Southern Accent Bias in the Broadcast Industry

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By

Megan Sundberg

Randy Reeves, Committee Chair

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

When I decided to attend the University of Missouri for graduate school, I told my undergraduate mentor. During our conversation, he made a passing comment that I did not fully understand, but it stuck with me. He said, "you're going to want to pick up the Missouri accent while you're there." I had never thought about my accent before this, I grew up in Richmond, Virginia, and then the tidewater region of Virginia, both places with a type of Southern accent. After hearing this comment, it made me wonder why he would recommend picking up a Missouri accent instead of proceeding through life with my own accent. I finally asked him about this, and he told me the Missouri accent was the most desirable for journalists because it is the most neutral of all the accents in the United States. This immediately sparked my interest. Why was this his perception? Was there any merit to it? If I don't follow his recommendation, will I struggle to make it?

The United States is home to a diverse array of regional accents. The range varies from the New England accent, down to the Southern accent, over to the Southern California accent and includes every combination in between. Every region, every state and every town has its own unique way of talking. Accents are also a noticeable feature of people. It can help strangers pinpoint where a person is from. However, this also adds potential bias into the fold. In certain careers where speaking is impossible to avoid, this could cause issues.

Broadcast journalists make a living with their image and their voice. It is their voice that presents the news to the public on a day-to-day basis. Journalists, like the people they tell the news to, have accents. Their accent may be thick or thin, may be local to the region or from hundreds of miles away and may or may not be something

they wish to hide for fear of it affecting their work success. If journalists are judged for their accent, they may not be able to build rapport with their audience and subsequently put their prospects in the field in jeopardy.

This research study looked at how broadcast journalists, specifically ones who currently have or at one time had a Southern accent and work outside of the South, were impacted by their accents within their profession. Trying to look at all different American accents was too broad to adequately cover within this research. Focusing on solely the Southern accent ensured a narrow focus. The Southern accent was chosen as the main focus of the research because there was a study that indicated a lack of professionalism associated with the accent as opposed to other accents (Shah, 2019). Looking at this stereotype in relation to the professional journalism industry is the center of this research.

Research regarding accents has been done in relation to other fields. Current research on the topic of bias for or against Southern American accents includes Ash et al. (2020) and Amira et al. (2018). This research, however, focuses on accents in American politics and elections. There is little research within the realm of the media and journalists, and therefore this research will hopefully fill in the gap. Additionally, much of the research regarding accents in the United States surrounds how foreign accents are perceived (Hosoda & Stone‐Romero, 2010). Very few studies focus specifically on regional accents within the United States.

This topic is important because accents are part of a person's identity as it shows origin (Whitworth, 2021). Accents, while not currently protected under anti-discrimination laws, are considered by many scholars to be 'practically immutable

characteristics,' meaning they are able to be changed, but are very difficult to. (Rose, 2020). This research could help contribute to the development of workplace hiring standards and prevent discrimination based on an accent. In a narrower scope, this research would potentially change the current standard that journalists should have a neutral accent (Rossen, 2020). Rather than journalists remaining in the region where their accent is common, they could go somewhere with a vastly different accent without fear of judgment, worries about hiring prospects or salary impact (Morgan, 2019).

The purpose of this research is to discover more about how a Southern accent affects, if at all, how journalists find success in the broadcast media industry. Several key topics were looked at such as how journalists feel their accent plays a role in their craft, if they felt pressure to change or alter their accent and how stereotypes factor in.

Professional skills component

This semester, I served as a production intern at Fox News as part of the New York City Program professional placement. I worked on the show "The Five" during the semester which is a roundtable discussion format of news featuring five hosts from varying backgrounds and political affiliations. The show discusses current events and issues on weeknights in a six-segment format for an hour. On a daily basis, I shadowed a segment producer and assisted them with research, graphics, finding VOs, editing SOTs, script writing and taking care of any of the hosts' needs. Prior to this experience, I had very little experience with broadcast news and had only learned about TV production in one class during my undergraduate education at Virginia Tech. However, working at the Columbia Missourian as a photo editor and a sports editor helped prepare me for the fast-paced nature of broadcast news. Additionally, it taught me how

to fact-check, gather news and produce a complete package by deadline, all of which were crucial skills during my internship. My internship lasted 10 weeks from February 12th to April 19th. Additionally, for the first four weeks of the semester, I worked remotely on the Social Desk at the Columbia Missourian creating Facebook and Instagram content using Social News Desk. For the New York Program, I attended lectures on Tuesday nights.

Mina Pertesis, coordinating producer on The Five, supervised me throughout the semester. She paired me up with different segment producers each day to ensure I learned from a variety of different people on the team and got experience producing for each of the hosts. On a few occasions, she and I produced segments together if the team was short staffed. When this happened, she would guide me through the process but ultimately allowed me to take the reins and produce most of the segment myself from start to finish.

At the beginning of each day, I sent pitches to the producers. If there were any stories they particularly liked, they would have me request elements through the licensing department to try and obtain rights to the content for the show. After this, I would review the recorded show from the night before and write down timecodes for each topic so the Ratings Department could access the specific timecodes if necessary. Then I would compile a one-page topsheet for the hosts' folders outlining the main bullet points for that day's different segments. At this point I would be assigned to a segment producer for the day and get started on the articles packets. This was a 5-10 page packet of information about the assigned segment designed so the hosts could easily access information, data points and any other information they may need to

recall on air. Essentially, this served as a snapshot of the topic and needed to be clear, concise and answer any potential questions that may come up during the show. I would then send out the articles packet for approval by Mina before sending it to the hosts and other producers. The rest of the afternoons were spent figuring out what VOs to pull from the database that may coordinate well with the segment. Additionally, I created several SOTs that compiled different news outlets' reactions to a certain event. For this, I would scrub through keywords in transcripts to find important reactions that we wanted in our shows. Finally, I plugged everything into the iNews rundown to make sure everything was ready for showtime. Throughout the process, if I thought of any creative banners I would add them to the banner list created by the line producer. At showtime, I ensured the hosts had everything they needed before heading down to the control room to observe the show.

After graduation I hope to obtain a job as a production assistant or equivalent position at a national news network in Washington D.C. I have enjoyed working on a discussion-style news program, and so I would like to produce for a show of a similar nature. My time at the Missourian helped prepare me for the pace of a newsroom. In J7180 I learned about sourcing and how to produce different news for different mediums. At the Missourian, I worked as a sports desk TA which taught me about copy editing and the importance of grammar and how to check over writing for readability and AP style, skills that I believe will help me in any future positions. I also worked as a photo desk editor at the Missourian which helped me understand more about how to divide tasks amongst a team of journalists to produce a complete project. I worked on the Friday Night Sights team and managed Missourian photo coverage of Mizzou

football. These roles helped prepare me for my role at Fox and develop my technical skills to take into future employment opportunities.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Currently, there is little research specifically on journalists with Southern accents and the effects it may have. However, there is some research that looks at American accents as a whole that are relevant to look at in the scope of this research. Additionally, looking at bias in general is important to create a foundation of how bias functions and the implications it brings about. Organizing the literature into subsections provides a greater look into how the literature connects as well as sheds light on areas needing further study. The subsections broken up in this literature review are the classification of a Southern accent, intersectionality, general bias, accent attributes, politicization and professionalism.

Southern Accent Classification

For this research project, one of the most important things to determine first is what counts as a Southern accent. Even within the South, there are a variety of different regional accents that may vary slightly from state to state.

The Southern accent has origins dating back to English colonists (Brown, 1991). From there, the accent developed over hundreds of years to become more similar to what people are used to hearing today. According to Promova, a language learning website, there are four distinctive auditory characteristics that separate the Southern accent from other U.S. accents (Laughton, 2023). The first feature is a “slow, melodic drawl. Vowel sounds are typically lengthened and stretched” (Laughton, 2023). Secondly, “diphthongs, or two-part vowel sounds, are often flattened into single vowel sounds. For instance, ‘ride’ may sound like ‘rod’ (Laughton, 2023). Finally, following along with the unique use of vowels is vowel breaking which “entails single vowel

sounds splitting into multiple syllables. The word ‘bed’ might be pronounced as if it were spelled ‘be-ud’” (Laughton, 2023).

Even with these three characteristics, the simplest way to identify a Southern accent is in the vowel space (Decker, 2023). Specifically, the merger of ‘I’ and ‘E’ vowels is a distinctive marker of the accent (Brown, 1991). For example, ‘pin’ and ‘pen’ is a common reference in studies that look at the accent, with both words being pronounced the same despite their vowels being different (Brown, 1991). This way of pronunciation in Southern English is derived from what old British English used to sound like (Brown, 1991).

This type of accent has only recently begun to be studied in the media. A study by Dragojevic et al. (2016) saw researchers observing randomly selected shows to determine what kind of accents could be heard. The study “observed 89 randomly selected show on primetime TV of scripted and reality shows and found that a non-standard native variety of North American English was only present in 6.5% of speakers” (Dragojevic et al., 2016). This identification of ‘non-standard native variety of North American English’ includes accents outside of just the Southern accent; however, this means that Southern accents were present in even less than 6.5% of the speakers, meaning it was rarely heard (Dragojevic et al., 2016). Additionally, the study saw that “in addition to being underrepresented, non-Standard speakers were found to be *misrepresented* as more overweight, less intelligent, and least praised” (Dragojevic et al., 2016). This introduces the idea that broadcast journalists who have anything other than a standard North American English accent could face challenges related to their

accent in their career. The Southern accent specifically, based on other research discussed later emphasizes these associated stereotypes.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is "the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage" (YW Boston, 2017). It acknowledges that people have multiple different past experiences and identities that all merge into the prejudices they face (YW Boston, 2017). This is important for this research because a person with a Southern accent may not necessarily have faced the same experiences with discrimination as others. Additionally, other factors may exacerbate the discrimination such as gender and race. These are important differences to keep in mind throughout the course of the research.

General Bias

Bias can be present along several different lines. In the case of this research, I specifically looked at accent bias; however, it is important to note that accent bias may vary depending on other bias factors. Two of the sources, both from Moss-Racusin in 2012 and then 2015, discuss the presence of gender bias in STEM fields. Gender bias may seem somewhat unrelated to this research regarding accents, but in order to accurately evaluate the implications of accent bias, it is important to look at research that has been studied more heavily regarding other types of bias. Particularly, this other research could be beneficial to my research because it could demonstrate how accents could exacerbate biases that already exist. For example, in the research from Amira et al. (2018), female gender combined with a Southern accent saw higher results of

negative bias in the subjects. Knowing how compiled biases affect outcomes provides a broader scope of the topic.

The study from Moss-Racusin et al. (2012) looks at gender bias in the context of faculty- to-student interactions. The researchers propose that science faculty members positively favor male students over female students when asked to review applications for a science laboratory position. Results indicated the gender of the students was significant while the gender of the faculty members was not. Additionally, female students were offered fewer hours and a lower salary (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). This study was furthered several years later by one of the same main researchers from the first study. Instead of looking at gender bias among science students, the researchers looked at gender bias in the grand scheme of the science industry. A main takeaway from this study was one comment stating, "I am a female scientist and even I sometimes struggle with bias against women" (Moss-Racusin et al., 2015, p. 6). The main takeaway from this research was people potentially being biased against a certain group even if they are a part of that group. In the scheme of accents, asking journalists with Southern accents how they feel viewers who have Southern accents themselves react to hearing it in a professional media setting provided interesting responses in the interview.

In one of the accent bias studies from Kinzler et al. (2013), the findings indicate that certain children involved in the study demonstrated a preference towards the accent most similar to theirs and react more positively in general. This contradicts the gender study as, if the same principles of bias were applied, female scientists would react more positively to other female scientists; however, the results did not always support this. This could be a result of simple differences between adults and children regarding

inherent as opposed to learned behavior, or it could be a broader theme of preference towards the similar.

The argument this research makes is that bias can compound upon itself to create an even greater degree of bias (Dreizler, 2020). This concept ties most of the research together in that the bias is not simply existent or nonexistent, it is a scale. As seen in the election study, females with Southern accents were more harshly judged and therefore showing bias can be further aggravated based on other factors, particularly immutable characteristics (Amira et al., 2018). Looking at it in terms of a scale, having a Southern accent would subject a person to a potential degree of bias, being a woman would raise the level of bias. Factor in racial, ethnic and class bias and there is a high potential for severe generalizations, stereotypes and bias against people. This is a difficult phenomenon to study as there are so many factors to consider for bias, age being another, that no one study could accurately reflect it; however, by combining several different studies, connections may appear, more questions may be asked, and more research conducted. In the interviews it is important to understand and acknowledge this compounding bias but also understand that this study is solely looking at Southern accent bias.

Compartmentalization of Accent Attributes

By and large, a major theme presented throughout much of the research is the compartmentalization of different accents. Several studies looked at how people perceived different accents and asked the subjects to either rate the accents on a scale for different attributes or assign attributes themselves. This method allowed the subjects to

personalize their analysis of the accents better and provide the researchers with a broader sense of how those accents were perceived.

A mixed methods study from Shah (2019) asked people to judge speakers based on their accents. The results for the Southern accent presented two contradictory analyses: one showed a positive association for friendly and calm, while the other showed a negative association for not intelligent and liar (Shah, 2019). Across the board, "friendly" was an attribute very commonly applied to the Southern accent; however, so was "unintelligent." This parallels the study on elections from Amira et al. (2018) showing people are less likely to support a candidate with a Southern accent as they perceive them to be not as intelligent or qualified.

By compartmentalizing accent characteristics into several categories, terms or scale ratings, it is acknowledging that biases and stereotypes exist in society. Performing a qualitative study is especially useful because it did not lead the subject to each word, the subject had to think of them on their own.

Bringing this research back to the main question regarding accents in the media and whether a Southern accent negatively affects a journalist's image, there is little research on accents specifically pertaining to the media and so the current research can only be loosely applied to a media context. Moving forward, more research is necessary about accents specifically in the media to fully determine how accents play a role in journalism.

Politicization

A portion of the issues presented in the media revolves around politics. It is therefore important to acknowledge the research done related to accents specifically in

the context of politics and elections. Two sources discuss solely this research. The first study from Ash et al. (2020) looked at eight different hypotheses centered around how candidates with Southern accents are judged by potential voters when compared to candidates with neutral accents.

Additionally, the researchers also varied their methods to include the difference between Democrat and Republican viewpoints. This research found support for the hypotheses that showed people assume Southern accents align with Republican views, people associate Southern accents with negative traits, Democrats will negatively evaluate candidates with a Southern accent and Democrats will be less likely to vote for a candidate with a Southern accent (Ash et al., 2020). Bringing this same idea to the media, if the same findings were to hold true, viewers may hold the same negative viewpoints towards journalists with a Southern accent and therefore not find as much success as their neutral-accented counterparts because of assumed political partisanship.

The other source discussing politics also studied the Southern accent in terms of candidates and how voters perceive them (Amira et al., 2018). However, this study did not bring Democrats and Republicans into the experiment design. Other than this one difference, the researchers did follow a similar model as the other political study recording speeches with a Southern accent and a neutral accent, having voters listen to the recordings, answering questions and found very similar results (Ash et al., 2020). The study from Amira et al. (2018) also included recordings of both men and women with Southern and neutral accents, bringing the question of possible gender bias into the study. Researchers specifically looked at how confident subjects were in the candidate with differing accents, a confidence that had a more drastic decline in females with

Southern accents as opposed to males with Southern accents (Amira et al., 2018). This is an important factor to consider within the context of accents and bias. Bias may exist along accent lines but just how drastically these biases exist may vary depending on other factors such as age, gender and racial lines.

This research argues that, while generalizations and stereotypes are existent in life, they have the ability to influence some very important things. Debates are a key component of elections, and if voters are heavily influenced by a candidate's accent, then they may not really be voting for what they truly believe in but rather what sounds the best to their ear. Additionally, the media in all forms has a heavy influence on societal decisions as well because of its role as informants and, if accents in the media see the same degree of bias, the implications could be very large (Mitchell & Jurkowitz, 2020).

Professionalism

The majority of research surrounding accents and bias revolves around foreign accents and how Americans perceive them. Finding research specific to the Southern accent is difficult. Additionally, most of the research is recent to the 21st century. This creates a potential question about why it has not been studied as extensively in previous years. This shows a gap in the research because not only has accent bias in the media not been studied extensively, but accent bias, in general, is a relatively new concept being studied. Research can only be developed if it is studied repeatedly, and the findings confer with one another. The gap in this instance is the lack of research.

In the study by Shah (2019), there was a contradiction in the perception of the Southern accent. One result was a positive association with being ‘nice’ and ‘friendly’

while other results came back with ‘unintelligent’ and ‘liar’ (Shah, 2019). This contradiction points to people viewing the Southern accent as nice in a social setting but not a professional setting. In one study, researchers looked at the Southern accent across industries and how it changes over time (Forrest et al., 2021). The results indicated that the Southern accent has a decreasing prevalence in certain industries as opposed to others. Specifically, the accent is disappearing in the technology industry as opposed to government and law fields (Forrest et al., 2021). This research presents the notion that people change to fit a mold they believe makes them more desirable in a certain industry. If certain traits are perceived as giving a person more of an advantage in an industry, then employees will naturally want to replicate them to market themselves to corporations.

This exposes a gap in the research for the media industry. On television news, the accents heard are generally neutral aside from local stations (Rossen, 2020). The perception, therefore, is that a certain type of accent, or lack thereof, is expected to be successful in the industry (Greenlee, 2023). Drawing focus back to the research study regarding gender and STEM hiring trends (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). While this study discusses gender and how it affects hiring, the same bias principles could be applied to determine whether accent bias exists in the media industry. If one accent is determined to be more desirable in the industry, or rather certain accents are considered undesirable, then this could affect an applicant’s chances of getting hired (Ragusea, 2017). For example, if someone hailing from the Deep South wants to apply to be a news anchor in Boston, would they be given the same fair chance because of their accent? News

networks need to consider applicants based on how well viewers in the area will listen to them because the news is not effective if the viewers are not engaged.

There are protections against bias discrimination in the job application process, but to what extent are accents protected from this discrimination in a career where talking is the selling point (United States Department of Labor, n.d.)? As shown in several of the studies, people are generally more inclined to connect with and think more positively of accents most similar to theirs (Kinzler et al., 2013). However, if you turn on the news and hear an accent out of place for the area you live in, it could affect how well you listen. If viewers are listening more to the accent than the actual news content, then this presents a major problem for the news station.

Overall, the concept of an accent affecting a job can be loosely paralleled to accents affecting candidates and gender affecting job offerings. However, all types of discrimination are different and affect people differently. Accent bias is not the same as gender bias and therefore further research about accent bias specifically is needed to fully determine how it affects people specifically, in the context of the intended research question, journalists and the media.

The research questions for this project are based on trying to get a full understanding of how journalism is impacted by accents. Specifically focusing on the Southern accent, the factors of success, media atmosphere and bias are enveloped within the research questions.

- RQ1: How do broadcast journalists who currently have or at one time had a Southern accent navigate career challenges they might encounter as a result of where they grew up?

RQ1: According to journalists who currently have, or at one time had a Southern accent, how does a Southern accent affect a journalist's success in the media industry?

CHAPTER THREE: PROFESSIONAL ANALYSIS

The United States has many accents. The Southern accent in particular is prevalent throughout a vast majority of the country. While many find this accent endearing and a sign of familiarity to home, there are issues that come with speaking with this accent. A Southern accent is, by some, negatively associated with being less educated and dumb, traits no one wants to be labeled as, especially in a professional role. In broadcast news, neutral accents are the most common accent heard across the industry. Very few anchors speak with a thick accent of any kind. After seeing this trend, I began to wonder how journalists handle their accent as they are heading into the industry. I wanted to know if they were told to get rid of it or whether it was a personal choice.

This research aimed to look at a narrow scope of accents in the broadcast industry, focusing solely on the Southern accent in particular. I wanted to talk with current or former broadcast journalists who worked in front of the camera in some capacity. Additionally, I wanted these people to have grown up in the South but no longer necessarily worked in the South. This criteria opened the conversation to discuss how they felt their Southern accent had potentially limited their success in the industry and learn more about how they had combated any obstacles they had faced during their professional journey. Nine journalists were interviewed over the course of the project, all of whom talked about their journey through the industry, about their roots in the South, about the evolution of their accent, and how that did, or didn't, play a role in their career.

The list of people interviewed for this research were the following professionals. Their names have been removed for anonymity purposes.

Number	From	Work	Race	Gender	Age Range
Participant 1	Marietta, Georgia	Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	White	Female	30-40 years old
Participant 2	Crossett, Arkansas	Columbia, Ohio	Black	Female	30-40 years old
Participant 3	The Woodlands, Texas	Columbus, Ohio	White	Female	30-40 years old
Participant 4	Fairhope, Alabama	St. Louis, Missouri	White	Female	20-30 years old
Participant 5	Atlanta, Georgia	Portland, Oregon	Mixed Race	Male	30-40 years old
Participant 6	Biloxi, Mississippi	Raleigh, North Carolina	White	Female	30-40 years old
Participant 7	Baltimore, Maryland	Omaha, Nebraska	White	Female	30-40 years old
Participant 8	Atlanta, Georgia	Boston, Massachusetts	White	Female	40-50 years old
Participant 9	Monroe, Louisiana	Los Angeles, California	White	Male	50-60 years old

The nine journalists I spoke to were from varying backgrounds. Some were from rural areas while others were from more urban areas. Several of them decided to pursue a career in broadcasting starting in their freshman year of college and others found their way into the industry after a career change. Their experiences were as varied as each person. Even still, I started hearing commonalities starting in only the second interview. There were certain participants who had faced more difficulties in

relation to their accents compared to some of the others. I cannot pinpoint specifically why this may have been as I do not know how thick of an accent they grew up with or their journalistic skill level that may have played a factor.

Research Question One

For the first research question – how do broadcast journalists who currently have or at one time had a Southern accent navigate career challenges they might encounter as a result of where they grew up? – one major theme persisted: if they wanted to be in broadcast, there were only two ways to deal with their Southern accent. They either had to change it or not change it. If the journalists chose not to change their accent, they had to accept the limitations that come with that choice. That being said, all nine journalists that were interviewed chose to kill their accents on air, but they did still have valuable input about the potential positive side of not changing their accent. Of only a small sample of journalists, the fact that all chose to kill their accents, shows that there is a pressure felt by journalists in the industry to conform to a certain standard in order to achieve success. All of the journalists took it upon themselves to put in the work to try and kill their accent using several strategies.

