

# Podcasting the Crisis of Masculinity: Recognition Politics, the Manosphere, and the Joe Rogan Experience Audience

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## Abstract

*Despite podcasts' increasing prominence in the contemporary media ecosystem, they have attracted limited scholarly attention. This study examines audience characteristics of the most popular podcast in the United States, The Joe Rogan Experience (JRE), situating it within the broader cultural context of the "manosphere." Leveraging two national probability samples collected in October 2022 (N=2,907) and November 2023 (N=1,000), this research explores the socio-demographic profile, political attitudes, cultural values, and media consumption behaviors of Rogan's listeners. The findings indicate that Rogan's audience transcends traditional partisan alignments, instead cohering around shared cultural orientations characterized by epistemic skepticism, institutional distrust, conspiracism, and distinct attitudes toward gender and race. This study underscores the importance of examining deeper cultural values alongside traditional political variables, enhancing our understanding of how influential media figures like Rogan shape and reflect broader ideological currents in an increasingly fragmented information environment.*

## Introduction

Podcasting has moved swiftly from a fringe pastime to a centerpiece of today's personalized audio landscape. Amid that growth, The Joe Rogan Experience (JRE) towers above the field, routinely drawing multi-million-strong audiences that eclipse cable-news reach. A decade ago, podcast listening was a niche activity, with only 30% of Americans reporting having ever engaged with this medium. By 2023, 64% of Americans had listened to a podcast, and regular weekly listeners have more than tripled since the early 2010s (Pew Research Center, 2023). And content from podcasts often appears as “social clips” or “sound-bite reels” on Instagram, TikTok, X/Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, expanding their reach, especially for programs like JRE and Huberman Lab.

The explosive growth of podcasting extends beyond the United States. Recent cross-national data indicate that podcasts have become increasingly popular globally, with more than a third of respondents across 20 surveyed countries now engaging with podcasts monthly, reflecting broader transformations in media consumption habits worldwide and intersecting with the rise of social media and the erosion of local and legacy news sources (Newman, Fletcher, Robertson, Ross Arguedas, & Nielsen, 2024).

In this increasingly fragmented media ecosystem, characterized by declining institutional trust, polarization, and the waning influence of traditional information gatekeepers, podcasts offer a uniquely intimate, long-form communication style that may foster distinct audience relationships and potentially influence political and cultural attitudes differently than traditional media sources. Within this context, Joe Rogan holds unique sway and serves as a critical case study. Consistently ranking as the most listened-to podcast in the United States, JRE has transcended conventional media boundaries, influencing political discourse and cultural debates by platforming diverse, often controversial figures — a network of comics, heterodox pundits, wellness gurus, and tech evangelists dubbed the “Roganverse” (Korach, 2024; Lewis, 2024; Zichgraf, 2025). Yet little is known about the implications of JRE consumption for democratic life.

Rogan’s podcast typifies a broader cultural phenomenon identified as the “manosphere” (Barnes & Karim, 2025). This informal but increasingly influential online ecosystem comprises podcasters, content creators, and influencers who primarily target young men, promoting specific conceptions of masculinity, widespread skepticism toward mainstream media, and resistance to progressive cultural trends (Ging, 2019). Understanding Rogan’s role within this cultural context provides essential insights into the ideological currents shaping contemporary media consumption.

Building on two complementary survey datasets—one administered immediately after the 2022 midterms in Wisconsin and the other fielded nationally during the 2023 election cycle—we advance two interlocking questions: (1) What demographic, cultural, and ideological traits predict JRE consumption? (2) How does JRE consumption relate to patterns of news and

social-media use? We use these analyses to gain insights into the ways the “Roganverse” may serve as a gateway to broader “manosphere”

To structure our analyses, we first situate JRE in the fragmented post-broadcast audio ecosystem. We then synthesize literature on parasocial intimacy, recognition backlash, and epistemic polarization into a model of engagement with the manosphere. Using this framework, we analyze these data using hierarchical regression techniques, revealing implications for post-2024 political communication research.

We argue that Rogan’s appeal cuts across conventional political categorizations, reflecting deeper cultural alignments among listeners, including epistemic skepticism, institutional distrust, conspiratorial thinking, and distinct views on race and gender. By exploring these cultural worldviews alongside traditional political variables, we offer novel insights into how influential figures like Rogan shape and reflect broader partisan, ideological and cultural shifts within today’s fragmented media landscape.

## **A Cultural Force for Skepticism**

Estimates show that every JRE episode draws about 11 million listeners, nearly four times as many people as prime-time cable news hosts like Sean Hannity (Fox News) and almost twice that of the NBC Nightly News. Unlike cable and network news, which are extensively studied by political communication scholars, only thirteen articles published in Political Communication since 2010 have even mentioned podcasts. His podcast episodes with Elon Musk (#1169) and Donald Trump (#2219) were consumed by 69 million and 54 million listeners, respectively. Bloomberg (Carman, 2024) reports that in 2024, JRE’s Spotify follower count is 14.5 million, more than three times its closest rival (Ted Talks Daily). The show attracts high-profile guests, from comedians to MMA fighters, scholars to mentalists, billionaires to Senate and Presidential candidates of both major political parties, all people who Rogan selects because, as he says, he thinks, “...it would be cool to talk to that person.” Never because the person is popular, he insists (Spotify, 2024), and never shying away from controversial, unorthodox guests.

Rogan’s style could be described as longform casual, similar to a popular talk radio personality, Howard Stern. While he may conduct some background research before his interviews, there is no script. Instead, “... it all just sort of happens in real time. It’s just an actual organic conversation with people enjoying themselves, which is something we all can relate to, and something we all love to do.” This relatability and authenticity both resonate with listeners, as Rogan himself appears to find joy in the exchanges. He often seems genuinely intrigued or incredulous at the things he learns, but is also occasionally critical of guests, challenging their assertions or beliefs. This combination of fascination and skepticism is a hallmark of his hosting style.

