

Pass The Mic- Women Finding Space on Air: Transcribed Interview Catherine Jetté

Interviewer: Could you tell me your name and how long you've been working radio?

Catherine Jetté: Okay, well, my name's Catherine Jetté and I've been working in radio since... I would say, 2004. Som I guess it's, uh, a little while now.

Interviewer: Yeah, great.

Catherine Jetté: (laughs)

Interviewer: Did you ever feel you were at a disadvantage as a woman, working in radio?

Catherine Jetté: I would say no. It seems to me that there was a time in radio where it was mostly kind of a 'boys club' in, you know, a generation or two before me. But, uh, since then, I think there was a desire for a diversity of voices and opinions. And I don't feel that I've been at a disadvantage at all because of my gender.

Interviewer: Fantastic, I'm glad to hear that. So some questions may overlap, but I'm going to ask them all anyway, Did you ever experience sexism in your job?

Catherine Jetté: Uh, really minor things. Um, You know as, as I've said, there was a time in radio where I think it was quite male dominated. And so there are still some, you know, old guys, um, in the industry that are just from a different time. Where it was 'appropriate' to say certain things to women that we now agree it isn't (chuckles). Uh, so a few really minor comments about, you know, something that I was wearing or a way that I looked. Um, but at the same time, you know, those same men--it seemed to me, had a respect for me professionally. Um, so they just maybe thought that I wanted to hear certain things that it was okay to say when they were young, that it would be inappropriate now. So other than a very minor comments that, you know, not even major enough that I would have spoken to a superior about it or followed up on. Um, really, I haven't had any negative experiences in that regard.

Interviewer: Great. Do you feel that women have a harder time getting on their jobs and radio?

Catherine Jetté: I don't think so. I think that, you know, radio is a business. When you have a radio station, you have a certain type of listener that you are trying to appeal to. And, uh, in many cases, a woman is a good person to speak to that audience. Because the audience may be primarily women. Or you need different types of voices on your show, to make it interesting...

just from a sound perspective. And you need men and women's voices just to make it sound good! So I think there are many opportunities for women on the radio-- at least today, and I'm not sure that was always the case. But I think now a lot of my colleagues are women. It seems to be split fairly down the middle in, uh, areas where I've worked... which is mostly journalism.

Interviewer: Mmhm. So, uh-- your station that you work at now, is there a particular target demographic. Does skew more male or female?

Catherine Jetté: Currently, our listener ship is slightly more male than it is female. Um, But...that's sort of, the numbers fluctuate. And I don't think that there's a concerted, you know, effort necessarily to speak to one gender over the other. Um, It just so happens that where I work now, there's always a male and a female anchoring the news cast. So-- and that's just basically because, um, 'Me too people' were on the air literally every minute. And it helps to have different sounding voices so you can kind of tell him was talking, so it's just even from an audio perspective, it helps to have different types of voices.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you feel that we wouldn't have a harder time getting management jobs and radio?

Catherine Jetté: I would say that currently--currently actually, I have two female managers. So, um, not in my personal experience. But, I do think that, um because the field was dominated by men, I think previously, it's taken a while for there to be enough women, with enough experience to end up in those roles. But I've seen a shift recently, uh... where there's been a lot more women in management positions than there were even when I started in the business.

Interviewer: Mmm, what do you think accounts for that shift? Is it just simply--what do you think accounts for that?

Catherine Jetté: I'm, I'm not sure. Just now, they-- you know, there were a lot of women trailblazers 30 or 40 years ago in the business. And they've, uh, you know-- recently, these women who have been working in radio now have enough experience to go on and be leaders themselves, in the field. And perhaps corporations or understanding that it's good to have, um, a diversity of different viewpoints in leadership. But, I know that in my experience I worked under a female News Director, uh, a Female Assistant News Director and Female General Managers, and, you know, higher ups in the company even than that. So, um, personally, Yeh lots of women have been good role models and managers.

Interviewer: Fantastic. Do you feel that women in general are treated differently than men in the radio industry?

Catherine Jetté: Hm, I don't think so. Personally, personally, I feel that I've... you know, earned respect from my peers. And I don't think that, um, they treated me differently because of my gender. uM... No. Perhaps, you know, from a branding perspective, historically, women played a certain role on the radio. And you ended up having kind of 'mom and dad figures' in, you know, morning shows and things like that. I know for me, I am a newscaster, just like my male co anchor is a newscaster. And I don't think that, um... we are treated differently.

Interviewer: Glad to hear it!

Catherine Jetté: (Laughs)

Interviewer: Uh, have you or other women you know, ever been paid less than a man doing the same or similar work that, you know?

