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À propos du PhiLab | About PhiLab

Le **Réseau canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie** (PhiLab) a été créé en 2014 dans le cadre d'une demande de financement « développement de partenariat » obtenue du Conseil de recherche en sciences humaines du Canada (CRSH). Ce financement a été reconduit en 2018 pour six années par l'obtention d'une subvention « partenariat » du CRSH. Depuis 2024, PhiLab profite de financements octroyés par différentes fondations dont la Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon et la Fondation Mirella et Lino Saputo. Le Réseau pancanadien constitue un lieu de recherche partenarial, de partage d'information, de mobilisation des connaissances sur la philanthropie subventionnaire et de formation à la recherche. Les activités de recherche conduites en partenariat valorisent les connaissances auprès d'une diversité d'acteurs sociaux, d'agences gouvernementales, milieux universitaires et petits et grands médias. La valorisation des connaissances, via des outils de communication novateurs et accessibles, permet une diffusion élargie des connaissances produites ou déjà existantes. Le Réseau regroupe des chercheurs, des décideurs et des membres de la communauté philanthropique à travers le monde afin de partager des informations, des ressources et des idées.

The **Canadian network of partnership-oriented research on philanthropy** (PhiLab) was created in 2014 as part of a "partnership development" funding application obtained from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). This funding was renewed in 2018 for six years by obtaining a "partnership" grant from SSHRC. Since 2024, PhiLab has benefited from funding granted by various foundations, including the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon and the Mirella and Lino Saputo Foundation. The Pan-Canadian Network is a hub for partnership research, information sharing, knowledge mobilization on grantmaking philanthropy and research training. Research activities carried out in partnership promote knowledge among a wide range of social players, government agencies, academics and small and large media. The valorization of knowledge, via innovative and accessible communication tools, enables a wider dissemination of the knowledge produced or already existing.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
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PHILANTHROPIE SOUS TENSION | PHILANTHROPY UNDER PRESSURE

Credit : Tommy Trenchard

Power in Discomfort: A Podcaster's Guide to Ethical Content Creation

By Joey Mac Intosh, *Philab Podcast Host & Producer*

Joey Mac Intosh is a student of acting at Concordia University, and an interdisciplinary artist based in Montreal, QC. His process contemplates the human in all its forms. Through his projects, he attempts to learn more about acts of love, healing and intersectionality. It is important for him, through the PhiLab podcast, to discover more about charity and the blind spots of philanthropic constraints.

Discomfort

Over the past two years as the host of the PhiLab Podcast, I've come to understand how even small decisions can have significant consequences when it comes to communications and relationships. A poorly chosen episode title might make someone uncomfortable, while an unintentional misstep in conversation could cost the opportunity to connect with a potential guest. How to navigate through the fear of making mistakes to reach the larger goal of spreading a message through a podcast?

This article explores the inherent conflicts within content creation from the perspective of a content creator, examining the challenges and ethical dilemmas that arise throughout the creative process. It delves into the learning curve involved in navigating the complexities of selecting interviewees, ensuring meaningful representation, and balancing power and responsibility in shaping narratives. Through critical reflection and real-world experiences, the discussion highlights the tensions between intention and impact, particularly in relation to diversity, editorial choices, and audience engagement. Ultimately, this article serves as both an analysis and an invitation—to acknowledge these challenges, embrace discomfort as a tool for growth, and move forward with a more intentional and ethical approach to content creation.

Content creation, podcasting and conflicts

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a content creator as "someone who creates content (= video, images, writing, etc.) for the internet, especially for a social media website." In the case of the PhiLab podcast, content creation serves a specific purpose: to disseminate academic research conducted within the organization while providing a platform for practitioners in the philanthropic sector to expand on topics explored by scholars. Content can be leveraged in various ways, and as Thomas Zeitzoff notes in the abstract of How Social Media Is Changing Conflict, social media lowers the cost of communication. The PhiLab podcast aligns with this principle by striving to both reduce communication barriers and broaden the reach of academic insights. Its goal is to make research more accessible to communities that may not have the

time or inclination to engage directly with academic papers, reframing complex information into a more digestible format.

