps them? Or do they tend to graze?
6. How does public radio fit into their lives, what purpose does it serve, and what benefits does it provide?
7. How do they use the various assets provided by the public radio system beyond terrestrial listening – podcasts, streams, apps, social media, etc.?
8. Why do they stay with a public radio story, and/or why do they switch?
9. To what degree do they dig deeper when they hear an impactful story, and what sources do they turn to?
10. What are the key programs and shows that truly resonate with Millennials?
11. What are the various ways in which public radio is accessed, and what are the motivations behind them?
12. What are the story lines, topics, and styles of public radio features and programs that connect with Millennials?
13. How does time-shifting impact media consumption globally, and public radio specifically? What are the motivations and benefits, and how does this impact terrestrial radio listening? Are there benefits to being live?
14. How are podcasts being utilized, and what impact do they have on broadcast radio consumption?
15. What is the impact of mobile in their media consumption, and what role do apps, texting, video, and social media play?

Additional questions will be posed as the project unfolds, but these are the main avenues of inquiry for this phase.

## Project Design

This ethnographic phase of the project is designed to observe 12 respondents – three per market in Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, and Michigan (Detroit, Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids). By recruiting from each participating radio station’s database or via social media in these metros, we will identify individuals that fit specific recruiting criteria (see

below) and whose average day is conducive to observational research. Some work locations, for example, do not allow observers with video cameras.

We will conduct a pre-interview with each respondent in order to map out the day to ensure that they will provide a satisfactory result. Each encounter will then have the following format:

**Observational** - A typical day starts with our observers arriving when the respondent wakes up. We will observe them as they get ready for work (or other activities they might have in their routine), all the way through the end of their day. Very few questions will be asked – our team is there to observe and take notes.

**Post Fieldwork Interview** – Using notes gathered from the observational phase, our team will then conduct an on-camera interview, probing about the actions and behaviors taken to develop a better understanding of why they used a certain device, changed a radio station, talked about a news story, followed news online, etc.

**Post Fieldwork Notes** – At the end of each daily encounter, our observation team will post notes on the Google Doc so stakeholders can follow along, make comments and even suggestions for additional probes.

## Recruiting Parameters

We will recruit respondents from the databases of each participating radio station. Of the twelve respondents, we will attempt to observe a minimum of three non-Caucasians.

The recruiting parameters will follow these guidelines:

- $\frac{1}{3}$  18-22s,  $\frac{1}{3}$  23-28s,  $\frac{1}{3}$  29-34s
- $\frac{1}{2}$  Male,  $\frac{1}{2}$  Female
- Listenership to public radio for a minimum of two years (this may be adjusted as necessary)
- For informational purposes only, we will be asking how they listen to public radio – dayparts, at home/work/car, on which devices they utilize, and whether they time-shift and/or listen to podcasts.

## Conclusions

A thorough report on PowerPoint with video segments will be created for the ethnographic phase of the Millennial Research Project. It will be designed so it can be modularized for different presentations and applications.