Free to Inform: A Study of Influences on Newswork at a National Public Radio Station

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FREE TO INFORM: A STUDY OF INFLUENCES ON NEWSWORK AT A NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO STATION

By

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ABSTRACT
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National Public Radio (NPR) has been a source for radio news programming since 1971. In 2014, there were more than 900 radio stations with a federally funded NPR license. When a station is granted its license and partial funding, it is given the mission to create objective and balanced content. Even with threats of defunding and waning audiences for all broadcast media, NPR continues to air news programs daily.

This thesis examines how newsworkers at an NPR station interpret their jobs as journalists. In-depth interviews were conducted with seven NPR newsworkers at the same mid-sized station. The purpose of the interviews was to answer the question, "How do news workers on a local National Public Radio news program make meaning of their jobs, journalism as a profession, and perceive different influences on the news content they create?"

Using the theory of political economy, the concept of professional journalism, and past newswork and public media studies as a foundation, the interviews were analyzed and four major influences were discovered: the budget, the newsworkers' beliefs and values, their routines and guidelines, and their audience were found to be the strongest influences on their work. The interviewees perceived their work to be important, ethical, and under-funded.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> National public radio will serve the individual: it will promote personal growth; it will regard the individual differences among men with respect and joy rather than derision and hate; it will celebrate the human experience as infinitely varied rather than vacuous and banal; it will encourage a sense of active constructive participation, rather than apathetic helplessness. (Siemering, 1970, p. 248)

Every morning, my alarm wakes me up with the phrase "I'm Steve Inskeep…And I'm Renee Montagne." As the 6 a.m. National Public Radio (NPR) broadcast of Morning Edition begins, so does my day. NPR has been my main news source since I was in undergraduate school and realized I was free from my father's morning ritual of MSNBC's *Morning Joe* interspersed with brief trips to The Weather Channel for "Local on the 8s."

I have always been a news consumer, but I've never been conscious of my choices until I came to graduate school and began studying journalism and the news. Then, as sometimes happens in graduate school, I began to question everything. Why did I only listen to NPR? Why did not I seek out other news sources? I had the Internet and basic cable. I could watch local television broadcasts or subscribe to an online newspaper. Was it convenience? Was it familiarity? Was it because NPR produced better journalism?

I never was able to answer those questions, and soon I moved on to less myopic topics, such as the history and structure of public media. While I am a fan of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) as well, I did not have a daily consumption habit like I did with NPR. Therefore, much of my research drifted towards public radio. I found that

while the history and laws governing U.S. public media are well-examined and researched, studies of NPR or PBS stations and the work done there are few and far between. Considering how important NPR was to my daily life, I made it my goal to add to the minimal research on public media, and to do that I decided to study the people that covered the news.

In order to gain a better understanding of the news I consume daily, I chose to interview the newsworkers who create the news. I wanted to know what influences they felt at their work. This study sought to answer the question, "How do news workers on a local National Public Radio news station make meaning of their jobs, journalism as a profession, and perceive different influences on the news content they create?"

I used in-depth interviews to delve into the newsworker's views of their work and the influences that affect their work. The perceptions of newsworkers are important to understand when looking at newswork as a whole. The interviews revealed that the newsworker's beliefs and values about their work, their budgets, their routines and guidelines, and their audience were the main influences on their work.

The Journalist and Their Work

Journalists are not always described in the best of terms. In a 2014 article titled, "Report: Journalists Are Miserable, Liberal, Over-Educated, Under-Paid, Middle-Aged Men," *The Atlantic* reporter Derek Thompson examined an Indiana University study on the state of the American Journalist. The study examined the views journalists held of their work and it was not pretty. Leave it to journalists to be brutally honest. Over half of the journalists surveyed said journalism in the United States was heading in the wrong

direction and only 23.3% reported being satisfied with their job (Willnat & Weaver, 2014, p. 4 & p. 10). The study did not mention if there were public media journalists within the group of 1,080 surveyed, but it indicated that the journalists were chosen at random over a wide variety of news organizations (Willnat, et al., 2014, p. 25).

In addition to the Indiana University study, the PEW Research Center has released an annual study called "The State of the News Media." The 2013 report noted the emergence of new types of news organizations such as entrepreneur-led online news (PEW, 2013). It also indicated non-profit news feels a need to expand further into the digital media realm (PEW, 2013). Cable news viewership is on the decline, the "vast majority now get news in some digital format," and more and more people turned to online streams of radio broadcasts than listened to the actual radio (PEW, 2013). There are profound shifts occurring in news media.

In such turbulent times within the news media, it is imperative to better understand the inner-workings of the news. With all of this in mind, I embarked on a study of journalists and their influences. In the end I chose to study NPR, not only because understanding a federally funded entity is important or because of the small amount of research on public media indicated a need for more, but also because it was the news with which I was most familiar. It was the news most important to me.

Thus leads me to this study. An examination of newswork, news decisions, influences on newsworkers, and a closer look at public media are in the pages that follow. The ultimate goal of this study was to better understand the newsworker's views of their work, including any influences and pressures they might feel. This study looks at what it

means to work at an NPR, according to the newsworkers. First, however, past studies and theoretical frameworks will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2

NEWSWORK AND THE INFLUENCES ON PUBLIC MEDIA AND NEWS MEDIA

This study examines the many aspects of newswork including influences on the newsworkers and their work. Past studies have shown, when creating news content, newsworkers feel pressures from many different sources. These can be economic, political, cultural, technological, and organizational pressures within the newsroom (Herman & Chomsky, 2012; McChesney, 2005; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; Schudson, 1997; Berkowitz, 1997; Bagdikian, 1996; White, 1950; Parenti, 1993; Dagnes, 2010; Croteau & Hoynes, 2001; McManus, 1994; Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon, 2001; Gardner, et al., 2001). The influences a newsworker experiences can change the way his or her news content is created as well as the stories that ultimately end up on air. The news content that is consumed then helps contribute to the image of reality for the viewers (Altheide, 1974). Because news media can impact a viewer's perceptions of his or her world, the influences on the creation of the news content are essential to understanding. According to Gardner, et al., a healthy and ethical news media can lead to a healthy and strong society.

> News coverage that provides truthful and comprehensive accounts of events fosters the conditions that societies need to thrive economically and politically. And accurate media coverage enables individuals to make sound judgments and gain control over their lives. However, news coverage that is biased, distorted, or incomplete undermines the capacities of societies to flourish and robs individuals. (Gardner, et al., 2001, p. 125-126)

The intentions of the news media, including public news media, to be "truthful" and "comprehensive" have been found to sometimes clash with the political and

economic influences they experience (McCourt, 1999, Aufderheide,1996). The necessities of working around a budget and creating content that draws audiences can lure broadcasters away from their original missions and news creators from their socially conceived ethical foundations (Bagdikian, 2004; McChesney & Nichols, 2010; Croteau, et al, 2001)**.**

Historically, public news media has been held to standards that require them to ignore most influences they might face, including political and economic pressures (McChesney, 2004, McCourt, 1999). Given the above, this thesis examines the variety of influences NPR newsworkers face – with separate attention to economic and political pressures. Ultimately, this thesis seeks to answer the question, "How do news workers on a local National Public Radio news station make meaning of their jobs, journalism as a profession, and perceive different influences on the news content they create?"

To situate the study a brief history of NPR, as well as a review of political economy and newswork studies are in order. The history of public media as well as past research on public broadcasting offers insights into its organizational goals and culture, media production, and content. This thesis also uses theory and research on the political economy of the media, including news media, and research on decisions in the newsroom, to gain insight into influences on news media production. Finally, analysis of the history and current implications of "professional journalism" will provide background into the expectations society has of news media.

It is important to note, the terms "public," "public service," and "non-profit" are used interchangeably in this study to refer to government and grant funded American media, which includes National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service, as

many of the research cited uses those terms to mean the same type of media. News media refers to all of news media, including non-profit news media. Media will refer to all forms of broadcasting and print media, which includes news and entertainment. It will be clearly noted when I am referencing commercial, or for-profit, media as opposed to public, or non-profit, media, in the hopes of dispelling any confusion. In addition, the terms "journalist" and "newsworker" are also used to refer to the same profession. News producers, anchors, editors, reporters, and news directors all fall under the categories of journalists and newsworkers. Upper management, such as general managers, are not included in these descriptions and will be referred to by job title.

The History and Structure of American Public Broadcasting

Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR) stations and their content were not created as a replacement for traditional for-profit broadcasting media (McCourt, 1999, p. 23). Non-profit broadcasting was built to supplement for-profit media (FCC, 1946). There were publicly funded radio and television stations dating as far back as 1917 with the creation of 9XM in Madison, Wisconsin (Witherspoon, Kovitz, Avery, & Stavitsky, 2000, p. 2). However, the structure for the public broadcasting system that exists today did not take shape until after the mid 20th century. In the 1960's, a group of educators, philanthropists, and foundation executives saw a gap in the media landscape, and the resulting governmental response was an act that created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB)(Avery, 2007, p. 358; McCourt, 1999, p. 34). This group was independently created and named itself the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television (White, 1993-1994, p. 496; Witherspoon et al., 2000, p. 14).

In 1967, the Carnegie Commission drafted a report on the state of educational television programming (White, 1993-1994, p. 496; Witherspoon et al., 2000, p. 15). The report found that current television programming lacked diversity and educational value so the commission suggested the government establish a broadcast system that solely existed to air an array of educational programming. This system would be "governed by a nonpartisan board of directors that would serve as a heat shield from either White House or Congressional appointee" (Avery, 2007, p. 360).

The study the commission conducted eventually led to the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, which President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law on November 7, 1967 (Avery, 2007, p. 358; Witherspoon et al., 2000, p. 21). The act called for the formation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) as well as provided government funding for the corporation. The CPB was never meant to be a new "Fourth Network" but instead, it was meant to act as a funding, licensing and oversight organization for public stations (McCourt, 1999, p. 36). The government created the CPB as a private corporation. This was to ensure "maximum protection from extraneous interference and control" from political influences as well as to be "an instrument capable of affirming American diversity and reviving civic life" ("Act of 1967 Amended," n.d.; Engleman, 1996, p. 2).

However, against the Carnegie commission's original intentions for the broadcasting system, the act gave politicians some control over public broadcasting. The act stated that Congress was in charge of approving the CPB's budget and the sitting president had the power to appoint the nine members of the CPB Board (FCC, 1967). With the government funding, the CPB created grants to public broadcasting stations through licenses. These stations were called Public Broadcasting Stations (PBS) and

National Public Radio (NPR) stations. State commissions, educational institutions, and community nonprofit corporations applied for licenses from the CPB in order to set up a local PBS or NPR station (Witherspoon et al., 2000, p. 23) The licenses and their grants were, and still are, not enough to fully fund the stations. According to a 2005 study on the financing of PBS, when all PBS stations were examined as one group, only 37% of their funding came from the government (Brooks & Ondrich, 2005, p. 104). The rest of the funding for the stations had to be raised through private grants and donations.

The partial funding also came with certain caveats. For example, in order to continue to be funded, all meetings held by PBS and NPR stations had to be open to the public and each station must create a community advisory board. Also, there were restrictions on the salaries of each PBS or NPR officer or employee. If a station was found to be paying "in excess of reasonable compensation" according to the rules of the currently amended Public Broadcasting Act, the entire station would lose its license and government funding ("Act of 1967 Amended," n.d.). It was also stated in the act that each station should air programming that is "instructional, educational, and cultural" ("Act of 1967 Amended," n.d.). This was to ensure that the original intentions of the creators of the CPB were realized within the content produced and aired by PBS and NPR stations. Over the years, PBS and NPR grew until there was a station in almost every major city in the United States. All were united under the same mandates: Be objective. Be diverse. Be balanced (White, 1993-1994, p. 503).

The public broadcasting ideological framework has changed over the years. Currently, CPB's mantra is "digital, diversity, dialogue" ("About Public", n.d.). Even with changes in wording, the CPB always maintained that diversity, education, and

public discourse were key goals for the programming funded through their private corporation. Funding is based off of these ideals. This means if a station is found to be lacking in any of the above areas, it can lose its financial support and license from the CPB (“About Public”, n.d.). The CPB’s goals and objectives have helped inform the mission and vision statements for PBS and NPR over the years.

Since its creation, the CPB has had its share of supporters and critics. Many politicians, mostly left-leaning politically, have defended the continued funding of pubic media. Former President Bill Clinton even called himself “an NPR kind of president” during his time in office (McCourt, 1999, p. 14). American public media has won its fair share of awards, and its audience has grown over the years (McCourt, 1999, p. 14; Engelman, 1996, p. 4) Scholars have touted the benefits of the publicly funded media. McChesney and Nichols, for example, offered fully publicly funded news media as a solution for the failing budgets and lack of interest in the public good at newspapers and television news stations (McChesney, et al., 2010, p. 171). Croteau, et al, (2001) believed public media was so vital that a trust should be set up so that public media would be fully funded each year without the need for congressional approval and never have to rely on corporate donors and viewer fundraisers in order to meet budget requirements (p. 229).