To improve as a podcaster, there is a need to learn to complete, on a daily basis, one of life's simplest yet most difficult tasks: listening. An interview based podcast is not and will never be about the creator—it is about the guests. The content creator's role is to create a space where their guests can be vulnerable, heard, and understood in a world where genuine listening feels rarer than ever.

Some interviewees come to the podcast to express their internal conflicts—about the sector, society, and their place within both. Often overlooked, they persist in this work out of love and hope. They embrace discomfort and powerlessness because they must, not because they want to. The problem is, too much discomfort comes with a price. "Burnout, compassion fatigue, stress, anxiety and worry due to uncertainty are borne by much of the non-profit workforce." writes Iryna Khovrenkov in her editorial Philanthropy & Mental Health.

One particularly challenging episode is Archive, Philanthropy, and Mental Health with Kristen Young. Her raw honesty about mental health is deeply moving. As she discusses,

> "Having to write grants, knowing inherently that I will not be able to meet the needs of all of the people who need this program that I'm writing this grant for, or knowing that I have to limit the amount of people who will receive care from this program that has been funded because I inherently don't have enough funding to meet this need is frustrating. It weighs on you, and it shouldn't be that way. And I can't—I can't do it right now. I could do it for some time, but I can't do it right now."

There was a weight of responsibility in deciding whether to publish it. The episode doesn't present facts, statistics, or trends from a quantitative perspective—it shares her personal experience and highlights her vulnerability. To create a safe space, it's important as a content creator to reflect and remain attentive to ensure the guest feels comfortable with everything shared. Ultimately, with her consent, it was published, knowing that she is not alone with these struggles. To put it simply, the philanthropic sector is hard to navigate emotionally.

To help guests feel more at ease during a recording, podcasters have several tools at their disposal to create a stress-free environment. One simple yet effective approach is meeting the guest beforehand. This provides an opportunity to get acquainted, break down the recording process, and address potential stressors. In her book Le stress au travail vs le stress du travail (Stress at Work vs Stress from Work), Dr. Sonia Lupien identifies four key stressors: 1) Lack of control, 2) Unpredictability, 3) Novelty, and 4) Threatened ego (55). Understanding these factors allows both the guest and the podcaster to gradually reduce their stress levels, fostering a more relaxed and engaging recording session.

A simple choice

Selecting interviewees is always a delicate process and a potentially stressful one. It feels like walking on a tightrope, striving to ensure diverse representation without reducing guests to mere checkboxes. The word "diversity" itself is uncomfortable—not because its importance is rejected, but because of the fear surrounding tokenism. As a cisgender white host, privileges have to be recognized, but it is still hard to navigate the complexities of representation while not having enough tools to understand it and trying to manifest change.

While not knowing everyone in the philanthropic sector and having a small team—currently two people in PhiLab's communications department—reach and resources are naturally limited. Sometimes, there

is nothing more to work with than what one has/ knows and trust in the organic unfolding of the selection process. Midway through recording our fifth season, a realization showed that over two-thirds of my guests were women—an achievement that extended beyond Women's History Month. Yet, the question "Is this enough?" still lingered. Was there enough diversity within that group of women? Or was it overcompensating? These questions felt uncomfortable. An inner voice questioned "Is this the right way to feel? Isn't it a good thing to have more women's voices being heard? Should we include more male voices for the sake of balance? Given how male-oriented philanthropic spaces have been for so long, doesn't it make sense for women to take more space now that "of the 3.5 million Canadians working in the charity sector, 77% percent are women" (Janz, 2024)? But what about non-binary voices? Would that be too much for the audience?..." Stop.

This thought rabbit hole is the best example of self-doubt. By then, it was too late to alter the lineup, but the experience reinforced a lesson: preparation and enlarging one's circle are key in achieving diversity. In the case of a podcast, to pursue a higher level of preparation, there is the possibility of integrating a new layer into the planning, considering positionality more intentionally to ensure diversity as a conscious choice rather than an afterthought. As for enlarging one's circle, allowing the guests to refer to other potential guests is a simple yet effective to discover new voices within the sector.allowing the guests to refer to other potential guests is simple yet effective to discover new voices within the sector.