Rogan’s unscripted and informal conversational approach can be theoretically understood through the concept of parasocial interaction, a one-sided psychological relationship in which

listeners feel a personal connection to media personalities (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Podcasts, due to their intimacy and long-form format, have the potential to foster particularly strong parasocial relationships. Rogan's apparent authenticity, curiosity, and approachable skepticism invite listeners to feel they are participating in genuine conversations, intensifying emotional engagement and loyalty among his audience (Dibble, Hartmann, & Rosaen, 2016)

During and after the COVID pandemic, Rogan, his show, the Joe Rogan Experience, and its supporting platform, Spotify, found themselves at the center of a firestorm stemming from the show's amplification of misinformation (Spangler, 2021). Sometimes coming from Rogan himself and sometimes from his guests, JRE amplified spurious claims ranging from the COVID vaccine altering recipients' genes to ivermectin curing COVID to young people being at greater risk of heart problems from the COVID vaccine than from the COVID virus (BBC News, 2022). In the weeks that followed, old clips surfaced of Rogan using the N-word and joking about sexual assault in comedy clubs (Rosman, Sisario, Isaac, & Satariano, 2022; Hitt, 2020). These and other controversies, such as the platforming of anti-vaxxers like Robert Kennedy Jr.'s and conspiracy theorists like Alex Jones, spurred speculation about the kinds of people who were listening to Rogan's show, and the impact of JRE (and its misinforming content) on its audience's attitudes and beliefs (Stecula & Motta, 2021; Jarry, 2021; Jones, 2023).

Yet, despite its clear cultural relevance and impact, detailed accounts of the makeup of Rogan's listeners are scant. One exception is the 2023 YouGov survey that pointed to an overwhelming young male audience, whose attitudes and beliefs prioritize physical fitness, professional success, privacy, and a distrust of mainstream journalism more than the general public (Pheby, 2023). That survey also found a large discrepancy between how Rogan listeners think about gender equality in the workplace compared to the general public. Journalistic deep dives also find that Rogan is a hero to politically disillusioned, mostly young, men (Gordon, 2019). While undoubtedly confounded with the overwhelmingly male nature of the JRE audience, these findings invite us to consider how these unique characteristics of this massive audience interact with one another, and how they relate to adjacent political, cultural, and psychological characteristics.

### **An Emblem of the Manosphere**

Rogan has branded himself as a fearless, outspoken defender of free speech, refusing to silence himself on topics and perspectives that may be unpopular or controversial (from vaccines to transgender rights). Some, like First Amendment scholar Jonathan Turley attribute Rogan's popularity to this free speech commitment: "Rogan's popularity is precisely due to the fact that he is uncensored in what he says" (Turley, 2022). Yet others are less charitable, like The New York Times' David French describing Rogan as part of the toxic "Manosphere," the online world comprised of "gurus" to whom men are turning to "fill the void" caused by a "lack of meaning and purpose" in their lives (French, 2024). Rogan and his program exemplify the concept of "bro culture," dominated by a kind of "young man who not only engages with but relishes the privilege of being a straight, cisgender, financially comfortable white man" (Lascity, 2021).

According to Lascity (2021), a bro exists at the “intersection of athleticism, friendship with other men, class privilege, and a relaxed vibe,” and Rogan himself is highlighted as a quintessential exemplar. Others, such as UT Austin professor Peniel Joseph who, after Rogan’s past usage of the N-word on air was unearthed in 2021, wrote, “Joe Rogan’s platform, it has now been revealed for the world to see, is less a bastion of independence of mind and free expression of thought and more a haven for racial intolerance, sexist insults and the kind of so-called “locker room talk” (Joseph, 2022).

Understanding Rogan’s audience requires recognizing his podcast as embedded within this larger cultural phenomenon of the manosphere and “bro culture.” Rogan’s informal, approachable style aligns well with other popular “bro culture” podcasters, comedians, and influencers—such as Theo Von, Tony Hinchcliffe, Bert Kreischer, Jordan Peterson, Gad Saad, Andrew Huberman, and Bret Weinstein—who similarly mix personal growth narratives, provocative cultural critique, and humor in a manner that resonates with younger, male audiences. Rogan and these other manosphere hosts often appeal to the feelings of disenchantment among many young American men, a population that expresses distrust toward traditional institutions, mainstream news, and established cultural norms. Such sentiments are common across manosphere podcasts, YouTube channels, and social media influencers (Barnes & Karim, 2025).

Rogan and other figures within the manosphere frequently employ communication strategies common to populist rhetoric, notably anti-elitism, anti-intellectualism, and appeals to “common sense” (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). This style effectively taps into feelings of disenfranchisement and marginalization among listeners, reinforcing narratives that elites—academic, political, or media—are disconnected from or actively hostile toward the lived realities of ordinary people, particularly young men experiencing social and economic uncertainties.

### **The “Crisis of Masculinity”**

Yet, Rogan’s popularity and overwhelmingly male audience suggest that regardless of what he is offering, his show is satisfying a central need or desire among these dedicated listeners. Crucially, his popularity is booming at a moment when American men and boys are falling behind - economically, educationally, and socially. Today, American boys are less likely to graduate high school than girls, less likely to earn bachelor’s degrees than women, and perform significantly worse on standardized tests than their female counterparts (Reeves & Smith, 2022). As reported by the American Enterprise Institute, American men report that their social circles are shrinking (Cox, 2021). Their risk of dying from drug overdose is almost three times greater than that of American women, and their risk of suicide is four times greater than that of American women (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2023; American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2024).

But this “crisis of masculinity,” as it has been referred to by some conservatives, is a challenging one to discuss, especially, as the Washington Post’s Christine Emba highlights, for progressives who may worry that addressing a rising crisis among men may work against some of the “gains

that have been made for women over the past several decades” (Illing, 2023). Emba suggests that because conservatives are more comfortable talking about traditional gender roles and articulating norms of masculine versus feminine behavior, cultural conservatives have “an opening” to appeal to “young men...looking for role models and realizing that they feel unsure and uncomfortable about their place in the world” (Illing, 2023). This, it appears, may be just the opening that Rogan is tapping into on JRE.

This broader social context of male disenchantment can be usefully viewed through the lens of backlash politics, which describes how demographic groups react defensively when perceiving threats to their traditional privileges or identities (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Within this framework, Rogan’s messaging, which emphasizes personal strength, self-reliance, and resistance to perceived cultural shifts, resonates powerfully by offering both validation and a sense of agency to listeners who perceive themselves as socially or culturally threatened.