In opposition to the praise levied by the supporters of public media, critics have found numerous arguments against the continuation of government funding of the CPB. Since the signing of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, many conservative politicians have argued that publicly funded media was unnecessary and undemocratic (McCourt, 1999, p. 2-3; Rowland, Jr., 1986, p. 251). Not only did President Richard Nixon and President Ronald Reagan attempt to completely defund public broadcasting, but members

of Congress such as former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and Senator Larry Pressler have all campaigned against funding for the CPB (McCourt, 1999, p. 1-4; McCauley, 2002, p. 68; Engelman, 1996, p. 5; Witherspoon et al., 2000, p. 43).

Critics allege that public broadcasting is not outside the bounds of economic and political concerns. In fact, historically, many of the main arguments against public broadcasting have been economic and political in nature. A historical study of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 explained that, "the Act set up a fifteen-member Board of presidential appointees, thus ensuring that partisan politics would be built into the system" (Avery, 2007, p. 360). Indeed, through the presidential appointment of the Board of Directors of the CPB as well as the congressional approval of CPB funding, partisan politics has often played a role in direction and fate of the CPB.

Along with citing the inherent government influence in public media, many public broadcasting opponents have used the strategy of praising commercial media as the more democratic option. They have argued that since public media was not a part of the traditional marketplace then it was somehow unpatriotic or unfit for a democracy (McCauley, 2002, 227). Critics also argued public media had become more and more like its commercial counterparts, especially in regards to budgetary concerns. There has been some evidence to support this assertion. In 2013, NPR announced it would offer contract buy-outs to ten percent of its staff due to budget shortfalls, and the nationally syndicated news program "PBS NewsHour" had its first major lay offs in two decades (Stelter, 2013; Beaujon, 2013). Some scholars and critics argued that non-profit media was just as likely to have economic concerns as for-profit media and used recent workforce reductions as evidence of this. With such a divide among scholars, it is important to study public

media, how they create the news, and the content of the news they create. Past studies on public media and its content have revealed insights into the current state of media content production at PBS and NPR stations.

Studies on American Public Media

While there has been limited research on public media, the research available has illuminated the processes and content trends at non-profit broadcasting stations. Many scholars found that public media stations have adapted to a decrease in government funding in recent years by adopting capitalistic tactics in order to raise money (Avery, 2007; Aufderheide, 1996; White, 1994; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; McCourt, 1999; McCauley, 2002, Kerbel, Apee, & Ross, 2000; Bailey, 2004; Brooks & Ondrich, 2006; Woal, 1986, Hoynes, 2003). This included branding the content the stations produce and tailoring the content to a specific audience (Avery, 2007, p. 361; McCauley, 2002; Aufderheide, 1996, p. 72; McCourt, 1999). These studies attributed this shift to many factors.

Historical analyses of NPR and PBS found problems with the policies and regulations behind public media as well as its mission (Aufderheide, 1996, p. 72). Public media, for example, was not viewed as competition for commercial media and was only created to provide content that "commercial broadcasters did not want to provide" (Avery, 2007, 359; Aufderheide, 1996, p. 64). This means that public media was already at a disadvantage in regards to ratings and subsequently public donations. Finding the number of donors needed to survive was difficult when public broadcasting stations were

mandated to air programming that commercial broadcasters deemed unprofitable (McCourt, 1999).

According to these studies, public media has been forced to cater to Congress in order to have their funding approved every year, and the funding was never substantial enough to allow the stations to drop private corporate sponsorship and public pledge drives (White, 1994, p. 505; McCourt, 1999, p. 11; Hoynes, 2003, p.44). In fact, in 1992, members of Congress were upset by content run by PBS and NPR and gave the CPB additional powers to control content. CPB was granted the power to decide which public broadcasting stations got funding based on CPB's assessment of how objective and balanced the stations were. The CPB was also required take public comments on a station's programming into account when allocating funding. White explained, "by performing these functions, CPB has become a regulatory arm of the federal government" that could be used to coerce stations into creating content in-line with the current federal government's ideologies (White, 1994, p. 506-507).

Due to the sparse funding, the marketplace held public broadcasting "hostage" over the years (Aufderheide, 1996, p. 63). According to the studies, public media began to use commercial methods for staying afloat with only meager government funding (McCourt, 1999; Aufderheide, 1996; White, 1994; Croteau, et al., 2006). More and more, public broadcasting resembled commercial broadcasting (Croteau et al., 2006, p. 227; McCourt, 1999, p. 8). The need for new sources of revenue led NPR to brand itself and its content in order to attract the audiences most likely to donate to the station. McCauley (2002) called this type of niche marketing "narrowcasting" (p. 69). This targeted audience was more likely to donate and to donate larger amounts during pledge drives.

The audience the NPR stations targeted was highly educated, wealthier than the average American, mostly white and male, and fell within the "baby boomer" generation (McCauley, 2002, p. 71). The NPR stations sought to reach these audiences through marketing tactics such as the merchandising of programming, commercial tie-ins to shows, cross promoting programming, and the creation of a brand and consistent product image (McCourt, 1999, p. 12-13; Croteau, et al., 2001, p. 226; Hoynes, 2003, p.46).

This trend toward more commercial practices led to issues about the content aired on public broadcasting. A framing analysis of election coverage on two PBS stations found that PBS devoted less time to in-depth coverage and often aired shallow "horse race" election coverage (Kerbel, et al., 2000, p. 16). Kerbal, et al. (2000) discovered that "apart from a few exceptions and despite its reputation for being a substantive alternative to the ratings-driven commercial networks, PBS coverage looks a lot like what we find on ABC" (p.16). This type of coverage clashed with public broadcasting's original mandate that it offer meaningful and educational programming. Despite this deviation from expectations, a 2007 survey commissioned by PBS showed that people believe PBS to be "highly trusted," "well respected," and a "good value or the level of tax dollars invested" (Avery, 2007, p. 363).

These commercial practices led the PBS and NPR stations to deviate from their original mandates. As White (1994) argued, it became impossible to have truly diverse content when a station must cater to a targeted audience in order to receive donations and sponsorships (p. 514). It was also difficult to be truly local when, in order to save money, NPR and PBS stations used nationally syndicated programs (Aufderheide, 1996, p. 65-66). Witherspoon, et al., discussed this divide in their study on the history of public

broadcasting. They cited the use of the terms “mission” and “market” by public broadcasters when deciding what type of programming to put on the air. If programming fell under a “mission category,” it was completing part of the public service mission of the station and was often seen as unprofitable. If it fell under the “market category,” it was a program that broadcasters hoped would increase revenue but would not necessarily serve the public good (Witherspoon et al., 2000, p.74).

The vague terms under which the public broadcasting must operate were also cited as problematic. McCourt (1999) called these goals a “string of platitudes purposefully selected for their vagueness and calculated inoffensiveness” (p. 12). Terms such as “objective,” “balanced,” and “diverse” were considered too broad and, at times, conflicted with the practicality of running a broadcasting station in a capitalistic society (McCourt, 1999, p. 13-14). Thus the “lofty ideals” set forth for the stations were tailored to a more commercial approach (Aufderheide, 1996, p. 72-73). Furthermore, because the wording of public broadcasting goals were hazy or too general, it became hard for stations to endeavor to reach the requirements set forth for them (White, 1994, p. 503).

Past research on public media focused on PBS and NPR station’s trends toward more commercial practices as well as the issues in adhering to a vague set of mission statements. This research has provided insight into the current state of public media content production and organizational practices and beliefs. Research on the influences and decisions in the news production process is also important to consider. I will turn to this work next.

Decisions and Influences in the Newsroom

Because of the news media's ability to help shape the audience's perception of reality, the process of creating news has been widely studied (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; White, 1950; Berkowitz, 1997; Bantz, McCorkle, & Baade, 1980; Fishman, 1980; McManus, 1994; Gardner et al., 2001). Scholars explored how decisions are made and what influences those decisions within a news organization. While most focused on for-profit newspaper and television stations, they have provided insight into the decision-making processes and influences in a non-profit radio newsroom.

One of the foundational studies on news workers and news decisions was D.M. White's "gate keeper" study. Using psychologist Kurt Lewin's theory on "gate keepers," White explored the passage of news items from discovery to publication. He found that news passed through a series of gate sections where the decision for the news story to continue its journey was made either by impartial rules or "gate keepers" (White, 1950, p. 383). Gate keepers were people with the power to make decisions about the newsworthiness of a story or how a story should be told at any given time. The gate keeper could either let the news story pass through to the next stage of production and possibly on to publication, or he or she could decide to remove it from the process, almost ensuring it will not get published. In order to better understand newswork and the news creation process, White examined the decision-making process of the gate keepers.

White (1950) focused on the "last 'gate keeper;'" a wire editor at a non-metropolitan newspaper who was in charge of selecting news stories that would appear on the front and "'jump' pages" of the newspaper (p. 384). White found that the wire editor sifted through the wire copy and picked stories that would be seen by the readers.

The study discovered that the wire editor chose stories he thought to be accurate and the more politically "'conservative'" story. Sometimes the decisions were made for him by people in positions above him, by the competing media's gate keepers, and by the perceived wants and needs of the newspaper's audience. White (1950) posited that, "theoretically all of the wire editor's standards of taste should refer back to an audience who must be served and pleased" (p. 389).

In the interview he conducted with the wire editor, White (1950) examined how the editor's prejudices played a part in the decision making process, as well as the need to present a variety of different categories of news within the newspaper. White determined that gate keepers not only chose which news item were going to be published, but also shaped the story of the news item. The concept of gate keepers and the influences on the decisions they make informs my study of newsworkers and the decisions they make.

Another strong study on influences in newswork comes from the work of John McManus and his research on four, for-profit television broadcast stations in the western United States. He examined cultural, technological, and legal or regulatory influences greatly affected news production. Cultural influences included the values the newsworkers personally held as well as values that were considered commonplace within society by the newsworkers. Many of these values were terms that newsworkers used to describe why a particular story was newsworthy, or why it was chosen for air (McManus, 1994, p. 42). Other values were incredibly broad and often not even fully recognized by the newsworkers. These values that influenced their work were considered "natural" or "common sense" (McManus, 1994, p. 43). McManus (1994) gave a list of "American values" such as nationalism and individual personality and cites local cultural values such

as “sympathy for a regional industry” as examples of some of these common sense values (p. 43-44).

In terms of technological influences, McManus described how the complexity of the technology needed to produce a certain type of news, in this case television news, can influence news production. The technology to capture, process, and broadcast the news for television was expensive and these costs affected newsroom decisions. For example, “broadcast media is measured in time” and the time slotted for news is often considered scarce (McManus, 1994, p. 48). The amount of time given for each newscast affected how much advertising time is allowed which in turn affected how much money and time can be given to news production. McManus also explained how the technology used by television to reach their viewers changed news production. For example, in television the sequence of stories is decided upon solely by the newsworkers and for the most part, can be viewed only once by the audience (McManus, 1994, p. 49).

McManus (1994) also cited regulatory influences on news production (p.50-54). One example of this influence was the limits of the First Amendment in terms of press freedom. The press was granted freedom to report on any subject matter to an extent. Some limits were libel and the limits provided by the Federal Communications Act. This affected what news was aired and how it was reported. If a news program reported a story that was false or if the FCC found that a news broadcaster is not acting “in the public’s interest,” the station could be sued or lose their license (McManus, 1994, p. 51-54). These were the three main influences that McManus discussed in his research, however, many scholars have found other pressures that affect news production.

The concept of routines in news work also provides insight into the process of news production. Many scholars have studied the use of routines in a newsroom (Tuchman, 1973; Bantz, McCorkle, & Baade, 1980; Fishman, 1980; Berkowitz, 1997). Bantz, McCorkle, and Baade's (1980) participant observation of a television news station found that journalists form habits when it comes to news content production. This study was conducted at a "western metropolis television news room" where researchers observed the newsroom for 14 weeks to examine how the news decisions were made and the process of creating the news (Bantz, et al, 1980, p. 45). They discovered that the news was created not entirely out of routine but within some set patterns. Uniform news products were made using "nearly identical reporters and photographers" (Bantz, et al., 1980, p. 64).

Bantz, et al. (1980), saw this type of production of news as problematic, because it lacked flexibility, personal investment in the news content created, and led to unmet expectations for the newsworkers in regards to the "factory" in which they worked (p. 65). Some newsworkers even cited their inability to finish an assignment as a result of their boss's emphasis on productivity. Bantz and his fellow researchers were not the only ones to find routinization in the workplace.

Other scholars used different terms and definitions for the routines found in a newsroom. Tuchman (1973) found that newspaper and television reporters and editors created routines in newswork that permeated all types of news events. Her study of a television station, a newspaper, and a city hall press room revealed the use of consistent routines among reporters and editors, their "collective negotiations," when making news

decisions, as well as the addition of social aspects of the newsrooms such as the idea of "professionalism" and use of "legitimated institutions" as sources (Tuchman, 1978).

Gans (1979) used the terms "availability" and "suitability" to describe the relationships between journalists and their sources and journalists and their audience (p. 81). Stories were chosen and written in regards to how available a source was and if the story suits their limited time and staffing needs (Gans, 1979, p. 82). These conditions are added to commercial, audience, and political considerations to create a complex news decision routine. Fishman (1980) furthered the research through a study of beat reporters. He detailed the routinization of newswork at a newspaper through their use of "phase structures," or common narratives, as a way to chose and write stories.