Voice lessons

All of the participants discussed how they worked on getting rid of their accents. They each described different methods, what worked for them and what obstacles they faced. Interestingly, the majority of the participants, all but two, took some form of voice lessons at some point in their career. Some took lessons with accent specialists while others simply worked with speech professionals or even acting

coaches to help them learn how to shape words and enunciate as much as possible. They also cited proper diaphragm breathing as being a beneficial technique for speaking cleanly and clearly on air.

Throughout all of the interviews, participants talked about words they struggled with, many of which are still words they struggle with today as they have been unable to completely shake their accent. Participant Two talked about their experience with a voice coach and, even with a person hired to help them lose their accent, struggles persisted, “I took voice lessons. I did that to try to lose the accent. I felt like it was harder for me to do that. For whatever reason, like I just couldn't grasp some concepts in terms of like, the Is and all that.” Hearing this from the participants was especially telling when it comes to the question of how difficult it is to lose an accent. When people think about the difficulty of shedding an accent, they often think of international accents. The truth of the matter is, as told by the participants, that American accents can be tricky to change as well. This correlates with the idea that an accent is not an immutable characteristic, but it is almost immutable if the proper work and dedication is not applied. The participants who chose to work on their accent with a coach cited how it had more benefits than just losing their accent but enunciating and learning to breathe from the diaphragm, all skills that are important for broadcast journalists. This clear enunciation could have proved beneficial to them as they sought work because, even people who have a neutral accent can struggle with poor enunciation and fast talking that would make them less likely to be understood by viewers.

Repetition

The other technique the journalists cited as the most effective way they managed their accent in order to find more success in the industry was repetition. Even though the majority of them had voice coaches, they discussed how important it was to put in the work and be conscious of the way they were speaking in order to change it. From the very first interview with Participant One, this theme was present as they said, "when speaking on air, it's just hyper focusing on enunciating." Some journalists cited this repetition strategy as a means of working through their accent while others simply said it was good practice to try and speak as clearly as possible on air and they think all journalists should do it, accent or not.

An important aspect of this strategy as well was the idea of patience. The participants, especially when discussing the frustration they felt with themselves when they were young, talked about the importance of understanding that a change was not going to happen overnight but rather would take time. In conjunction with these journalists struggling with their confidence as a result of their accent, they stressed the importance of patience so as not to get overwhelmed and give up. "Practice patience and perseverance. And so it was just like this listening to myself, and then saying it again and then listening to myself. But it is like an active thing to make sure that you're not saying anything with a stretched out vowel, or just maintaining your professionalism, like speaking without an accent, to me is almost the equivalent of maintaining my professionalism," said Participant Four. This participant likened the accent change to that of talking in a serious setting to another professional. They said that it felt like a very similar switch as to when they were talking to their insurance

company and wanted to sound more professional and be taken seriously. Participant Nine especially stressed the importance of speaking professionally, “my phrase is, you can be conversational, but you must be professional. Casual is not conversation. I talk casually when I’m at home with my family. Conversational can be professional.” In this respect the participant likened a lot of people with Southern accents as speaking in a manner that was not conducive to being understood on air such as speaking slowly, cutting off the ends of words and using expressions.

Participant Eight talked about their routine when pre recording anything and the lengths they go to in order to ensure little to no trace of their accent makes it through. “If I hear myself, you know, we have the headphones, and I can hear it. If I hear myself saying something that sounds Southern. I will repeat it, I will redo it, I will do a second take or third take,” this patience and dedication to ensuring that no accent makes it through shows the lengths a journalist will go to when they are navigating things that could be a detriment to their career. This kind of attention to detail is exhaustive and creates an expectation of perfection if a person does not allow themselves some grace. Participant Two talked about being kind to themselves as they worked through their process, “I think people have to really be patient with themselves to, you know, everything isn’t going to happen overnight. So really giving yourself that grace to grow.” This quote touches on how navigating career challenges is not a linear process. There are many different ways to navigate issues but there will always be setbacks and bumps in the road that must be overcome. Many interviewees cited patience as one of the most crucial components of the entire process to ensure they never got frustrated with themselves and did not try to be perfect but rather human.

“It’s just part of the job”

When hearing about the different ways the participants navigated the challenges they faced because of their accent, it was interesting to hear that all of them opted to work on losing their accent. When starting this project I was almost certain that at least one person would have refused to change, citing it as part of their identity. Therefore, I was a little shocked to hear how many people were willing to give it up. However, several participants gave the same reason that helped the entire thought process make sense in my head, it was just part of the job, and it was a very achievable thing. Participant Nine said, “I also believe it is absolutely, absolutely doable by anybody, if they think about it, but you have to listen to yourself.”

They related it to having a neutral accent on the air to dressing up and doing their hair and makeup. Every job has requirements that employees must adhere to and working to have a neutral accent was just one of them. No employer cared if the person had a Southern accent at home, so long as it didn’t find its way on air. Participant Six touched on this idea by saying, “I don't think I don't think I really cared to be honest. Because I knew I know, in my heart of hearts that I am from the South, and if being a better speaker and presenter means toning down my way, you know, Southern accent, I'm okay with that. Because at the end of the day, it's gonna make me better, it's going to make our viewers understand me better. And that's when you're going into, you know, a television career. That's what's expected of you. So it really was just like, at the end of the day, this is something I got to do.” This idea of identity being acceptable so long as it wasn’t distracting was so interesting because some participants equated it to performing in a certain role and having to check some of their quirks at the door. They

did say that being relatable is important so as to not be so cookie cutter in everything that viewers would be turned off, but understanding that the most important thing in the job is for the message to be communicated accurately to the viewers. Participant Eight in particular talked a lot about how having a neutral accent is just part of the job. “I think it's equivalent to when a boss calls and you answer the phone versus when your friend calls, you don't necessarily try to have two different dialects or two different twangs, or no twang, or accent or this or that. I think it's just almost a customer service voice. But I do think that that just laid the foundation of making me conscious of how the words sound when they're coming out of your mouth. And the goal always is just to to not let those words be a distraction based on the tone, or the accent that they're coming out of your mouth with. I do think that other people in other professions have a different professional voice and a different social voice as well. It's just not as apparent as it is for news anchors who you're listening to for an hour, two hours.”

Relatability

This idea of viewer trust is ever prevalent in today’s society. It is one of the most important jobs of any journalist because, without trust, the media would have no platform. Most of the participants discussed that they believed having an accent that was either neutral or similar to that of their viewers helped build the most trust. This was because viewers would see the anchor as a member of the community rather than an outsider. There was only one participant who said they did not worry too much about their accent and had actually experienced some positive feedback as a result of sounding slightly Southern on air. “I would say I would say more often than not, any of the feedback I've ever gotten about the way I speak has been generally positive. It's not

been people saying, oh, my gosh, I can't stand the way you speak. It's more like, oh, man, you remind me of that I used to live there. Or I'm from there, too. It's nice to have another Southerner out here," said Participant Five. As discussed in the other research question, this response is an anomaly compared to the other participants who expressed their accent designating them as an outsider and only being beneficial if they were working in the South. Participant Five talked about believing this positive feedback had to do with diversity in the newsroom and having more personality to offer than an anchor with just a neutral accent.

Personality

The only other positive side of allowing a Southern accent to slip through as reported by the participants was maintaining their personality. As stated, many people feel their accent is a part of their identity and personality and to lose it would be to lose a part of themselves. Participant Three talked about how, as they have become a more qualified journalist, they have worried less about letting their accent slip through, "I've been so confident in my knowledge of my beat and what I do that it's kind of gotten to the point where I'm like, if they don't like me, then that's kind of their issue. I think that I bring, you know, a little bit more like, honestly, flavor." This raises an interesting question about the potential different responses by young reporters and experienced reporters. Young reporters do not have much experience and are judging situations based on what they have been told by others while experienced journalists are reacting based on lived experiences. The other piece of advice from Participant Three is the hope that younger journalists will be less willing to conform to the standards set by the past decades in the industry, "And I always tell young reporters and anchors who are

learning, don't be you as an anchor, just be you." Whether this is a realistic piece of advice or simply a hope for the future is unclear based on the way the industry is set up currently to desire a neutral accent.

"It still comes out"

The final topic that came up consistently across the interviews was that, no matter how hard a person tried, no matter how many years they had been away from the South, their accent still came through. Each participant cited different circumstances where their accent came through despite their best efforts. Participant One said, "I feel like when there's breaking news, or when I'm under pressure, that's when my accent comes out. And it was, you know, right before the shows, I'm trying to figure out exactly what to say. And so it's like, I'm not thinking about how I sound, I'm just thinking about getting the information right and saying it as quickly as you know, as accurately as possible. So I think being under pressure, can can draw that out, can draw out an accent, if that makes sense." Most other participants said their accents came out more often off camera, specifically when they were talking to friends from home, when they were tired, sick or intoxicated. This cemented how human all journalists are. No matter how good a person is at their craft, slipups will happen and it is important to simply focus on presenting the news to viewers as clearly as possible.

Research Question Two

For the second research question – according to journalists who currently have, or at one time had a Southern accent, how does a Southern accent affect a journalist's success in the media industry? – there were a wide variety of topics the participants

discussed as related to their perceived success. This ranged from few job prospects, job location limitations, combating stereotypes, being viewed as an outsider and diminished confidence.

Difficulty getting a job

One of the most important things to anyone studying to be a broadcast journalist is their perceived ability to get a job. All college students worry about their job prospects post-graduation, but it is especially nerve wracking for broadcast students because it is not just their resume that has to speak to their skills, it's their portfolio. Hiring managers watch their past work to see if they will make a good fit for their news station. One of the most intriguing interviews about this specific period of job searching came from Participant Two. Most of the people interviewed discussed how they felt their accent would limit where they would be able to work. However, Participant Two discussed how they were warned that not only would they not be able to work outside of the South, but may not get any job in front of the camera. "I was told by hiring managers, I was actually told that, like, I wouldn't be able to even like, get a job" Participant Two said. This was the only participant who had been definitively told that their accent would make it nearly impossible to get a job in the industry. For several other participants, they were either told they would have a difficult time getting a job or feared they would face employment issues post-graduation.

Inability to work outside of the South

More commonly, other participants were told that their accents would make it extremely hard to find a job anywhere other than in the South. This is because people, specifically viewers, feel more comfortable hearing their own type of accent and view

other accents as ‘outsiders.’ Three participants specifically spoke to finding themselves confronted with this possibility. Participant Four spoke of this difficult conversation coming in just their freshman year of college saying, “And I was like, ‘what are the odds that broadcast is kind of like right for me? When he looked at me, he was like, ‘if you want to work anywhere other than Alabama, you're gonna have to lose that accent.’” This comment, while potentially not seeming like a terrible thing because it is the region the participant was from, points to a severely limited job market as there are only so many stations in the South. Participant Nine was told, “If you ever want to work anywhere but here, you cannot talk like that.” By eliminating all of the other regions, a journalist's prospects to find a job and level up in the region, but by no means impossible, are very limited. Some participants even mentioned that it is better to not have a Southern accent even in jobs in the South because they thought a neutral accent was the route that would lead them to the most success.

Participant Eight discussed their thought process when deciding whether or not to make an effort to curb their accent, “I just wanted to be able to have more opportunities, and I didn't want to be pigeonholed into, ‘she sounds like she's from the south, who's only going to resonate with Southern viewers, therefore, you know, no one above the Mason Dixon Line would would listen to her or that or even consider her for position,’ I think at the time, I was just focused on wanting to be able to have, you know, a broad range of of cities that I could go to and be considered for the next jump out of a very small market.” To this participant’s point, a job in the South is still a job, but by being limited to only one region, opportunities are less abundant and many of the major cities for news are not located in the Southern United States. For each of the

three participants that specifically mentioned being told their accent would limit them to a specific region, it was a professor or mentor that told them this, not a hiring manager. This means that professors know of this limitation and try to guide students that may be affected so as to, in their eyes, give them the best chance possible at finding a good job. Participant Five was pulled aside by a mentor in late college and told, "Hey, you're gonna look somewhere out of the south, like, you know, if you're gonna get out, you're going to get out and beyond the South it could be a concern." Participant Five later expounded upon this same sentiment, "I do remember hearing like, 'hey, you know, you might need to think about this.' And I just remember thinking, 'well, then maybe I won't leave because I'm not going to break my back trying to speak a certain way.'" This raises an interesting notion of how many journalists decided to remain in the South because of job prospects, but that is beyond the scope of this research.

Stereotypes

After answering the question of how a Southern accent affects a journalist's success, the next question to consider is why it affects success. The participants had many different opinions on the matter but they all coincided relatively well. Their thoughts mainly centered around the stereotypes associated with the accent. The literature on this topic dove into how stereotypes intertwine themselves into society and what effect they have, much of which correlates to the participants' responses.

From an early age, we associate our own accents with the idea of home. It is often comforting to hear and we only begin to notice it when we leave the region we grew up. Similarly, the participants talked about how they did not even consider their

accent until they entered this field when they realized it could pose a real issue to their success. Participant One discussed this situation by talking about hearing a fellow journalism student speaking and believing they would have trouble getting a job. They said, “So when I heard it, to me, it's comforting. But one of my thoughts was, oh, people probably think she’s not as educated. I think there is a negative stereotype where if you have a strong southern drawl, people associate it, I think, with stupidity sometimes, or they associate it with being uneducated, or they associate it with not being as professional.” This shows that, once aware of the effect a Southern accent might have on a journalist’s success, Southern journalists themselves believe other people like them won’t have success.

Fighting stereotypes is often an uphill battle. The participants, when asked about the stereotypes of the accent, listed the stereotypes and always followed it up by saying they weren’t true. “Those accents come together and people just consider them like hick or dumb, hillbilly which are terrible words, because they just have a connotation of stupidity and ignorance, and it's so not true,” said Participant Three.

Intelligence aside, another assumption several participants brought up was their experience with people thinking their political affiliation aligned a specific way solely based on their accent. Participant Four said, “I struggled a lot with respect from my peers, especially closer to election time, because I have this Southern accent. And people immediately thought, ‘great, here comes an opinionated Republican,’ like, ‘here she comes, she's probably going to, you know, dismiss my opinions and thoughts.’” In the news, most outlets try to remain as neutral as possible. If people who are watching the news assume that an anchor with a Southern accent has a certain affiliation

regardless of what they are saying, it could be in contradiction to the region they are reporting in. “And I don't want people to think just because of things that happen in a state where I'm from that I'm that way or not open minded. And that sometimes we're an accent can come into play. I don't want people to think because of the way things are talked about in this country if I have a certain accent, or am I from a certain place that I'm a certain way,” said Participant Three.

This entire theme uncovers an interesting perspective on the stereotypes the participants feel are correlated with their accent as none of them pointed to any specific instances of facing judgment because of their accent but rather cited fear of judgment. It raises the notion that many of these journalists changed their accents out of fear of what might happen should they not conform. This fear could have developed internally or because of comments from mentors or others in the industry.

Viewed as an outsider

An important factor in the news is credibility. Viewers need to trust anchors and trust the news. From an early age, people are taught to be wary of those they consider outsiders, often people vastly different from themselves because of perceived differences. An accent can garner this feeling and so the participants discussed how their accent made them come across as an outsider. They discussed that viewers want to turn on the news and hear from someone who is a member of their community, someone who understands their problems and concerns. If they turn on the news and hear an accent different from theirs, the assumption will be that that person is not from their community and can therefore not possibly understand their problems nor offer solutions. “And whenever you are moving into a new city, you have to be a voice of

authority. Whenever you're, you know, telling the community, the news, you want people to trust you. So you want to be able to say the words that they say, or else you're not going to be credible," Participant Seven said. Echoing this sentiment, Participant Eight discussed how people would fixate on their accent because of it not being familiar to the region and not absorb as much information because they are distracted by the accent, "And I believe in news, we don't want people focused on how we're saying something we want them focused on what we're saying and the news that we are delivering of the day."

Diminished confidence

After hearing about how the participants' success was affected and why an accent affected it, I asked how all of these experiences affected their confidence in themselves and their careers. Several of the participants, mainly the ones who had been in the industry longer, said that it may have stung when they were young but they let it roll off their shoulders. The younger journalists said that it affected them more, lowering their confidence that they would even be able to have a career in the field and putting into question their personal confidence. I was not expecting to hear about how their experiences with their accents in the industry made them feel bad about themselves personally. Participant Two specifically discussed the doubts she faced early on. She was also one of the only participants who said she explicitly did not want to stay in the South after graduation. All of the other participants said they wanted to try and get a job elsewhere but would not have minded staying in the South so long as they got a good job. "So it was hard, like, it makes you question like, who you are, why you're made this way? Why do I talk this way? You know, it's like you're trying to

really fit this mold. In so, I kind of struggled with a lot of that, like self esteem. Um, it really, it broke me, it really did. You know, for someone to tell you that, like, you're not going to get into business with that. It's just, that's hard," said Participant Two.

They also discussed trying very hard to change their accent and still feeling like it was not going to be enough and grappling with potentially losing a part of their identity by getting rid of their accent, "Like, you get out of college, you do all this work, and you hear that, you know, who the very essence of who you are, which is how you talk will hold you back from, you know, your dream, right, pursuing that career. So that was a really big blow," said Participant Two

The way they overcame this blow to their confidence was trying to have confidence in their craft. "It was a little discouraging, right, because we can't change the way we speak that much. I mean, you can change it to a degree. But I remember thinking, 'I mean, that's really unfortunate.' Because that doesn't, that has no, no impact on somebody's journalism skills," said Participant Five. It is important that these journalists realized this early on in their career so that it did not discourage them from leaving the field. It would be an interesting study to learn how many prospective journalists left the field after graduating because of limitations based on their accent, but that is not in the scope of this research.

Overall, the participants discussed that their accents inhibited them from being able to find jobs outside of the South or even at all. This was because of negative stereotypes about the Southern accent that make people think Southerners are dumb or uneducated. Because of these stereotypes, viewers outside of the South think of people with Southern accents as outsiders and therefore unfit to tell them the news of their

community. When a journalist experiences these roadblocks to success, it can affect their confidence in their skills and in themselves.

Analysis wrap-up

Overall, based on all of the discussions with the participants, there are several takeaways that could be useful to a young journalist with a Southern accent. All of the journalists said that they found it beneficial to kill their accents. They cited several reasons including what they believed to be providing them a better chance at getting job offers as well as improving their broadcast voice on the whole. From these interviews, my advice to young journalists facing the question of what to do with their accent would be to find a voice coach and learn how to hide their accent. My suggestion would not be to necessarily kill their accent in all areas of their life but rather be able to switch it on and off so that it is up to them when they decide to bring it out. A voice coach is beneficial to learn these skills so they understand how to shape words and proper breathing techniques to help them overall. Additionally, putting in the work is important as nothing is going to change just because they want it to. If a young journalist wants to make the change, put in the practice and it will come with time. All that being said, my best advice to them would be patience and kindness. It may be easy to view their accent as a hindrance or that it makes them inferior in some way, but that is a negative mindset that will only hold them back. If they view it more as part of the job, as was discussed in several interviews, then they will be able to separate their on-air personality from their own personality and preserve what makes them unique while also conforming to the job requirements.

Prior to this research, I could not understand any justification for journalists feeling the need to kill their Southern accent to increase their chances of success. I thought conforming was some terrible facet of the industry that I did not agree with because of the loss of individuality. However, after talking with the nine journalists throughout the course of this research, I changed my frame of mind surrounding the topic. The most convincing reason for me was the mindset that it was just part of the job. Just because you are expected to dress, act or even speak a certain way in some job settings, does not mean that you cannot act how you desire on your own time. This does not mean to say some personal flares are actually good for the journalism industry and should be welcomed. However, if a neutral accent on air is the best to clearly communicate the news to viewers in order to avoid any miscommunication, then that is what should be done. Comprehension is a key component of journalism and if a neutral accent is the best avenue to achieve that, then journalists should strive for it.

Moving forward, this research could be expanded to talk to hiring managers or news directors to see what they believe about this topic and how they look at applicants who have Southern accents. This may be a more difficult study because hiring managers may be less inclined to talk openly about hiring practices so proper sourcing would be necessary. Future research could also include more participants as well as potentially trying to find journalists who have kept their accents, should any such broadcasters fit this qualification. These future research areas could help expand this topic as well as uncover or clarify nuances related to this research project.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

A journalist's image is important to their work. They present the news and are the very face of the news themselves. In times of triumph or sadness, viewers turn on the news and the first thing they hear are the words of the anchor in front of the camera. Accents have long been toned down in broadcast in favor of a more neutral tone. Strong Southern accents in particular are rarely heard in the news and almost never heard in the news outside of the South. Even though it is not heard, there are journalists who started their lives in the South and then ventured elsewhere. This group of people had to confront their accent head on and figure out how to handle it in order to have a successful career free from limitations. Each journalist may have approached the issue differently and used different techniques to silence their accent but, of these nine participants, all conformed.

In terms of the first research question, in relation to how a Southern accent affects a journalist's success, participants all agreed that it does in fact limit success in several ways depending on experience. Some participants were told outright that their accent would prevent them from getting any job in front of the camera. Others were told they might be able to find success, but it would only be in the South. This outlines the scope of how a journalist's success is limited. The next discussion went to why their accents limited their success. First, the most agreed upon reason was stereotypes. Participants used a wide range of words to describe the stereotypes surrounding a Southern accent by people outside of the South, but most were synonymous with a lack of intelligence. There were also assumptions that a Southern accent automatically meant a journalist was Conservative. This correlation in an area of an opposite

demographic would tag the journalist as an outsider. Viewers want their news anchors to be members of their community who they believe understand their problems. If viewers believe that the person doesn't understand their community because they are from the South, their levels of trust in the anchor will plummet. The result of these constrictions and limitations of success is a lack of confidence. The participants cited feeling like they would never be able to find success in the industry and came out of college feeling discouraged. They even felt as though no amount of experience or expertise would qualify them for a job they rightfully deserved solely because their accent was perceived as different and not professional. Because of this limitation on their success, all of the participants felt there was only one option, to kill their Southern accent.

For the second research question, as related to how journalists navigate the career challenges discussed in the first research question, participants discussed how they worked to kill their accent and ultimately find success. The most prevalent solution was to hire a voice coach. Many of the participants talked about the moment they knew this was the career for them and so they 'invested in themselves' to do everything they possibly could to achieve their dreams. Most people only had a voice coach for a short period of time to help teach them the skills necessary to continue working on their accent. From there, most participants worked on repetition to learn how to say things as neutrally as possible. This included redoing takes on recorded segments, listening to playback on headphones and even talking to themselves in a bathroom mirror. They willingly did all of these techniques to kill their accent because,

as they justified it to themselves, this was just part of the job much the same as showing up to work in business attire.