### **Media Fragmentation and Declining Trust**

The past forty years have seen several concurrent trends in the U.S. and around the globe: a splintering of the information environment, also called media fragmentation, a decline in the power of elite gatekeepers over the information environment, and declining trust in institutions, from journalism to government, science to higher education (Young & Miller, 2023; Shehata & Strömbäck, 2018; Nielsen & Fletcher, 2024). Research indicates that media fragmentation has contributed to political polarization by facilitating partisan selective exposure and avoidance, while also allowing politically disinterested audiences to drop out of the formal political information environment (network news, cable news, newspapers) altogether through the availability of a wide array of non-political entertainment offerings (Stroud, 2011; Prior, 2005).

Through the 1990s, scholars of political communication had tended to limit the concept of political media to more traditional political fare, like news, debates, and political advertising (Young & Miller, 2023). But starting in the early 2000s, researchers began examining the political correlates and consequences of a wide variety of entertainment programs, from late-night comedy to political talk radio, to daytime talk shows, historical reenactment films to crime dramas (Young, 2004; Jamieson & Cappella, 2008; Baum & Jamison, 2006; LaMarre & Landreville, 2009; Holbert, Shah, & Kwak, 2004; Holbrook & Hill, 2005). The implications were clear: even those audiences with limited exposure to the formal political information environment were likely deriving some political meaning from some media somewhere. More recently, scholars have expanded this work to include video games, meme culture, and online makeup tutorials - all as forms of media content that have potential political implications - for democratic attitudes, feminist beliefs, or for one’s engagement in civic culture (Bacovsky, 2021; Penney, 2020; Chae, 2021). As Williams and Delli Carpini argued back in 2001, the fragmented digital media environment is “a hostile one for maintaining the always fragile distinction between public affairs and entertainment” (Delli Carpini & Williams, 2001, p. 166).

These trends coincide with epistemic polarization—a divergence in what different groups recognize as valid knowledge and trustworthy information sources (Oliver and Wood, 2018; Young et al., 2022). In such a fragmented media landscape, podcasts like Rogan’s become not just alternative information channels but epistemic communities that reinforce shared skepticism toward established institutional narratives. Consequently, Rogan’s audience may be especially receptive to alternative viewpoints, conspiracy theories, and contrarian perspectives precisely because they align with an underlying distrust of mainstream informational authorities.

At the same time that our media environment was splintering, the horizontal and nonrecursive logics of digital technologies began to empower users (and malicious actors) to become producers of content while eroding the control and authority professional journalists once had over the flow of information (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). The rise in citizen journalism, including user “comments, photos/videos, reader blogs, and even reader-assembled news articles” (Lewis, Kaufhold, & Lasorsa, 2010) reflects this change; as does the diffusion of mis and disinformation across popular social media sites over the last two decades (Allcott, Gentzkow, & Yu, 2019).

These two changes in the information environment (the explosion of media choices, outlets, and genres coupled with the disappearance of the information gatekeepers) occurred against a backdrop of declining trust in institutions among members of the public (Lewis, Kaufhold, & Lasorsa, 2010). Trust in journalism, government, science, and higher education have all been declining for decades - attributable, at least in small part, to the erosion in institutional gatekeeping authority that had previously gone relatively unchallenged during the era of one-to-many, one-way broadcast media logics (Kennedy, Tyson, & Funk, 2022; Kennedy & Tyson, 2023; Twenge, Campbell, & Carter, 2014; Park, Fisher, Flew, & Dulleck, 2020). Additionally, as American party politics transformed from uniquely noncompetitive in the mid-1900s to more competitive at the turn of the 21st century, Americans increasingly rejected the mainstream political press in favor of less traditional and more overtly partisan sources (Ladd, 2012). We propose that these three concurrent trends have operated synergistically to facilitate a rise in alternative sources of political identity and meaning-making - most notably those that challenge the dominant messaging originating from established institutions.

*“What is clear is that this new media environment presents a direct challenge to the authority of elites- journalists, policy experts, public officials, academics, and the like- who served as gatekeepers under the old system. Less clear is to whom, if anyone, this authority has shifted.”* (Williams and Delli Carpini, 2001, p. 167)

## **A Trusted, Increasingly Political Source**

A recent Pew study shows that a plurality (46%) of Republicans who get news on podcasts trust them more than the news they get from other sources. Comparatively, only 19% of Democrats feel this way. Similarly, among Republican listeners, 40% declare that they often hear news on podcasts that they wouldn’t have heard elsewhere. Only 21% of Democratic listeners believe that to be the case (Shearer, Liedke, Matsa, Lipka, & Jurkowitz, 2023). In short, not only have

podcasts grown in popularity, they are also more trusted by Republicans, a group that tends to distrust the news media in general.

That is not to say that shows like JRE are only aimed at the political right. As Rogan accumulates a massive audience in an increasingly fragmented media environment, he does so by appealing across the political spectrum. He has been credited with launching Andrew Yang's political career; he endorsed Bernie Sanders in the 2020 Democratic Presidential primary; and on the eve of the 2024 election, he endorsed Donald Trump for President (Peters, 2019; Yglesias, 2020; Treene & Sullivan, 2024).

Additionally, the unique characteristics of podcasts: their informal, long-form, and typically unedited nature, allow them to sidestep traditional journalistic gatekeeping norms, facilitating environments in which misinformation and controversial ideas can flourish unchecked. Factchecking a news story is easy. Factchecking a two-and-a-half-hour conversation is not. As a result, this format makes podcasts particularly effective vectors for ideas that might otherwise face rigorous scrutiny or outright rejection within traditional media environments, thus influencing public discourse and audience attitudes.

We propose, however, that as politically consequential as Rogan's explicitly political guests or discussions of electoral politics is the broader "bro culture" ethos of the show writ large. With content that emphasizes masculinity, fitness, self-improvement, skepticism towards mainstream institutions, and at times, hostility toward feminism and progressive social movements, the show is consistently ideological even when not discussing capital "P" politics (Ging, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2020).