One of the more recent studies on newswork and news decisions was Berkowitz's study of a local Indianapolis, Indiana television station (Berkowitz, 1997, p.81). Using both quantitative and qualitative research methods, Berkowtiz found trends in the type of news chosen for air. News that was "easy to explain," "provide[d] a good audience draw," and was able to be "assembled with efficiency of effort" were more routinely selected (Berkowtiz, 1997, p. 91).

The different methods newsworkers use during the news decision process reveal the different influences on those decisions. In addition to studies on newsgathering, scholars have also pointed to economic and political influences on the production of news.

Theory of Political and Economic Influences on Media

All forms of influence were examined in this study, including the political and economic pressures newsworkers experience at their jobs. As such, the theory of political economy can provide a theoretical foundation for understanding those pressures. This area of media study has been extensively explored. I will begin with a broad review of the political economy of the media and then narrow my focus to news media.

The earliest political economists, Karl Marx and Friederich Engels (1887), created the concept of the base and superstructure dichotomy of economics and politics. This detailed how those in power, the superstructure, who own the means of production and labor, created a system that ensures their power is constant and growing. (Marx & Engles, 1887). Marx and Engels focused on all forms of production, not just of the media. This theory was eventually adapted to the media and has since branched out into more complex theories on the influence of politics and economics on the media (Garnham, 2012; Jhally, 1989; Bagdikian, 1996; Parenti, 1993; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; Herman & Chomsky, 2012; Schudson, 1997). This has included the influence money, profit, and political power has on the production, content, and culture of the media and those who own, produce, and consume it.

Sut Jhally (1989) offered a strong theoretical framework for how the media is affected by money and political power. In his “marketplace of ideas” where all discourse and media exists, the media institutions supported the current power structures of a rich minority who derived power from the consent of a poor majority (Jhally, 1989). Jhally (1989) posited that the marketplace is ideological as well as material in nature (p. 66). The ideological area of the marketplace relies on the theory that when different ideas compete for people’s minds, in the end “truth” will be the idea that ultimately takes root

in a person's mind (Jhally, 1989, p.66). The material area is more literal, and consists of a marketplace where ideas are bought and sold (Jhally, 1989, p. 67).

Jhally draws upon Enzensberger's (1974) concept of a "consciousness industry" to explain that media organizations "produce a form of consciousness in the audience that benefits the class that controls the media and industry in general" (Jhally, 1989, p. 68; Enzensberger, 1974). This was because private parties have owned the media. These parties existed in a capitalistic system and did not act directly in the public's interest but in the interest of their business. Jhally (1989) argued that mass media's actions are to increase audience size and thus profit (p. 69). The way media made profit was through advertisement sales. The advertisers bought space on the page or time on the air of media that have larger and more desirable audiences. The media corporations then sold these larger or targeted audiences for higher prices. Advertisers subsequently use the airtime or page space they purchased to sell their products to those audiences.

In sum, Jhally's political and economic theory applied to the media posited that the media existed within a capitalistic marketplace to further the agenda of those who owned the media and who owned industry. The media was a means to sell items through advertisements and also an item itself through the programs it airs. Finally, media organizations sold their audiences to advertising agencies and politicians (Jhally, 1989, p. 69). Throughout this process of buying and selling, Jhally (1989) argued that the media corporations forget about the interest of the public.

As the media landscape has grown and changed, more scholars have studied the effects of economic and political influences on the media. Parenti (1993) and Bagdikian (1996) extended Jhally's ideas about the relationships between money, politics, and the

media to reflect more current conditions. Both argued that the conglomeration of the media has led to an oligopoly of large media corporations. These corporations shared many board members and worked together to create a political and economic climate that best suited all parties. Profit motivated all decisions within a boardroom, and this motivation trickled down into media production practices as well as the content produced (Parenti, 1993; Bagdikian, 1996). Content was created with audience ratings in mind. Since media companies were all vying for the same audiences, the programs produced by all corporations tended to use the same tactics to increase viewership and subsequently created a homogeneous media market.

Parenti (1993) tied economic influences into decision-making in the news. He found in a for-profit news organization, the owners and advertisers have the most influence on decisions, while news editors enforce the ideologies of the owners and interests of the advertisers in the newsroom. The reporters then learned the culture of the newsroom and acted accordingly, at times self-censoring in order to ensure their continued employment (Parenti, 1993, p. 33-39).

The relationships between economics and the news media have been studied extensively. This is due in part to the cited importance of the news media's role in the U.S. democracy. In order to best understand how politics and economics might affect public news media, an examination of past studies and theories of the political economy of news media is necessary.

Political Economy of the News Media

Many scholars have explored the harmful effects of political and economic influences on the news media (McChesney, 2008; Dagnes, 2010; Croteau, et al., 2006; Bagdikian, 1997; Schudson, 1997; McManus, 1994). They found that in the quest for profit, news programs were instituting practices that many claimed ignored the public's interests in favor of profit (McChesney, 2008; Dagnes, 2010; Croteau, et al., 2006; Bagdikian, 1997; Schudson, 1997). The news media began to create less accurate news content and were presenting more salacious and trivial material (McChesney, 2008, p. 495). Dagnes (2010) called this type of news "soft news." Soft news was used a tactic for news programs to increase ratings (p. 76), but it was considered cheap to produce and often did not serve any larger public interest (p. 157). Croteau and Hoynes (2006) explained that, "the business logic of lowering expenses and increasing profits results in news that is limited in its range of ideas, favoring those entities that have the resources to aid journalists in their work" (p.163). This emphasis on the business aspect of the news came from the current power structure of the media (McChesney, 2005).

McManus (1994) studied how the application of market logic to news production affected news media. He found that when the news media was sold by family businesses to corporations with stockholders who "seek to maximize return on their investment," that news becomes a product as opposed to a service (McManus, 1994, p. 1). This product is driven by four markets: the market for audience, the stock market, the advertising market, and a market for sources. This harkens back to Jhally's idea that media is both the product and the means to gain another product – audiences. McManus (1994) adds stockholders and the "market for newsworthy information" to Jhally's market for audiences and market for advertising (p. 5).

McManus' study of news production and market forces sought to shed light on the arguments for and against market-driven journalism. The results of his study showed that the news served "the market for investors, advertisers, and powerful sources – before and at the expense of – the public market for readers and viewers." (McManus, 1994, p. 197). He ultimately worried that with this new type of news media, news audiences were learning less from the news, that they may be misled, that "news sources may become more manipulative," and that news audiences tended to care less about politics (McManus, 1994).

Because larger corporations worked within a capitalistic marketplace, their main goal was increasing profits. Bagdikian explained that profit-generating practices led to a less diverse news media landscape.

> Growth of control in a relatively small number of corporate hands, and a rapid homogenization of content…increasingly makes most newspapers and broadcast programs uniform in basic content, tone, and social and political values. (Bagdikian, 1997, p. 68)

In addition to homogeneous content, news organizations were cutting staff and expecting a quicker turn-around on stories, leading to less in-depth coverage of news events (McChesney, et al., 2010). Business practices that required newsworkers to constantly pursue profits led to an overreliance on expert and political sources (Herman, et al., 2012). According to Schudson (1997), organizational systems created a system of reporting that "presents a portrait of the world in tune with the view of dominant groups in society (p. 11).

Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon (2001) conducted in-depth interviews with over 60 journalists and discovered much of the same political and economic

influences being expressed by their interviewees. Their study found the “impact of new technologies,” the need for increasingly larger shares of the market, the increase in corporate control of the news, the constant drive for higher profits, and the issue of decreased revenue but faster deadlines affected modern for-profit news production were affecting the newsworkers by applying new pressures to their work (Gardner, et al., 2001). These pressures stemmed from the shift in the goals of a newspaper from the public interest to profit-making.

In order to fully understand the affect economics and other external influences have on journalism, it is necessary to examine the news media’s history of standards, practices, and ethics. The traditional standard society holds for “good journalism” was created with the advent of the concept of “professional journalism,”

Professional and Ethical Journalism

While exploring why the economic and political influences in journalism are believed by many to compromise the basic tenets of journalism, it is imperative to look at what the basic tenets of journalism are according to popular cultural standards. Many scholars believed that news media should be created with the public’s interests in mind (Croteau, et al., 2001; McChesney, 2005; Bagdikian, 1997; Schudson, 1997; Gardner, et al., 2001). However, the concept of news for the public good was not the original driving force for journalists. Journalists originally had no formally written moral and ethical obligations to their audiences. The advent of these standards occurred in early 20th century with the creation of the “professional journalist” (McChesney, 2004).

This is a concept that has come to define what Americans believe to be ethical journalism, was created out of a desire to assuage government fears and impede any new government regulations of the news industry. During the commercial boom of the 19th century in the "Gilded Age," the newspapers were making large profits from sensationalism and outright lying (McChesney, 2004, p. 59). The U.S. government saw this and wanted to impose regulations on newspapers that would create a more honest form of journalism.

According to McChesney, the newspaper's owners decided that best way to stop government regulations was to self-regulate using a set of rules they created themselves. They also saw this as an opportunity to regain credibility with their audience. Members of American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) determined that they should find a way to regulate their own industry and soon the term "professional journalism" came to be (McChesney, 2004, p. 64).

This type of journalism required a separation of the commercial interests from the editorial process. It mandated that journalists be neutral and honest with no particular political affiliation. These ideas were entirely new for journalists at the time. In order to make it more credible, the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) was formed. The ASNE put out a public code of ethics for journalists. The code was not a contract journalists or newspaper publishers had to sign that would require them to actually follow these rules (McChesney, 2004, p. 64-65). It was a completely voluntarily adopted set of journalistic guidelines. Nonetheless, this is a concept that has formed the basis for what American's perceive to be ethical journalism.

The idea of professional journalism has persisted today. One of the most commonly held ethical guidelines for journalists created by the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) was based on the ASNE's ethical code (Society of Professional Journalists History and Timeline). This ethical code became the standard for how we judge journalism. There have been acknowledged flaws in the nature and application of this journalistic set of ethics, but it has been typically the way Americans view ethical journalism today. The SPJ admits that the code is not legally enforceable but it is the most often taught and well known code of ethics for journalists today (Society of Professional Journalists, 2013).

McChesney was not the only scholar to examine standards and ethics within journalism. Gardner, et al, (2001), as previously mentioned, not only interviewed journalists about the issues they faced in their work, but also examined the "sources of strength" in journalism (p.153). These strengths included "the living tradition of standards and practices that the domain has evolved over years, their own personal sense of journalistic mission, and the pockets within the field that still support good work" (Gardner, et al., 2001, p. 153). These three strengths all influence the newsworkers either externally or internally.

Gardner, et al., like McChesney, discuss the history of professionalism in journalism, though Gardner, et al, took a slightly less cynical view. They argued that professional journalism was tactic used by newspaper owners to gain more market share by "increasing the quality of their coverage" (Gardner, et al., 2001, p. 156). According to the scholars, this tactic was not just a face value claim, but an actual set of standards that journalists followed. The strategy also moved journalists away from partisan reporting, to

more broad, unbiased reporting in an effort to widen their audiences (Gardener, et al., 2001, p. 156). The scholars saw these standards as beneficial for journalism and created a new era where “good journalism” was a concept that could be defined and rewarded (Gardner, et al., 2001, p. 157).

The second strength was an internal mission and “sense of moral identity” held by the journalists. These journalistic missions included, “informing the public,” “empowering the powerless,” “supporting democracy,” and “promoting social change” (Gardner, et al., 2001, p. 163-171). Of the journalists they interviewed, all mentioned at least one of those missions as the primary goals of their work. Gardner, et al.(2001), compared these missions with what they believe was a bleak journalistic landscape, concluding that though the journalists may claim those are their primary missions, the media marketplace in which they exist does not reflect those same missions (p. 170-171).

Finally, Gardner, et al. (2001), studied the current work standards and practices of the journalists. Most often mentioned were “truthfulness and fairness” in reporting (p. 171). The journalists considered these ethical standards as traditional and as very strong influences on their day-to-day work (Gardner, et al., 2001, p. 172). Truthfulness to the journalists meant not only “a refusal to lie” but also a lack of bias or agenda in their work (Gardner, et al., 2001, p. 173-174). To the journalists, fairness applied to the subjects of the news stories as well as to their audience. The journalists balanced “unflinching accuracy” with their duty to not harm their subjects and their duty to inform their audience (Gardner, et al., 2001, p. 175-176). The journalists also explained the need to tell all sides of a story in an effort to be fair to their audience (Gardner, et al., 2001, p.

176). These standards were expressed by the vast majority of the group of 60 journalists interviewed.

These ethical standards, along with the political, economic, and social influences on the routines of the newsroom all contribute to how news is created. The examination of these aspects of newswork help lay the foundation for what it means to be a newsworker as well as how they conduct their newswork. The knowledge from past literature will help me better explore what it means to be a non-profit newsworker and ultimately answer my research question: “How do news workers on a local National Public Radio news station make meaning of their jobs, journalism as a profession, and perceive different influences on the news content they create?” With the theoretical foundation laid, it is now necessary to understand how this study was conducted.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD FOR A STUDY OF NEWSWORK INFLUENCES

According to Gardner, et al. (2001), “the media have acquired unprecedented power over our lives, a power to shape our culture and our minds” (p. 125). This includes the news media and the ultimately the newsworkers that create it. How newsworkers interpret and subsequently choose to write or edit their stories is a critical step in the process of how news media then influences the culture for those who consume it. This is why it is important to understand how newsworkers perceive their work as well as any pressures or influences that might impact newsworkers and the news they create.