During the same season, another moment of discomfort came while planning episodes around Black History Month and Women's History Month. Initially, they were structured in a way that, in hindsight, felt like tokenism. One guest was kind enough to voice her concerns, and a reflection had to happen: Was it her responsibility to educate, or should mindfulness have been present from the outset? Could this reaction have been anticipated? How could it be prevented in the future? These were only the initial questions. To transcend tokenism, mindfulness must be embedded from the start, and the most effective way to reflect and change is by engaging in candid, uncomfortable conversations with multiple individuals who hold that positionality.

In this case, the mistake was to have approached these months with a narrow lens, limiting discussions to specific topics rather than embracing a broader positionality. Once again, diversity—but from yet another blind spot. Black History Month is not just about Black philanthropy, nor should Women's History Month be confined to discussions of women's philanthropy. These celebrations exist to empower diverse perspectives beyond those topics, and it is not the host's place to dictate what their guests need to discuss within the spectrum of philanthropy when it is their moment to shine. Let them choose what they see fit to talk about within the creation process. A theme can be a double-edged sword, requiring content creators to grasp its multifaceted nature in relation to guests, the audience, and the community. Some keywords are deeply tied to personal identity, and considering all potential entry points will help prevent conflicts.

The ethical dilemma

Reflecting on power within the realm of conflict and podcasting, there are many privileges held not only by the host, but by the producer and editor. In the studio, all three wield significant power— they control the narrative through the questions asked, but most importantly through its editing. There are tons of decisions about what is amplified and what is omitted. This is the reality of any media where technology grants creators the ability to shape, filter, and manipulate messages more than what the audience can imagine. But, as a famous uncle once said, "With great power comes great responsibility." What does it mean to have a sense of responsibility when producing an academic podcast about philanthropy? As Britta Jorgensen notes,

> "One aspect of podcasting that receives less attention than 'branding' is the ethics of interviewing people and sharing their stories. With no real codes of practice or ethical guidelines to follow, a lot of the responsibility for making ethical decisions about your podcast falls to you as the producer." (p.52)

Responsibility rhymes with respect. This means amplifying all voices, even those the creator may not fully agree with. It is the creator's job to ensure the content accurately reflects what the guests intended to convey, provide information that is correct to the best of their knowledge, and make sure the podcast is engaging and enjoyable for everyone. In the end,

it is up to the audience to engage critically with the content. To build on ethical practices, here are a few noted by Jorgensen in her article:

- Consider how you treat your interviewees, how you edit and share their stories.
- Reconsider your need to interview vulnerable interviewees if you aren't sure how to handle that process.
- Allow interviewees to change their mind about being interviewed or having their interview included in your podcast.
- Check and double check spellings and pronouns.
- Portray your interviewees fairly and accurately.
- Read the ethical guidelines of your country's public broadcaster and broadcast codes of practice for some ideas about what other things you might need to consider.
- Credit everyone who helped you make the podcast.
- Treat your listeners with [...] care.
- Include trigger warnings for any potentially [sensitive] topics.
- Conduct thorough research and avoid spreading potentially misleading information.
- Provide accurate sources of information to your listeners in your show notes, don't rely on half-remembered mentions of something from a past conversation or a forgotten website.
- Provide corrections to any errors you make in subsequent episodes.
- Check in with your online community about any ethical conundrums you find yourself in. (p. 52 - 53)

There is an inherent tension in how power is exercised through ethical or unethical manners—whether consciously or unconsciously. Yet, all hold some form of power in their own lives: the power to say no, to invest in causes, to influence change in ways some may not even recognize. Content creators are what they do. They are what they say. They are accountable.

Conclusion

In the evolving landscape of podcasting, especially within philanthropy, the act of content creation is far more than just curating interviews and producing episodes. It is about navigating the delicate balance between intention and impact, between amplifying voices and ensuring ethical storytelling. Every decision—whether it be selecting a guest, choosing a theme, or editing an episode—carries weight and responsibility.

Podcasting is a powerful medium, but with that power comes the duty to listen, reflect, and refine one's approach continuously. The conflicts discussed throughout this article illustrate the necessity of mindfulness in every stage of production. From ensuring representation beyond tokenism to fostering genuine dialogue that allows for discomfort and growth, these challenges serve as reminders that ethical content creation is an ongoing process, not a destination.

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