Even from this perspective of fulfilling a job duty, participants agreed that having a slight accent in the industry added personality to the role. They thought viewers would rather see a slight flare than see no personality. They also said that sometimes their accents helped them relate to viewers who were also transplants from the South. By and large, however, even with the possibility of connecting with a few viewers through their accent, all said a neutral accent was still the best course of action.

Despite spending hours working to neutralize their accents, it was so pleasing to hear about how each of the participants' accents still found a way to come out. Each participant could point to certain words such as 'Carolina,' 'home' or 'veteran' that they struggled with and believed they would always struggle with. It was an acknowledgement that news anchors are still human and to err is human.

Moving into the future, the participants believed that the news and the world is moving to a neutral accent and so this topic may become obsolete in the years to come. However, they also believed that their passion for telling the news far outweighed their desire to maintain their accent on air. They believe it is their duty to communicate with their viewers and if the best way to do that is with a neutral accent, so be it.

Overall, both research questions were answered by the nine participants in this project. The goal had been to interview between 10 and 15 participants but saturation was adequately reached at nine interviews. The interviews did open up new potential research topics that could be studied moving forward as stated in the analysis to better understand the extent of the experiences of people with Southern accents in the

broadcast industry. The journalism industry always needs new voices and understanding what reporters go through to make it in broadcast is important to ensure the future of the industry.

CHAPTER FIVE: EVALUATION

I am very pleased with how my internship went this semester. I did not expect to be producing my own segments from start to finish as I had just assumed an intern would not be trusted with such a task. I not only learned how to complete the tasks of my internship, but I learned the professional skills that have now made me confident in entering the professional world. In terms of my research, I am happy to have been able to talk to the people I was. They had such interesting input about my project and made me consider things I had not thought of when I was first drafting the proposal and expected findings.

The final project is just about the same as what I had proposed in the fall. Using the information from the interviews, I was able to answer both of my research questions and facilitate interesting discussions. I am also very pleased that many of the people I interviewed expressed that they thought the topic of the research was very interesting, important and they were excited to hear the findings. This type of comradery of people who had grown up in the same region and their personal and proud feelings about their accents felt very good. It cemented the importance of the topic that I feel passionate about.

I wish I could have gotten more interviews from people who were at well-known news stations, but they rarely responded when I reached out to them, which is to be expected. I am pleased I was able to interview the Boston and LA anchors because of their large audience and popularity. Those two voices added a lot of valuable input and, combined with the input from the other participants, I am confident in the completeness of the responses that helped shape the analysis.

I could not be happier with how my internship went. I produced, or helped produce, at least three segments each week I worked. Being able to show that the material I helped research, create and put together was what made it on air was beyond satisfactory. The producers and segment producers were always pleased and impressed by my work and praised my ability to be a fast learner. Having had little to no broadcast experience prior to this internship, I was uncertain about what to expect as well as how adequately I would be able to complete tasks. I am pleased to say that I believe I performed my responsibilities well.

Fox helped me become very comfortable with several programs including iNews to create a show rundown. Additionally, I learned how to video edit on Dalet and communicate with other departments to get the content necessary for my segments. This included using different departments to obtain the rights for videos, gather AP content, compile crime statistics and upload songs to use between segments. I also learned a lot about writing for the ear instead of the eye which is something I had never done before. The first few weeks I worked there was a lot of breaking news. This was difficult to deal with early on because I was still learning the workflow but it made me think on my feet and help out with putting together content during the show as the news was breaking.

One of my favorite aspects of the entire internship was helping put together the final segment of the show, One More Thing. Several times I was in charge of shopping for supplies and setting up displays on set during commercial breaks. I helped with one of the host's birthdays, National Oreo Day and a baby shower.

I was unsure if I would like production and so this internship was a wonderful opportunity to try it out and see if it's something I would want to pursue after graduation. I absolutely loved the opportunity and know it is something I hope to obtain a job in. Additionally, I believe I was successful throughout the internship and so believe I have the tools to find an entry-level position in production. It was not only a successful semester, but it was fun and so I am beyond thankful for the opportunity.

Supervisor Evaluation

April 18, 2024

To whom it may concern,

It was a pleasure having Megan Sundberg as our intern on "The Five" at the Fox News Channel this Spring 2024 semester. She is one of the strongest interns we've ever had on our show since it launched nearly 13 years ago.

Megan is dependable, professional, responsible, shows initiative, has solid news judgment and was helpful to all of the producers as a team player. Megan demonstrated that she has learned the skills required to produce segments for a live TV news program on her own, and she did so successfully.

Megan's internship responsibilities included: pitching compelling story ideas, finding entertaining videos for our One More Thing segments, compiling data spreadsheets of minutes for our ratings analytics team, crafting research packets that included news articles and factoids of information for the segment, producing video and fullscreen elements using the Dalet video system and VIZ graphics system, as well as writing lower-third banners at the bottom of the screen. Megan made sure our five hosts

had everything that they needed in the studio for our live show, including their printed facts and any props on set. She also assisted the producers in the control room in case of breaking news.

Megan did a great job. She's smart, has strong producing skills, a positive attitude, and a great work ethic. She has a bright future ahead.

We congratulate Megan on her upcoming graduation and wish her the best in her future endeavors. Any employer in the news business would be fortunate to have Megan join their team.

Sincerely,

Mina Pertesis

Coordinating Producer & Intern Manager
"The Five"
Fox News Channel
1211 Avenue of the Americas, 21st floor
New York, NY 10036
(212) 301-5014
Mina.pertesis@fox.com

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Participant 1:

Q: Tell me a little bit about your background, where you're from, how you got to where you are.

So I was born and raised in Marietta, Georgia. And my father is from Long Island, New York. My mom is from Macon, Georgia. So growing up, I don't feel like I was around like a deep South accent. But moving away from the South, I definitely appreciate when I go back home or when I talk to friends. I hear a lot more of that emphasis on on how people talk. So I grew up there for 18 years, I went to the University of Alabama, where I majored in broadcast journalism. I got my first job out of college in Mobile, Alabama, where I worked as a general assignment reporter. So I worked every shift, I worked weekends, I worked the morning shift, the day shift, the evening shift, I did it all. And then I was promoted to weekend anchor after three years or four years there. Anchored weekend mornings. From there, I moved to Columbia, South Carolina, where I anchored four hour morning show. Did that for about three years. And then I moved up north to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where I am currently. And I anchor the morning and the noon show here. And then I do reporting on the side as well. So that's kind of a background of my journey. Thus far, I got into this business because I really wanted to anchor TV news, I thought that if I could have any job in the world, it would be really fun to be on TV in the morning and help people wake people up. I still enjoy it. And it's definitely different than I thought it would be. But it's brought a lot of I can genuinely I can genuinely say I really do enjoy my job. So going through all of that. I think I've noticed I've noticed the most drastic difference when it comes to language moving from South Carolina to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. And I think my accent when I was in Alabama was probably stronger than I realized going to the University of Alabama and being around people there and in that area. People relate to you if you have a southern accent, so it's not something you necessarily need to get rid of, but coming up north, it was something I'm more aware of having certainly.

Q: Do you feel like it designated you as an outsider?

Yeah, it wasn't, um, I don't feel like I've personally ever really had like that strong of an accent. So it wasn't something I really needed to work on. Some of the things that I do notice are just different words that people use regionally. So they don't say y'all, in the North they say us guys, right? Or they don't say subs, they say hoagies. So some of the different words for just general, you know, information or things that we use every day, there are just different words that people use. And also up north, and this might be a little more Midwest to how people pronounce their O's. So the meteorologists with whom I work says both. And that's very different than down south, because like the O is saturated.

I've received emails over time from viewers who will say, hey, why don't you pronounce your T's? Or I'm trying to think of emails I've received in the past. Or why

do you pronounce this word this way. So I have received emails about the way that I pronounce things. And I don't know if that's a dictation, or an enunciation or if it's an accent. So that's something that I've paid attention to. And also, when speaking on air, it's just hyper focusing on enunciating. And realizing that how you talk is just how it comes across I guess. If you don't over enunciate sometimes, your words sound slurred. So it's almost like training your mouth to talk and enunciate when you're speaking, especially when you're anchoring for you know, hours.

Q: Has your accent ever been in conversation? Like once you moved to Harrisburg? Was that ever a conversation with higher ups?

No, I mean, typically, viewers could be very nitpicky. So you have to take any viewer email with a grain of salt. I like receiving them because it brings kind of an awareness to me. Oh, I didn't know I was doing that. So for example, I say veterans, and I got an email once it said, Why don't you pronounce it veterans? It's veterans. So it's really about like the enunciating. And usually news directors kind of have your back because viewers can be kind of crazy and hypercritical. So I've always taken it. And it's hard not to take it personally, because you're putting yourself out there every day. But you just learn to take it with a grain of salt and say, okay, maybe I do need to work on this, you become aware of it, and then you move forward. So management hasn't really gotten involved.

So I haven't really had to work on it very much. I will say when I talk to my friends down south that I can feel it coming out just if I'm on the phone with them. But generally speaking day to day, I grew up in a household that didn't have a very strong accent. And because I was in like the suburbia and Atlanta area, it wasn't as far south as like Griffin, Georgia, where you would have like a more of a drawl, I would say. But I do have somebody I can connect you with, who has a strong Alabama accent, who was a host in North Carolina. And she on TV is very much like, Hey, we're in Mobile, Alabama right now, like she has that drawl. So I think that because I had a foundation where I didn't have that. Growing up, I didn't have that strong impression. I don't think it was as much of an issue now I will I'll say and I'm actually doing a story on this today, I went to speech therapy in elementary school because I couldn't pronounce my Rs, ELLs and w's. And so I think that helped me growing up with having that early training in elementary school to learn how to speak better and more effectively.

Q: What do you think the negative stereotypes associated with the Southern accent are?

So ironically, this morning, there was a soundbite, replayed from Georgia's governor, talking about the UGA student who was just killed by the undocumented immigrant. And he has a southern accent. So when I heard it, to me, it's comforting. But one of my thoughts was, oh, people probably think he's not as educated. I think there is a negative a negative stereotype where if you have a strong southern drawl, people associate it, I think, with stupidity sometimes, or they associate it with being uneducated, or they associate it with not being as professional. I don't know if that still exists in people's minds, but I'm very aware of the fact that I mean, I think that people assume that if you

have a southern accent, or if you're from the south, or you know, Alabama has a very negative stereotype at times with being behind the times. So I think that I'm very aware of it. But then after living there, it's like, oh, I mean, I can see why people might say that, but I don't think it has ground to stand on.

Q: How would you feel going to work somewhere with a very distinct, non-Southern accent such as New York or Boston or Wisconsin?

I think it would be a challenge for me to fit in. So one of the main things about being an anchor is your relatability to your viewers. And I actually just got an email from my mom, she's reading a book about how sometimes news directors will watch the talent on mute to see how relatable they are. Just from a personality standpoint, how are they on camera. And I think one of the things, the reason that people watch your TV show in the morning is because they like you, it's a popularity contest. So if you don't fit in with people, if they don't feel like you're one of them, it's going to be a lot harder to gain as viewers, because you are viewed as an outsider. So I think if I moved to Boston, or if I moved to Midwest, I think it would be a little bit of a challenge because I don't enunciate or pronounce things the way that people in that region do. And I think that you would probably be able to tell a difference in Harrisburg. There's not a very strong accent. In Delaware County, Pennsylvania, there's certainly a a different inflection on words. So my morning producer says water, like with a hard D monitor. And we call it the Delco accent. So when she speaks, I'm like, Whoa, but I love listening to her talk, because it's so different. So yeah, I do think it would be a challenge. Now. I would say there is a standard that no matter where you move, you sound you should sound like you don't have an accent at all. But I do think if you move down south or if you move up north, I think having a little bit of that same accent as the people who live there. I think it helps them relate to you. Absolutely.

Q: What do you think about the future of accents in the media?

I think that the standard of an accent can be enduring, I think that there will probably always be the expectation and the push to not have one. And there are anchors and reporters who work with voice coaches, to help train them out of their accent that they grew up with. And I have an agent I worked with, we didn't really have to work on my accent, per se, but we did work on the emphasis I put on certain words, or the way I deliver the news. So there is a lot of emphasis on that delivery. But I think just moving forward, I think that the standard is going to continue to be just a very even keel, you sounds like, don't like you're not from anywhere in particular, I guess. Like, we could plop you in any state. And you'd be good to go.

Q: How is the hiring process when you have a Southern accent? What were your conversations like in college with other people with an accent?

The girl I told you about her name is Carly, I was actually surprised that she was on air. Because she had such a strong accent. Now she was on air in Mobile, Alabama, where she's from. But then she got a job in Raleigh, North Carolina, which is still close to the

south. But yeah, I was actually surprised that she landed the gig because I thought that it would be difficult for her to get a job with how she sounded on TV.

Q: What kind of training do you go through mainly in undergrad? Is that something they teach you in undergrad?

I don't know about other journalism schools. But it wasn't, it wasn't anything in particular that I remember, they hyper focused on. And it might have been because I was in the south. And so because I was from there. They didn't necessarily pay extra attention to it. Or because I didn't have a strong accent it wasn't addressed. I'm trying to think I honestly can't remember because that was like 11 years ago,

Q: How would you feel about it if you moved back now? If you got a great reporting gig somewhere in Alabama, Mississippi, anywhere in the deep South? How do you think that change would be?

Honestly, I think I would feel really comfortable. Because it's my roots as far as where I grew up. And I think I would allow myself to speak with more of a southern tone. I don't allow myself to do that right. Now. Occasionally, I still say y'all, because that's how I grew up talking. I will never say yous guys, I refuse to do it. But I think that I would maybe even amp it up a little bit, here and there. Because I know it's how people talk. And to me, it's a fun part of its culture, is what it comes down to is the culture. So if I, if I ended up moving back south, I think I really enjoy it now depends on the market size. If it's a major television market, like a top 10, I probably wouldn't be able to do that. So I would say that matters to whether you're reporting and the top talent. If you're in Atlanta, Georgia, and its market number eight in the nation, you're going to have to have a more strict and professional speech than if you are speaking and market 100. And it's just a smaller audience. And it's more more, I think, because it's not as diverse of a reach like the television station isn't reaching as diverse of an audience as they are in larger cities. So in Atlanta, you're going to have people from all over the nation and the world living there whereas As in, let me think of a town in Louisiana of what's it called. And trying to think of a smaller, like Tupelo, Mississippi, probably, that's going to be more hyper. Just like Southern folks, it's not going to be as many transplants. So I feel like you can get away with more with an accent in that market than you can and a top television market in the nation.

Q: How does trust pay a role in journalism?

Yeah, you know, I think trust is a big thing with the media, especially over the past. I would say eight years, that's changed a lot. I think, naturally, we will probably grow, we gravitate towards people, I think as humans who are like us. So I think there is probably a natural tendency that oh, this person is like me, I can relate to them. I'm going to trust them more. So I can certainly see a correlation.

Q: Do you have anything else to add about your experiences?

Um, I would just say I think growing up. I was aware, going into the news business that I could not have a strong accent. My mother, when she was growing up in Macon, Georgia, she did some model calls for the prices right? With her modeling. Ironically, even though it's not a speaking role, they told her she couldn't have an accent. So growing up being raised by her, since she did not have a strong southern accent. I think that that helped me and I was aware of that going into my industry. So I think it was something that like precluded me becoming a newscaster.

Q: So it wasn't this rude awakening when you got into the industry?

It was something I was aware of. So I think that probably helped. And additionally, I will say something I think has helped me in this business is when I tell people, I'm from Georgia, they say, Oh, you don't have an accent. So it's like people are surprised when I say I'm from the south, because I don't talk with a southern drawl. So it's like people expect it, right. They expect me to have an accent because I'm from the south. So I don't usually when people say that I'm like, Okay. Like, yep, that's how it's supposed to be. I have all the news. Like, that's my job. Yeah, so I have people have commented on the fact that I don't have a strong southern accent. So yeah, people have said that just when I'm out and about meeting, folks. I'm trying to think if there's anything else. I think that's it. But I do think because the news industry is so nomadic, but in the broadcast industry. I do think it plays a role and it matters. And I think it will continue to matter. Because especially with viewer trust, and people wanting to you know, that's something that we're battling in the media right now. I think it definitely plays a role, because you want to be people want to watch you feel like you're from their hometown. Like you could go grab coffee together and hang out. Someone relatable.

Q: When do you find your accent comes out more?

I feel like when there's breaking news, or when I'm under pressure, that's when my accent comes out. Not as much on the anchor desk. But if I'm reporting and I'm out in the field live, let's say I remember there'll be a once Mobile, Alabama, there is like a suspect who had just been arrested. So I had to look at this information. And it was, you know, right before the shows, I'm trying to figure out exactly what to say. And so it's like, I'm not thinking about how I sound, I'm just thinking about getting the information, right and saying it as quickly as you know, as accurately as possible. So I think being under pressure, can can draw that out, can draw out an accent, if that makes sense. Because I'm not thinking about anything but what I'm saying and the topic at hand.

Q: How much do you think people can change or hide their accents?

Yeah, it probably depends on the person and situation and how strong it was. But I definitely think in like high pressure situations or if I'm tired. And like I said that I talked to my friend, my best friend in Georgia. When she and I talked on the phone, she says things like suffer like oh, yeah, we're out. See, I can't draw out my accent unless I'm doing it. Then she'll say, Yeah, we just went to the field today. And then we're

gonna make supper and Luke's been crazy right now. So I talked to her and I hear her mind, like automatically turns back on. I can just tell or if I'm talking to another friend's mother. To me, it's like music to my ears. And maybe viewers. Maybe viewers feel that way. I don't actually know. But like, when I hear somebody with a sort of accent to me, it's like, oh, that's the sweetest sound in the world. I love it. I do. So it might be that for viewers. I don't know.

Participant 2:

Q: Tell me a little bit about your background, where you're from, how you got to where you are.

Sure. Um, so I currently work for a lifestyle show in Columbus called Daytime Columbus. I just moved here like four months ago, before that, I was in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for two years. Um, and then before that, I was in Arkansas, so maybe I should start there. So I graduated from UALR, University of Arkansas, Little Rock. And I think it was that time I was applying for jobs and was told, like yourself that I had some lose the southern accent. Um, I didn't realize that I had like, a real deep Southern accent until, I think years later. And I was like, Oh, my gosh, um, but yeah, I mean, I was told by a hiring managers, I was actually told that, like, I wouldn't be able to even like, get a job. Um, so there were different things that so actually, I took voice lessons. I did that to try to lose the accent. I felt like, it was harder for me to do that. For whatever reason, like I just couldn't grasp some concepts in terms of like, the Is and all that. Um, but I think it took a little while for me to actually get out of that. Um, so anyway, that happened, I ended up going to grad school. And then once I graduated, with grad school, I went back to Arkansas. So I went to grad school in Chicago, and then went back to the southern roots. So, um, you know, that was good. I didn't have any issues. And I think just over time, like, I just lost the southern accent. Just kind of traveling to different cities. Moving to Grand Rapids, like, obviously, there aren't a lot of people that talk like Southern so it's like, you kind of adapt to what you're around. Though, like when I'm talking to my family, and sometimes in conversation. The southern accent does come out. Um, but yeah, that was definitely like a problem when I was trying to get it into the business for sure.

Q: What was it like being told to lose your accent? Why do you think you were told that?

Um, you know, I think there could be stereotypes. Sometimes when people think of like, the southern accent, you know it for whatever reason it speaks to like your intelligence, right. And I think a lot of it does have to do with the viewers because like, you do have to look a certain way and sound a certain way. And so I think that managers really listen to those viewers that, you know, as they should, to, in some degree, in my opinion. But yeah, I think the audience, the viewers really drives that conversation for sure.

Q: Did you ever feel like you would only ever be able to get a job in the South?

I didn't want to be in the south. And so that's why I kind of took it upon myself to just go ahead and do the voice lessons. So that I could be more marketable, like elsewhere. But I do know, I, of course, I had those thoughts, like, I was gonna have to stay there. Um, but I have a, you know, it was difficult, right? Like, you get out of college, you do all this work, and you hear that, you know, who the very essence of who you are, which is how you talk will hold you back from, you know, your dream, right, pursuing that career. So that was a really big blow. Um, but, you know, I think in order for me to really get in my career, that was a change that I was just gonna have to make. I, you know, there are so many expectations, I think, in this career that, you know, it's crazy, I get it, I think it's crazy. In my opinion, though, it's like, I get it, like, it's really all about the viewers. And, I mean, looking back at it again, like if I showed you clips from like, when I was in college, and I was young, too, but like, I really had like, a thick southern accent. Um so I just had to make the change. I just had to do it.

Q: How do you think accent plays a role in viewer trust?

Yeah, um, you know, the relationship with viewers is, is very, very important, right? That's how you get those enterprise stories. I mean, that's why people tune in, they tune in, honestly, to watch the content and to watch the people.

Honestly, I think what, especially when I think of me as like a black woman, like, for example, I, I love to see other like women of color on the news in this industry, even with like, hair, right? Hair, that's a whole nother different topic. But you don't see a lot of like women of color wearing braids. So I do agree to that, like you do, kind of develop more of a relationship with people that you do kind of have certain commonalities with. So I agree. I agree with that. I don't think it's always right to think that way sometimes. But you know, people gravitate to what they know, and what's familiar. And so, you know, I think everybody does it to a certain degree, but I don't think that anyone, I don't think anyone should have to change themselves just to fit this expectation. Like, I think that's something that I have been really struggling with over the past, like, few months, it's like, why can't I be myself? You know, and I, honestly, I think people really like that. And they appreciate that. More than, you know, to be honest. Um, so yeah.

Q: What does the future of the industry in regards to accents look like?

I think the industry as a whole I feel like it's changing. Um, I mean, obviously, there are people who are still, like wanting to be in a business. But I almost feel like I don't know if the standard is changing in terms of like, we're just trying to hire people like the money is an issue, right. And so a lot of like, people coming first out of college, like, most of them don't mind, like, what they're getting paid. And so, I don't know if like hiring managers would be more accepting of like, if you do have this deep southern accent, like, we'll hire you. And, you know, we'll work with you. You know, but we're not going to pay you more than this. Right is so, um, I don't know. I mean, in that, like, with that in mind, it's hard to really tell the future of that. without really looking at the

industry as a whole. I don't really know what it's like now. I think when I first got into the business that was five years ago, and even like you The hair conversation was different. It was really like, you can't come in here with braids. Now you can't. So I don't know what it's like in terms of like you know, accents. I don't I don't know what that's like now. It changes so often. And like I said, with like a lot of people getting out of the business now. They're doing other things more jobs are looking for MMJs. So it's, it's hard to tell.

Q: What was having a voice coach like?