Understanding a newsworker’s beliefs and influences is important regardless of the type of news created. An examination of non-profit newsworkers is especially important, not only because they engage in newswork, but because of public media’s financial structure, organizational structure, and divisive history. To gain insight into news production through the eyes of the newsworker, this study asked the question “how do the newsworkers on a National Public Radio news station make meaning of their jobs, journalism as a profession, and perceive possible influences on the news content they create?” In order to answer this question, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with members of a local NPR news or current affairs program. Each interview lasted between forty-five minutes to an hour and a half.

The use of semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed me to gather the perspectives of people working on the front line of non-profit news production. The newsworkers had the opportunity to explain their perceptions of how news decisions are

made within their work place as well as their views on journalism as a whole. Through these interviews, I obtained a deep understanding of the newswork and journalistic beliefs of members of a local NPR newsroom.

Choice of Method

In-depth interviews are a well-tested qualitative research method, though more sparsely applied when examining the influences on newswork. In previous research newswork has been explored through participant observations in tandem with interviews or content analyses (Bantz, et al., 1980; Breed, 1955; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Berkowitz, 1989; Berkowitz, 1997). However, in-depth interviews on their own have been used to great effect to understand the ways journalists see their work environment and style. They were utilized in some of the more important news studies, including White's (1950) gatekeeper study on newswork decisions. Interviews were also integral to Berkowitz' (1989) dissertation on influences and ideologies in the newsroom.

The in-depth interview has a long history in qualitative research. Through the use of thoughtful open-ended questions and follow-up questions, it has allowed interview subjects to fully explore their perceptions and beliefs on a variety of subjects. Interviews have been the most appropriate research method when seeking to understand a person's "beliefs, attitudes, values, knowledge, or any other subjective orientations or mental content" (Gordon, 1975, p. 39). Interviews attempt to "understand rather than explain" (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 366). As I sought to understand newsworkers' beliefs and how knowledge of their decisions influences in their work, interviews were the most apt form of research method for this study.

In White's (1950) study of newsworkers, the interviewees provided insights into how decisions are made regarding the selection of news. Through the insights gained from his interview subjects, White discovered news must journey past many gatekeepers in order to eventually be published. He also better understood what influences played into the decisions made by the newsworkers at a newspaper. Like White's study, this study seeks to better understand the influences on the decisions of newsworkers at a non-profit radio station.

Berkowitz (1997) also utilized interviews in his study on a local television newsroom and its newsworkers. The interviews helped provide a deeper understanding of the newsworkers' news decisions that would have not been gleaned from mere observation and content analysis. Berkowitz was able to ask the newsworkers why they chose to broadcast certain stories as opposed to others. Similarly, my study utilized interviews to better understand the newsworker's perspective of their work.

The information gathered through the interviews also provides insight into the newsworker's "experience, knowledge, and worldviews" (Lindlof, et al, 2010, p. 173). These worldviews come directly from the interviewees' own descriptions and words. Through this method the interviewees were able to give their perceptions regarding their work. The questions in the interviews investigate the beliefs the newsworkers had about their work as well as perceived influences on their work, which allows the interviewees to thoughtfully explore of these topics. Through the "stories, accounts, and explanations" of the interviewees, I explored the research question, "How do news workers on a local National Public Radio news station make meaning of their jobs, journalism as a

profession, and perceive different influences on the news content they create?" (Lindlof, et al, 2010, p. 174).

The semi-structured interviews used both close-ended and open-ended questions and sometimes varied in the order asked. Follow-up questions were asked in order to "delve more deeply into some of the topics or issues addressed or to clarify answers given by the respondent" (Brennan, 2012, p. 28). This process allowed me to adapt to each interview depending on how the interviewee answered the question, and thus created an opportunity for me to personalize each interview and gain better insight into each interviewee's perceptions and experiences. Before turning to a more detailed discussion of the interview schedule, a review of the interview site and participants is in order.

Site Selection

The research was conducted at a mid-sized Midwest NPR station with active local programming. This station was selected because of its convenient location and the number of newsworkers on staff. I will refer to the station as WKMP in order to allow the station to remain anonymous. For around 50 years, WKMP has covered a media market that reaches at least sixteen counties in two different states. According to its 2012-2013 annual report, the station's average weekly audience was a little over 90,000 listeners. WKMP received its CPB funding through a local university and the rest of its funding through on-air membership drives and corporate sponsorship.

WKMP had a total of 17 "on-air" staff according to its website. This included the general manager and programming director. This staff covered three locally produced

programs at WKMP: a local news broadcast, a local news magazine program, and local music programming at night. The rest of the programming consisted of syndicated national broadcasts. This study includes interviews with newsworkers from the local news broadcast and the local news magazine, as those two programs focused on producing news.

The local news broadcast airs five days a week from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. The locally produced news is intermixed with a nationally syndicated broadcast. WKMP does have a live host to help transition between national and local content as well as provide his or her own stories, including the local weather. All of the local news stories were produced the day before they aired, thus all news reporters except for the host typically work a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday.

Unlike the news broadcast program, the news magazine airs six days a week, at 10 a.m. Monday through Friday and at 3 p.m. on Saturday. The news magazine has four full-time employees and one part-time employee. It features a host that is oftentimes its executive producer but can also be one of its senior producers. It airs longer form interviews on subjects ranging from political and social issues in the community to local artists and arts programs. The stories they cover are considered “feature” stories as opposed to the news broadcast’s “hard” news stories. This means the stories often include information outside of the bare facts. The station considered both the news broadcast program and the news magazine program a part of their news department and the employees that work on these programs are thus newsworkers.

Interviewee description

Participants were recruited through e-mail to the station's general manager's assistant. This assistant acted as a liaison for any contact made between my potential interviewees and me. This method of outreach meant that I could not contact potential interviewees directly and ultimately slowed down the scheduling for interviews. In order to schedule interviews, I would send a request to the assistant to reach out to the newsworkers on my behalf. With each request I received a reply directly from one or two newsworkers. Because this delayed the interview process, final three interviews were obtained through researching media contact lists I received from a local filmmaker and using the e-mail addresses listed on them for newsworkers at WKMP. Once I was in direct contact with the interviewees, I was able to set times and locations for the interviews.

In the end, seven respondents agreed to be interviewed for this study. All seven were interviewed over four months. I ended my research gathering when I felt the information gained through the interviews was becoming repetitive. WKMP listed 17 "on-air" newsworkers at their station. Of the 17 newsworkers at WKMP, I interviewed seven newsworkers: four from the news broadcast program, and three from the news magazine program. I interviewed two male and five female newsworkers.

According to the university that sponsors WKMP's license, all of the newsworkers I interviewed were considered "broadcast specialists" or "senior broadcast specialists," although the station gave them more precise titles. All of the titles listed in the interviewee descriptions below are the ones given to me by each interviewee. Oftentimes the interviewees would have multiple titles.

- Larry worked on the local news broadcast and was considered a “news reporter” and “host.” He had worked in journalism for more than 30 years and had been working at WKMP for over 20.
- Amy worked on the local news broadcast as well as a special project news series. She was considered a “news reporter” and the “executive director” of the special project series. She had worked at WKMP for more than 20 years.
- Joan worked on the local news broadcast part time for less than 10 years. She was considered a “news reporter.”
- Taylor worked on the local news broadcast and was considered a “news reporter” and “producer.” She had been at WKMP for less than 10 years.
- Tim worked on the news magazine program as the “executive producer” and “co-host.” He had worked in journalism for more than 20 years but had been at WKMP for less than 10 years.
- Polly worked on the news magazine program as a “coordinating producer” and also worked on web content for the station. She had been at WKMP for less than 10 years.
- Ellen worked on the news magazine program as a “producer” and part-time “co-host.” She had worked at WKMP for less than ten years but had been a journalist for more than 20.

The interviewees were promised anonymity throughout the research study and will be kept anonymous within the analysis of the research. At the beginning of each interview, I asked each interviewee for an alias of his or her choosing that could be used within this

study, however, I eventually decided to create new aliases for each interviewee to ensure anonymity. The interviewees' names were never recorded. Each interviewee was also given the opportunity to determine how much information would be revealed about his or her job titles and station. I was open to any fears, concerns, or potential suggestions about my methods to keep their participation anonymous and gave them my contact information in case they had questions or issues. It does bear noting that only one person identified as a person of color. To protect the interviewees' identities, his or her alias will not be revealed.

I accommodated the interviewees' preferences for the time and location at which to conduct the interview. All interviews took place at WKMP and occurred during work hours. The interviews were recorded onto a memory card. I then made two back-up copies of the audio through my Dropbox online storage account and in a folder on my desktop. No one had access to the interviews except for me. I transcribed the audio recordings of the interview with the help of ExpressScribe transcription software. I was the only person to hear the audio and see the transcripts. These final transcriptions were used as the basis for my analysis. All of these steps were taken to ensure that the interviewee's identity was kept confidential.

Interview Structure

Following Brennan's (2012) semi-structured in-depth interview structure, I used the same set of pre-constructed questions for each interview. However, using the interviewees' responses as a guide, I deviated from the set list at times in order to better understand the interviewees' perceptions and to allow the interviewee to elaborate on a

particular topic. Interviewees were allowed to take as long as they needed to answer questions in order to gain their full perspective on the topics discussed. The main topics covered included:

1. Introduction and information sheet
2. Ice-breaker questions and short answer questions
3. Open-ended questions
    a. Organization and Decision-Making
    b. Budget and Other Influences
    c. Beliefs and Values
    d. Opinions about the Program and the Station
4. Any questions or concerns from the interviewee

When I first sat down with each interviewees, I briefly explained the study I was conducting, how the interview would go, and gave them the information sheet with my contact information. I also explained my steps for keeping the interviews anonymous as well as who would be handling the recordings and transcripts. I began the interviews with ice-breaker questions as well as easier close-ended questions in order to ease the interviewee into the interview For example, as an ice-breaker I often would ask what stories they were working on that day or if they had any interviews scheduled. I would then ask close-ended questions such as “what would you like your alias to be?” and “how long have you worked at WKMP?”

Next, I asked the interviewees questions regarding the structure of the news program and any decision-making they do during their newswork. For example, I asked the interviewees to describe a typical day at WKMP and what each interviewee believed

made a story newsworthy. These questions revealed how the station was run, how they made decisions regarding news stories, and the hierarchy of the program and the station. The questions were designed to explore any institutional influences, gatekeepers, and routines the interviewee might experience.

The next set of questions dealt with any influences the interviewees experienced with specific questions that asked about fundraising and budgets. The focus on fundraising and budgets came directly from past studies on public media. Most of the studies focused on how economics affected business practices at public broadcasting stations. (Avery, 2007; Aufderheide, 1996; White, 1994; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; McCourt, 1999; McCauley, 2002, Kerbel, Apee, & Ross, 2000; Bailey, 2004; Brooks & Ondrich, 2006; Woal, 1986; McCourt, 1999). It was important to this study to see if the interviewees perceived economic pressures and influences since the ultimate goal was to explore any pressures the interviewees might experience that would affect their newswork. After broadly dealing with pressures and influences, I specifically asked about any budgetary influences and about their newswork during membership drives.

Interview questions then delved into the beliefs and values that might influence the interviewees' work. Their personal morals, values, and goals for their work were also explored. For example, the interviewees were asked about their goals for their work as well as their definition of "good journalism." I also examined their ethical practices and asked about any ethical issues that arose during their newswork. This section of questions allowed the interview to explore how their personal beliefs might influence their work.

I ended the interviews with a short list of questions that inquired about the interviewee's opinion about and views on the future of their program, their station, and

NPR as a whole. The last question I asked each interviewee was if they had anything else they would like to say. These questions were meant to gauge the interviewees' broad personal views on their work as well as gave them the opportunity to add anything they thought I should know about their work that I had not asked about yet.

Please find the full interview schedule in Appendix A.

Method of Analysis

The interviews of the NPR workers offered many shared themes and meanings. Using Maykut and Morehouse's (1994) "constant comparative" method, I worked to identify the reoccurring themes and meanings. The constant comparative method requires the researcher to code each transcript so that he or she will know the source of the pieces of information or quotes at each step of the process. I first read through all of the transcripts in one sitting. I then went through a process of "discovery" where I made notes of "recurring ideas, questions, thoughts, etc" within the transcripts (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 132). I then created an excel sheet in which I made categories for themes that appeared within the transcripts. I then found quotes to place into each category. This process is called "inductive category coding" (Maykut, et al, 1994, p. 134).