Catherine Jetté: That is a challenging question, because I've earned less than some of my male colleagues in the past, but I've also had a lot less experience than they have in the past. I've been paired with a kind of 'mentor types' who have been in the industry much longer than I had and had management experience and things like that. And so I've earned less than them and I've been aware of it. But again, there's a difference in experience, so it's hard to say. Um, yes, I earned less was it because of my gender? It doesn't appear that way.

Interviewer: Mmhm and, uh, have you sort of heard about this from any other women in the radio industry? In terms of salaries?

Catherine Jetté: I can't say that I've heard a lot about it... really, for-- when you're talking about, um, equal experience and that kind of thing. I mean, some of our highest, highest paid radio personalities in Toronto are women. I don't think there's, uh, you know, too many more people out there who make more money than, you know, Aaron Davis at CHFI who is a Rogers colleague. So I, I really-- my personal experience does not show that that women are paid less.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the radio industry is a fair and equitable place for women today?

Catherine Jetté: I think so, It has been for me. I'm at a great place in my career, and, um, I can't think that I'd be further along if I were a man. Um, you know, motherhood and radio has its challenges... for sure. And this is something obviously that men wouldn't face. But, um, you know the fear of changes happening to your radio station while you're out on maternity leave. Um, you know, should you apply for a big promotion if you know that you're gonna be leaving to go have a baby? Um, things like that are obviously issues that women are going to face more

than, more than men. So, uh, I know a lot of women who have opted for shorter maternity leaves and things like that in radio and that I haven't seen as much in some other industries. Other things like radio is a 24 hour business, you're not gonna find a daycare that opens at 3 in the morning so that you can get to the morning show on time. Uh, so these are things that, that women face, they may have to, you know, tailor their work schedules. Uh, so that child care is available while they need to work. In my case, I have a very supportive partner who is here in the morning when I'm not. Um but that's not the reality for everyone. And so um yeah, I can, I can imagine women having to deal with that to an even greater degree than men. So I guess there's probably issues.. uh, more surrounding, you know, motherhood than gender.. necessarily.

Interviewer: Right, right. And so do you feel that that's primarily the one big way in which women might, might be...um, perhaps even at a disadvantage then, in the radio industry? Is around issues of motherhood and daycare and child care?

Catherine Jetté: I think so. I mean, it's not, It's not as if you can, uh, you know, pump breast milk while you're on the air (laughs) it's not-- and I know a lot of caring dads, but that's just not something they would ever encounter. So, um, even if even if fathers have to alter their schedule because of child care and stuff, they wouldn't have to take things like that into consideration. (chuckles) So of those are, you know, issues, of course, that are gonna be uniquely faced by women that, uh, I guess are probably true in every industry, but especially radio, because it is 24 hours a day. I mean, if you're working the midnight shift, it's gonna be hard. To, to juggle that and and family, so...

Interviewer: Um, Catherine, what advice do you have for radio owners and managers with respect to women working in radio?

Catherine Jetté: Um, well, definitely, you know, if, if you can, um, accommodate, uh, motherhood and parents, in general, I think that's going to go a long way. Uh, and just, you know, any interested speaking to your audience...um, It's great to have mums on board because moms are listening. And so, um, I think they're, you know, there could be benefits to having, you know, young mums on the air. Even though it may come with having to accommodate their schedule, or allowing them to take days off when their kids were sick, or allowing them, you know, pumping breaks (chuckles) anything like that. Because they're speaking to, um, a big audience that maybe others with more easy schedules to accommodate wouldn't be able to speak to you quite as well.

Interviewer: Mmhm, yeah, that makes sense.

Catherine Jetté: Mmhm

Interviewer: And what advice do you have for women seeking to build a career in the radio industry?

Catherine Jetté: I, I say go for it! Uh, I-- you know, I've had a lot of luck, I've worked hard. But I think it is a good a good industry for women to find jobs in, with lots of amazing opportunities. And, uh, yeah, go... kick some ass! (Laughs)

Interviewer: (Laughs) That's good advice, I love it! My last question is simply to ask whether you have any other stories or examples or thoughts that you want to share on this topic in general?

Catherine Jetté: Um... I don't...no, I don't think so. Um, like I say, radio's been very good to me. So I... really, um I really can't complain about where I am, um, and yes, it's, it's a struggle to get anywhere. You're poor for a long time (laughs) before you finally sort of breakthrough somewhere. And I think that's just as true for the men in this industry as it is for the women. And, um, you know...don't be afraid to speak up. Maybe, uh, women are a little more afraid of doing that, but don't, you know, you have an opinion and use it. And it'll, it will help you, not hinder you to be, uh, opinionated and to fight for what you know is good and true and right.

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