So what happened was, I graduated undergrad, okay. And I was going like, I went to NABJ. So National Association of Black Journalists. I went there. I was communicating with different hiring managers, I was applying for jobs. And that was kind of the overall thing. It's like, this accent, this accent and this accent, you have to lose it. Yeah, yeah. And so, um, I took a year to apply for jobs. And so in that year, is when I went to the voice coach, and so, um, also in that year I decided to go to grad school. So like, when I got to grad school, moved to Chicago, I didn't, I wasn't doing a voice coach. I think I was just more like, internally trying to really think about, like, making sure I say my words distinctly right, like doing all those different things. I don't know if I actually was, I don't ever remember having a conversation about my accent once I went to grad school. I just think it kind of like, over time, like I said, just being in a different city like Chicago, like no one's talking there. I just so happened to kind of lose that.

Q: Do you feel like people focused on your accent more than your journalism skills?

That's devastating, right? It's hard, especially when you're already like having a hard time trying to, you know, get offers, right? Like, everyone has these certain goals. I definitely had goals for myself when I graduated. College, right? Like, you know, I'm gonna get a job, like, in the next six months, I'm gonna be doing this, you know, doing that. So it was hard, like, it makes you question like, who you are, why you're made this way? Why do I talk this way? You know, it's like you're trying to really fit this mold. In so I kind of struggled with a lot of that, like self esteem. Um, it really, it broke me, it really did. You know, for someone to tell you that, like, you're not going to get into business with that. It's just, that's hard.

Q: What's would be your advice to upcoming journalists going through what you went through?

Um, do I have any regrets about going to a voice coach? I'm not really, I mean, I think that because I didn't really have a deep southern accent. Um, I I don't regret it. I will say, um, my advice to people I think is to really be confident in who you are. Right. Be confident who you are. If you want to make that change. Do it if not, you know, I think it's all about timing and finding the right person who would be willing to say "We'll take you in and work with you."

Q: Can you tell me more about going to a voice coach?

Yeah, and then I also had a high pitched voice, too. So that was, you know, something I needed to work on. But it was really like, the ad set. And, um, and, you know, it all really changed over time. Like, yeah, it really did. I think people have to really be patient with themselves to, you know, everything isn't going to happen overnight. So really giving yourself that grace to grow like I don't, I don't think it's bad for us to grow in certain areas, to improve in certain areas. So, you know, and also, I wouldn't advise with the not to knock, like any suggestions that anyone has, I think they should definitely take it in and just assess, like, does this work for me? You know, is this something that I am willing to do? And kind of make those decisions from there? Like, I don't think it should ever be like, go hard, like, No, I'm not going to do that. You know what I mean? Like you do have to kind of take into consideration like, what the business is looking for. And go from there.

Participant 3:

Q: Tell me a little bit about your background, where you're from, how you got to where you are.

Um, so I'm from Texas. I'm actually from Houston. So people in Houston, really, we don't have accents. But I grew up my closest childhood friends are from North Carolina. So every summer, gosh, for almost a decade or so I would spend at least a month with them in the Carolinas and then just communicating with them and stuff I definitely picked up and I always had some words that you know, I'm from Texas, I had some words that were always a little different. And also being born in Louisiana, spent a year and a half of my life there. When I first started talking, it was Louisiana. So there are some words I just always had. But through my friends in the Carolinas, I did develop a definite accent. And it kind of just stuck with me. And when I got to college, my well my second school my first school was in North Carolina, I went there for gymnastics. So the accent was around. And then when I transferred to SMU in Dallas, I didn't really think much of it. People there have accents. Because it's kind of like old muddy southern University. So you had some of that. There's also people from like New Orleans and all over Texas where there are accents. But when I got into doing broadcast, myself, and another one of my classmates, I want to say she was from Tennessee originally. I think that's right. We actually did private lessons with one of my professors to curve our accent as best we could. There are still words I can't do right. I think I say the word. weird if I focus I can say it right weird, but I say weird. I say weird, weird. Carolina. I will never say Carolina. Normally, I will always say it Carolina. And that's just something I've come to accept. But I think it's also I didn't want it to completely go away. Because it's who I am. And yeah, the whole like Midwestern diction, act, whatever, that's fine. But I mean, here in Ohio, where it's supposed to be, you know, Midwest, people have while accents. My husband's from Cleveland. And he says mom, and hockey. And I'm like, that. No, that's not right. So, um, but yeah, that's kind of my background. And how I learned to kind of have to like, mellow out my accent for sure. Um, if I get nervous, or if I have too much to do it

comes it comes flying out and I I can I can turn it off. If I if I absolutely need to. I can turn it on. But yeah, that's kind of how I've had to learn to bring it down a little bit. Bring it down a little bit, you know, as Ross you know, as Chandler Ross. Yeah. So yeah.

Q: When do you find your accent comes out?

Yes. If I get mad, it comes flying out? Yeah, um, I will say, having worked in Kentucky. Um, there are times I turn it on, if I would when I was working in news, not in sports, and I was in news, and I was on like a murder scene, and you're trying to relate to people you're trying to be softer, if that makes sense, without even thinking about it, it would just come out. And I don't know why. But yeah, I would notice that even my photographer, if I had a photographer, maybe like, what was that? And like we talked about was just like, No, you had a different voice. And it's not just my accent, my like broadcast voice, which is kind of what I'm doing right now without thinking about it. It's a lot deeper, I go down because I learned also through yoga, I took a yoga classes, like a BS or in college, my roommate was an opera major. Breath was huge for her. And I thought, You know what breath is probably important for me. And so I took yoga and learned how to like breathe through my diaphragm more. Okay, so when I'm brought doing broadcast, that's where I'm, my voice is coming from. But, but naturally, my voice is pretty high. Like, it's like, you know, like this. But, but I would notice if I was on like a murder scene or something that required a little bit more like tact or softness, it would just come flying out.

Q: You said you worked on your accent with a professor, was that something you sought help for or did someone come and tell you to work on it?

She did. She was she's an I don't know she adjuncts anymore. But she was an adjunct professor. At for one of the local TV stations, she was a reporter. And then she taught with us a couple times a week. And honestly, she wasn't even my full time professor from my class. I actually had in the same class, I had a different professors at different time slot. But because we are going through the program, and you know, this, probably where was your first school, Virginia Tech? Okay, so you'll know going from Virginia Tech to Mizzou, um, there are definitely some people who when you're in your original classes, you're like, okay, that person is really invested in being a journalist really invested. You know what I mean? When you get to Mizzou, everybody is because they're not. So it's like when I got to Northwestern, we were all different level of crazy. But, so I was picked out me and my friend who is from Tennessee, they knew that we were probably two of the ones that had a real chance because of our dedication and are not necessarily care to be on television. That's just how we like to present our work. They picked us out and said, Hey, let's work on this because you're going to need to. And so yeah, it was like time out of class. Like it wasn't even part of my class, it was just time when I would just come to the studio with my friend and my professor. And it wasn't even that many times, I only did it a couple of times. Because she just gave us the tools to work with. And a lot of it was breathing, diaphragm, bringing your octave down. It's amazing when you bring your voice down how things change. Um, so that's

what a lot of it was. But yes, they they came to me and said, Let's work on this a little bit.

Q: What do you think are the stereotypes or perceptions of a Southern accent?

Oh, boy, how do I say this tactfully? Um, there definitely is a stereotype. I mean, dumb Southerner is a stereotype and just kind of like that, I always tell people, there's a difference between Southern and country when it comes to accents. And like, it always cracks me up there people. Like when I was living in Kentucky, and I'm like, No, you that's a country accent that's not a set or an accent. And I think most others kind of feel that way. Like there is a difference. And but both of those accents come together and people just consider them like hick or dumb, hillbilly which are terrible words, because they just have a connotation of stupidity and ignorance, and it's so not true. And I also think because so much let's face it comes from the northeast. And that's where lots of things are headquartered and things like that. There has always been maybe it goes back to civil war. I don't know that It's just like, butting of heads for everything. Um, I think that's where a lot of it kind of, kind of comes from. But then like I said, I also think depending where you live, it can be a real benefit. Because I did have friends that worked with me in Kentucky who were from Kentucky and had slight accents. And they were seen more as what you would call folksy. And then local news, that can be a real good thing to be a little bit more folksy.

Q: Does letting your accent come out make you more relatable to people?

Yes, because especially in local news, you have to look at your demographic. So the demographic these days, and local news is older people watch it. And it's probably just because they've always watched it, you know, I mean, our generation, we weren't really watching local news as much, or at least my generation and yours, you are definitely a lot younger than me. But we were so much here. We are like getting everything here. And so those people that are older, they really want to feel like you are part of their community, and you are a part of them. And that is so much what local news is about is it's like, Hey, watch us don't watch the cable stuff, because they don't really know who you are, we know who you are, we're part of your community, we have the same challenges as the we have the same, you know, things at the grocery store cost the same for me as it does for you. Um, so I think that there is a benefit in some cases with that in local news, because then you really are more so a part of their community and their culture, if you will. And that’s because you remember those people don’t you? And that's because that person wasn't the same cookie cutter. You know, Hi, this is me, and I am doing the local news. And I always tell young reporters and anchors who are learning, don't be you as an anchor, just be you. And I think that's where sometimes not having an accent, it can really hinder some people because then they try to be like, I'm Ron Burgundy, you know, and that's not who you are. It's okay to have a little bit of a different twang. Now, don't do it in LA. But that's a whole other issue of LA is a beast that I will never conquer. And I'm totally okay with that.

Q: How do you think hiring managers looked at you when you were entering the industry?

There is always that worry. Yeah, because there's just so many people trying to get so few jobs, and it's this balance of you gotta stand out, but you don't want to be too different to where they're like, oh, that person's too loud, or that person's to this and our viewers aren't going to relate to them. Um, and so yeah, there is kind of that where do you find the balance of being unique but not being out there? It really is hard. I was lucky. My first job was in Texas and in West Texas, so talk about country accent, not southern accent country accent it is. But there's also the interesting part about that is there's such a huge Hispanic population. So there's all these different accents flying around out there. So um, I got very lucky that well granted I also applied knowing that I probably fit a little more folksy my type of folks who would fit better there but no, it is it really is kind of always a worry but I mean that worry goes with like, the kind of clothes I wear How's my hair cut you know those kinds of things. It's not just accent it there's Gosh, haircuts all over the country. It's so different clothing. Oh my gosh, so different. When I started here in Columbus, you would think I mean, it's the Midwest it's probably a little bit more a little bit lacks on clothing. No, my my news director went through my entire closet and told me yes or no. Wow. And I've never experienced that before and I've worked in the south. So like a It's not just accident. It's tons of different things that you're constantly it's sometimes it can feel like I'm trying to, like, dial myself down a little bit.

Q: How would you feel your chances would be to go somewhere else now with a different accent like Boston or LA?

I think, yeah, because I think now I've been so confident in my knowledge of my app, my beat and what I do that it's kind of gotten to the point where I'm like, if they don't like me, then that's kind of their issue. I think that I bring, you know, a little bit more like, honestly, flavor. That sounds weird, but I mean, I look a little I have red hair, and it's, they've tried to get me to make my hair like, not as big here. I'm like, No, I'm texting. If I don't feel good on camera, then I'm not going to do well, if I'm just worried about like, you know, so, um, I think that with my accent, I think that I've, I've gotten and I've, I've lived so far away from Carolina and Texas for so long now. It's not even really a problem. I live with a Midwestern er, his whole family is Midwestern. So I think I could do it. I do. But do I want to whole like the whole nother question? Don't get me wrong. I love New York. I love Boston. I don't know if I'd want to report there because it's just so different. I really like the aspect of the size of the city. I'm in now, where we are a big city, but there is like a local vibe. Definitely. So I could be a little bit more community. It feels more community. And I like that. And I think some of that goes with but you know, voice and look and that kind of thing.

Q: Are there situations other than on air that you try to completely kill your accent?

That’s a good question. That’s a really good question. DMV, maybe. I'm, like, those kinds of things. Um, anytime I'm doing something like this, um, when I'm talking to

students or things like that, I don't want them to think that. I don't know what's what's, uh, I can't think of a good word. It's a good thing that I don't work in words. Um, gosh, but But yeah, probably more. So it's like a professional type setting. That's not work related. Yeah. Or from like, meeting somebody for the first time? Yeah. I'll make sure that it's much more boring sounding, I guess you can say. But yeah, because there is always that fear of like people stereotyping you because of the voice and the accent and then thinking, like, I don't want to get too like political here. But when people hear it from Texas, they think a certain thing. And I don't want people to think just because of things that happen in a state where I'm from that I'm that way or not open minded. And that sometimes we're an accent can come into play. I don't want people to think because of the way things are talked about in this country if I have a certain accent, or am I from a certain place that I'm a certain way? Yes, that's not true. Yeah, no, it's very interesting, because that's so true. And being from Texas, people just automatically assume all the time that you believe certain things. And I'm like, No, I, I blatantly pushed my boundary. I went lived in Chicago by myself. I went and lived in Africa. I wanted to get different perspectives. And I'm glad I did. Because, yeah, gosh, living in Africa. First off, saying when you're in Africa, that you're from the United States, and people automatically think that you like you're toting a gun all the time. I'm like, Okay, no, we're not. This is not cowboys. We're not all what the wild west that way. Not, it's not. And then trying to explain to them and like some of like, the viewpoints and think like, oh, no, and I'm like, you just can't, just because someone's the loudest doesn't mean, that's what we all think. And that's so often how it is the loudest, especially in the south, garner's the attention.

Q: Where do you see the industry moving in terms of accents?

I don't know if it's gonna be a factor really anymore. And I think it's mostly not even so much that people are moving so many places. It's the fact that we have so much communication via voice and video with each other. So you're not just hearing the voices or seeing the facial expressions or how people use their mouths to form words, just with the people around you. You're seeing it from all different places. And unfortunately, I think that because so many people are not watching local news anymore. They're watching these big cable like, conglomerate, garbage things that the folksiness is going to start going away. And that to me is really sad. But I do think because we are able to communicate via video so much. I think that it's all going to kind of start meshing a little bit more. One thing that is hilarious, my nephew's when they were really little and watching TV for the first time used to watch Peppa Pig, which is British. And they started saying stuff in a British accent. Oh, wow. So there's even that, like, like the things that kids are watching. It's not just your local like PBS anymore. It's from all over the world. And kids are picking up like colloquialisms and things not even like my my daughter watches Bluey, which is Australian. And so it that is also an interesting aspect is kids from a very young age are hearing all kinds of accents. So I'm curious to see, like, are our different countries? Are we gonna start sharing slang? Yeah, because it's really that that's a different, totally off the topic, different aspects. But it just shows like how much we are all communicating in

different voices. And I think it's seeing how the words are also pronounced and lips are used. That's a big part of it as well. It's not just hearing, it's the seeing.

Q: Do you have anything else to add?

I really think that you're on to something here, especially when it comes to stereotypes and this climate that we're in right now, especially in an election year. And how it can, you know, tell people because it affects how you communicate with people. And that's sad that because somebody might have an accent, you think that they are so different from you? Because probably not we all put our pants on the same way. So, I mean, I've got I hope we do. Who knows?

Participant 4:

Q: Tell me a little bit about your background, where you're from, how you got to where you are.

Yeah, so I was fresh out of Alabama. I grew up in Fairhope, which is right across the bay from Mobile about 45 minutes north of Gulf Shores, very small town, one high school. But yeah, it's gotten a lot bigger as time has gone. But I spent all of my childhood there. We moved from Virginia when I was two. So I never really knew anything other than, you know, deep southern Alabama. And it was so cute. And I remember vividly, when we were younger, we were hanging out with friends and things. And we would come home with like, a little twang more than normal, because my parents, Virginia, Texas, Kansas, they're from everywhere. So we would come home and my mom, would kinda tease us and be like, oh we're talking like Alabama girls now. And we'd be like, no, no, I'm not. And it was always kind of a big thing. You know, I would hear parents and things tell their kids like, Well, my mom said that if I'm not, you know, with my friends, I should try and talk like, you know, more eloquently, like trying to enunciate my myself a little bit better. And I think everyone kind of had the idea that if you wanted to go anywhere and do anything, it was, you know, the accent would make people treat you a little bit differently. And so I didn't really care. And I didn't think I had a strong southern accent until I got up here. And everybody sounded like really Northern. So I went through rush and all of that. And I liked it. I enjoyed it. But it definitely created this little air around me like, oh, we have the little Alabama girls here. So it sounded very different than I do now. And the reason that I don't sound like that anymore is because of Randy Reeves.

When I did cut ins for KOMU, I was originally wanting to do broadcast and I decided it was it was less of like a an I can't do it more of I don't like to do it type thing. I am not very opinionated or politically inclined at all. And frankly, I am a path of least resistance kind of gal. So I did copywriting now, but just pretty much right up my alley with the whole, like learning and doing things with that. But when I did cut ins, I remember sending him a video and we had kind of talked about it. And I was like, What are the odds that broadcast is kind of like right for me, I don't know, when he looked at me, he was like, if you want to work anywhere other than Alabama, you're

gonna have to lose that accent. And that was a bold, blunt. I like it. And I don't like being told what to do and what not to do. So I took it as like a personal challenge to figure out how to speak without it. Because even even now there are just certain words that I say that have like an inflection on them. That's different. But I had to sit there in the mirror and just do my vowels over and over again. I just remember. I couldn't say home, home the way they wanted me to say it. And it always was really drawn out and so when I I submitted my thing it was like, we have a little ways to go. There's some things that you say that, you know, quite obviously are Southern, but how did you do it? And I said, practice patience and perseverance. And so it was just like this listening to myself, and then saying it again and then listening to myself. Because originally when I would say things, it was like, Hey, this is Alyssa coming to you live from Rocheport. And I have all the morning cut ins that you guys are going to need. And here is your news. Back to you, Bill. And it was Hi, this is Alyssa. Coming to you live from Roachport. The man was approached outside of his home. Like home was such a big word for me to get over because I kept saying home. Like kind of go up with it. Yeah. That O, it was the O's are hard. Anything with an E or an I, I would mix those two things up, like pin. The right with a pin. My boyfriend's name is actually Ben. So I caught a lot of smoke when I would meet his parents and they'd be like, well Ben you brought home a nice lady. And I was like, am I saying it right now not saying it wrong? It's a point of endearment. But for a lot of people, I think it was like, does this girl like? What were her ACT's like, like, I feel like people really did kind of assume that I wasn't intelligent in the same way that they were because I sounded like the Beverly Hillbillies. So there's that?

Q: What do you think are the stereotypes of the Southern accent?

Oh, yeah. I mean, I don't think people took me seriously. And I don't think people assumed that I was going to be objective in my reporting. And it, I struggled a lot with respect from my peers, especially closer to election time, because I've done this southern accent. And people immediately thought, Great, here comes an opinionated Republican, like, Here she comes, she's probably going to, you know, dismiss my opinions and thoughts, because that's just what people do for themselves. And I was like, I actually don't care. I'm kept up with things, mostly because like, I like to be in the know of what's going on. But I think as I, you know, we got around to COVID, and things like that, like, you just kind of have to separate things a little bit more, because like, I'm a intelligent, be not a Republican. And see, I do believe that COVID was real. Like, he people love to really lean in on the assumption part. And I had a lot of people asked me if my accent was fake, and told me that I was faking it. And I was like, Oh, awesome. Thank you. Wow, it was cut. People were bold. And I never really got past the part that I think people didn't take me seriously. And it was more of like a novelty. And so I was like, Oh, this just doesn't resonate well with me. So I was actually kind of glad it's gone. And I think it especially with like job interviews and things, I think it's helped people see me as like a real candidate and not like the personality hire, you know what I mean?

Q: Do you feel that your accent is what pulled you away from broadcast?

I mean, in the same way that like, you know, I probably wouldn't have been able to get a job outside of like, kind of that southeastern America belt right there. A lot of people said that it made the people listen to me more because I sounded different. And I agree, they may have listened to me more, but I don't think anyone would have ever retained what I said. And so as I was kind of Like going through and seeing about broadcast, it was very early on that I was like, you know, I don't ever want to have to wake up one morning and I'm tired or I'm sick, or I'm not feeling well. And it normally happens, like, if I'm drinking, or if I'm sick or angry, I will sound just like my family and my friends back home. And it's kind of funny. For everyone around, it's like, Oh, haha, you know, but it is like an active thing to make sure that you're not saying anything with a stretched out vowel, or just maintaining your professionalism, like speaking without an accent, to me is almost the equivalent of maintaining my professionalism. Now, but I would hate for I would hate for myself to ever not be doing it in broadcast, and then it becomes something that, you know, I you don't lose respect for our viewership, or causes something weird. I doubt it's even that serious. But I think for myself, personally, it was a bigger, it was a bigger feat for me to do that the first time and like, feel that professional. But eventually, it just kind of like faded out, because I wasn't using, I had practice that I had figured out how to do it kind of consciously. So it didn't become a very big deal. And I don't think it impacted me as much as me not liking politics and not wanting to go into like, the news, because it does make you kind of sad, you know?

Q: Even though you've now left broadcast, what is it like working in a region you and your accent are not from?

Yeah, you know, honestly, um, I had one coworker come up to me and be like, Yeah, my mom grew up in Kentucky, and she was only there for like, four or five years, but she got this southern accent from her time living there as a kid. And she brought it back here to our life in St. Louis. And she's just kind of sounded like that ever since. And so every time you say something, there's once in a while where I catch you, and you sound just like my mom. And I thought that was endearing. And I think it's less of an issue for me, mostly, because I just spend all my time writing, and there is no accent on paper, which is cool for me, because I'm like, it doesn't matter. And I think writing ultimately took out the factor where, either as a woman or as a person from the south, you know, writing appealed to me more, because it didn't matter what I looked like, or what I was doing, and the words were just there, and they could have been written by anybody, which, to me is better, because part of the reason I didn't like news was a yes, the southern accent thing. But also, being a woman in news is a little bit more tough. And I didn't want to have the constant struggle of whether or not people listened to me because I was intelligent, or because I was a woman. You know, it's just something that we have to deal with. I think as like, as young women professionals, I think that's just a hurdle we have to jump in, got to do what we got to do with it. But the writing always appealed to me just because like I become less important behind the computer. And it's more like my brain becomes the most important thing that shines through what I do. So

that's, that's the appeal for me. But you can kind of do anything if you just, like know how to speak and write, I guess.

Q: Why do you think there's a standard in broadcast for accentless speaking?