Inductive category coding consisted of placing different pieces of information into groups consisting of similar information. These categories were provisional and subject to change later on in the process, but acted as preliminary areas of focus (Maykut, et al, 1994, p. 136). For example, I began with a category called "High Standards" which

eventually became a part of a larger category or theme called ‘Journalist’s Beliefs and Values.” When a category had six to eight quotes from the transcripts assigned to it, I then made rules for that category. These were called the “rules for inclusion” (Maykut, et al, 1994, p. 139). Constant Comparative method required the rules be written as “propositional statements” which revealed “the meaning that is contained in the data” within each category (Maykut, et al, 1994, p.139).

Each category had different rules for inclusion. For the “Journalist’s Beliefs and Values” category, each piece of information had to pertain to the standards, ethics, morals, or values the newsworkers personally held or believed the station held in regards to their newswork. The information put under the “Audience” category had to refer to how audiences were discussed or regarded by the newsworkers. The quotes selected for the “Budgets” category had to pertain to money and budgets or pertain to situations that were caused by the budget. The “Routines and Guidelines” category was hardest to define. This category included any quotes regarding station policy and procedures, newsworker habits, and ingrained journalistic routines. The less prominent “Feedback” category contained any mentions of reviews of the newsworker’s work by management, co-workers, or audience members. Finally, the smallest category was “Diversity.” The rule for inclusion in this category was that the information pertained to the diversity of the news content created, the audience members, and the staff at the station. Using each propositional statement, I was able to better organize the information from the interviews and thus gain a clearer understanding of what could be learned from the interviews. During this process, categories changed or combined depending on how the statements were written and how the data was interpreted.

After the categories and propositional statements were set, I examined any relationships or patterns found across the categories (Maykut, et al, 1994, p. 143). Some propositions were strongly supported and found throughout all interviews while others were important outliers that still helped answer the research question. For example, every interviewee mentioned some example of economic influence on their work, while fewer interviewees mentioned the influence of feedback on their work. Even though the "feedback" theme was smaller, it was still important to include in the analysis.

During this process, I printed out the excel sheet of categories and cut out each quote. I color-coded the quotes using highlighters so that I could put them under more than one category. I then used the color-coding to combine categories that have similar themes and then created new rules for inclusion for the new categories. When all connections were made and all stand alone propositions recognized, I solidified the statements into "outcome propositions" (Maykut, et al, 1994, p. 144). Outcome propositions are the statements that answer the research questions and the quotes from the interviews are the evidence used when defending the statements in the written analysis. Along with the outcome propositions, I included a section on any outlier or contradictory information given by the interviewees in order to fully account for all of the perspectives given. I found four outcome propositions and two outlier themes in the interviews.

CHAPTER 4

NEWSWORKER'S PERCEPTIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF INFLUENCES

The process of analysis enabled me to draw conclusions about what the newsworker's perceptions meant for non-profit news, as well as some of the influences that affect journalists in non-profit news. Using past research on both for-profit and non-profit news media, I was able to link ideas about a newsworker's perceptions of influences on their newswork with the research on the news content that is created. I turn there next.

When I conducted my research at WKMP, my interviewees were much more used to asking than answering questions. I asked my interviewees to step out of their roles as newsworkers in order to examine the work they do. While normally their newswork required them to be succinct in their wording, the newsworkers I interviewed were thorough in their explanations and descriptions of their work experiences and influences. They often, somewhat unsurprisingly, told stories to illustrate points they were making, and most appeared genuinely interested in talking about their jobs. The following section details the resulting themes that formed within these fascinating and, yes, at times verbose, interviews.

Before turning to the analysis, it is important to note that the quotes used in the analysis have had any "um" or "uh" removed for the sake of clarity. However, these verbal ticks and pauses were noted within the transcripts. Within these transcripts, four major and two minor themes emerged from the interviews as prevailing influences that impact the newsworkers' work. The major influences were budgets, routines and

guidelines, beliefs and values, and audiences. The minor or outlying themes were feedback and diversity. In order to be considered a major theme, the theme had to have permeated all interviews and throughout multiple answers. Evidence for minor themes was smaller but robust enough to note. The following analysis will detail the influences the interviewees described as impacting them and their work.

Budgets

As noted in the literature review, the impact of money and budgetary interests on the news media has been profound (McChesney, 2008; Dagnes, 2010; Croteau, et al., 2006; Bagdikian, 1997; Schudson, 1997; McManus, 1994). Economic pressures influenced the way newsworkers worked, the content they created, and the goals and mission of the news organizations. Studies on public media found similar influences (Avery, 2007; Aufderheide, 1996; White, 1994; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; McCourt, 1999; McCauley, 2002, Kerbel, Apee, & Ross, 2000; Bailey, 2004; Brooks & Ondrich, 2006; Woal, 1986). While I created many of the questions in my interview survey to directly examine the budgetary and economic influences the interviewee might experience, I found that questions regarding other aspects of their work often resulted in answers that revealed subtle monetary influences. Throughout the interviews, the interviewee's would often recount stories that involved issues that existed either as a direct result or partially due to the station's budget. I found three major areas of economic influences on the interviewee's work. The first, and most often cited, was the station's small staff and budget shortfalls. The second was the interviewee's awareness of a budget

but conscious noninvolvement in most aspects of the business side of the station outside of membership drives, which is the third area of influence on their work.

Short-Staffed, Small Budget

> It's funny because when I was young and would tell people [I was] interested in going into journalism, everybody would say "Don't do it!" and I would laugh and think that they were just pulling my leg. They would all say the rewards aren't great enough and you work long hours for not much pay and you know after 23 years of doing this, I understand completely what they were saying. At the same time it's a terrific job so there's a lot I wouldn't change about it. (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host)

The interviewees' stories often contained their views on how the perceived inadequate budget of their station affected their day-to-day working lives. The budget affected their access to resources, how much time they spent on stories, which stories they would cover, as well as how they organized their days. Many times, the interviewees connected the smaller budget with a smaller staff.

The interviewees often talked about how the smaller staff influenced many of the news decisions on their program. Because they only had a certain number of people to "feed the beast," or create the content for each show, there were often issues with a lack of time and deadlines (Polly, Coordinating Producer). This led to pressure on the newsworkers to do more work in less time. Joan (news reporter) explained that, "a bigger staff would help, where we would have more people in the mix doing stories so that fewer of us are on a daily basis just trying to crank stuff out." Ellen (Executive Producer and Co-host) expanded on the idea saying, "the pressure mostly that I feel…is that we

don’t have enough people to do what we need to do” and that the newsworkers are “always struggling to catch up” because of a “lack of time and lack of resources.”

Another interviewee, Polly (Coordinating Producer), described the staffing situation when she first began working at the station on the news magazine program. She explained that there were supposed to be twice as many people working on the show than there were, but no new people had been added since she had been there. She offered that because of this stagnation, staff members have “constantly been expected to do more and more things.” This was the same for the news broadcast program. Larry (News Reporter and Host) said that oftentimes, “you may go longer than you would had hoped to fill that position, and so during that time everyone has to first kick in a little bit more and all that stuff, so it can be…that adds to the pressure.” During staffing shortfalls, the amount of work does not change, adding pressure to the newsworkers to complete the same amount of work with fewer people.

The lack of time and resources were also cited as reasons that certain types of stories were not pursued by the newsworkers. Joan (News Reporter) found it frustrating that “with our small staff we can not do big investigations you know we would love to but we can not get too deep into stuff unless we’re deployed for like a month to just work on that you know.” Similarly, Taylor (News Reporter) talked about stories that were “nixed because they're taking entirely too long.” She explained that, “We're a small staff here…in comparison to other news outlets here, we're tiny, so having something take two weeks can sometimes be pretty problematic when you need to constantly push things out.” Larry (News Reporter and Host) related that this need to always be producing new stories made him “feel pressured to do more faster.”

The smaller staff and budget also affected routines around the office. The smaller staff required the newsworkers to revaluate what was feasible during the day. For the news magazine program, this means that they are unable to hold staff meetings to discuss stories. “You know, because we have such a small staff. There are four people that produce this show and because it is such a relatively small staff when we don't meet on a given day we sort of treat the entire workday as though it's the meeting” (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host). Others saw how the daily aspects of newsgathering were affected by the lack of resources.

> We are limited in what we can do. For a long time we had to buy our own batteries. We were encouraged not to file like for reimbursement, for like travel. I don’t know if that was ever a rule but it was what we all did. We just drove our, you know, we just paid for our own gas for going out and doing stories and batteries. Now people are filing for travel reimbursement and people are filing for batteries. I don’t know what changed. We just decided enough of this. But that’s a result of the budget being always, you know, never great. (Joan, News Reporter)

Most of the interviewees perceived that the budget was never as large as they wanted it to be. They saw it in their smaller-than-desired salaries and their lack of resources (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host; Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series; Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host). Even though they were aware of these shortfalls, the majority of the interviewees professed to have very little interaction with the budget.

Aware But Uninvolved

> I think, you know, we’re not a very huge station so we all tend to know a little bit more about what’s going on financially with the station than maybe some bigger organizations. And a lot of that has to do with the fact that we do on air fundraising. So, you know, to that extent like we know what our goals are for the

> on air fund drives, and at our staff meetings we always hear you know how far we are [toward achieving] our overall goals or our community goals or our corporate goals and things like that. So, you know, to the extent we hear about it that doesn't really come into play with the production of the show. It just might be something we chat about among the staff just like " Uh-oh! We better make more money," or, "Hey, we're doing pretty good this year," you know, because you're always kind of thinking about that in the back of your minds. You know, shortfalls are not good. (Polly, Coordinating Producer)

While the interviewees seemed fully aware of the relatively small size of the budget and its influences on their work, they often professed their lack of involvement in fixing the issue. Their conscious separation between the business side of the station and the editorial side of the station was made clear in their interviews and ultimately affected the way they worked.

At most, the interviewees had "an awareness of how the station is doing financially" (Larry, News Reporter and Host). Most interviewees felt the need to keep the business practices separate from the newswork. The separation between money-making and newswork is seen most clearly in the interviews with the members of the news magazine program staff. Since they produced in-depth local stories wherein they interviewed people who represent certain interests, they were aware of the distinction between newswork and business practices such as advertising or promotion. Tim (Executive Producer and Co-host) explained this separation saying, "often we will do interviews with organizations or people who have events coming up, and you know, as we go into the interview with the person basically say[ing] this is not going to be an advertisement for your event. Or an advertisement for, you know, whatever the issue is" and, "we never want to air something purely as a promotion piece for whoever is doing it." Tim (Executive Producer and Co-Host) even mentioned avoiding interviewing people

from organizations that had recently become underwriters for the station. This was out of fear that devoting some of the show's airtime to the underwriter's organization would be perceived as a reward for giving money to the station.

Other interviewees explained that budgets or business practices are issues that are dealt with by other employees. Two interviewees stated that they "don't do anything with budgets" or "don't really deal directly with any of that stuff [finances]" (Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host; Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). The interviewees also made it clear that other business practices such as program ratings and audience surveys are not in their domain. The interviewees were aware of these practices, but other people at the station handled them. When asked if the station surveyed its audience, Taylor (News Reporter) said, "we definitely, but the news department does not really do that, but as a station we do that. We have people who do that." The disconnect between the two sides of the station that the interviewees discussed reveals that the newsworkers perceive themselves to be creating content outside of the influence of their marketing and sales staff.

The interviewees explained that on the whole, they "very rarely" interacted with the business side of the station and, "unless you make concerted effort to go mix and mingle then you really don't" ever interact with the business side of the office (Larry, News Reporter and Host; Taylor, News Reporter). This is not to say they never worked with the marketing and business employees. This rare interaction occurred mainly during membership drives.

Membership Drives

> Everyone has a responsibility to at least participate in some level in fundraising. Some people absolutely hate it. Others don't mind it, and…everybody else is in a range in between those two points. (Larry, News Reporter and Host)

> We try to make sure the fundraising we do on [the news magazine program], first of all, doesn't compromise our integrity as producers, but we look at it as a necessary part of being in this kind of in this kind of media. (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host)

The one exception to this lack of involvement in the economic arena of their broadcasting station was when they participated in the station's membership drives at their station. According to the interviewees, these membership drives affected their work minimally and only for a few weeks out of the year. However, interviewees did perceive some influence from the membership drives on their work.

Membership drives, on the whole, are organized by the marketing department at WKMP. According to Taylor (News Reporter), "[marketing department employees] ask us if we are available to pitch certain days….They set up meetings and they give us papers…and they have pitch points that you can read directly or you know get an idea of what you're going to say."

When discussing how much of their time at work was taken up by the membership drives, the answers often varied. One interviewee discussed how membership drives made it "really hard to get other stuff done" (Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series) during that time, while another claimed she devoted only "one percent" of her total time at the office to membership drives (Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host). This is mainly due to each person's total responsibility when it comes to fundraising. Larry (News Reporter and Host) had to carve out large chunks of his day to give on-air pitches while others, like Tim (Executive

Producer and Co-host) had to, “carve out an extra half hour or so in the day to go in and record the friendly conversation about why you should give money to local public radio station.” However, even though the newsworkers had less time for producing stories during drives, fewer stories needed to be produced because “the amount of content on the show is reduced.” While there was less content, the type of content aired was affected by the membership drives.