In this context, Rogan's position as the most prominent example of "bro culture" content reflects his bridging role—offering a palatable entry point into a much wider universe of creators who blend cultural critique with personal empowerment narratives. His content and style thus attract politically diverse listeners who share particular cultural predispositions toward independence, skepticism of traditional institutions, and a specific brand of masculinity (Lewis, 2019; Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016).

We must also note that while Rogan's audience is objectively huge, his overall reach is even bigger. For instance, podcasts are often recorded to video, and short clips of episodes are often shared widely on social media. One clip of Rogan mocking President Joe Biden stumbling over some words in July of 2022 has amassed more than 15 million views on Instagram. Additionally, mainstream media frequently covers dramatic or newsworthy moments from new podcast episodes.

Moreover, since January 1, 2019, The New York Times has published 528 news stories, either in print or online, that mentioned Joe Rogan, according to the Nexis Uni database. That means that one does not have to be a listener of Joe Rogan to know what Joe Rogan says and does. This "meta-coverage" of audio programming harkens back to the popularity and reach of Rush

Limbaugh, who not only drew a large audience (though at its peak, it was about 20 million listeners per week, considerably fewer than Rogan), but was also a frequent subject of mainstream media coverage itself and had intermedia agenda-setting influence (Michaelson, 1998).

Given its popularity, and the role it may play for its male listeners, this article explores the demographics, politics, media consumption, democracy-related beliefs, and cultural values of the Rogan audience. As indicated above, we do not expect to find Rogan listenership mapping neatly onto our partisan and ideological divides. Given the inherent challenges in attracting a large audience, in the age of fragmented media, Rogan's level of popularity would suggest that he is appealing to listeners across the political spectrum. What we present below is a descriptive analysis aimed at building a foundation for our understanding of the listenership of the most popular podcast in the world.

Taken together, these lines of scholarship suggest that JRE listening is best understood as the convergence of three forces: (a) the parasocial lure of long-form conversation, which personalizes elite–audience ties; (b) a politics of recognition backlash, wherein listeners seek venues that affirm heterodox masculine identities; and (c) epistemic polarization, the widening gulf in what counts as legitimate knowledge. We conceptualize this as a model of manosphere engagement, with JRE a product and catalyst of these dynamics.

In this manuscript, we conduct analyses of two original datasets: (1) the 2022 Wisconsin Communication and Election Study (WCES), which included parallel national and Wisconsin panel surveys conducted before and after the 2020 U.S. Presidential election, and (2) the University of Delaware Cooperative Election Study (UDCES) module from November of 2023. Each study was conducted in a different time, using different measures. But together, they help us put together a comprehensive picture of Joe Rogan's audience. Below, we discuss each study in turn.

## **Data and Methods: Study 1**

This study is based on an analysis of the 2022 Wisconsin Communication and Election Study (WCES) dataset, which included parallel national and Wisconsin panel surveys conducted before and after the 2020 U.S. Presidential. For the national sample, respondents were drawn from the SSRS Opinion Panel. U.S. adults aged 18 or older are “recruited randomly based on nationally representative ABS (Address Based Sample) design (including Hawaii and Alaska). ABS respondents are randomly sampled by MSG through the U.S. Postal Service's Computerized Delivery Sequence (CDS), a regularly-updated listing of all known addresses in the U.S.,” with known business addresses excluded from the sample frame. Quota-based sampling matched the sample populations on age, gender, race, income, and census region. The first wave of data was collected from October 31 to November 15, 2022, yielding 2,907 respondents. Although the broader design involves a panel component, recontacting participants for a second wave

collection from March 23 to April 4, 2023, the focus of this study is the first wave data due to the availability of key variables.

*Criterion Variable:* A single construct serves as the criterion variable — consumption of the Joe Rogan Experience podcast. This was measured by a single item: “Thinking of your recent media use, how often in the last week have you used the following types of media content? “Joe Rogan’s Podcast.” Responses were recorded on a 5-point frequency scale ranging from “Never” (1) to “Very often” (5). Of valid responses, 80.0% of participants reported that they never consumed the Joe Rogan Podcast, 9.0% indicated rarely consuming it, with the remaining 11.0% responding to consuming it at least occasionally ( $M = 1.35$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ).

*Demographics and Political Orientations:* Demographics and basic political orientations served as control variables in our model. These include single-item measures of respondents’ age ( $M = 49.02$ ,  $SD = 16.90$ ), gender (53.6% Female), education (5-level;  $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ), income (7-level;  $M = 3.39$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ), partisanship (7-point;  $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 1.96$ ) and political interest ( $M = 2.01$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ).

In addition, political efficacy — perceptions of self-efficacy regarding political engagement — was measured via responses to four attitude statements using 5-point Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree: “I think that I am at least as well-informed about politics and government as most people,” “I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics,” and “I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.” ( $M = 10.13$ ,  $SD = 3.15$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .85$ ).

*Worldviews:* A cluster of worldviews and political outlooks were gauged as part of the WCES, including beliefs and perceptions of Political Traditionalism, Political Division, Acceptance of Authoritarianism, Elite Corruption, Conspiracism, Collective Power, Benevolent Sexism, and Hostile Sexism. All items were assessed via responses to attitude statements using 5-point Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Political Traditionalism was measured with four items: “People with traditional viewpoints are being silenced,” “It is going to keep getting harder to know what sources of news I can trust,” “Things are going to get worse in this country,” “American democracy is weaker than it used to be.” ( $M = 9.30$ ,  $SD = 2.90$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .64$ ).

Political Division was gauged with two items: “Americans are more and more divided on issues related to race,” “Americans are more and more divided on issues related to gender.” ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ , Inter-item  $r = .46$ ).

Acceptance of Authoritarianism was also measured with two items: “It is permissible to engage in violence against your political enemies,” “Strong leaders sometimes have to bend the rules in order to get things done.” ( $M = 7.84$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ , Inter-item  $r = .28$ ).

Perceptions of Elite Corruption were assessed using three-items: “Most politicians do not care about the people,” “Most politicians only care about the interests of the rich and powerful,” “Established politicians who claim to defend our interests, only take care of themselves.” (M = 10.87, SD = 2.72, Cronbach’s alpha = .81).

Conspiracism was gauged with two items: “The people who really 'run' the country, are not known to the voters,” “Much of our lives are being controlled by plots hatched in secret places.” (M = 5.93, SD = 2.31, Inter-item r = .64).