You know, I feel like there's two sides to that. The, the most intelligent people that you hear talking on any form of media, like Be it a Twitter feed clip or something like that, or even on the news, the people that I think are recognized as intelligent individuals. But on the other side of that coin, some of the silliest, most out of pocket speakers have, can, they sometimes have a twang. I mean, granted, there are some really out of pocket people in America that have no accent, and, you know, but I feel like the people who are most often associated with like, low intelligence, just just so happen to have a twin. And I think it's due to, in part, like a political orientation, I think it has to do just with the area itself not being the same. But just like that part of America itself doesn't necessarily have access to all of the education, especially in places like Mississippi, I mean, growing up so close to the Mississippi and Louisiana and Florida, you recognize that some of the spaces down there, like you don't necessarily think about them, because all of the money is in those big cities. But I know Mississippi itself is just one of the most impoverished states that we have. And all of those people have accents. And like the terrible places in Louisiana that just never recovered after Katrina. Those people have like Creole Southern accents. And then you have places in Alabama that are still like, one stoplight towns that don't know any better. They haven't had any adjustment to life as people like us know it. And it's still just, you know, raising kids getting married at a high school, popping out babies, that sort of thing. Like, it's a very different way of living. And it's something that frequently pops up on my Facebook, from people I graduated with are all like getting married, they're having kids are starting their family, they have, you know, like a lawn care service business that they've started themselves. So they're getting into like masonry and concrete landscaping type things, a lot of people went to trade school. These people have such a different way of thinking and such a different way of living, that it's like we forget that they probably don't understand some of the things that we're able to learn about. It's just like an educational difference. Honestly, I think I might sound a little bit harsh, but I think somewhat, that's where that's coming from is like, the differences that we get with our education by going other places. And then looking back on like, the things that I knew, because recently I'm, for example, my trip to San Francisco, the first time I went, I went with my youth group from Alabama. And I went over there, and the people granted they were like homeless people, but they were asking us if we had paved roads, because they've never heard of, like, established little tiny southern cities. I was like gas is $2. It's great. We have good education. And then like, do you guys even have paved roads to dollar gas? Where are you getting it straight from the ground? And we were like, No. Wow, that thinks some people just don't understand like. Different doesn't always mean like Messer, but in some cases, it just means that there's no there's no one coming up behind you saying like, Hey, by the way that this can, this isn't the experience that's happening everywhere. Someone just told you this and you're all taking it for granted. Definitely like my second trip to San Francisco. We're talking about the demographic of, you know, where my friends living now, what the situation is

with like the homeless population. And when you're in the city, everyone is so sweet. They're not like the California mean, they're not snubbing you they're not pushing gluten free things on you and like telling you to go to yoga stereotype. Not everyone's like that. And, frankly, the homeless population didn't affect people who lived in like, other parts of the city. It was mainly one one kind of aspect of it. And it was just so much bigger than the city I grew up in that it seemed like a bigger problem. But it's no bigger problem than it was like anywhere else. It's just like scaled down. So I think he's to kind of like round now that answer, it's like, I think people in Alabama just aren't as open to the rest of the world. So like, things just because there's so foreign. So in the populations slowly getting super old there too, because people are retiring there. So that doesn't help anything because you get all these old people in lower Alabama that just tell you like, what's going on what's what. And that's like, that's not how the world works anymore. And I'm not sure it ever worked that way. But good try.

Q: Are there any phrases or sayings you use in addition to having an accent?

I am constantly like saying either excuse me, I'm sorry. Oh, by the way. If you don't mind, I am always cushioning things with just that like perfect little amount of padding. It's a good way to start off. Yep, cushioning. It's like conversational cushioning, you know. And I honestly think it helps people respond better knowing where you're at. But I've loved in New York. And I think I liked it just because I didn't have to be so nice. Because I was I was raised to be so very polite, and so very respectful. Even people that I did not like did not want to talk to. And the only time that I'm ever really rude to someone like on the street is if it's a man, and I'm getting unwanted attention from them. It's good time to be that's the only time I will like, muster up the courage to be rude to someone. But even if it's someone that is so mean to me, I will just sit there and be like, bless your heart. That's all we can say. Like, I am so sorry that you're so upset right now. And I think sorry, is one of those. I think a lot of people say sorry, just way too often. But I, I cannot break myself of the habit of opening up my emails. Hi, I hope you're having a wonderful day just thought I would ask no big deal. Like, if you can't get to it today that it's no big deal. Like, I'll figure it out. We can get to it tomorrow, like no sweat. It's like you're apologizing for asking them a question and then asking them and then apologizing again for interrupting their day and then saying thank you so much for your time and your patience.

Q: Media is generally a very blunt industry, very opposite of Southern traditions, how do you navigate this difference?

The exclamation point is a habit. I am trying to break. Yeah, like I put an exclamation point on everything that I don't want someone to think I'm pissed off at you. If that makes sense. So I could be texting my manager, my friends. My parents, if I have no punctuation is better than a period. Yes. So like leaving it just without punctuation is nicer than marking it. And I think people our age are the ones that do that mostly. But with my manager, I know he's like, Alyssa, love you, but stop using exclamation points when they don't be long. Because you can use a period, it's not gonna piss anyone off, like I get it. But it feels mean. And since I'm in a marketing agency right now, so kind

of a different form of media. But, I mean, we communicate pretty much through teams all the time. And that's just like sending somebody a message. So it's not as big of a deal. But I think when I was still writing for the Missourian, and I would email people, I 100% was just buttering them up, like making them. Sure, like, I am nice, I'm approachable. And I all I want to do is talk to you. And I always got great responses. So I figured it's totally okay did either do or don't do that. I think people are either open to speaking or not, you know?

Participant 5:

Q: Tell me a little bit about your background, where you're from, how you got to where you are.

Yeah, so I grew up in metro Atlanta, in Gwinnett. County with the high school in Gwinnett. County. And then I went to the University of Georgia. Originally, I was going to I really wanted to do sports play by play or something sports related at first, which is why I went into broadcast journalism. And then the program at Georgia, like most colleges is, is geared towards news. So as I got into the news, compelling, I was like, I really liked this. And I realized that sports is a small field and every guy for the most part, and a lot of women want to go into sports. So I thought there were more opportunities in news. I by nature, like to inform people I think it's important that everyone informed themselves so I did the news program broadcast journalism at the University of Georgia. I played football at University of Georgia and then when I graduated, I moved to southwest Georgia and worked at a station called WALB was the at the time the Reycomm affiliate. Reycomm has since been sold to gray. So I did about three and a half years there I did about a year or so as an MMJ. Monday through Friday. And then I moved into the weekend anchor role there and did that for probably a year and a half. And then in August of 2016. I saw I guess two years in a couple months. Then I moved to Savannah. I transferred within gray to WTOC, which is the CBS affiliate in Savannah, I was the weekend anchor and MMJ there for about two years, I did a whole contract and then close to a whole contract. And then a weekday anchor job opened up Monday through Friday with an investigative reporter role. So I was able to kind of pull out of the daily reporting mix and do more long form reporting, which is where I really cut my teeth on the more enterprise reporting in depth reporting. So did that for two years and then in June of 2020, I grew up spent my whole life in Georgia. And at the time, I'm married now, but at the time I was single, I don't have kids. So I was thinking, this is really an opportunity at, you know, in my late 20s, to get out and move and experience somewhere else. So I was looking just for anywhere to move from Savannah, and I interviewed a few stations on the West Coast, and ended up moving here to Portland, right, but I took the job right before the pandemic, pandemic hit. And I moved here in June of 2020, solely doing investigative reporting. So I was Monday through Friday. And typically I would turn I'd say a couple of stories a week, when I first moved here, I was doing a lot of general assignment reporting just to get my feet wet, understand, throughout the market, make sources make contacts. But as I started to get into a workflow, I settled more into that role. I did that for all almost two

years, a year and eight months, and then on fortunately, another weekend anchor job opened up. And since I had some anchor experience, I was filling in for a little while. And I worked for k two, which is owned by Sinclair and Sinclair puts a big emphasis on anchors, who also turn content, they don't want anchors, who are just reading shows. So I think that being an investigative reporter, having experience doing more in depth and long form reporting, put me in a better position to get that job, they don't, you know, they're not going to let someone who can't anchor on TV, but there's much more of an emphasis on, hey, we want people who are creating content in these in these positions. So I filled in on that seat for a little while. And then I took that job in February of 2022. And I've been doing that since so I anchor the four o'clock news, Monday through Friday. And then I do investigative reporting. And I was typically I'm on air every Monday with what we would traditionally call a sweeps piece, but it's just a piece that we're going to promote. Like Monday, I'm working on a story. Based on how the district attorney's office here resolves murder cases, most of them are resolved through a plea deal. So we're looking at the plea process, why they do that the sentences that these people get, there's some reaction from families of victims and friends. So that will run Monday. And then typically, another day of the week, Friday, I'm doing something a little a little shorter. That's not necessarily as long and that doesn't take me as long. So that's what I've been doing for the last two. What Oh, just over two years is monday through friday anchoring and then and then investigative reporting. So that was a long answer.

Q: What have you experienced in relation to your accent in the field?

I mean, there are certainly people out here who meet me and say, Oh, you must be from the south. Fortunately, I don't have a super deep southern accent. I tell people, if you just went to the south, you would not think I have a southern accent. I mean, I moved to Albany, which is southwest Georgia. And when I was in Savannah, which is southeast below Macon. I mean, those people have deep Southern accents. So even some of them would not think I was from the south. I think that what I've learned over the years is that for me, my accent comes out and more in certain phrases, I say, and if I'm not enunciating whether it's saying like, you know, going to versus gonna. And I think that there are certain phrases that I've had coaches and mentors who have said, Hey, because it, you know, it can be it can be inhibitive. I mean, you know, is that as unfortunate as it is, in a in a medium like this, you need to be able to speak clearly in a way that people can understand, and I've never had anybody say, Hey, you're too Southern, or this, that or the other. I think that, but when I've heard feedback that my accent comes out, it's typically in phrases I say that I've tried to kind of be more kind of there's another one. I'm trying to be a little bit more cognizant of, just to make sure. I'm trying to be clear on air.

Q: When did you decide to work on your accent? Did that occur in college or when you got into the industry?

It came more as I got into the business. I think if I look back at my college years, it did not really come up a lot. I mumble mumble probably my whole life my parents and

family would would tell you that I mumble I've tried to get better at at enunciating and being clear, and I think I am. But I would say that the coaching more came out as I was looking for a job specifically in Savannah. Hey, you're gonna look somewhere out of the south, like, you know, if you're gonna get out, you're going to get out and beyond the South it could be a concern. And no one ever said, and then I'll be clear, no, no hiring manager ever said, Hey, you're too Southern, we can't hire you. It was just more of a hey, it might be a factor, they would probably never tell you. But just something to keep in mind if you're going to read the news somewhere else. Maybe stations in the South? It's not a big deal, because you talk like the people who? Who live there.

Q: How do you handle having a Southern accent in the industry?

I tried to be relatable on air in perhaps you know, that. That's one way you are relatable. I think that there are many ways you are relatable to people, to viewers, in this profession, and perhaps the way you speak is one of them, which is why I tried to be conversational. I don't. I'm not super, you know, I think that I would still consider myself on the younger end of this profession. I mean, I think the older people in this business are a lot more formal. And you know, they, they grew up watching Walter Cronkite, I think that it's kind of off putting to people, no one talks that no one talks that way. You know, if any conversation, you look at our conversation, I mean, there will be stumbles, there will be times you need to regather your thoughts. And I think that so I try not to be like, I gotta be perfect on TV, because no one's perfect. Even in just regular conversation. So, you know, I'll be honest, I've never had anybody say, Man, I can't watch you because of your accent. And maybe that happens. For some people like said. But some people really, really do. And I've worked with people who really do I mean, people I worked with in Albany, especially, that can remember the way they spoke. But it maybe was endearing to the people who are watching that, because that's how a lot of people, it's the accent a lot of people speak with.

Q: Do you think there is a standard accent in the industry? What do you think it is and why do you think it has developed?

Yeah, I think that, you know, when I was in college, we we talked a lot about, you know, doing exercises to loosen up your vocal cords and certain phrases, you could say, yellow leather, or whatever it might be, I think the goal should be I try to tell people because everyone, every time I meet someone and find out what I do, and give us your news voice. I feel like if you turned me on TV, I'm pretty similar. I'm probably a slightly more polished version of what I am off here. But I wouldn't say I sound different. There are certainly things I don't say. The more you get into this, I think you figure out some what words are more difficult for you to say. Specific specifically is one of them. I try to avoid that on TV, because it's just a very tough word to say. So for me, it's not. It's not really about the accent. I'm trying to be a more polished version of what I am off here. And I tried to just enunciate, but like I said, there are still people who call me out and say, Man, I knew you were from Georgia, and I looked it up and you certainly are so there are people who clearly pick up on it.

Q: What are some of the benefits of having a Southern accent in the industry?

Yeah, I think that the versatility and it's not being fake or phony, it's being relatable. That I think that I think she's getting at. And I do that as well. I mean, certainly, Oregon and Portland and Portland, it surprises people. Portland outside of Portland is really actually rural. And, you know, Portland is obviously heavily Democratic. But if you get just even 10 or 15 miles out of Portland, it's, it's ruby red. So it's very diverse politically, you know, urban versus rural. So there's a lot. There's a lot of diversity here on that front. And yeah, I think that is a benefit. It allows you to relate to people, it makes you not be some, you know, just random person on the news. I think what you point out, I mean, even people I meet in my personal life, it's like teachers, you know, you don't think that they have a life or they're real people. You know, I tell people, we're real people I live here, you know, we have we have a vested interest in this community thriving as well.

Q: What are the stereotypes of a Southern accent?

I feel like growing up in the South, I mean, the negative stereotype is that people who speak that way aren't smart. And I don't agree with that at all. I think that's fundamentally not true. But it's kind of a I'm a hick. You know, that's just the stereotype is people who talk like that are less educated, less smart, even though, you know, some of the sharpest people in the world have Southern accents. So I don't know that that's just a stereotype I think of it's not why I don't speak that way. You know, I try to flex it, I try to speak in a way that's clear and easy for people to understand. And, you know, I don't feel like I have a super deep southern accent to begin with, which maybe is helpful.

Q: What did it feel like to be told in college to try and lose your accent in order to be successful in broadcast?

Yeah, it was a little discouraging, right, because we can't change the way we speak that much. I mean, you can change it to a degree. But I remember thinking, I mean, that's really unfortunate. Because that doesn't, that has no, no impact on somebody's journalism skills, right. Like, and I think that's something that you just realize that it's kind of a fact of, I mean, it's TV is a visual medium, and no hiring manager is going to tell you but like to a degree, there's a superficiality to it, and there's always going to be there's always going to be certain things that if a female anchor leaves, they're most likely to replace that person with a female linkers just kind of the nature of it, you need to have diversity on air. And they obviously could not tell you, Hey, we're only going to hire a woman. But, you know, I remember I do remember hearing like, hey, you know, you might need to think about this. And I just remember thinking, well, then maybe I won't leave because I'm not going to break my back trying to speak a certain way. You know, I mean, but it hasn't, it has not been a problem. And no one here as has mentioned it, or I've never had a manager say hey, we need to work on your presentation on this.

Q: If you had run into pushback from hiring managers about your accent, how do you think you would have reacted? Would you even try to leave the South?

Yeah, then I might just stay here. You know, if that became a hindrance to me, if hiring managers, that was the feedback I was getting, if they would even do that, I probably wouldn't say, Okay, then I'll just, I'll find another TV job in the south, there are certainly plenty of them. And it's not a problem there once again, because you're in a region in an area where that's, you know, the dialect the people who live there. I mean, your accent is not a protected class.

Q: Do you have anything else to add?

I would say I would say more often than not, any of the feedback I've ever gotten about the way I speak has been generally positive. It's not been people saying, oh, my gosh, I can't stand the way you speak. It's more like, oh, man, you remind me of that I used to live there. Or I'm from there, too. It's nice to have another Southerner out here. So generally, I've never had any issues with people saying that, you know, is it's a distraction, or they can't watch. So I don't have I haven't had any, you know, negative experiences, I would say from people who do point out my accent if they even catch it.

Yeah. And I think if you do talk that I mean, from my perspective, I think that, you know, I always I, I believe that diversity in any newsroom, whether it's print, digital, television is good. And that's diversity of gender, of race, of sexual orientation of geographic diversity, I think the more diverse a newsroom is, the better it can be at serving the public, which is why we get into this is to inform the public and and serve them. It's not to be on TV or, like, it's not for any superficial reasons, like people who are in this for the right reasons who don't burn out, it's because they, they really believe in the journalism side of it. And I think that more diversity, and all Frances better, yet,

Q: Where do you think accents in the industry are heading in the future?

I think I think people are more now with all the different, you know, mediums where people can create content, it's people, it's a lot less acceptable. I mean, people are taking much less art, you know, much less formal news. Well, I think that I think that I don't see any reason that we're gonna go back to like that very stereotypical News voice going work in this business. If you talk like Walter Cronkite, or insert the famous newscaster, I think that the the ability of anyone to create content now, kind of normalizes that, to a degree.

Participant 6:

Q: Tell me a little bit about your background, where you're from, how you got to where you are.

Yeah, um, so it was instilled in me from a very early point in my college career, like when I started taking my journalism classes to nix the southern accent as best as I

could. And so I've been working on that for, I guess, my whole career, but I have come to realize that a lot of people actually find it endearing. And it I don't want to say it helped me get my last job. But I think it helped me get my last job because he related to me, because of my accent, but I started. So I went to college at the University of South Alabama, from 2010 to 2014. And majored in communications with a focus or emphasis on broadcast journalism. And so yeah, we started taking, I don't think we started taking our actual journalism classes until maybe my sophomore year, but definitely junior and senior year. And by the time you're a senior, you have to take an internship. So yeah, so it was, in order to get a specific credit. For this one class, we had to take an internship and it was, like 100, and something 130 hours for that semester. And so that's when I started my internship at bucks 10. And I was there for a full semester. But whenever I graduated, I realized that I didn't want to. I knew I wanted to be on air in some capacity. But I knew from very early on that the typical sort of side off for my typical news reporter standpoint, that that's not where my heart was, I wasn't into crime and politics, and you know, everything else that a general assignment reporter would have to essentially report on. And so, because of that, I didn't really know where I would fit in. Because during my whole college career, I was like, I'm going to be a sports reporter, and be on the sidelines at football games. But you quickly realize that you don't know as much as you think you know about sports, because it has to be you have to, you have to know about all the sports and I was really more hyped on football and baseball, and not really basketball and swimming, and tennis, and golf and all of that. And so, um, so that quickly fizzled out. So I didn't really know where I wanted to be. And it took me I graduated in May of 2014. And I didn't get my first job until November of that year. And it ended up being a news producer position part time. And it was great. I will never ever regret taking that first step as a news producer and doing that, like background work and learning the ropes of an actual newsroom and how it works. But I definitely shouldn't have stayed in it as long as I did. Mostly because I was just unhappy and I wasn't growing it was more lateral movements. So after that first job, I was there for probably right out a year and a half. Back to that internship, there was an opening for a news producer position at that station. After about a year and a half of my first job and so So I called up my former boss at my internship, the executive producer, producer, who's still there to this day who Candice knows actually also. And he was like, the job is yours, if you want it, I know your character from her internship, I know you're going to be a great employee, blah, blah. And so I was really thankful for that. But still, it was kind of like a lateral move, it was full time, I was making a little more money. But it wasn't at the end of the day, what I wanted to do. So it took me having to figure out where I wanted to fit in, essentially. So I was doing all kinds of different things while I was producing and mind you, I was doing the overnight shift. So I was like, Oh, 1am to 9am. So I would be when Candace would anchor. I was her producer, sometimes on the weekend show until she left. But yeah, so I would go in at 1am produce the shows get off at 9am Try to stay awake, or take a nap it just really depended. But once I hit Fox 10 And I was trying to find my like groove there. I did traffic reporting. And I tried to fill in on our lifestyle show. Then I started volunteering on the weekends for live shot recording and just trying to find my groove again. And what I'm good at, and it still it was at the end of the day, it was exactly what I knew from the star is that I wasn't into crime and politics and the

general assignment beat. But I knew traffic reporting was okay, I can do that. That's fine. And then studio pin is like a lifestyle show that we had at foxin. And when I got the opportunity to fill in a couple of times, I was like, This is it. This is me, this is where my personality shines. It's where I'm really good at ad libbing. I can, you know, I can hold my own and I'm doing a really good job at it. And I only got to fill in twice for that show. And I was like, This is it, this is for me. So then I would start doing those live shots on the weekend. And try to figure out the stories or the content that I wanted to report on. And so I would do like the buddy walk or the Cajun cook off, you know, like light hearted fun things that that really that I just enjoyed. And that was really cool, because that was all volunteer basis on my part because I wasn't getting paid for that it was just me trying to take initiative to show them that, hey, I can do this. I can be you know, on air too. And it may not be exactly what a new structure is looking for. But because there are lifestyle shows out there, and I was able to figure out that that's where you know, that's where I fit in. I started applying to the job. So I just recently moved back home from Raleigh, North Carolina, where I was a lifestyle co host for the last two and a half years. So September would make my third year. But I got engaged last May. And thank you. So I just moved back home to Alabama, to live with my fiance for the first time. So we're not long distance anymore, which is really, really cool. But But yeah, long story short, I guess not really, because that was a kind of a love story. But yeah, whenever I interviewed for this last job in Raleigh, the general manager was from Jackson, Mississippi. And so he had that Southern drawl, that twang, and as much as I tried to hide it or conceal it as best I can. Sometimes it comes out and I can't, can't help that. And so he related to that, and I think it really, it kind of warmed him up with the idea of me and coming into that role and being somebody that he can trust. And yeah, so I don't know if that answered your question. But that's sort of my like, here, there everywhere kind of story that has accumulated to where I am now. And now I'm not in TV currently, but I did just get a job at a Distinguished Young woman of America, if you've ever heard of it used to be called Junior Miss. But I am their new marketing and communications director. So it's not an on air role. But the cool thing about these skills that we're learning, you know, in journalism, and the broadcast field is they kind of translate into other roles and positions in this world of ours.

Q: Tell me more about that relationship with the producer from Mississippi. How do you think things would have played out if they weren't from Mississippi?

Yeah, I mean, probably, it probably would have been a different story. I mean, he probably still would have seen my potential, I would have gone into the interview without the managers or higher ups thinking that she's got something, you know, there's some reason that she's getting interviewed today. And so it could have very well done the opposite. And that, I think, that would have been a little heartbreaking, but also understandable, because we've been taught for so long, it's been instilled in us from those first, like, level one journalism classes, you gotta have a very, I don't even know the word, but it can't be super Northern, it can't be super Boston, or I don't even know if that sounds about right. Um, you know, it can't, we can't be talking like this and expect people to understand this more down south. And you know, that's, and I think that's due to the nature of the business, because I worked with so many people in Mississippi who

were from New Jersey, and they had that very thick accent. But because it's one of the roles in television, they sort of tried to mute it or sort of cover it up in a sense when they're in that presence of TV and viewers because you have to kind of be a chameleon in a sense. And you have to turn yourself into where you live. So the viewers down south are not going to understand a girl from New Jersey who is talking 100 miles a minute and definitely with a different accent. So you've got to kind of meet the audience where they're at as well. And I think that that that knowledge of our professors telling us, you should have a more balanced dialect. It's helpful because of the nature of the business. So because those girls are coming from New Jersey down south, well, because we're taught to have a, you know, a mild accent, those skills are going to come in handy.