Most interviewees stated that they did consciously think about how the content they aired during the drives might affect the amount of donations. They explained that they wanted to air “really strong stuff…because we know that’s the best way to make the case for supporting public radio” (Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). They made decisions to air reruns of larger projects they had created in order to “showcase what we do, and say ‘well you really like this right? So now give us money to support it’” (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host). The interviewees made it a point to say that they would air these pieces anyways, but often try to air or re-air some of their best content during membership drives (Polly, Coordinating Producer; Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host).

As shown, budgets and membership drives influenced some of the news decisions newsworkers made at WKMP. However, money was not the only pressure that the interviewees experienced. Their personal habits and routines as well as institutional guidelines and gatekeepers were all mentioned as influences on their daily work.

Routines and Guidelines

Past studies on newswork have revealed the presence of social, institutional, and personal pressures affecting the journalists (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; White, 1950; Berkowitz, 1997; Bantz, McCorkle, & Baade, 1980; Fishman, 1980; McManus, 1994; Gardner et al., 2001). From White's (1950) study of gatekeepers in the workplace to Tuchman's (1978) study of journalistic routines, many influences affect the way decisions are made within a newsroom. Within this study, the interviewees said they experienced many of the same pressures. The habits and routines, that the newsworkers developed as they worked at WKMP for an extended period of time, acted as a basis for the structure of their days. The interviewees' work habits and their station's institutional guidelines helped create some of these routines and gatekeepers reinforced them.

Routines in Daily Newswork

> You know, I would say its not necessarily written down but we all know the seven tenants [of] news values of which I don't even know if I can name all of them anymore really. Once you start practicing you just forget about that stuff and you go for the stories. But they all tend to relate back to those news values in some way. (Taylor, News Reporter)

The newswork routines and habits of the interviewees differed slightly between the news broadcast program and the news magazine program. However, as will be shown, workers at both programs had a set of routines that informed their work decisions. I will explore both sets of routines separately.

According to the interviewees, the news broadcast program workers had a more structured day, which "starts in the editorial meetings" that the reporters attended every

morning (Larry, News Reporter and Host). The meetings were “conducted by our news director” and are “pretty collaborative” (Taylor, News Reporter; Joan, News Reporter). The staff then went “around the table and each person has to give their thoughts and their ideas so we’re expected to have something everyday to contribute” (Joan, News Reporter). These meetings occurred “every Monday through Friday…at roughly 9:15 or 9:30” (Larry, News Reporter and Host). After the meeting, all the reporters either worked on stories for the newscast the next day or they worked on their longer form pieces (Larry, News Reporter and Host; Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series; Joan, News Reporter). Stories can be directly influenced by the day of the week they will air. “We probably need a little more serious story on a Monday and a lighter story on a Friday” (Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). In the end, they “work typically the 9 to 5 workday, Monday through Friday, with the exception of [Larry] doing the crazy early morning show” (Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series).

The news magazine program workers experienced routines that were less structured but just as understood by the newsworkers. Their smaller staff made morning meeting more difficult to implement and in the end unnecessary. “ I think if we had a bigger staff, it would be an issue that we didn’t have morning meetings. We’ve tried it many, many times and it is just kind of everybody’s schedules are so jammed packed” (Polly, Coordinating Producer). Instead, the interviewees who worked for the news magazine program understood that they could simply go talk to their Executive Producer Tim anytime they wanted to discuss stories or production. For Tim, there was often “a steady, steady flow of people in and out of my office” (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-

Host). This routine was seen as effective and resulted in “basically everyone on the same page” (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host).

Apart from their daily work schedule routines, the newsworkers described routines they had formed surrounding how to find news sources and which stories to pursue and air. Both the news program and the news magazine program newsworkers had similar habits and routines for choosing news sources and people to interview for a news story. Interviewees explained that they “keep a list of contacts” (Larry, News Reporter and Host). They shared these contacts with each other and often reused contacts because, “its convenient and you know, it’s faster. It’s more efficient” (Larry, News Reporter and Host). They recognized that they “use talking heads often,” and that they had “people that are just go-to people for [a particular] subject” when seeking out guests and commentators for stories (Taylor, News Reporter).

The interviewees developed habits for selecting sources, stating that “if you’ve worked in the area long enough you know the go-to people are” for interviews and that “it’s pretty clear who the voices should be” for their stories (Joan, News Reporter; Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). They also had their go-to contacts. Oftentimes sources reached out to them to be interviewed. These sources tended to be “just as eager as we are to talk about an important issue in the community and they just happen to be an expert source” (Polly, Coordinating Producer). This too was seen as a time-saver for the newsworkers.

Apart from finding sources, both sets of interviewees also explained their routines for finding and selecting stories. When searching for stories, the news program and news magazine program interviewees felt that “each of us develops an eye for things that may

be even the simplest of happenings [as] potentially…newsworthy" and that "if there's an obvious story then, you know, that's what it is" (Larry, News Reporter and Host; Taylor, News Reporter). This innate ability to know when a story is newsworthy was echoed across both programs. When asked if story selection had become second nature, Ellen stated, "Yeah, I would say so…because I don't have to think too hard" (Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host). The interviewees found stories by "talking to people," "using other media," "taking a walk down the street and looking around," or they "drive around and pay attention to things" (Joan, News Reporter; Taylor, News Reporter; Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). For the news magazine program, story selections often come from sifting through the "many pitches" they get each day (Polly, Coordinating Producer).

They look for "tension" and " trends" in stories that they find (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host; Larry, News Reporter and Host; Polly, Coordinating Producer). This meant that the desired stories featured a conflict, controversial issues or were part of a larger group of stories that were being talked about locally or nationally. Many times the interviewees chose stories that they found interesting. Taylor (News Reporter) explained that the newsworkers "get to pick a lot of what you're interested in which is always nice because who wants to do things they aren't interested in." In fact, "interesting," was a word used by other interviewees as a required attribute for a story they would pursue as well (Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host; Larry, News Reporter and Host; Polly, Coordinating Producer; Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). The interviewees often would ask themselves if a story "impacts our audience" or has "community impact," and if it did, then it was

viewed as a newsworthy (Taylor, News Reporter; Polly, Coordinating Producer). Joan (News Reporter) also mentioned “timeliness” as an attribute of a newsworthy story. On the whole, the interviewees agreed that they were “on the same page” when it came to defining a newsworthy story (Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series; Taylor, News Reporter).

Institutional and Social Guidelines

> Sometimes you bring a story, and we say that is just too NPR. Like…NPR would so do that story…. I'm going to give the example. I have an example but I fear I'm going to give it wrong in the way in which I tell it. But it has something to do with the Brewers [baseball team’s] dog, Hank. And so we're talking about why are people so obsessed with this dog. And obviously we know the dog is cute. I'm not really an animal lover. I think they're cute at a distance. I'm afraid of everything, to be perfectly honest. But we're like this dog is getting so much attention. What's going on? And then our news director suggested we do a story about…it may have been about people's obsession with...so forget that the dog is cute, but people's obsession with this dog. And it just it got real NPR. We're just like no. (Taylor, News Reporter)
>
> Ok, so over-thinking can sometimes be an NPR thing? (Interviewer)
>
> Yeah, like it’s way too stereotypical. (Taylor, News Reporter)

Along with the routines the interviewees developed, institutional guidelines influenced their workday. There were similarities among all of the interviewees in their descriptions of what they believed were the goals of their program and of the station. There was also a consensus among the interviewees as to how the news director or executive producer preferred their stories to be edited.

Guidelines of their professional goals and of the station’s goals were echoed among all of the interviews. They believe that their programs were created to “educate

our audience, to enlighten them and to tell them stories" (Taylor, News Reporter). They explain that their programs worked "for the good of the whole community" (Larry, News Reporter and Host). To "inform" and "impact" the community was seen as important to the station and its programs (Polly, Coordinating Producer; Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host; Joan, News Reporter). Amy (News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series) believed that the goals "may be stated in different words but I think that we're on the same page."

As for institutional guidelines, many of the interviewees explained that there were specific rules when editing their stories. They stressed the importance of "active voice," being "factually accurate," and having "authentic voices" (Taylor, News Reporter; Joan, News Reporter; Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host; Larry, News Reporter and Host). Larry (News Reporter and Host) described authentic voices as "people talking about things that they have been affected by" or "that are meaningful to them." Interviewees also explained the need for stories to "take people places" or take "listeners to a scene where they can picture what's going on" (Larry, News Reporter and Host; Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). The writing also had to be "brief," "short and clear" (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host; Joan, News Reporter). These guidelines were either seen as "stuff that we assume we all know from journalism school…in conjunction with kind of like the NPR model, if you will" (Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). These editing guidelines were enforced by gatekeepers who did not allow a story to be aired until the guidelines were met.

Gatekeepers

> Well Tim is our executive producer so he is the godfather. He's the don…so pretty much we all report to him….Tim is the boss, and the rest of us are his minions. (Polly, Coordinating Producer)

According to the interviewees, the gatekeepers at WKMP fall into three job positions. The first is the news director who is the main gatekeeper for the staff of the news broadcast program. The second gatekeeper is executive producer of the news magazine program. Finally, the upper management of the station, the programming director and the executive director, were cited as rare gatekeeping influences on both programs. The interviewees explained how these gatekeepers affected their newswork by deciding what the programs airs and how the newsworkers pursue and edit their stories.

For the news broadcast program staff, the news director had the final say in almost every news decision. From the beginning of a story to its final edit, the news director played a part in the decisions made for that story. According to the interviewees, the news director would "give the green light for a story" and "if you didn't, in effect, have the green light to cover that, you wouldn't cover it" (Larry, News Reporter and Host). During the production of the story, the news director "has significant input" as well (Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). When the reporters finished a story, "the final edit goes to our news director" (Taylor, News Reporter). The interviewees described reporting back to the news director during all aspects of their newswork to either get permission to continue or to discuss their progress.

The news director also had the power to kill a story. Many of the newsworkers on the news broadcast program cited that the main reason their news director would tell

them to stop pursuing if the story feels incomplete or if it is taking too long to complete. Amy (News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series) explained that, “It’s a matter of completion, like if you see something that you think is a good idea and you start looking into it. You do some interviews, but then it just kind of goes nowhere because there’s like not really a point to it.” If the story is incomplete or if the newsworker was unable to get all sides of the story then the news director might not let the story air. If a story took too long to pursue, the news director would sometimes tell the newsworkers to stop pursuing it. When asked why the news director might nix a story, Taylor (News Reporter) described the following situation:

> Then there are other times they're nixed because they're taking entirely too long. So we're a small staff here. In comparison to other public radio stations, we're not that small. In comparison to other news outlets here, we're tiny. So, having something take two weeks can sometimes be pretty problematic when you need to constantly push things out.

In other words, because of the small amount of newsworkers needed to “feed the beast” for their almost daily news program, news stories that take longer to pursue are considered burden and could be cut by the news director.

The news magazine program had an executive producer, Tim, who the other newsworkers on that program report to in a similar way. Though, according to the interviewees, when “ he’s not here, generally Ellen is then” in charge (Polly, Coordinating Producer). Tim “establishes what’s going on the air….although we all work with him very closely….He’s not very dictatorial, but it’s his job to make sure that the show has the components that we need to have” (Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host). Interviewees stated that when they found a story to pursue, they would “probably go to Tim or Ellen, depending on who was here” and “would say, what do you think

about this? What's a new angle" (Polly, Coordinating Producer)? Tim or Ellen would then help decide the direction of the story and ultimately decide what aired the next day.

Finally, upper management also gave some direction to the interviewees, though interviewees said they had "very little" direct interaction with the programs and that they were "very hands off" (Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host). This was true more for the station manager than the programming director. For example, Larry as host and Polly as the web editor interacted or reported to the programming director. Amy (News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series) would also go to the programming director "if I have like a promo that I want to run overnight and I want him to plug it into the programming over night" or "if I have a question about one of the [special project] segments." However, most of the other interviewees interacted more with their immediate superiors and rarely discussed business or programming with upper management.

This does not mean they did not ever see the general manager. Polly explained that "our general manager…he comes by a lot and he'll say 'Oh I really liked that segment' or… 'What are you guys doing about this' (Polly, Coordinating Producer). Interactions with the general manager could be "as casual as just a 'hello' or…we have monthly staff meetings, for instance, where all staff are invited to participate and share ideas and all that stuff" (Larry, News Reporter and Host). However, according to the interviewees, when it came to day-to-day news decisions, the news director and executive producer were viewed as the decision-makers. Along with these routines, the newsworkers were strongly influenced by their personal beliefs and values.

Beliefs and Values

As in Gardner, et al.'s study of journalist's perceptions of their work, the beliefs and values of the interviewees in this study were often discussed as an important part of the work they did. The interviewees' ethics, standards, and journalistic beliefs is a strong theme throughout their interviews. The interviewees strived to meet their own and their station's standards of ethics, which included keeping their personal life separate from their work as a newsworker. They also let their optimism and idealism as well as the high standards for the content they created affect their newswork.

Ethics

> I feel that it's very important to follow the ethical guidelines of the fairness and accuracy. If I worked for a place where that wasn't important I don't think that I could work there very long. (Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series)

According to the interviewees, there was a set of ethical guidelines the station created and that each employee signed and strived to follow. These guidelines were acknowledge by the interviewees and were often interchangeable with their own personal ethics. There was uniformity to the interviewees' descriptions of the ethical values that influenced their work. The interviewees strived to be "truthful and accurate" and "honest" (Taylor, News Reporter; Joan, News Reporter; Larry, News Reporter and Host; Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). They talked about the "radio version of the golden rule" of trying to "fairly represent people" and avoiding "gotchya journalism" (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host; Taylor, News Reporter; Polly, Coordinating Producer).