Perceptions of Collective Power were also measured using two items: “Dramatic change can occur in this country if people banded together and demanded change,” “We are able to struggle together in order to achieve political goals.” (M = 7.15, SD = 1.81, Inter-item r = .43).

Benevolent Sexism was assessed using two-items: “Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores,” “Women should be cherished and protected by men.” (M = 6.60, SD = 1.95, Inter-item r = .61).

Hostile Sexism was measured with three items: “Most women fail to appreciate all that men do for them,” “Women seek to gain power by getting control over men,” “Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.” (M = 7.41, SD = 2.70, Cronbach’s alpha = .82).

*News Use and Media Orientations:* Measures of media use and orientations toward media were also measured in the WCES. Asking people to think about their recent media use, respondents indicated how often in the last week, on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very often), they used the listed types of media content. Using the available named news media outlets, a factor analysis using Promax rotation yielded a three factor solution without cross-loadings. The three factors of media use were as follows:

The first factor was Center Left news use, comprising legacy and digital news outlets: New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, Wall Street Journal, Politico, HuffPost, Vox, The Hill, and BuzzFeed News. (M = 13.38, SD = 5.64, Cronbach’s alpha = .89).

The second factor was Conservative news use, made up of a range of conservative sources, including a cable news outlet and social network, alongside digital outlets: FOX cable news programs (e.g., Sean Hannity, Laura Ingraham), Truth Social, One America News Network (OAN), Breitbart, and Daily Caller. (M = 6.87, SD = 2.97, Cronbach’s alpha = .78).

Two cable news outlets, CNN cable news programs (e.g., Anderson Cooper, Wolf Blitzer) and MSNBC cable news programs (e.g., Alex Wagner, Chris Hayes) yield a third factor reflecting Cable News Use. (M = 3.45, SD = 1.99, Inter-item r = .69).

General Social Media use was measured using the same scale, with respondents indicating how often they used Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp. (M = 13.05, SD = 9.35, Cronbach’s alpha = .72).

The WCES also contained measures of News Finds Me, which we gauged via responses to three attitude statements using 5-point Likert scales, again ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree: “I rely on information from my friends based on what they share on social media,” “I rely on my friends to tell me what’s important when news happens,” “I prefer learning about important issues from family and friends as compared to learning about them from the news.” ( $M = 6.99$ ,  $SD = 2.50$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .76$ ). Similarly, News Avoidance was measured using responses to three items on 5-point Likert scales: “I do not have to seek news because when it breaks, it will get to me over social media,” “I am worn out by the amount of news there is these days,” “The news media focus too much on negative stories.” ( $M = 10.77$ ,  $SD = 2.44$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .70$ ).

*Social and Institutional Trust:* Social and institutional trust were also measured using attitude statements and Likert scales, with each yielding multidimensional constructs.

General social trust was made up of nine items reflecting a broad sense of trust of different types of people: “People of another nationality, People of another race or ethnicity, People of another religion, Legal immigrants, Small business owners, People living in rural areas, People living in suburban areas, People living in urban areas, People in your neighborhood.” ( $M = 30.91$ ,  $SD = 4.99$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .89$ ).

Social trust was also measured with a more partisan-inflected group of targets, allowing for a measure of Trust in Liberal Groups: “Republicans in [INSERT STATE]” (reversed), “Democrats in [INSERT STATE],” “Evangelical Christians” (reversed), “Undocumented immigrants,” and “Labor union members.” ( $M = 15.07$ ,  $SD = 3.59$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .71$ ).

Trust in Liberal and Conservative Institutions was also assessed. For Liberal Institutions, four items were used: “The Biden Administration,” “Colleges and Universities,” “Labor Unions,” and “The US Congress” (which was controlled by Dems before the midterm). ( $M = 10.89$ ,  $SD = 3.54$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .77$ ). Similarly, for Conservative Institutions, four items were used: “The Police,” “The US Supreme Court,” “The Military,” and “Large Corporations.” ( $M = 12.17$ ,  $SD = 3.46$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .77$ ).

*Political Knowledge:* Finally, four items were used to measure basic political knowledge: Who determines the constitutionality of laws? How big a majority is required to override a veto? Which party controls the House of Representatives? Which one is more conservative? ( $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .65$ ).

## Results

Despite being a juggernaut of the podcasting medium, as we highlighted in the section above, a full 80% of our sample never listened to the Joe Rogan Experience podcast. For the sake of comparison, a similar percentage of our respondents (73%) declare never watching daytime talk shows, such as the ever popular The View. Of the rest of our sample, 9% listen rarely and 8% listen occasionally, and the rest of the respondents listen to the Rogan podcast often. Who

exactly are the people who listen? To answer this question, we present hierarchical multiple regression analysis with the ordinal Rogan listenership as the dependent variable.

In each model, we enter a block of conceptually similar variables, beginning with demographic controls, followed by political orientations, worldviews, media consumption and attitudes, and trust and knowledge, which we discussed in the preceding section. The results are featured in Table 1.

The demographic composition of the Rogan audience is quite straightforward. In each model we ran, income is unrelated to Rogan listenership. But consistently, the people who tune in are more likely to be younger, male, and with low educational attainment, even when controlling for other relevant factors.

Politically, however, the story of listenership is more complex. Models that do not control for various political and psychological predispositions, media diets and other relevant blocks indicate that overall, Democrats are less likely to listen to Rogan than Republicans. At the same time, as additional covariates are included, that relationship loses statistical significance. This suggests that the political asymmetry in the Rogan audience (looking more Republican than Democrat) may be an artifact of other, more value- and belief-centered constructs, or that these worldviews serve as mediators for these ideological orientations.

When it comes to political and cultural beliefs, there are several consistent correlates of Rogan listening that remain significant once covariates are added to the models. One such predictor is conspiracism, which is consistently and positively correlated with Rogan listenership. The more conspiratorial the respondent's thinking style, the more likely they are to tune in.