Q: What do you think are the stereotypes associated with the Southern accent?

Well, obviously, it's it's the cliches the they talk so slow. They're so dumb, they can't understand you, sweetheart, bless your heart. But, sorry, I don't get it last year. Okay. Yeah, just the misconception of people thinking that we are not intelligent beings, because we tend to speak with a drawl or a slower pace, then others in the country. Which is, obviously to a very big misconception, because people from here go to Harvard, or they go to Yale, or you know, any of these big league schools. But a lot of us like to say closer to home, and that's also okay, because we're also getting great education and learning just as much if not better than, you know, others who may be a aren't going to school or be you know, that we can't even afford go to school. So, you know, just the the knowledge that I live in a really great area. I have a really great fiance fiance, who you know, we are really great team. And we're each other's biggest cheerleaders. And so it's like, things like that, that people don't see when they're judging you based on your, your accent or where you're from. I'm from Mississippi, born in Alabama, race in Mississippi, or work in Alabama now. And you know, even even up in North Carolina, there's a lot of people coming from all over there. I met so many people from Australia who made North Carolina their home, you know, and all of these people have these different preconceived notions or misconceptions, and sometimes they're just looking to, you know, have a civil conversation and learn more about you know, where you're from and what you've done and who you are and where you grew up. And you know, all of that. So I think a lot of times it is negative but a lot of people really just want to be informed and educated at the end of the day.

Q: Did a professor ever have a conversation with you?

Yeah, me and my best friend, as matter of fact, because he's from a small town in Alabama. Thomasville. And it absolutely was, for some reason I grew up pronouncing, I need to go home. And I don't know why home is a southern it's got a southern twang to it. He wanted me to say home, you're going home. And it's just something with and it has stuck with me to this day. But I still stay home. I'm just going home. I got to use the phone. I don't know why.

Q: How did your accent affect your confidence about the career path you were choosing?

I don't think I don't think I really cared to be honest. Because I knew I know, in my heart of hearts that I am from the south, and if being a better speaker and presenter means toning down my way, you know, Southern accent, I'm okay with that. Because at the end of the day, it's gonna make me better, it's going to make our viewers understand me better. And that's when you're going into, you know, a television career. That's what's expected of you. So it really was just like, at the end of the day, this is something I got to do. So I didn't take it offensively at all.

But yeah, because you're not changing who I am, when I leave the TV. I'm still me, I'm still going to want to have a glass of wine or two, I'm going to be only real Southern, you know, and that's just, that's just who I am. At the end of the day. That's just what you know, what I've grown up around, but also, I can turn it on in a second, and use my anchor voice, my TV reading voice and say, Good evening, you know, and it's totally fine. And it's not. It's just what I have worked on and what I've practiced, and I'm not proud of it. Definitely.

Q: Is it challenging to change your accent on air? Does it feel like you're changing who you are?

Yeah, it can be challenging for sure. Because you want to, and especially when you're in a lifestyle role, because you know, part of what you're responsible for is gaining viewership. And drawing them in because of who you are. And so I wanted to be me, I wanted to be, you know, raw and real, and have that Southern way and have something special about me, but also be intelligent, intelligible. And, you know, make sure people understand me and where I'm coming from and sound educated and not sound like a country bumpkin who doesn't know anything about anything in the world. Why is he in his role? Why is he telling me stuff I need to know, when she herself doesn't know anything? You know? So I really wanted to make sure that whatever role in whatever capacity you have on air, who, to viewers who are trying to ingest information that I'm telling them take me seriously at the end of the day?

Q: How would you have felt differently had you moved up to somewhere like Boston or Minnesota?

Yeah, well, I probably feel like a fish out of water for the first six months or so just because it would be such a culture shock. But I intentionally did not apply to those jobs. I stayed so it really affected my job search and the path that I wanted to take, just so I could avoid dealing with that stuff. So I I only applied to states in the southeast, and then Arizona. I know but I went once and it was phenomenal is bright, beautiful. Like I could do it. People are cool, but um, and I'm sure and you know, people are cool everywhere. It's just a matter of your your outlook on life and like, what you what you want out of your career and what you expect to have others. So I really just didn't, I guess consciously put myself in that position to deal with something like that. So a lot

of people may maybe they think like, I'm just gonna get my foot in the door, I don't care where I am what I'm doing however I get there, I'm gonna get there, I'm gonna deal with my consequences, you know, when I get there. And then for me, it was a conscious decision of I'm not gonna put myself through that. I'm going to stick where I know, stick with what I know. And make it work wherever I land.

Q: Do you have anything else to add?

I think a lot of people get into this this business wanting I don't want to say fame. But essentially fame at the end of the day and you quickly quickly realize that it is not about that and it comes down to so whether you have a really southern accent or really northern accent, Midwestern accent, whatever it really at the end of the day all comes down. At don't even know, at the end of the day, I really just think it's about what you make it to be. You can you can it doesn't matter where you are, where you are, where you're from. But kind of respecting yourself in a sense enough to challenge yourself but defend yourself at the same time. And make sure that we're whatever path that you do decide to take that you don't let something like a an accident accent stand in your way that's just that's not to say don't take the lessons that you've learned in school and put them to use obviously because I I still to this day, do that. And I think it is imperative to do that. That thing. But also be yourself so I don't Yeah, I don't I don't have anything else really to add just to just do it. Yeah, be yourself. Don't let Dixon and I mean, kind of diction but don't sound like an idiot, you know, I'm saying, but um yeah, don't let somebody else's perception of you. You know, dim your light.

Participant 7:

Q: Tell me a little bit about your background, where you're from, how you got to where you are.

Um, yeah, I grew up in Maryland, went to Alabama. And then I was going to study history and political science. Why did study history and political science and I wanted to go to law school. Once I graduated college, I ended up moving back to Maryland. And I was still in my last, you know, law school head. And I went, I worked for a medical malpractice lawyer, and I realized, oh, lawyers, they're really miserable people. So I was like, I don't want to go that route. So I'll go into news. Well, I didn't really think of news. I went to Alabama. So I was a huge sports fan. And I really wanted to be a sports reporter. So I was like, How do I even get into this? And my neighbor is Jerry Sandusky, not the guy from Penn State, the voice of the Ravens. And he was like, Well, if you're interested in sports, broadcasting, like come on with me and I'll make you an intern at WB Al. And so I became one of his interns for a year you know, luckily luck of the draw. It was a fantastic hands on internship and I got to be like, I got to go to the station three days a week, help him produce his show, help them cut Video Highlights and all that good stuff for the show. I got to go out with reporters do live shots and I ended up doing putting doing like some stand ups putting together a tape and then I sent it off. I had never touched a camera. I never like I didn't take journalism class. I think I took one communications class in college, but it was never something that I was

going to pursue. So I didn't have a background in journalism at all. And so I made my tape and ended up in San Angelo, Texas being a little MMJ for my very first job. So it was wild. I was there for 14 months left there, went to Mobile, Alabama back to back to Alabama. I think it was in Alabama and Mobile. Eight months left there went to New York because New York was my dream. Got a job at FiOS one news. Hated it really could not leave New York fast enough, which I'm from the East Coast. It wasn't only a New York thing. I was a plethora of reasons as to why I had to leave. But it just I was like, This is not for me. I ended up leaving, went back to Maryland. I actually quit news for like, a couple of months, took a break from it. Actually got a job working on like a fitness studio, and then realize okay, I'm good. I'm ready to go back and then I landed a weekend anchor job in Roanoke, which was fantastic. I was there for two years and then I got the main anchor job at Channel Six. In here in Omaha, Nebraska, I was at Channel Six for five years as the main evening anchor, fantastic experience. And then I left in September. I'm now at straight arrow news, which is here in Omaha, it's headquartered here. We have a staff here. But we also have remote employees all across the country. And our whole mission is just to be unbiased, straight Fox and I feel like we have hit our target. And we're right there. And I couldn't be more proud of working for this brand now. So it's all digital news. Now. We don't put on like a newscast at night. It's not like that traditional mainstream media, like you could see whenever you tune into your local news, we kind of just put together stories that are happening nationally, internationally, especially, you know, these wars are keeping us very busy right now. And then like we record them, and we have really great editors that do a good job of putting those assets together and put everything online. So I think that's the way news is shifting now. Anyway, so yeah, we're here. This is what I'm doing now.

Q: How would you describe your accent?

I would say people from Baltimore, Baltimore, Baltimore, have a twang. We call it Baltimore, not Baltimore. So people from Baltimore do have a little bit of a twang. My parents do. My aunts and uncles do. So it's kind of funny, but I think once I went to school in the south, I don't want to say I ever had like a super thick twang, but I do have some words here and there. Well, I'll say something and people are like, I think yesterday, I was actually talking about this exact thing. I went I got my hair done and my hairdresser was I said the word can and I think I said like can or something. And she's like, when you say so just like weird things like that. Like my mom says. She say water? Yeah, the water. She says wash and wash. I'm like there's no are in wash moss. So just like little things like that. But I feel like over the years, you just kind of get rid of your your accent. I don't want to say I had an accent per se but you just kind of correct the words. And everywhere you go, especially in this business. Everybody pronounces things differently. Like you're in the Midwest, there's definitely some words that I'm like, that's not how that's spelled. Why do you pronounce it like that? There's a city here called norfork. And in Virginia, it's Norfolk, right? Like, that's how you pronounce it in Virginia. Here. It's norfork. And I'm like, There's no R, that's an L. It's just funny. You just have to roll with it and learn how to change, you know, something that you've been used to your whole life.

Q: Have you ever had conversations with managers about your accent?

Oh, yeah. I mean, and that's, that just happens all the time. Because, you know, in this industry, we're constantly moving around. I'm going to be moving in different parts of the country, people just pronounce things differently. And whenever you are moving into a new city, you have to be a voice of authority. Whenever you're, you know, telling the community, the news, you want people to trust you. So you want to be able to say the words that they say, or else you're not going to be credible. So yeah, I mean, but it was never like a big issue. It was never like, I never got in trouble for it, they would just be like, hey, like, this is how they say it around here. And I'd be like, okay, cool. I'll fix it, you know, and he just learned just part of the job is he would say, it's got to be, you know, you can't, I can't come in here and say, water, you know, they're gonna be like, what's water? You out of the water?

Q: Do you feel like you've tried to talk more like the people you are telling the news to?

yeah, I mean, it's very important. I mean, people, they have so many different options, right? Whenever they are going to watch the news, especially an Omaha is a news market where people traditionally watch the news here, I can name a bunch of other markets where people don't, but here in Omaha, the numbers are up and people do trust, you know, their local news sources. So especially as a main anchor, I had to be out there, I wanted to be out in the field and tell stories, you've got to make connections, you've got to meet people talk to them. I feel like today, especially some of these kids coming out of college, I feel kind of bad for them, because they've grown up on their cell phones and this technology. And yes, some of it is good. But a lot of it prohibits you from creating genuine connections and friendships with people. So my bread and butter is going out and talking and just meeting with people, I'm really good at just striking up round conversations with people at the airport, the grocery store, you never know who you're going to meet what somebody is going to tell you. And if they're going to change your life or not, you know, it takes one chance meeting for something tremendous to happen to your life or to somebody else's life. And you never know what you could teach somebody else, as well. So, being an anchor, or reporter in any city is a very important job. People are entrusting you to tell them what's going on in their community, we're also very, we're responsible for letting people know about the issues that are going on in their community. And we're also here to educate people on those issues. So that way, whenever they go to the ballot box, they can make their best educated choice in, you know, voting, and that's what we're here for. And it's a responsibility I never took lightly. So yeah, trust is huge. You've people have to know you, they have to know you're working for them in the community, that you're working to get them that information, and that whenever you do give them that information, that it is factual and unbiased. And so it's a responsibility and what I take very seriously.

Q: Since you've moved around so much in your career, how have you adapted to the different markets you've gone to?

Well, it's always very exciting. The last time I moved, I was 28 years old. I've been in Omaha almost six years now. So I've, I feel like I have found a tiny little bit of stability in my news career just to stay in one place. Because every you know, two, three years, you're moving around, and especially with some of the stops I was moving after 14 months or after eight months, and it's a lot to pick up your life and move to a whole new city. But luckily, with a lot of these newsrooms, everybody has done that throughout their entire career. So luckily, for me, a lot of my newsrooms, my co workers became my family. And then of course, you make other connections in the community outside of the newsroom, but usually the moving around part that was never an issue for me, I'm just, I'd be like, great. Who am I going to go meet today, who's my new co workers like I, I always love going to work and hanging out with my friends. You know, my coworkers are always my friends. So that was always an exciting part. It was never stressful, or, you know. It was, that was the easy part. You just gotta get in and you just, you go to community events. You try to reach out to city leaders whenever you get in and you just say hey, this is who I am. I'd love to meet up with you. And sometimes you know, that works. I mean, luckily here in Omaha, I've interviewed the mayor several times and my recipe rock she's like, Hey, Lauren!

Q: Do you feel like there's a standard accent to meet in the industry? I've read that the Midwest is considered to have a very neutral accent and therefore some people say it's the most desirable for broadcast.

You know, I've heard the same thing. And honestly, I've heard especially after I moved to Omaha, people said that the dialect here in the Midwest is like standard for TV, like the Midwest accent is what people should strive to have, when they are anchors and reporters in this industry. And I don't know what it is about the Midwest accent that makes it trustworthy, or makes people want to tune into the news. But that's what I was told by, you know, senior reporters, anchors and bosses in this industry, here in Omaha. So I was like, okay, and then there have been some big moves. I know that one anchor went from here to LA to be an anchor, you know, and so it must have been something in the voice.

Q: How comfortable would you feel going to a place that has an accent very different from yours in the U.S.?

Um, again, I think it just goes back to your work as a journalist. And if you're consistent and trustworthy, I don't think your accent really plays too much of a role in that. And I have worked in Alabama and Texas. Yeah. Without any kind of accent, I think. And people seem to appreciate, you know, the work that I was doing. So I don't think it really, I don't think viewers really hold on to that too much. Now, I do think that if you have a southern accent, and you go to Boston, the viewers are going to be like, let's go in going on here. It can definitely happen. And they, they will tell you, you got to get rid of the big southern like, you can have a little bit of a twang. But if you're going to be in Boston, I don't think you can have a southern accent.

Q: Do you think it's the same vice versa with someone coming from the North? Or is it different?

The same might be true, like someone from Boston, go down to Alabama wants to hear a Boston accent. Like, I don't want to hear it like it's not a good. The Boston accent. So no, you're and honestly, if you turn on the news in Boston, you won't hear the anchors have a Boston accent. It's just you've got to be clean, concise, and you've got to be able to deliver the news with authority. And I think if you have any kind of thick accent, you're not able to do that. I mean, if you tune into like, especially I go, when I have time I go to a different city, I always just turn on the local news, just to see what's going on. You know, check out what they've got going on. And I've never heard anybody have like, thick accent, whether it's south, northeast, you've got to just be able to, I don't want to say talking like monotone, but just be neutral. The news should just be neutral.

Q: Do you have anything else to add?

No, I just say neutral neutral works. That's what I've been taught. And that's what I've seen other people be taught as well. And I think that's the best way that viewers are going to perceive an anchor or reporter and find them to be trustworthy.

Participant 8:

Q: Tell me a little bit about your background, where you're from, how you got to where you are.

So I grew up outside of Atlanta. And I went to the University of Georgia, they have a really good journalism program. And after Georgia, I was a teleprompter operator and an overnight scanner, listen to the scanners overnight and was a writer at a small station in Huntsville, Alabama. And after about a year of doing that, I went to Midland, Odessa, Texas, and I was a reporter and then moved my way up to morning anchor there. We were there for about four years. And then I went to Raleigh, North Carolina. And I was there for three years reporting and filling in on the anchor desk. And then I went to Orlando, Florida. I was a reporter and investigative reporter, one of the main anchors and then came to Boston. It's been eight years ago. So I spent nine years in Florida. And then we've been the past eight here in Boston. And so I've been doing this for 25 years since 1999, if you can believe it. I met my husband in the business and he is a meteorologist. He's recently out of the business and doing something out of the business but freelances. Still every now and again for weather relief and that kind of thing. But yeah, so that's that's my track.

Q: How would you describe your accent?

I feel like right now my accent is pretty neutral. I do think in certain social situations if I'm more comfortable with people or if I know them better. I do feel like a little bit of the Southern comes out the y'all I I still say y'all, even though we're here in New England, and people don't really say that, but you know, I feel like it for the most part,

it's neutral, people are always a little bit surprised when they meet me in person. Sorry, I'll start that, again, my son was just calling, people are always a little bit surprised when they meet me in person, because they hear a little bit more of a southern accent than they do on the newscast. So when the cameras come on, there's really no accent at all. And people say, you know, how do you do the news voice? And it's not really something that you try, I am cognizant of it, I always have been, just because I knew that I wanted to work outside of the cell. But I think it's equivalent to when a boss calls and you answer the phone versus when your friend calls, you don't necessarily try to have two different dialects or two different twangs, or no twang, or accent or this or that I think it's just almost a customer service voice. You know, people on the other line of customer service talk differently than they would in a normal conversation. So I do feel like sometimes in social situations, and in person, you hear a slight southern accent more so than when I'm on the air delivering the news in New England. Where, you know, most people are from here and not from the south. I did I think this is your second question about has it affected my career. So that's when I knew that I was leaving West Texas and we wanted to get out of West Texas and make the next job. It was recommended to me to get some voice lessons and some some coaching on my accent at the time. And both my parents are from Mississippi. And I don't think I ever had a real very strong, strong southern accent. But, you know, I knew that I needed to get some techniques to try to curb a southern accent if I wanted to work outside of the South. And so I worked with, she was actually a an acting coach at a local theater in Odessa, Texas. And she just gave me some techniques and helped me with pronunciation and that sort of thing. And I think I really do credit that for for helping me, you know, be able to get out of the south, so to speak, in this career. And you know, the other thing that she helped me learn was just speaking from the deep part of your voice. And I think when you do that, and you're conscious of it, and you're speaking from the lower register, you don't have an accent as much of any kind. So it is something that I am cognizant of.

Q: Are there specific words or phrases that you specifically struggle with that come out regardless?

You know, I can't think of a specific word. But sometimes when we are in the booth tracking, you know, we track cold opens and things for the newscast that are then that are pre taped. If I hear myself, you know, we have the headphones, and I can hear it. If I hear myself saying something that sounds southern. I will repeat it, I will redo it, I will do a second take or third take. So I can't think that there's a certain word. I just know that y'all is in my vocabulary. To this day, even in more professional situations, that word is a word I can't seem to get away from that. That is from the south and very southern. I don't I rarely say you all I just merged the two together. But yeah, I don't think that there's a certain word that trips me up or, or anything, so to speak.

Q: Do you think a neutral accent is the standard for the industry and why do you think that is?

Well, I think it for a couple of reasons. I think, you know, whether it's a northern accent or a southern accent, I feel like it can be a distraction if it's if you have a very strong accent from any region or something that doesn't sound normal. And I believe in news, we don't want people focused on how we're saying something we want them focused on what we're saying and the news that we are delivering of the day. And I feel like that's the main reason and I think yet you we just we want to be neutral with the news that we're delivering and neutral in the accent that we're delivering. And if that so to speak, I feel like a strong accent. Whether you're from the north or the south when you're trying to deliver the news can be a distraction.

Q: Was there any concern in your mind when you got the voice coach and were applying to jobs?

No, I knew just that this was very early on in my career, I was very young. So this was after my my first contact contract on air contracts. So I think I had been on air for four years. And I didn't think that it would be a negative, I just wanted to be able to have more opportunities, and I didn't want to be pigeonholed into, she sounds like she's from the south, who's only going to resonate with Southern viewers, therefore, you know, no one above the Mason Dixon Line would would listen to her or that or even consider her for position, I think at the time, I was just focused on wanting to be able to have, you know, a broad range of of cities that I could go to and be considered for the next jump out of a very small market. So back in the day, in our industry, you really had to start off small and work your way up. And that's no longer the case, which is good for you, and your peers. That's, you know, getting out of that small market. And I mean, I think I went from market, almost 200 to a markets 60 something. So I made a big jump from Midland, Odessa, Texas, to Raleigh, North Carolina, it is also a southern city. So the accent wasn't, or wasn't a really big concern. But I still did that coaching before I started applying for jobs. And I think that, you know, I can't remember specifically techniques, she taught me, I remember, we went over a lot of pronunciation. And I met with her once a week, it was so long ago. But I do think that that just laid the foundation of making me conscious of how the words sound when they're coming out of your mouth. And the goal always is just to to not let those words be a distraction based on the tone, or the accent that they're coming out of your mouth with.

Q: What do you feel are the stereotypes associated with a Southern accent?

You know, I think it depends on where you live, right? If you are in the south, then I think that a southern accent can be associated with, you know, southern hospitality and with politeness and that sort of thing. I know that studies have shown that that people with Southern accents are often considered less intelligent as others. And I know that there are some stereotypes stereotypes around that as well. And so I think it really just depends on on the region where you're living, if you are living in the South, people are going to relate to that. And they will not have a negative opinion of a southern accent. But I think in other parts of the country, some folks might before they meet.

Q: Do you think that has to do with relatability to your viewers?

I think so. Yes. I mean, but I don't try to sound like a New Englander. I'm just trying to sound neutral, you know, so that I'm not a distraction, if that makes sense.

Q: If you were to go back to working in the South do you think you would keep your neutral accent or would you let your Southern accent slip back a little bit?

I do. I think that I think that it would just be neutral. I think that that for me as a as a journalist, I think that that leads to the most credibility. And, you know, there's going to be northern viewers living in the South, there are going to be southern viewers who are living in the north, and I think you want to be relatable, and, you know, not a distraction to any of them. So I think that we have to remember that I mean, just because we're in New England, there are a lot of people from Florida, who come to New England in the winter months, and in Florida, it's vice versa. When it is winter here, a lot of people will go to Florida to get away from the so. So I think we just have to remember as journalists that the audience is always from very diverse backgrounds and very diverse locations. And just keeping that neutral accent keeps the focus on what we're saying, and not how we're saying it.

Q: Where do you see the industry going in the future as it relates to accents? Is it moving more neutral?