The newsworkers stressed how important it was “to present as many sides to a story as time permits” (Larry, News Reporter and Host). They discussed “that you give all sides of the story equal opportunity to tell it” and to present “new sides to the story” (Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host; Joan, News Reporter). They even mentioned that they would not pursue a story if they knew they could not get all sides of the story (Larry, News Reporter and Host).

The interviewees also mentioned the need to remain unbiased. They would “not do a story that’s too overtly political or unbalanced” and would seek to “serve the public interest” first and foremost (Taylor, News Reporter). This included putting aside “whatever biases [they] might have on a subject” and trying to “approach something with an open mind” (Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host). It could also entail making sure guests on their show do not get “too promotional, you know? We’re not here to advocate a particular point” (Polly, Coordinating Producer). Tim (Executive Producer and Co-Host) discussed the importance of not being “beholden to advertisers.” He went on to explain that the station would never hire a reporter “who has a financial gain to be made from doing a story” or has “ulterior motives” for reporting a story a certain way.

This need to remain unbiased, or appear unbiased to their audience, led the interviewees to hide their personal views or feelings on topics when reporting. This led to ethical dilemmas for many of the interviewees. The interviewees understood that even though they were reporters, they were also “human beings” and “have our own thoughts about things” but that these thoughts had to be kept separate from their work (Joan, News Reporter). Larry (News Reporter and Host) explained that, “if you’re a reporter, be careful with whom you express your opinions. Do not express your opinions in news

stories. Do not have outside jobs where your objectivity will be compromised." The interviewees listed things a reporter could not do if they wanted to appear to remain unbiased to the community. This included putting "a bumper sticker on your car, a political bumper sticker or a sign in your yard, or sign[ing] the recall petition if that's something you'd like to do" (Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). According to the interviewees, a reporter should also "leave your religious and other opinions at the door when you come into work and pick them up on the way out" (Larry, News Reporter and Host). This separation is just one example of the newsworkers' attempts to produce what they believe is "good journalism."

Good Journalism

> And you know part of what public broadcasting is, and the words are really key there "public and broad," is that you're widening the whole scope here. You're bringing as many voices as you can to the airwaves in a sensible fashion in this public forum kind of a thing and I think its one of the enormous strengths of public radio that we're successful at doing that. And having this broad look at things versus what really is especially in commercial radio [has] become a greater and greater degree of narrowcasting…casting to a very specific group of individuals….Well, public radio, at least this station, is entirely opposite of that. (Larry, News Reporter and Host)

The ethical beliefs behind their work played into the high standards that the interviewees held for their journalism, their station and for NPR as an organization. They saw their own journalism and the journalism that they strived to create as good journalism. This strong belief in the quality of the work at WMKP influenced their own newswork and created pressure to keep improving and exceeding expectations.

The interviewees mentioned the high quality of the work at WKMP. Joan explained that, "this is the best managed radio station and news operation that I've ever

been involved in. I've been in two other stations. It's the best, it's the most well-run operation" (Joan, News Reporter). Tim, as executive producer said he worked hard to "create a working environment and a show that I would want….I've tried to create a working environment that if I were one of my employees, I would want to come to work everyday." On top of management, the interviewees used the many awards the station had won as examples of the good work they do. "The station has been hugely successful in terms of the awards that its won. We actually have four boxes of them in another room. So there's a high bar. And you know you just you keep trying to plug away there and get better" (Larry, News Reporter and Host). Not everyone was worried about meeting the high expectations of the station. Joan (News Reporter) understood that "there's a high standard here for the quality of stories," but explained that "I feel like I don't really have a problem achieving and satisfying that standard here." However, the idea that there is a standard of excellence was prevalent throughout many of the interviews.

The interviewees often perceived their station and NPR as unique within news radio. They did not acknowledge the competition in the local market as a threat, stating that they "don't really necessarily feel [there] is the competition. I mean there is competition but you know, only in so much that it drives us to the best that we can with the show that we produced" (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host). Tim (Executive Producer and Co-Host) went on to explain that the station was " the one place they can get sort of comprehensive local coverage and also comprehensive national coverage." The interviewees often compared their work to commercial radio. Amy (News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series) saw it as the station's job to do in-depth stories because "you're not going to hear of that in, you know, a minute and a half

T.V. spot, or you know, a place where somebody needs to drive up their audience so they can get more money from their advertisers." Polly (Coordinating Producer) also mentioned how the absence of advertisers at the station created a space for better journalism:

> But I do have to say I think, in general, radio tends to be a little bit more reflexive than your newspaper organizations. I mean I've always noticed this about NPR you know the bigger organization that they often are among the last to get things up on their website or to report things the air…its not that they don't get it at the same time but they fact check things so thoroughly that for them, and I think this is because it's a public radio model because it is non profit because it isn't you know all about revenue, that they have that ability to take that step back and not be competing to be the first to break something, which I think a lot of your for-profit news organizations they're very, very concerned about that.

According to the interviewees, this distinction allowed their station to have higher standards and ethics than for-profit stations. As will be shown, these values were also tied to an optimistic view of their jobs and their station.

Optimism and Idealism

> I just want to produce stories that are meaningful that people learn something from and um, enjoy listening to. I want to personally feel satisfied, and I mean I find this stuff very rewarding and satisfying. I feel like we can make a difference. I wish there were….I wish I had more time. I wish we all had more time to do projects that were a bit more along those lines you know. (Joan, News Reporter)

The interviewees' overall perceptions of their work were positive. This was revealed not only in their view of work, but also in their view of the future of their program, station, and NPR as a whole. Often this optimism and idealism made up for any issues the interviewees had with their jobs.

Even with the tighter budgets and small staff, the interviewees believed NPR and their station would be around for a long time. In fact, they often predicted a "really bright future for public radio as a whole" and that NPR was "going to grow in popularity" and "to get more listeners than it has now" (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host; Larry, News Reporter and Host). They saw their station as "vital to the community" and the place "where the most information and the most, you know, trustworthy information is" (Taylor, News Reporter; Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host). Polly (Coordinating Producer) discussed why the station would grow in the future, stating, "I definitely see a[n] energy here. I think we're going to keep challenging ourselves."

The interviewees emphasized their desire to remain in their jobs, despite some perceived workplace issues. Polly (Coordinating Producer) perceived her job as "stressful, but it's good work." She conceded that, "It's not always fun, but like it's fulfilling work. So I think that makes up for a lot of stress that you have to deal with," including the stress of "feeding the beast," or constantly meet hard deadlines on stories. Taylor (News Reporter) said that when she first began working for the station she, "Absolutely fell in love with public broadcasting," and ever since "it's been a conscious effort to stay." In fact, one interviewee could not see herself at any other type of station explaining, "this was the only really place, public radio, to do radio journalism as far as I was concerned" (Joan, News Reporter).

The interviewees also believed that their listeners understood the quality of their work and would remain listeners in the future. Larry saw the audience as having "a thirst for learning and knowing things and wanting to learn more, and I think that's what's going to fuel organizations like NPR, like us, that have a reputation of being fair and

broadminded" (Larry, News Reporter and Host). The interviewees believed in their listeners' staying power stating, "People are always going to love public radio. I think with all this change…I just feel like people are always going to want to listen to public radio in their car" (Joan, News Reporter). Joan was optimistic that there would always be an audience for their programming. The important of audience was another important theme in the interviews.

Audience

> That respect for audience is something that I've always taken to heart and I hope I never lose because, hey, lets face it, without an audience, you know, you may as well have a wooden microphone. Because you won't be broadcasting anymore that's for sure. (Larry, News Reporter and Host)

Many of the studies on public media discussed the rise in commercial tactics, some of which was tailoring content to the station's listeners and donors (Avery, 2007, p. 361; McCauley, 2002; Aufderheide, 1996, p. 72; McCourt, 1999). The newsworkers I interviewed at WKMP were aware of their audience and definitely kept them in mind when creating content. However, they thought less of what would gain them more listeners or lead to more donations and more about what would benefit their audience to hear.

First, the interviewees had differing definitions of who their audience was. A few interviewees did understand the demographics of their listeners, listing attributes such as "highly educated, very wealthy, very white, and predominantly male" as well as mainly "over 50" (Taylor, News Reporter; Larry, News Reporter and Host). Amy (News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series) saw the audience as a

reflection of herself, explaining that she "assume[s] that we, [the staff], are regular listeners…so I don't think that it's as much…like what would they, [the audience], like to hear, as what would we like to hear." While their ideas of who their audience was might differ, there was a similar thread of how they took their audience into consideration when doing newswork.

The interviewees acknowledged, "target audience comes up a lot" (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host). Tim (Executive Producer and Co-host) believed that, "thinking about our audience does define how we treat a story," however, "it doesn't necessarily define whether we do a story." Ellen (Executive Producer and Co-host) explained that, "we don't want to exclude a story that people might not be comfortable with just because we know kind of what the demographic is" of the station. For example, Tim (Executive Producer and Co-host) described the decision process by saying "we would never say, 'Ok, 60% of our listening audience never goes to church so we're never going to do any religion stories'." However, the interviews reflected a tension between the need to pursue stories that do not necessarily fall within listener's interests and the importance of keeping their listeners in mind when choosing and writing stories.

> I think we always have to try to keep in mind things like who our audience is because, again, there's kind of this relationship that you have with them, you know? We wouldn't be there if not for their support….If not for their interests and stuff, there would be no point in us being there, but at the same time they also trust us to give them stuff that isn't….It's not just about pleasing your audience. It's about challenging them and it's about educating them and informing and engaging them in a new and interesting way. (Polly, Coordinating Producer)

While the interviewees were apprehensive towards using their audience's interests as a deciding factor in news decisions, they also thought it was important to account for their audiences' interests in their newswork. The interviewees said that when stories were

presented in morning meetings, it was often asked, “how many people is this going to affect? Why would anybody care?” and “What do we think our listeners care about right now? What are people talking about?” (Larry, News Reporter and Host; Joan, News Reporter). They said, “the most important thing is to be interesting to the listener,” and that “mindfulness of your listening audience is probably a constant” (Polly, Coordinating Producer; Larry, News Reporter and Host). Listeners were considered to be integral to the success of the station.

Polly (Coordinating Producer) said the goal of the station was “to create an informed listenership, to help people in their pursuit of life-long education, to be informed residents, to entertain sometimes.” These goals helped them keep their audiences in mind while avoiding pandering to them. They could justify a story for being informative rather than a story that has proven to draw in listeners. Ellen (Executive Producer and Co-host) explained, “I mean if the story is interesting then its worth putting on the air and we do get you know we do get people responding both positively and negatively to different things.”

Other Noteworthy Themes

Within the major themes of economic influences, routines in the newswork, beliefs and values, and audience influences, there were also less prominent but still important themes of feedback and diversity. In the interviews, there were a variety of views surrounding the feedback the interviewees received from their superiors, coworkers, and audiences and the influence of diversity at their station.

Feedback

Many interviewees held opinions on the feedback they received on their work. They believed some types of feedback were more important than others or that some feedback simply was not reliable. There was an overarching sentiment that audience feedback was not very trustworthy. The interviewees argued the ineffectiveness of audience feedback "because typically you get responses from people who absolutely hate you" (Taylor, News Reporter). They perceived this as an incomplete picture of the views of their listening audience. Ellen (Executive Producer and Co-host) explained, "you always hear from people who are unhappy before you hear from people who are happy. You'll get like one or two unhappy people and you won't hear from the 500 people who were happy with it…because most people don't bother to write." The interviewees did not see the lack of positive feedback from audiences as indicative of bad stories.

Online feedback was also deemed unreliable. Amy (News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series) shared that "the website shows us how popular stories are so when something is shared broadly and is listened to a lot" but it does not necessarily indicate a well-written story, but instead "it could just be because it has a headline that's attention grabbing." The interviewees believed that "just because people maybe aren't responding to that particular sad story doesn't mean that that particular sad story was not worth telling" (Polly, Coordinating Producer). In fact, it was explained that "we don't do comments on our website," meaning the station did not allow people to comment on the stories they published online (Joan, News Reporter). The interviewees did not see all online feedback as useless. They explained that they had to "take that information, that engagement that you are getting with your audience, those

measurements, whether they be Facebook likes, interactions, emails, you know, listenership or…even just tracking streaming trends on the website" and put them "into a bigger context" (Polly, Coordinating Producer).

Besides audience and online feedback, the interviewees listed some feedback as worthwhile. This feedback included "Arbitron numbers" and "if [their stories] win awards" (Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host; Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). One form of feedback that was cited as especially helpful was peer and supervisor critiques. They called this editing process "a critical part" of the reporting process because "you are handing something that you've created over to someone else" and are "using their judgment to help you better tell the story" (Larry, News Reporter and Host). However, not everyone thought there was enough of this type of feedback at the station. Joan (News Reporter) explained that the news broadcast workers "don't really get feedback" and she wanted "more encouragement and back and forth and that there was a sense that it was ok to offer advice or even criticism." In the end, the interviewees believed that when it came to feedback to, "knowing how a specific story worked...it's kind of hard to know" (Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host). Like feedback, diversity was revealed to be a minor theme during the interviews.