Other consistent predictors are perceptions of political division and perceptions of collective power, such that people who believe the country is more divided on issues of race and gender are more likely to be listening to Rogan and those who see collective action as a path to democratic change are less likely to be listening to Rogan. Counterintuitively, our results suggest that Rogan listenership is lower among people who feel that traditional political viewpoints are being silenced and that American democracy is weaker than it used to be (Political traditionalism). That is especially surprising given Rogan's aversion to so-called "cancel culture" and concerns about threats to free speech more broadly.

While hostile sexism was positively correlated with Rogan listening in the early models, once covariates were added, this relationship was reduced to non-significance. Similarly, we find that Rogan listeners score lower on populism and authoritarianism, but once covariates are added to the models, these relationships also attenuate. The relationship between one's media diet and Rogan listenership is also interesting. Rogan listeners are not the people who avoid news. In fact, people who consume a lot of news, whether from liberal and centrist sources, like Vox or the Wall Street Journal, or conservative sources like Fox News or Breitbart, are more likely to listen to Rogan's podcast than people who consume less news from across the political spectrum.

Even so the relationship between conservative media consumption and Rogan listenership is considerably stronger ( $\beta=0.397$ ) than the relationship between liberal and centrist news consumption ( $\beta=.155$ ). People who spend a lot of time on social media are also more likely to tune in to Rogan than those who spend less time on platforms like Facebook or TikTok. And finally, people who report relying on friends and family for information, rather than on traditional news outlets (News finds me), are also significantly more likely to report listening to JRE.

Contrary to our expectations, trust in various institutions did not have an independent effect on Rogan listenership, when accounting for other relevant predictors.

**Table 1. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis of Rogan Listenership, WCES Data**

|                                 | Block 1  | Block 2  | Block 3  | Block 4  | Block 5  | Block 6  |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Block 1: Demographics           |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| Income                          | -.002    | -.034    | .003     | .005     | .006     | .007     |
| Age                             | -.159*** | -.205*** | -.204*** | -.169*** | -.166*** | -.161*** |
| Female                          | -.140*** | -.102*** | -.085*** | -.100*** | -.100*** | -.100*** |
| Education                       | -.095*** | -.094*** | -.071*** | -.071*** | -.071*** | -.068*** |
| $R^2$                           | .041     |          |          |          |          |          |
| Block 2: Political Orientations |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| Partisanship (Dem)              |          | -.161*** | -.086*** | -.040    | -.040    | -.046    |
| Efficacy                        |          | .107***  | .156***  | .044     | .047*    | .047*    |
| Political interest              |          | -.025    | -.061*   | .031     | .027     | .026     |
| $R^2$                           |          | .079     |          |          |          |          |
| Block 3: Worldviews             |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| Political division              |          |          | .064**   | .044**   | .042**   | .043*    |
| Benevolent sexism               |          |          | -.013    | -.032    | -.034*   | -.023    |
| Hostile sexism                  |          |          | .087***  | .035     | .031     | .028     |
| Elite corruption                |          |          | -.058**  | -.010    | -.008    | -.013    |
| Authoritarianism                |          |          | -.094*** | -.015    | -.010    | -.010    |
| Perceptions of collective power |          |          | -.082*** | -.045**  | -.044**  | -.040*   |
| Conspiracism                    |          |          | .132***  | .069***  | .065***  | .064**   |
| Political traditionalism        |          |          | -.005    | -.050**  | -.053**  | -.051*   |
| $R^2$                           |          |          | .127     |          |          |          |
| Block 4: Media Consumption      |          |          |          |          |          |          |
| Social media                    |          |          |          | .059***  | .054**   | .053**   |
| Center & Liberal news           |          |          |          | .154***  | .157***  | .155***  |

|                                     |         |         |         |
|-------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Cable news (excluding conservative) | .020    | .020    | .021    |
| Conservative news                   | .401*** | .396*** | .397*** |
| $R^2$                               | .346    |         |         |
| Block 5: News Attitudes             |         |         |         |
| News avoidance                      |         | -.013   | -.012   |
| News finds me                       |         | .038*   | .040*   |
| $R^2$                               |         | .347    |         |
| Block 6: Trust                      |         |         |         |
| Social trust                        |         |         | -.012   |
| Trust in conservative institutions  |         |         | .007    |
| Trust in liberal institutions       |         |         | -.037   |
| Trust in liberal groups             |         |         | .039    |
| Political knowledge                 |         |         | -.010   |
| $R^2$                               |         |         | .348    |
| $N$                                 |         |         | 2,907   |

Note: Values in the table are standardized Beta coefficients from multivariate linear regression models. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## Data and Methods: Study 2

Data for Study 2 come from a sample of 1,000 voting-age American adults collected by YouGov as part of the 2023 Congressional Election Study (CES). The survey was in the field in November of 2023. Data are weighted to population benchmarks using the weight variable provided by the CES.

*Criterion Variable:* A single survey item is our criterion variable — consumption of the Joe Rogan Experience podcast. It was measured in a similar way to the Rogan consumption variable in Study 1. It was measured by a single item: “How often do you happen to listen to The Joe Rogan Experience Podcast?” Responses were recorded on a 5-point frequency scale ranging from “Never” (1) to “Always” (5). In our sample, 31.2% of respondents reported listening to Rogan, 14.3% rarely, 12% occasionally, 4.3% frequently, and .6% always, with 68.8% reporting never listening to JRE.

*Control Variables:* Again, as was the case with Study 1, we assessed demographics and basic political orientations. These include single-item measures of respondents’ age ( $M = 49.04$ ,  $SD = 17.78$ ), gender (55% Female), educational attainment (6-level;  $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ), family income (16-level;  $M = 6.64$ ,  $SD = 3.70$ ), Hispanic ethnicity (5%), partisanship (7-point;  $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 2.20$ ), political ideology (5-point;  $M = 2.92$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) and political interest (4-level;  $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ).

*Worldviews:* We’re missing many of the detailed worldviews and political orientation batteries asked in Study 1, such as various forms of sexism, conspiracism, and authoritarianism. However,

we do have an interesting set of batteries on respondents' intellectual humility, Gut/Intuition Epistemic Motivations, and Evidence/Data Epistemic Motivations.

Intellectual humility ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .77$ ) was measured with three items: "I question my own opinions, positions, and viewpoints because they could be wrong," "I reconsider my opinions when presented with new evidence," and "I accept that my beliefs and attitudes may be wrong." Each item was measured on a scale ranging from 1 "Not at all like me" to 5 "Very like me."