I do. I mean, I think that viewers are more viewers. They do want a connection with a local anchor. And so I do think it's great to have people on your anchor team who are from here who know history of events, that maybe someone who moved into the market doesn't know because they didn't live it, they grew up here, they remember certain things. And there's so much value in that. And, you know, one of the questions I think you're asking me is, how comfortable did I feel coming to work in a place where I didn't grow up. And, you know, we've now been here almost a decade. So I feel like I am now a New Englander. But, you know, I have always relied on my colleagues who did grow up here for perspective on big stories, and perspective on historical events that happened to the community. And that has helped me be able to relate to the viewer. Through their perspective, even though I may have not lived through it as a child, there was a massive snowstorm that happened here a couple of decades ago, and my my co workers were in grade school when it happened, I wasn't here, but I've heard them talk about it so often. And now I can say things like, Oh Mark, I remember, you know, you missed 20 days of school because of that snow, you know, that sort of thing. So that you were relating to an event, even though I didn't go through it, just through connecting with him. And there's a real value there. And viewers do want to be able to connect, they want people who are familiar with their community. And I think that that builds instant trust, if they know that you are up here, and you're familiar with with the places that you're reporting on. And so I think the challenge for me, when I moved from the South to Boston, I really just got involved in the community heavily through community events. I volunteer a lot, I visit a lot of nonprofits, I go to a lot of fundraisers, where there are a lot of people and I met people almost every single weekend, just getting to know the community. And we also really just fell in love with

the Boston sports teams, which was something that really and that was just genuine. But that was an instant connection to the viewers, even though we did not grow up here. And certain areas of Boston, the North End Back Bay, we love going into the city. So we just immerse ourselves in the culture. And now like I say, almost 10 years later, I don't feel like a Southern transplant, so to speak. You know, I feel like I'm part of this community. And that's because I just got so involved in the community and got to know the people who live here. And got to know the places where I'm recording on by visiting so many different talents, and you just got to put in the work and make the connection. And really it's it's that for as a news anchor, as a director, as a producer, when you're moving in any market, you want to have that connection with the viewers. And so it may not be your hometown, or even the part of the country that you grew up in, but you want to have, you want to be able to relate and get to know the people in your community, so that you are then bringing them stories that matter to them. And in a way that matters to them and in the way that can relate to them. And so I think you don't necessarily have to be from that area to be a success in that part of the country. But you do have to make a real effort to get to know them, what they like, what matters to them, what's important to them, the culture, so to speak in that community. And you have to work a little harder at it if you did not grow up there. Because if you grew up there, obviously, it's an eight and you have all those experiences those rich experiences of growing up in that part of the country, but if not, I think that there are other ways to make that connection as well. But it does take a lot of work.

Q: Do you have anything else to add?

No, I think you know, the question that we get asked the most or one of them other than do you do your own hair makeup is? How do you do the news voice? You know, and? And I again, I think that if people you know, were at a cocktail party, they'll say do your news voice right? Do I can't do it. I'm not at work. And so I do think that other people in other professions have a different professional voice and a different social voice as well. It's just not as apparent as it is for news anchors who you're listening to for an hour, two hours. If you're well, I mean, we're on from five to seven, we take a break and run from 10 to 1130. So someone's listening to me for they happen to watch the five to seven. They're hearing that news voice so they like to call it for for two hours, but again, ask anyone if you talk the same when your boss calls versus is the tone the same when your best friend calls. And it's just that. So I think that there's just a different posture. When you're when when the camera comes on, there's just a different you're working, you're in your work mode, I like to call it to its work mode, right?

Q: So you would describe the accent as just part of your job?

Exactly, it’s just something you do. And again, for me, it's not, you know, the most important thing is just presenting things in a neutral accent so that it's not a distraction so that people are focused on what we're saying, not how we're saying it. But I will tell you one thing in New England as it relates to to accents is towns are not pronounced here, how they are spelled, oh, that's probably very difficult to learn. I studied and studied before we moved here for quite some time and listen to audios of, you know,

that sort of thing. Because, you know, you don't want to mess up in this mispronounce Peabody or Bill Rekha or, you know, that sort of thing. It looks like Peabody, but it's actually pronounced Peabody. And so that's another thing is you do just have to really learn. How, you know, if things are not pronounced in certain regions of the country, how they look, you know, you just have to be conscious of that. And that's something that you have to focus on as well. Definitely. That is that would be distracting, right. It's another thing if I say p body, and its purity, well, the person again, is not listening to the story about what's happening in Peabody, they're going that crowd doesn't even know how to say Peabody, right? So that I mean, that's just an interesting example. And there, there's a video of some NASCAR folks trying to stay pronounced the towns in Massachusetts, and it's, it's, it's an interesting little video that's out there, I'm not sure who produced it. But it's, I think, anytime you move to, to a different part of the country, things are often pronounced whether you have an accent, or not different than they look. And that's part of learning the culture and the onboarding process of getting to know a community in our industry as well.

Participant 9:

Q: Tell me a little bit about your background, where you're from, how you got to where you are.

That is, that is we moved a lot as a kid. I was in 10 different high schools or 10 different schools by the time I got to high school. Some of them because you know, you moved around in in the same city, some because we moved quite a bit. I was born in Oklahoma. from Oklahoma, we very quickly moved over to Louisiana. And then we moved back to Oklahoma and then we moved up to Kansas, which is where my brother was born. from Kansas, we moved to Tennessee, I think is when it was from Tennessee. We moved to that was Memphis and then we moved to Little Rock Arkansas for a while. Then we moved out to Evergreen Colorado, and I lived there for about a year maybe less. And then we moved to Monroe, Louisiana, and Monroe, Louisiana. We moved by that that's when I was in the ninth grade. So we moved there when I was in ninth grade. And I went to high school and college in Monroe and that was also where I got my first job was in Monroe. So I I would consider Monroe, Louisiana which is north and east. I would consider that to be poor. probably where I grew up mostly. But but the formative years of my life, the areas that I spent most of my time were Little Rock, Arkansas. Probably Memphis, Tennessee and Monroe, and then we moved around to a lot of different places. Yeah, we were all over the place. And no, my dad was not in the military. It was just where my mind was just a restless sort. He was always switching jobs. I went to a place in Monroe. And at the time, the university's name was northeast Louisiana University. I take great pride in that school name. They have since changed it to University of Louisiana Monroe, which I can't stand the name of that. So I still say that I went to northeast Louisiana. But for accuracy in journalism, we would have to say my, my alma mater is the University of Louisiana Monroe.

Q: Did you major in journalism?

frankly, I had never even thought of this as a field. I was in the band in high school when we first moved there. And I was told by people, that music was never my, my thing really, per se. But it was the extracurricular activity I took going into the ninth grade, outside of, you know, all the sports that I was playing, you know, we moved right at the beginning of my ninth grade year. And so you're 15 you don't know what to do. And so you sign up for classes, and I signed up for the ninth grade band. And the schools were in two different places, Junior High was in one place. And at that time, ninth grade was not part even though your grades were part of high school. You were not in the high school. Okay. So the conversation as a ninth grader is, you know, if you're if you actually get into the band, at high school, you can get a college scholarship. And so I was like, wait a minute, you know, they say, yes, they will pay for you to go to college at Northeast Louisiana University. So that's probably when trumpet playing became, you know, serious for me, because then I started thinking, well, maybe that's how I get to go to college, because nobody in my family had really ever gone to college. And certainly paying for it was, you know, going to be a challenge. So I made the band in high school, and you started, you know, Church has always been a very big part of our life. And I think that somewhere along the way, I thought, well, you know, I'll major in music, and I'll be a minister of music church. That's what I think I'll do. And I think many, many kids make decisions on their career because they have limited scope of what they do. And for me, I just church and home and band, church and home and man and random sports. So I ended up majoring in music in college, vocal and my I paid my way through school by playing trumpet in the band. But my major was vocal major, because that was going to be that would be the impetus for being Minister of music, you know, was vocal and orchestration and choir practices and all that. But after about a semester of being in school, I realized I could play anything. If you put it in front of me, I could play it, and was pretty good at it. Good enough to get a scholarship. But I couldn't create it. And I began to see in other music majors skills that I didn't have. Oh, look, here's coffee. I had to go to the makeup room house. Thank you so much. You're so kind. I'm going to shut this i We're, we're having a zoom call. No, but thank you for the coffee. And then I have to hang my coats up on the back. There we go. So anyway, um, my guidance counselor, I had decided at that point, you know, after a year or so, I thought, you know, I'm gonna go to law school. And my guidance counselor when I went in to start making out another semester of school, my guidance counselor said, don't major in pre law because if you major in pre law, it's useless if you don't go to law school doesn't do you any good. I hear that. Journalism students do well in law school because you have to write and you know, you'll have to write a lot of things and So why don't you try that instead of law. And so I consider it Providence, I consider it, you know, God's hand on on my life, you know, some random person tells me to go major in journalism because I'm gonna go to law school. And I took a government law class. And that's when I realized what was involved in law school because, you know, you're actually supposed to, I was a student who would, would wait until the last minute and then study, and then do pretty well on the test and law school, you go into one of these lectures, and they expected you to read the case law. And the case before you came to school. And I'll never forget, I sat next to this guy named Scott Lee. Hi, who is when we walked in? He goes, Did you read the case? And I went, Oh, no, your man is still in our high school mentality. And he goes, Oh, my gosh, I can't

believe you didn't read the case. And I got called on it. And he's now a judge. So it kind of goes to show that he was in the right field, and I was in the wrong. But because I was taking these journalism classes, I began to see that well, wait a minute, this is actually I kind of like this. And so I ended up majoring in broadcast journalism, with a minor in radio, TV film. My idea was that maybe I could work in TV or radio, but if I couldn't, if I was a journalism major, I could write for a newspaper, or I could write, you know, magazines or something like that. But primarily, that idea was newspaper. Because remember, this was 30 plus years ago, and people still read newspapers at that time. And you know, so I was in Monroe. And while going through school, I mean, I think one of the great things about being at a smaller school was access to equipment. You know, you go to a major school, you know, you're fighting for time in front of the camera, you're fighting for time on the air, you're fighting for cameras, you're fighting for edits, it's a big difference now, because you can do a lot of it on your phone. But back then, you know, these cameras, we had, we had cameras, and you had to check them out and go use them. But you know, the more I did it, the more I was like, this is you know, I kind of liked this, and kind of like this. Awesome. That's how I that's how I ended up in journalism. It was it was never a thought of being on TV. It just ended up being something that kept me out of law school.

Q: How would you describe your accent?

I still have an accent, you know. And the, the more tired I get, or if I've been drinking, it comes out. And it really comes out when I'm with my family. Because my family had all of them and very, very thick accents, you know, and anytime I'm on the phone with my friends, best friend in high school still lives in Alabama. And, er, he moved to Alabama. So you know, yeah, I definitely definitely had work to do to get rid of it. I don't know that I ever completely got rid of it. It's my opinion that I don't think you have to completely get rid of it. We're a melting pot. But the one thing that I've always told people is you have to be professional, you have to, you have to think about what you're saying. And you have to focus on what you're saying. Because if you're in a neighborhood where somebody thinks that a southern accent makes you dumb that is going to hinder you. So I always loved Southern accents. And I don't think that Southern accents necessarily apply a level of intelligence because you can be grammatically correct and still have an accent. And so I fight that out here a lot. You know, in California they don't. They don't necessarily see Southern accents as a sign of intellect. high intellect. So it's important I think you have to work at it in this field. You cannot be a I'm so identifiable to an area because it alienates you from the area of living. Okay, and I don't want I need to be seen as a member of this community. And, and your your accent is one of those things, you know, now I make no bones about it, I am a very proud person with my family living in the South and growing up in the South. And I think in many cases, people don't understand anything about it, because they've never lived there. But yeah, I'm very proud of I mean, it, but it was, it was a, it was a, it wasn't a conscious effort to lose the accent. And I think in this field, if you don't make the conscious effort to lose the accent, you will not lose the axe, you have to work out you have to work. You're not just going to you're I mean, so my, my journalistic career began in Monroe. So my first job was in Monroe, Louisiana, on the

radio. And then down there in Monroe, there was an am FM TV station. And so all of those entities were under one roof. But I worked in radio sports. But because I also had a minor in TV film, I knew how to run the cameras, I knew how to operate shoot stuff in the field. So even though I was in radio, I would go down the hall, to the sports department, and volunteer to help them so I would shoot video games, I would edit forum, I would do stories if necessary, just because it was fun. I mean, you're 23 years old, and you're covering sports. I mean, it's great. And I was covering my alma mater. And then eventually, I ended up working on TV because people quit people moved. And next thing you know, I was the sports director at K Inouye in Monroe. And I was really only a sports director for a few months, because they gave me the interim title for a while and I thought that I should I should have gotten the title. So I immediately started applying for jobs elsewhere. And as soon as they made me full time sports director, I like within months, I had a job to move to Wichita, Kansas. So my next job was at Kake TV Ke Ke TV in Wichita, Kansas. I was a weekend sports anchor. And I worked there for about four years, I worked and that's that's one thing about this business, you work with people from all over the place. And my best friend, one of my best friends to this day was the sports director in Wichita, and his name is Roger Wallace. And so I would hang out with Roger and hang out with my roommate, Paul. Paul was from Kansas. So he has a little bit of an accent. But my other roommate was Todd Johnson, he was from Dallas. But he was the weather guy. And he he kind of had an accent, but his wasn't nearly as pronounced. So it's this melting pot. So now here you are in Kansas, working with Roger, who's from Ohio. And he didn't have any accent. And then you have these other guys who are Midwestern kind of thing. So you start to kind of, you know, adopt into it. But I can honestly, it was funny that you had sent this email because I would, I had just been talking with a guy who was on the swim team with in college, so he and I were divers. And which is odd, because I'm six, three, and he's about five, seven. So most people, six, three are not divers. But I walked on and so I was on the team, you know, my junior and senior year, and by that time, I'd already kind of started getting into this field. His dad was worked with NBC radio, on the national level. And I used to say, you know, we'd be we'd be practically be practicing. And he's going, you know, what diver you getting ready to do, I'm gonna do, you know, reverse one and a half. He will do it. I'm fixing to and you guys, you're why I'm fixing to your work. And he would repeat because he was from New York. He would repeat that over and over and over. And basically he broke me some very bad habits. And he broke me up those habits because he knew what his dad sounded like. And he knew what I sounded like. And I sounded like a hick. Redneck, you know, from Monroe. And he said, If you ever want to work anywhere, but here, you cannot talk like that. So he was the first so here was this fellow diver, who the only reason I was dieting was because he was academically and algae. And, and here, he's the one that started putting it in my head at 20 years old 21 that you have to change the way you talk. And that wasn't from a teacher. It wasn't from, you know, a professor, it was from a fellow student who actually had a father who was in his field. So you know, I started paying attention as early as about 21 You know, when again, it was just I just wanted a job. I just wanted to be able to work. So I was more than happy to be in Monroe the rest of my life. But, you know, the reason I left Monroe was one of the people I worked there with, he too, wasn't a very thick accent. He was he was Lanny James. He was, I can't

remember where he was from, but he was from somewhere else. And he had a very, you know, clean dialect. He didn't have a much of an accent. But he would always talk about, well, I could have done this. And I could have done that. But I stayed here because of my family. I stayed here, because so from very, once I've got my first job in TV, I was thinking, I never want to look back and think, what if, or I should have or I didn't, I can always come back here. But I can't redo it if I never leave in the first place. So that's when I you know, from the moment I started working, I thought not because I needed to move to Los Angeles or something. I just felt like, I need to try somewhere else. So that's how I ended up in Wichita was was going there, and I was still in sports. But while I was in Wichita, I began to realize, okay, well, I'd like to make more money, or I'd like to, you know, not be in Wichita, Kansas, the rest of my life, so maybe I can try somewhere else. So I was there about three years. And at that point, I saw actually, I sent a tape applying for a random job in LA. And the the guy who took the tape sent me a note back back, then you wrote letters. And he wrote a letter back and he said, You're not good enough to work in LA right now. But maybe you could be in the future. Here's a guy call this agent, I think he would do well for you. And his name was Kenny Lin. And so I called Kenny lender. And lo and behold, he said, Sure, yes, I'll take you on the client. And he said, Do you really want to stay in sports, and I said, I'll do anything. I'll do whatever was out there. And I mean, I thought, you know, game shows, I didn't know what he meant. But what he meant was news. And so because of him, I got a job in Denver, Colorado, as the morning show, news anchor in Denver, Colorado, having never done news before. Only doing sports, I started in Denver. That's the first place I had a news director telling me, You can't talk like that. So he, he pulled me into his office. And he said, You can't.

You know, I'm trying to remember some of the words that I would say that that were, you know, really big, but but in this industry, you will have talent coaches along the way. And in Denver was the first time I ever had a talent coach, and they would sit you down as a news anchor. And they would say, here's what you're doing, right? And here's what you're doing wrong. Try this, try that. That was their job. Lucky for me, these two talent coaches, were actually speech pathologists as well. Wow, that was their background. So they created this talent consulting job, but they were speech pathologists. Now they were not hired simply to make my accent better. They actually were there to work with all of the talent at the station. But their primary focus with me was, you need to clean up your language. One of the things I remember most specifically from them that has really stuck with me, was finish your words. They don't use they said you don't finish your words, is there a G at the end of walking? Say it? If there is a G at the end of talking, say it and i i, one of the things that I think with language for the point of your project, and I've thought about this a lot in the past, not just now is that most dialect, as far as my experience from the south is laziness. It's just not finishing a sentence. It's not finishing a word. And you can fix that. You just have to think about and I you know, they worked on a lot of different things. I used to say the word well, all the time. Well, well, it's kind of like ah, is very similar to and I was hit on the air You know, if I'm ad libbing, and I'm trying to fill in a blank, I would say, well, well, and they said, You got to stop that. And so these speech pathologists who were talent coaches, really fed an already held belief that you really have to consciously

think about what you're saying, in this profession. If you're wanting to change how you talk, that requires you to listen to yourself. And it requires you to hear it critically. You can't just listen to a story that you did. And listen for all the great things that you did. You have to critically look at it and listen to it and, you know, be or work or be a critic of yourself. You know, I would say another thing for this project, one of the things that's always been important to me is, you don't listen to anything immediately. Because then you hear what you think you said. But if you wait a week to watch a resume tape, or wait a week to watch your package that you put together or wait a week, or two weeks or three weeks, to see a car chase that you just covered, we did one yesterday, if I wait to see that, I don't remember the mistakes I made. And I'm only hearing it as a viewer. And when you hear it, as a viewer, you start to hear an accent, you start to hear verbal crutches that you might have, but you have to wait, you cannot anchor a newscast and then go right back to your desk and watch it because then you're only hook up thinking about the cut off hand that I just did today. Because that's so fresh in your mind. You don't think about all of the other stuff that just kind of flies under the radar that you may never pick up on. And I know you mentioned that after that I moved to California and hello, I, I haven't had anything quite like Denver, where they flat out said you have to stop talking like that. So that was the worst one that was the one in Denver, and hear my news director here couple of times. And these are the things that unless somebody says so it's a combination, you have to listen to yourself. But you also have to have some outside help. Because I used to say the word insurance, car insurance, I have car insurance. And my news director called me in one time and said what, what's this word? I said insurance? She has? No, that's insurance. It sure is never even hit the way she did. It was much better. You know, just going it's insurance. And then the holiday in November is Thanksgiving. But not my family. It's Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving, you know? And so people would say, hey, you know, it's not Thanksgiving. It's Thanksgiving. So I don't know that I have many words now that are quite so you know, leap off the page. But, you know, I just never saw it on some never heard on some words. And so you know, there's always, there's always different ways of approaching it. My news director here, had already decided that they were glad I was working here. And they were just trying to make me better. My news director in Denver, ultimately, I ended up losing my job in Denver because they thought I was going to become something that I wasn't. And so they just didn't renew my contract. And I ended up in LA. So I don't know. I don't know who was right, who was wrong. But part of it was, I don't maybe part of it was the accident. Maybe part of it was the news director in Denver wanted me to be more of a sportscaster doing news. And I didn't see I couldn't figure out how to do that. Because I wasn't talking about a game anymore. I was talking about people dying. And so maybe I just wasn't quite getting it. But I do think part of it was the work I was trying to do while on the air to correct language deficiencies, you know and become more like everybody else.

Q: How does this topic tie into viewer trust?

Um, I think in this industry, the station is the one that builds the trust. We have to be as much as we can a reflection of the community. I've I've not gotten jobs in the past because I was white, and they were looking for a minority. And I find that to be

perfectly reasonable and understandable, because you can't have an all mono chromatic mono gender show, you're not reflecting the community. So I'm okay with not getting a job because you're just not what we're looking for. Because look as part of it. And for this discussion here, I also think, you know, conversation is part of it, too. Here in LA, we have people who have Spanish speaking accents. And, um, I think that shows that they understand a certain segment of the community, because they relate to them. Now, I do believe it needs to be, again, for lack of a better word of that professional type of Spanish accent, that, you know, you're still using proper English, you're still grammatically correct. But I know that you're a Spanish speaker first. And if I'm in the Spanish speaking community, I'm going to trust that person. When I was reporting in the field a lot if I worked with this one guy named Giorgio scherzo, if I went into any part of town, that it was rough and tumble that they spoke only Spanish, he got us everyone, because they trusted him because he talked to them. They understood him, he understood them. And when I say understand it goes beyond language. But language is maybe the first step that you're going to take in understanding a person. If somebody is out here with a southern accent and LA, I'm going to ask him, Where'd you grow up, and they'll and it's a kinship, you can relate to somebody very quickly based on how they talk. And by the way, when I'm out playing golf, or when we might think I will, I probably sound a lot more like I did in the past. So on the air when I'm sitting on the set, and I'm anchoring the newscast, I think the trust that is developed goes far deeper than just what's being said, it's 25 years of working here of people kind of watching me grow up and grow older. And I think that's kind of the case, but, and our station has a lot of people who've been here for a very long time. So I think that trust comes over time, and the fact that you cover stories, you tell stories, and your profession, and they get it because they watch you and they find there are times when I will totally say something redneck, you know, or we'll have a soundbite from somebody in the south. And I'll make the joke on the air that let me interpret that for you. And so people know where I'm from, and they know where I didn't grow up here. But because of the professionalism over time, those things are okay. But I do think that if you are grammatically incorrect, and you have an accent, whatever that might be, you know, if you're not speaking in, in proper sentence form, that's more of a detriment to trusting you than an accent, because that is showing you don't I have to start questioning how smart you are. If you can't talk in complete sentences. It's not the accent. It's, you know, irregardless, you know, that's one of those that that makes my skin crawl when I hear somebody say irregardless. And you know, and my daughter loves to say anyways, and I finally broken her of that and I said, No, it's anyway, it's on anyways, but then I look up in the dictionary and anyways is actually acceptable. And I'm going okay, I'm losing my mind. But I do think you, you have a distinct accent that does not fit in the neighborhood you're from. You can be seen as an outsider. And I look now at a lot of British speaking reporters throughout our country. That I would suggest they should try to lose at least some of the accent because they jump off the pages. You not from here. And I don't know for sure that it affects I mean, again, it goes back to professionalism. If a person can come in and be professional and have a British accent, I'm not saying that they, you know, somehow aren't going to be able to report. But I do think that it shows you care when you're trying to fit in, and you're trying to lose some of it.