Intuition/Gut Epistemic Motivations ( $M = 4.97$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .75$ ) was measured with three items: "I trust my gut to tell me what's true and what's not," "I trust my initial feelings about the facts," and "My initial impressions are almost always right." Each item was measured on a scale ranging from 1 "Strongly agree" to 7 "Strongly disagree."

Evidence/Data Epistemic Motivations ( $M = 5.54$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .73$ ) was measured with three items: "Evidence is more important than whether something feels true," "A hunch needs to be confirmed with data," and "I trust the facts, not my instincts, to tell me what is true." Each item was measured on a scale ranging from 1 "Strongly disagree" to 7 "Strongly agree."

*News Use:* Measures of media use were based on items which asked, "in the past 24 hours, have you..." with response options of yes or no, followed by a list of specific outlets, which we grouped into three distinct categories: center left, liberal, conservative, and social media.

The Broadcast TV and Newspapers news use consisted of legacy broadcast news and newspapers. Participants were asked if they had watched local news, national news, or both. Those who said "national news" or "both" were then asked if they had watched a series of different networks, which included ABC, NBC and CBS News. Respondents were also asked if they had consumed newspapers like the New York Times in the past 24 hours. These four items (dichotomous exposure to ABC, CBS, NBC, and newspapers) were averaged to create the measure of Broadcast TV and Newspaper news use ( $M = 0.164$ ,  $SD = 0.244$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha = .63$ ).

Conservative news use was captured by a single item: consumption of Fox News ( $M=0.16$ ,  $SD=0.37$ ). Meanwhile, Cable news consisted of consumption of MSNBC and CNN. ( $M=0.122$ ,  $SD=0.269$ ,  $r = .38$ )

General Social Media use was measured with a dichotomous item, with respondents indicating whether they used social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp or YouTube) in the last 24 hours or not ( $M = .79$ ,  $SD = .41$ ).

*Social and Institutional Trust:* Social and institutional trust were also measured using attitude statements and Likert scales, with each yielding multidimensional constructs. Participants were issued the prompt: "How would you rate your trust in each of the following groups of people?"

followed by a series of groups, including “elected officials in Washington,” “scientists,” “university professors,” “journalists,” “doctors and medical researchers,” and “people in general,” with response options ranging from “very low” (1) to “very high” (5).

General Social Trust was a single item measuring trust in “people in general” ( $M = 2.63$ ,  $SD = .84$ ).

We also measured Trust in Liberal Institutions, which included scientists, professors, journalists, and doctors ( $M = 2.92$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ , Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .84$ ). Finally, we measured Trust in Politicians, which was based on a single item - trust in “elected officials in Washington” ( $M = 1.96$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ).

Results

As in Study 1, we follow a similar procedure, entering relevant predictors in blocks via hierarchical multiple regression analysis, with all variables in a given model entered simultaneously. Rogan listenership served as the dependent variable. Results are presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis of Rogan Listenership, CES Data**

|                                 | Block 1  | Block 2  | Block 3  | Block 4  | Block 5  |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Block 1: Demographics           |          |          |          |          |          |
| Income                          | .078     | .040     | .036     | .033     | .037     |
| Age                             | -.229*** | -.306*** | -.281*** | -.272*** | -.264*** |
| Female                          | -.168*** | -.133*** | -.104**  | -.101**  | -.100**  |
| Education                       | .007     | -.001    | -.009    | -.014    | .005     |
| Black                           | -.052    | -.021    | -.019    | -.024    | -.021    |
| Hispanic                        | -.025    | -.122**  | -.029    | -.028    | -.032    |
| $R^2$                           | .086     |          |          |          |          |
| Block 2: Politics               |          |          |          |          |          |
| Partisanship (Dem)              |          | -.122**  | -.104*   | -.104*   | -.077    |
| Ideology (Liberal)              |          | -.032    | -.017    | -.031    | .028     |
| Political interest              |          | .183***  | .127***  | .126***  | .134***  |
| $R^2$                           |          | .128     |          |          |          |
| Block 3: Media diets            |          |          |          |          |          |
| Social media                    |          |          | .039     | .033     | .045     |
| Broadcast TV and Newspapers     |          |          | -.002    | -.004    | .002     |
| Cable news (excluding Fox News) |          |          | .068     | .066     | .087*    |

|                                     |         |         |          |
|-------------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| Conservative news                   | .205*** | .199*** | .167***  |
| $R^2$                               | .173    |         |          |
| Block 4: Worldviews                 |         |         |          |
| Intellectual humility               |         | .061    | .091**   |
| Intuition/Gut Epistemic Motivations |         | .018    | .011     |
| Evidence/Data Epistemic Motivations |         | -.005   | .015     |
| $R^2$                               |         | .173    |          |
| Block 5: Trust                      |         |         |          |
| Social trust                        |         |         | .047     |
| Trust in politicians                |         |         | .100**   |
| Trust in liberal institutions       |         |         | -.246*** |
| $R^2$                               |         |         | .204     |
| $N$                                 |         |         | 891      |

Note: Values in the table are standardized Beta coefficients from multivariate linear regression models. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Again, the findings suggest that the demographic composition of the Rogan audience is quite straightforward. In each model we ran, income, race and ethnicity are generally unrelated to Rogan listenership. But consistently, the people who tune in are more likely to be younger and male. In contrast to the first study, we find no relationship between educational attainment and Rogan consumption when controlling for other relevant factors.

Politically, the story of listenership remains complex. Political ideology is not a statistically significant predictor in any model, although partisanship is significant in some models. Unsurprisingly, Democrats are less likely to listen to Rogan than Republicans, but not consistently, suggesting again that appeal of Rogan exists across the political spectrum, though clearly more appealing to the audience on the right.

When it comes to news consumption patterns, JRE audience is consistently correlated with Fox News viewership, suggesting that conservative media users are more likely to tune in than consumers of other outlets. At the same time, consumption of cable news like CNN and MSNBC, is also positively and significantly associated with Rogan listenership in one of our models.