Q: So you want people to focus on what you're saying not how you're saying it?

When I look at resumes, I think of it in the same way I think of this conversation, I'm never going to be perfect. But I should be technically perfect. In other words, you know, my resume, tape is always going to change, it's always going to be developing, I'm going to take things off, I'm gonna put things on. But when it comes to the way it looks, it's got to be technically perfect, I can't have jump cuts, I can't have bad audio, I can't have those things. And I look at that the same way I look at the conversation with this. And to the point of the woman that you just spoke up. If I have an accent, and I'm speaking in grammatically, technically correct language, people aren't going to get too hung up on how I'm saying it as long as it's professional. Yes. But if you're, you know, where are you at? Where are you wrong? You know, that's not going to come across? Well, because people are going to just like she said, they're going to be focused on. I can't believe he talks like that, you know, my mom would probably say that.

Q: If you moved back to the South do you think you would keep your neutral accent or allow your Southern accent to come back out?

No, I would try to keep it neutral, primarily because I mean, it's, it's this, I suppose it's very similar the way you would publicly speak to anyone. Or if you if you wrote a letter to a friend versus writing a job application. When I'm on television, I'm trying to present the most professional, intelligent person that I can be. And to me, in my mind, that means, as your other friend said, I don't want to be a distraction. There's a lot of a lot of things on air that I have come to over the years is this. You know, when it comes to a joke, or an aside that I might make in a newscast, I'm always thinking, is anyone going to be offended by this job? Not how many but as anyone, because the way I look at it is, no one is going to call the station and complain over a joke. I didn't tell ya, no one is going to call and complain, if I moved back to the south, no one is going to call and say, he doesn't have an accent like us. And I don't like him anymore. They're not going to make that complaint. But if I show up down there and start, you know, talking like I did when I was in high school, I don't think that would go over necessarily that well, either. So I guarantee you, if I move back in the south, there would be a lot of my accent that would come back. And it would be much harder to turn it on and turn it off when I go into work and come out of work. Because that's that's Thai talk, you know, when I'm talking to my friends down here, that's how I talk and he comes back, but it would change. But I don't know that I would necessarily do it on purpose, it would just be part of living in the community, it would still still come out a little bit. It would always be there a little bit. It is still always there. Now, people will say periodically, even in the building, and I think I don't have an accent.

Q: What do you think are the stereotypes of the accent?

I you know, out here, I mean, I have a very good friend of mine out here and during the Bush, George W. Bush campaign. He frequently talked about how stupid he was. And that always offended me and deeply offended. And I mean, this was a friend of mine and he and I would we would have have harsh disagreements, because I would say, you

know, you assume intellect based on an accent and you're setting yourself up to be humiliated. I said, just because he talks differently than you, does not mean, and he was from New York. So that is not an indication of whether he's smart or not. And I said, You, you, you should very, you should change your conversation on that. And by the way, that doesn't mean a person is smart. It doesn't mean they aren't smart. It's just to me, it's offensive. Especially when I hear people from these major areas, these major metropolitan urban areas, criticize somebody from with an accent from the south, it is deeply offensive to me, because they have no idea what they're talking about. They've grown up in this. My wife's from LA, she's never lived further than about 15 minutes from her, you know, the home that she grew up in. And I like to tell her, I said, you think you have a different worldview than I do? Because you grew up in LA. I said, But you have an eye, you have a worldview of Glendale California, because this is where you live. I've lived in Tennessee and Arkansas, and Colorado, and Wichita, Kansas, and I've seen virtually every part of this country for an extended period of time. And I said, and I'm from Monroe, Louisiana, I said, I can assure you, I know more about what's going on in the rest of the country than people who live in this big city of LA. And yet, because I have an accent, they will think that I'm either bigoted or racist or dumb, or didn't go to a good school or any of that, simply because of the way I talk. And that I try not to let it bother me. Generally, I kind of laugh it off. But in in moments of quiet and when I'm reading or when I'm studying or thinking, it's it's one of those things that's very offensive to me that you assume intellect based off of how someone talks? Definitely, absolutely. Because you'd never by the way, you'd never do that it would in a major urban area, New York, or LA or, but since you're in New York, let's let's talk about wouldn't anybody look at somebody from the Bronx and assume they're dumb because of their accent, or, or any other part of New York, they wouldn't. But somebody from the south comes up and goes to the Bronx and says the wrong thing, you know, doesn't say a city the proper way. Because they've never heard of it. Well, they're going to they're going to be deemed, you know, intellectually inferior. And I think that's a, you know, sad state of affairs. I just think it's offensive. And, you know, it's one of those things that can really make me upset. I guess you know, from Virginia. Yeah. I mean, you're probably you face the same thing. These Oh, the sweet you know, sweet kinda southern little girl, Megan. Megan coming up here. Yeah. Oh, Megan is so sweet. And you're like, I can be just as fired up as you.

Q: Do you think accents should be talked about more in journalism classes to help students have the best chance at success?

I do. There's a lot about journalism at the higher levels that I think is flawed. Personally, I think in many cases, they're teaching the way it used to be and not the way it is or, you know, a functioning way of being in TV news, but I think many kids graduate college, and they don't even have a resume tape ready to send to an employer right now. So for me, the single first thing I would require and I you know, I have made this pitch out here. I've tried to, you know, be adjunct professor here and there and just hadn't come through yet. But to me, if you expect somebody this is an industry different than any other, and if I want to be working at 22 years old when I graduate college, I better have spent the last six months getting a resume tape ready and sent out so that

somebody can see it. That's one thing that schools are absolutely shortchanging their students on the other But to your point is this, you know, you, as a professor have to see what is a hurdle and a detriment to one of your students getting a job. That's part of you're not just there to teach them editing, and writing and public relations and public speaking, you're teaching them and preparing them to get their first job. Now, if a student can't edit, you're going to teach them to edit. If a student can't speak, you need to do one of two things, you need to either teach them to speak or tell him to pick another major. And that is one of the things that I don't think is taught enough to many journalism students is you're not going to get a job in this field. If you talk that way. If you write that way, if you dress that way, if you look that way, I mean, there's a million different reasons why somebody can or can't work and television or radio or newspaper million, there's, I mean, I'm not trying to say you can't find a job, but it's kind of on these professors to identify hurdles for their students to get a job, and one of them is their language skills. You can't slide over that it is it's about being professional. And I absolutely, it's a by the way, let's let's be clear, I think it would be one of the more challenging things that a professor has to do, definitely. But I remember in one of my journalism class, one of my radio, TV film classes in college, a student and I got to be on a project and this student got an A, and I went to the professor, and I was really upset. Because you know, back then it's all about the grades. And that you want that grade, you want that a and it was name was Jeff Gibbs. And I said, Jeff, this is this is crazy, how is it that he got a B, or he got an A and I got a B, my story was so much better than his and you know, and he said, You gave it about half effort, and that was the best he can do. So that's why he got an A, and you got to be because you didn't try as hard as he could. It made an impact on me, because I remember it 30 years after. But it also made an impact of you did a disservice to the other student. Because you gave the other student in a when the work wasn't, and that person never got a job. In the field of journalism, that person never worked. And you now as a professor, delayed their understanding of what career path they might take. Because you gave an A when you should have given a C or a D, and help educate that person. And to your point about language, language is a part of what we do. And if you're a professor, and you're incapable of helping someone speak proper English, you need to at least be able to identify proper English and what it sounds like and let them know. I had I had one of our professors the head of the department for radio Joel Willer loved Joel Willer. He was great. He was from Ohio, and he they made me recut commercial that we had done for our campus radio station for Popeye's fried chicken. Never heard of Popeye's fried chicken? Not you've never heard of Popeyes. Oh, Popeyes. Exactly. Falling Piper high five. I was from Monroe, Louisiana. And that's Popeye's fried chicken. And I cut the commercial for Popeye's fried chicken. And he said, You've got to go redo that. Like, what do you mean? He goes, You're not here yourself. And I'm going you have any kind of spot for pie pots. And he goes, It's not pie pots, and I went, what is it that he goes it's Popeyes and I went oh, there's just no way that's how you pronounce that? Because yes, it's pop. I am going in it to this day is one of the more difficult words for me because I mean it was it's always been a you want to go to Popeyes Popeyes.

Q: Are there words you struggle with?

There's one that I think would have done me in out here. But lucky for me and it had nothing to do with me in the South. I think to your point, there are just words that are are difficult. There was a city in Colorado named buna Vista, that is how it's pronounced. It is buna Vista, Colorado. So I was driving along out here and I called a friend of mine because I was lost. And I just moved here. And I was losing my mind because I couldn't do a freeway system. I just and I said, Stephen, I cannot find where I am. And he goes, what free were you said on a one on one? Okay, what's the next x? And I said, Do you know this? And he goes, Okay, first. Never say that again. Oh, wait, what? Because he was from Colorado, too. And he had just been, he'd been living out here before me. And he goes here. It's Buena Vista. And I went, what? And he goes, it's Buena Vista. It's a Spanish word. And I'm like, wow. Okay. Well, thank you. Because I would have said the universe on the air. I would. Absolutely. Because that's. And then there's a city out here. That should be now San Pedro. But it is San Pedro. And how that happened? I don't know. So you know, language is already a challenge based off of where you live. And then when you throw in, how we see it, and how we have grown up with it. That makes it even more of a challenge, I think.

Q: Where do you think the field is moving in the future?

I do think that I think collectively across the country, not even in this industry. We are neutralizing our accent a lot. Because as you mentioned, we are an international country a lot more than we were in the past. You have people, you know, I'm trying to think of what the company is that moved to Monroe that used to be in Denver. CenturyLink I think century tell CenturyLink. Their headquarters are in Monroe, Louisiana. If you wanted a job, you had to move to Monroe, you had to leave Denver and move to Monroe. Okay, well, right there, you've taken a melting pot, or people who have no accent Colorado, and put them in Louisiana. So they're not on the air. But you have this, you know, people or businesses are moving to Texas. I mean, the Toyota headquarters that used to be in Torrance are now in Dallas and Plano. So you've got a bunch of California people who've moved to Texas. So again, your gentrifying, if you want to call it that, you're certainly softening the edges of a lot of people's language in Texas, because major corporations are moving all over the place, and people are going with them. In this industry, I think we are a reflection of our society. And yes, people are moving around a lot more. They don't stay in one place. The idea of going to college somewhere else is something that's really exciting for people. And so now you've taken you've taken a kid and you've gone to, you know, from Texas to go to the University of Arizona, well, you know how it goes. A lot of people they stay where they go to college, and they end up finding a job in that community? Well, you know, it's a big melting pot. And I think, I think think bigger city, you know, some big cities are getting smaller to Californians are leaving, you know, they're leaving mass out here, and they go to other states, and they're going to take their accent with them. So I do think that yes, the industry and the society, as a whole are softening the edges, so to speak. I do think the larger the city, the more likely you're going to neutralize your accent, definitely, you get into some of the smaller cities, it's just a lot easier. Because nobody's you're not going to run across the volume of people who don't have an accent. You're going to primarily run across people who do have an accent.

Q: Do you have anything else to add?

You know, I've had to move all over the country, I've gone to tiny schools, and it just, you just have to concentrate. You just have to think about it. You have to be self critical. But it's not about where you go to school. It's not about it's not an accident isn't a reflection of intelligence. But if you don't want people to think a certain way about you, then you should address the issue. You know, you you know, I can't walk around always get mad at people who think I'm something because of a southern accent, but I'm not doing anything to work on. And I think I probably would have stayed in Wichita, Kansas, or Denver, Colorado, or Monroe, Louisiana, if I hadn't worked at, I don't know that I would have been able to continue a career that had me in Los Angeles for 25 years. If I kept talking the way I talked when I was in Monroe, Louisiana, I just don't think it would have you know, from a professional on air perspective, I think it would have looked bad. I just don't think it would have been just something you have to work on.

And I also believe it is absolutely, absolutely doable by anybody, if they think about it, but you have to listen to yourself. You can't just casually talk. That's the thing. When when people are tracking out here, young people in college and they're trying to give and I'm trying to help them, learn how to track better learn how to read camera better, or whatever it is they're working on. Whether they want to write that. My my phrase is, you can be conversational, but you must be professional. Casual is not conversation. I talk casually when I'm at home with my family. Conversational can be professional. So you you want to be conversational. You don't want to sound hoity toity you don't want to I don't want to sound any more perfect English than I do imperfect English. What I want to be is relatable to the audience. And to be relatable to the audience. I need to be conversational and professional. I don't want to be conversational and casual. Because when you are a casual speaker you are going to say slang, you're going to say cliches you're going to say a lot of adjectives. And to me in my field, I believe additives have no place in what I do, because it tells people what I think. And I don't want that. And I also kind of think that soon as you start being a little too cliche ish, if you start becoming too casual in your language, you start to look unprofessional. And that doesn't mean you're not relating to the other person, because you can be conversational, and professional. But leave the casualness at home. And I think sometimes, you know, you'll see a script people write, and they'll leave out words and, you know, happening now, and I'm going no one talks like that. So no one talks like, take that out. I don't care about the happening now. Just tell me that today this thing is happening. That's what I want to know. Don't tell me that it's a tragic accident of a 405 When a person dies, because now what happens when seven people die? Is it super duper tragic, I mean, leave that out and just say, of fatal accident. For two people died, five people died, seven people died. Let the viewer determine if it was a tragic, because they may have been a part of a 25 person accident, and that was tragic for them. So you know, again, that kind of gets into style, but the point is, you know, just stick to the basics. Stick to the facts. Be professional, be conversational. Don't be casual. Casual. Yeah, the accent starts to come back as soon as you start getting casual.

APPENDIX II: INTERNSHIP PORTFOLIO

Listed below are the segments I worked on throughout my internship. I produced almost the entire, if not all, of the listed segments on my own under the supervision of a segment producer. The Fox archives require a subscription to view old video content so I could not directly attach video footage.

February 21st – Segment E

- **Topic 1:** People use company recordings of Zoom meetings on YouTube to pretend they're working: 'This is a lifesaver.'
- **Topic 2:** Would you live in a city that forced you to exercise?
- **Topic 3:** Mom goes viral after leaving a chore list for extra cash for her toddler's babysitter.

March 1st – Segment D

- **Topic 1:** INSANE RESCUE: Driver rescued from semi dangling off Louisville, Kentucky Bridge.
- **Topic 2:** Wish I was this buff -- Shirtless Mark Wahlberg, 52, shows off his RIPPED PHYSIQUE as he enjoys his daily 4 AM workout session!
- **Topic 3:** Rise of the "do nothing" vacation: Soaring number of Americans shun active, fun holidays for pure rest and relaxation trips to all-inclusive resorts.

March 6th – Segment C

- President Biden overwhelmingly won the Democratic contests on Super Tuesday, with one notable exception — American Samoa!
- Biden lost to long-shot candidate -- Jason Palmer -- a 52-year-old businessman from Baltimore.
- “Uncommitted” or “No Preference” also had a good showing against the President in key states.

March 11th – Segment D

- "The Most Powerful Propaganda Tool Ever" top Democrat, Republican intel senators blast TikTok as ban nears.
- The bill would require Chinese-based owner ByteDance to divest TikTok or face a ban on U.S. app stores --- banning users from accessing the platform --- it gives ByteDance 165 days to divest TikTok once passed.
- Top Democrat, Republican intel senators blast TikTok: "The Most Powerful Propaganda Tool Ever."
- Biden would sign bipartisan bill that could ban Tiktok if Congress passes the legislation... even though his campaign is on it!

March 13th – Segment E

- **Topic 1:** Stoner rats! New Orleans rats eating all the police-confiscated weed. New Orleans Police Superintendent Anne Kirkpatrick says rats are getting in the evidence room and eating drugs at NOPD headquarters.
- **Topic 2:** Famous artist Shaggy stuns fans by revealing he has been singing with a fake accent for decades... Shaggy's signature heavy Jamaican accent singing

voice... is not really his at all. The “It Wasn't Me” rapper used his real voice in a recent interview on TikTok and fans instantly expressed their dismay, having believed for decades that Shaggy had a heavy Jamaican accent.
- **Topic 3:** Good news for "The Five" scientists have discovered 5PM is the best time of the day!

March 15th – Segment D
- SNAKES ON A PLATE?! Eating snake is better for the environment than eating beef or chicken, study claims - so, would you try a python pie?

March 18th – Segment E
- **Topic 1:** Mike Tyson posts training footage ahead of Jake Paul fight.
- **Topic 2:** "Sopranos" star Michael Imperioli went full gangster on a climate protester interrupting his Broadway show... This is the wild moment Sopranos actor Michael Imperioli shoved climate change activists out of the theater midway through his Broadway performance of An Enemy of the People.
- **Topic 3:** French study suggests one in five young people can't recognize a zucchini.

March 19th – Segment E
- "Sob Parlour" is a pop-up "Cry-Spa" that provides you with a spot to shed your tears.

March 21st – Segment E
1. **Topic 1:** Is it illegal to order off the kids menu? Woman orders a kids' meal through room service. Hotel worker questions where the kid is!
2. **Topic 2:** Elon Musk's Neuralink shows first brain chip patient playing online chess.
3. **Topic 3:** "Why y’all laughing? This is serious stuff!" Lil Jon rolls out a MEDITATION album.

March 25th – Segment E
- Fliers trying to avoid Boeing planes, turning to prayer and anti-anxiety meds to get on the flight.

March 27th – Segment E
- **Topic 1:** Woman "nurses stricken baby hedgehog" overnight only to "discover" it was a fluffy hat bobble when she took it to an animal hospital.
- **Topic 2:** Playground bullies do prosper – and go on to earn more in middle age.
- **Topic 3:** What is "sunshine guilt"? Why you feel extra shame staying inside on nice weather days.

March 28th – Segment D
- Oakland officials go after 102-year-old wheelchair-bound man after he was unable to remove graffiti painted all over his home - as Dem-run city threatens to fine him thousands.

April 1st – Segment E

- **Topic 1:** Shocking video shows NASCAR driver ripping off his own bumper -- and chucking it at another racer!
- **Topic 2:** Sticky-fingered journalists told to STOP STEALING from Air Force One... among the items that were taken ... pillowcases, glasses, and gold-rimmed dinnerware...
- **Topic 3:** Gen Z prefers first dates are digital instead of meeting people IRL: 'It's efficient.'

April 4th – Segment D

- Seattle Public Schools Is Dismantling Its Gifted And Talented Program, Which Administrators Argued Was Oversaturated With White And Asian Students, In Favor Of A More "Inclusive, Equitable and Culturally Sensitive" Program.

April 8th – Segment E

- The Bad Boy Of Country! Morgan Wallen Arrested On 3 Felony Charges --- After Allegedly Throwing Chair From Sixth-Floor Rooftop Bar!
- The "Wasted On You" Hitmaker Arrested After Launching Chair From Sixth Floor Of Bar In Nashville That Landed Just Three Feet Away From Cops.
- MUGSHOT MANIA! Wallen Grins In Mugshot After He's Booked On Felony Charges For Allegedly Throwing Chair From Sixth-Floor Rooftop Bar

April 10th – Segment E

- **Topic 1:** Lenny Kravitz Works Out In Full Rockstar Attire Including Leather Pants... In a new video he shared on April 9, Kravitz, 59, can be seen doing an intense workout while clad in leather pants, a sheer shirt and sunglasses.
- **Topic 2:** The Four Most Divisive Words on a Flight: Will You Swap Seats?
- **Topic 3:** Rampaging monkey gangs terrorize Thai tourist town as cops arm themselves with slingshots and tranquilizer guns to combat "dangerous" primates

April 11th – Segment C

- "I DO NOT TALK TO FOX!!!" Rashida Tlaib Angrily Yells At Fox Reporter Hillary Vaughn Asking About "Death to America" Chants.
- Over The Weekend — A Group Of Pro-Hamas Protesters Chanted "Death To America" At A Ramadan Rally In Dearborn Michigan.
- The White House Waffled On Condemning "Death To America" Chants.

April 15th – Segment E

- Two Men Topple Ancient Rock Formations At Nevada National Park As Young Girl Watches In Fear: 'Daddy, Don't Fall!'
- The National Park Service Said Saturday That Park Rangers Are Looking For The Vandals Who Appeared In A Viral Video On April 7 Disturbing The Boulder In A Part Of Lake Mead National Recreation Area.
- During The Incident Caught On Camera, A Young Girl Yells, "Daddy, Don't Fall" As The Man In The Dark Top Struggles To Move A Rock. The Girl Then

Screamed, “Daddy, Daddy!” The Same Man Nearly Fell As He Dislodged One Of The Formations Before Regaining His Footing.
- If The Two Men Are Caught, They Could Face Prison For Six Months And A $5,000 Fine

April 17th – Segment E
- **Topic 1:** Nick Offerman Presidency Would Bring Back Woodworking, Kitchens, Sewing in Schools
- **Topic 2:** Having a Cat Can Double Your Chances of Developing Schizophrenia, New Study Says
- **Topic 3:** Forget dating apps: NYC pickleball courts are the hot new singles scene

April 18th – Segment E
- **Topic 1:** Forget Dating Apps: NYC Pickleball Courts Are The Hot New Singles Scene
- **Topic 2:** Watters Cheated! Students With Surnames That Come Later In The Alphabet --- Are Given Lower Grades, Study Finds!
- **Topic 3:** “Law & Order: SVU” Star Mariska Hargitay Mistaken For Real-Life Cop By Lost Child

APPENDIX III: CITATIONS

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Interview guide:

- *What have you experienced in relation to your accent in the journalism industry?*
- *How has your accent affected your career as a journalist?*
- *Tell me about how you felt entering the industry with your accent.*
- *What do you think the stereotypes associated with your accent are?*
- *Describe what you believe the standard is for accents in journalism.*
- *Have you ever felt like you need to change or hide your accent to fit into the industry better? If so, why did you feel you had to?*
- *How have you dealt with career challenges your accent might have posed?*
- *How comfortable would you feel working in a region that has a very different accent than you?*
- *Tell me a story about when you were aware of your accent.*