We were able to look at the relationship between various epistemic motivations (Intuition/Gut and Evidence/Data) as well as intellectual humility and Rogan listenership. We find that epistemic motivations do not predict whether a respondent listens to Rogan, but intellectual humility does.

This positive association between intellectual humility might be surprising. The general public probably doesn't associate people who acknowledge uncertainty, admit mistakes, or are open to new ideas as necessarily key characteristics of Rogan listenership. But we have to remember that

this is self-reported intellectual humility. Considering that insight, this finding becomes less surprising. The ethos of the manosphere centers on being an “independent thinker” (as a popular, mass-produced bumper sticker proclaims members of this group as “lions, not sheep”). It therefore makes perfect sense that people who listen to Rogan would see themselves as open to reconsidering or questioning their own opinions when presented with new evidence or viewpoints, as good independent thinkers should. Because of the self-reported nature of this survey data, we don’t know if these respondents actually practice intellectual humility or whether they merely profess it.

Finally, we look at the relationship between trust and JRE listenership. As expected, trust in liberal institutions, measured here with scientists, professors, doctors, and journalists, is negatively and consistently related to Rogan listenership. This is consistent with the populist ethos of the show which is critical of institutions, formal knowledge, and traditional elite voices. Contrary to our expectations, however, trust in politicians was positively associated with Rogan listenership, when accounting for other relevant predictors. This is a counterintuitive result, not in line with our expectations. We believe that this correlation might be explained by the ambiguity of the survey item, as it did not specify which elected officials the respondents were asked about. We may also be witnessing a floor effect, wherein Rogan listeners might not be especially trusting of politicians as much as non-listeners may be particularly distrusting of them.

## Discussion

Our two studies, with their differing survey items and timing, complement and extend one another in meaningful ways. There are clear consistencies but also notable differences, reflecting not only the different contexts of data collection but also offering critical insights for future survey research into podcast listenership and cultural identity.

One primary point of divergence concerns political interest. While Study 1 found limited evidence connecting political interest to Rogan listenership, Study 2 shows a strong and consistent positive relationship. This difference could partly reflect the timing of Study 2 during an active election cycle, suggesting that interest in political affairs may fluctuate alongside political events, influencing patterns of media consumption. Future research could benefit from longitudinal designs to better capture these dynamics.

Measurement differences between studies likely contribute to some divergences observed. Study 1 utilized a general consumption recall measure (“recently”), whereas Study 2 employed a more precise temporal measure (past 24 hours). Such methodological distinctions can substantially affect who self-identifies as a listener, particularly impacting the inclusion of occasional versus regular listeners. Future research should either calibrate measures to ensure consistency, or deliberately compare competing operationalizations across studies.

Importantly, Study 1's incorporation of a richer set of worldview variables—such as perceptions of political division, collective efficacy, sexism, conspiracism, and epistemic beliefs—offers a more nuanced understanding of Rogan's appeal. These cultural and ideological variables highlight broader societal shifts toward cultural ideologies that emphasize skepticism of institutions, gender essentialism, and conspiratorial thinking. These dimensions, we argue, constitute core aspects of the broader cultural milieu that Rogan exemplifies.

The aftermath of the 2024 U.S. Presidential election further underscores the broader relevance of understanding podcast listeners like Rogan's. Donald Trump's successful embrace of the manosphere, receiving both exposure and explicit endorsement from Rogan, contrasts sharply with Kamala Harris's reluctance due to anticipated progressive backlash (Chaffin, 2024; Franklin & Nicolaou, 2024). This distinction in political engagement strategies illustrates how podcasts have become significant actors, not mere passive media outlets but active political entities capable of shaping political outcomes and discourse.

Despite Rogan's global prominence across English-speaking nations and beyond, comprehensive audience research has been sparse. The cultural significance of JRE, addressing intersecting themes of politics, gender, race, and societal skepticism toward mainstream narratives, necessitates sustained scholarly attention. Understanding Rogan's listeners is not merely an academic curiosity but a critical step in comprehending broader shifts within contemporary media ecosystems and their political implications.

Contrary to reductive stereotypes that classify Rogan's listeners as primarily conservative or overtly sexist ("Bro Culture"), our results provide a more complex portrayal. We find no consistent evidence linking listenership with authoritarianism or sexism. Instead, Rogan listeners appear politically diverse yet culturally unified, particularly through shared epistemic skepticism, conspiratorial predispositions, and perceptions of themselves as intellectually humble, independent thinkers. The notion that Rogan listeners are politically tuned out is also complicated by these findings, as media consumption – especially consumption of conservative media – is higher among Rogan listeners than among non-listeners. Future research should explore these apparent contradictions further, particularly through mixed-method approaches combining qualitative interviews and quantitative longitudinal surveys.

The significance of self-reported intellectual humility deserves special attention. Whether this reported humility is genuine or a manifestation of the listeners' ideological self-conception as contrarian thinkers ("lions, not sheep") remains unclear. Future studies might experimentally investigate this construct's authenticity and its implications for misinformation susceptibility and broader epistemic polarization.

Methodologically, future studies must also navigate inherent limitations of self-reported media consumption data, including issues with recall accuracy and social desirability bias. Incorporating passive digital tracking or validated behavioral measures could offer greater reliability and enhance causal inference.

Critically, our findings connect to broader societal phenomena of gender ideology and essentialism that permeate various online communities and discourses, such as “tradwife” spaces and popular influencers like Ballerina Farm. The emerging “recognition crisis,” as articulated by Wells and Friedland (2023), further contextualizes these developments. The crisis involves widespread societal tensions over group identities, recognition, and misrecognition, profoundly amplified by digital and social media. Podcasts like JRE act as conduits for these dynamics, simultaneously granting visibility to particular ideological positions and reinforcing feelings of marginalization or disrespect among listeners, thereby intensifying cultural polarization.

Our analysis thus provides a roadmap for future research: investigating how cultural ideology, gender essentialism, and religious narratives intersect in increasingly fragmented media environments, including podcasts and social media. The recognition crisis underscores the urgency of studying these dynamics, recognizing that ideological and cultural divisions are no longer confined to traditionally political spaces but permeate diverse areas of social life. Addressing these intersections offers vital opportunities to enhance understanding of the modern media landscape and its profound implications for democracy and civic cohesion.

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