Diversity

Most of the interviewees did not mention diversity as an issue within the workplace. However, some did mention a lack of on-air minorities as well as no real initiative to make the station more culturally diverse. They acknowledged that there might not be a ton of people of color applying for positions at the station "but they're out

there and I don't know that we look as hard as we should or advertise in as many place as we should."

The only other mentions of diversity dealt with producing a variety of stories covering many issues to create a diverse audience base. An interviewee stated it was "the ultimate aim of this radio station is to broaden and diversify our audience and not make it just about, you know, upper middle class white people" (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host). To do this, the interviewees explained they "get a variety of stories on the air about issues that the average person in Milwaukee might not know about but might need to know about" (Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). It was discussed that the newsworkers try to tell "stories across the spectrum of incomes, of genders, of races of sexual orientations" (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-Host). Otherwise, there was no other mention of diversity in the interviews. These quotes could reveal that the newsworkers at the station do not typically think about diversity in the workplace, but do think about the diversity within their work. Since CPB's mission statement for licensees features the need to diversity, these comments on the subject are worth noting. While this study did not delve into the theme of diversity specifically, it is also worth noting is the lack of attention the newsworkers gave to the issue of diversity.

The influences and pressures perceived by the newsworkers interviewed for this study examined above all combine to create a bigger picture of the newsworkers' views of their work at WKMP. Many of the themes discussed in this analysis connect with past research on newswork, journalism, and public broadcasting. These connections as well as a broader examination of the results of this study are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE STATE OF PUBLIC MEDIA NEWSWORKERS

NPR has been a national news source for almost 44 years (Overview and History, NPR). This makes NPR news programs relatively young compared to other forms of journalism and thus a newer area of study. Because of NPR's unique funding system, the work done at the stations and the content they create should be studied in greater detail. A step towards determining how NPR stations function is to understand the workers who create the news content. This thesis sheds light into the perceptions of the newsworkers at an NPR station.

During in-depth interviews that sought to answer the question, "How do news workers on a local National Public Radio news station make meaning of their jobs, journalism as a profession, and perceive different influences on the news content they create," the interviewees discussed their hopes, goals, beliefs, and frustrations. They painted a picture of the work they do daily at WKMP. The internal and external pressures and influences the seven interviewees felt provided a glimpse into the motivations and routines of NPR newsworkers. Their main influences were the budget, their beliefs and ethics, routines and guidelines, and their audience. According to the interviewees, these pressures had an effect on their daily work.

Past studies suggested that strong economic influences would lead the newsworkers to use more commercial practices in order to gain larger audiences and more donors. These commercial practices would include narrowcasting or focusing highly on their target audiences and infotainment or creating lighter, "softer" news

(McCauley, 2002; McCourt, 1999; Croteau, et al., 2001; Avery, 2007; Aufderheide, 1996; White, 1994; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; McCourt, 1999; McCauley, 2002, Kerbel, Apee, & Ross, 2000; Bailey, 2004; Brooks & Ondrich, 2006; Woal, 1986, Hoynes, 2003).

The past literature also suggested that the newsworkers in this study would be aware of the economic and political issues at their news stations and would be alienated from their work and that the newsworkers created news without the public's interest in mind (Gardner, et al., 2001; Croteau, et al., 2001; McChesney, 2005; Bagdikian, 1997; Schudson, 1997). While some of the previous studies' results align with the findings of this study, there are also many deviations. These deviations as well as similarities will be more thoroughly discussed below.

The interviewees discussed their frustrations regarding the station's small staff and budget that hindered their ability to create content that lived up to their high views of professional excellence. One news reporter explained this dissatisfaction, saying, "I just wish there were more 'bigger picture' kind of thinking and collaboration and development of people personally, because as it stands now really none of that goes on because of the constraints of the size the staff" (Joan, News Reporter). The newsworkers at WKMP were fully aware of the small budget they had. They might not have sought out the exact details of every budget, but as journalists they were keen observers. They saw the small and unchanging staff, the stagnant salaries, and lack of resources to devote to new technologies and recognized the symptoms of an inadequate budget.

These budgetary pressures caused them to change the way they researched and created their news content. Past studies of NPR and PBS stations cited commercial tactics

the stations used in order to increase listeners and donations. For example, in the studies on public media, “narrowcasting,” cross-promotion, and the branding of content were commercial tactics NPR stations were using to increase profits (McCauley, 2002; McCourt, 1999; Croteau, et al., 2001). The newsworkers at WKMP, however, believed the best tactic to engaging more listeners was to create better content. Consistently high quality content was seen as the best strategy to gaining loyal listeners. They intended to to create this high quality content by being ethical, keeping their audience in mind when choosing stories, and also continuing to challenge their audiences with more in-depth stories.

The newsworkers at WKMP did not seem interested in delving into the marketing and business strategies of the station. They knew vaguely about those strategies, but they left any economic tactics to the business and marketing employees at the station with whom they rarely interacted. The newsworkers at WKMP were too busy “feeding the beast,” or researching, writing, recording, and editing news stories, to also worry about if their content would attract large donors (Polly, Coordinating Producer).

In fact, the newsworkers were worried about appearing biased towards a person or an organization that contributes financially to the station. The newsworkers wanted to seem as detached from the economic aspects of news production as possible. This became impossible during pledge drives, which puts the newsworkers in “an awkward position” of talking about budgets and the station’s funding directly with their audience members (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-host). However, they believed that in the end they were “not comprising our principles to go on the air and ask people for their pledges” (Tim, Executive Producer and Co-host). Fundraising, or “membership drives,”

seemed to be the exception to their aversion to discussion financial information with the public.

In general, the newsworkers were not comfortable discussing any business tactics in their newswork. This could mean that at WKMP commercial, marketing, or business policies to increase donations, corporate sponsorships, or audience size, were not a part of the newsworker's job, or it could mean, as in McManus' case, that the newsworkers did not want to acknowledge otherwise. However, according to the WKMP newsworkers, they avoided most aspects of the business side of running a news station in favor of retaining their appearance as an unbiased and honest source of news.

The WKMP newsworkers' perceptions contradicted other studies on the economics of public media. Unlike McCauley's study which examined the use of branding content to a certain audience in public media, the newsworkers at WKMP did not "really support the concept of audience-driven journalism in the sense of just doing what gets clicks and what gets hits" (Polly, Coordinating Producer). Studies of public media that explored stations who use more commercial strategies might apply to WKMP (Avery, 2007; Aufderheide, 1996; White, 1994; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; McCourt, 1999; McCauley, 2002, Kerbel, Apee, & Ross, 2000; Bailey, 2004; Brooks & Ondrich, 2006; Woal, 1986). However, since I did not interview the marketing and development employees at WKMP, I cannot conclude that those policies and procedures do not exist there. The newsworkers are simply unaware of or disconnected from them.

This disconnect is also explored in McManus' study of three television news stations. McManus (1994) explains that newsworkers preferred "the language of public service" instead of speaking of their jobs as part of a market system (p. 59). This is also

true of the WKMP newsworkers. They saw their work as truly a public service and only marginally a form of economic production. The newsworkers in McManus' shared this sentiment. This indicated that both groups of newsworkers were aware of the purpose of their work and of the perceived issues with economic influence in journalism.

In addition to interviews, McManus (1994) conducted an ethnography and found that many of the newsworkers' "actions demonstrate daily the fundamental contradiction between serving the marketplace of viewers and serving the public" (p. 181). He found that the newsworkers justified their profit-focused actions in ways that the WKMP did not attempt to do. The newsworkers in McManus' (1994) study used the need for an audience, their news medium's inherent tendency towards entertainment, as well as other excuses to explain their more commercially-focused news deicions (p. 165-181). The WKMP newsworkers could very well be making the same decisions as McManus' newsworkers. However, the WKMP newsworkers never indicated as such and never offered any excuses for their work outside of time and staff constraints.

Budget and economics affected the newsworkers in other ways as well. Gardner, et al (2001), discussed a "destructive cynicism" that existed among the news reporters they interviewed (p. 130). This cynicism was caused by the pressure to constantly be improving market share. "Journalists [felt] that forces of the field have intruded on their domain's integrity, obstructing their capacity to pursue the mission of good reporting" which caused the newsworkers to maintain a bleak outlook on their work (Gardner, et al, 2001, p. 128). This did not seem to have a huge effect on the WKMP newsworkers due to their lack of interaction with the business side of the station.

WKMP newsworkers weren't entirely immune to economic influences. Similar to the newsworkers in the Gardner (2001) study, the WKMP newsworkers also felt the budget cuts including the pressure to produce content with tight deadlines and fewer staff (p. 132). Some WKMP newsworkers also felt they couldn't pursue the type of time-consuming stories they wanted to because of the smaller staff and budget. However, the WKMP newsworkers seemed less aware of and involved in solving the budget issues (outside of participating in membership drives) than the newsworkers in the Gardner study. While the Gardner study newsworkers found it harder to meet their journalistic missions because of the pressure to increase profits, the WKMP newsworkers seemed to retain their mission to create good, ethical journalism while attempting to remain separate from any business or marketing strategies.

One of the possible reasons that the newsworkers did not seem to worry about commercial marketing tactics was because the strongest influence on their work was the newsworkers' goal to produce high quality news content. Many of the newsworkers counted the need to produce excellent journalistic content as one of their most significant daily pressures (Larry, News Reporter and Host; Joan, News Reporter; Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series). Larry (News Reporter and Host), who had been at the station for over 20 years, said that "there's always pressure…for your next story to be a little bit better than your last story." He had the pressure to "always try to get better at what I'm doing and find a better way to tell the story." Overall, the newsworkers wanted to create valuable journalism for their listeners. They wanted their work to have "some sort of an impact" on their listeners and their community (Polly, Coordinating Producer).

Their mission or driving force was to create ethical, professional, quality journalism. An emphasis on moral and mission-driven journalism was also seen in Gardner, et al.'s study of journalists. Their study found that one strength in journalism was the newsworkers' strong "journalistic mission" or "calling," which imbued them with a deep sense of morality in their work (Gardner, et al., 2001, p. 163). The WKMP newsworkers also had the drive to hold their work to a high ethical and professional standard. They sought to create "incredibly well sourced, well researched, [and] well written" journalism while remaining "truthful and accurate" (Amy, News Reporter and Executive Director of a Special Project Series; Taylor, News Reporter).

Their desire to create ethical, excellent journalism could be construed as a less cynical version of McChesney's professional journalism. According to McChesney (2004), ethical and objective journalism created in the public interest is a business tactic created and currently used by media corporations to keep the government from regulating the news media too closely. Even if that was the case, the WKMP newsworkers saw their goals to create ethical and objective journalism that serves the public as their personal missions as well as their station's mission. It was a strong influence on their work because that was how they believed good journalism was made.

While they strove for ethical excellence, the newsworkers did encounter dilemmas that affected their work. The main ethical issue the newsworkers discussed was the need to appear to be unbiased. The newsworkers often discussed the necessity of separating their personal and professional lives as well as abstaining from certain activities in order to not taint their professional persona as an unbiased source of news information. The newsworkers felt a tension between who they are as people and who

they are as journalists. The two did intersect at some points, such as following a story simply because they, themselves, were very interested in it. However, the newsworkers felt the need to separate their personal feelings and thoughts from their professional work on most other occasions, even going so far, as in Amy's case, to avoid politically active family members whose familial proximity might imply a bias in favor of the relative. In fact, like the Gardner, et al., study (2001), the newsworkers placed honesty and truthfulness as very important to their work. It would be dishonest to put bias in a story due to personal feelings and opinions.

The WKMP newsworkers wanted to "produce high quality journalism that's important and meaningful to our local audience" and to "share [their own] excitement about whoever I'm talking to with the audience" (Ellen, Executive Producer and Co-Host; Joan, News Reporter). In fact, their audience was very important to the newsworkers. Larry (News Reporter and Host) explained that his job would not exist without the audience. They kept their audience's interests in mind when making decisions on stories. According to the newsworkers, this meant not only thinking about what the audience wanted to hear, but also what they needed to hear. This connected to the original purpose for NPR and PBS, which was to create media organizations that "serves the discursive needs of the public" (McCourt, 1999, p. 147).

CPB and subsequently NPR sought to fulfill this purpose by giving the station certain mandates. One of these mandates was to be diverse ("About Public," n.d.). This term has been cited by past studies as vague and its exact meanings have been open to debate (McCourt, 1999). The CPB defines diversity as "rich work of programs, projects,

delivery platforms, ideas, and opinions," where the "public media viewers and listeners find their own reflections" ("About Public," n.d.).

Some interviewees defined "diversity" as covering a wide range of issues that affect a variety of different local communities, while others saw it as diversity within the station's staff. According to the interviewees, there was a desire to reach many different communities and to have an assortment of stories that reflect those communities. Tim (Executive Producer and Co-host) called the ultimate aim of the station to "broaden and diversify our audience and not make it just about you know upper middle class white people, and we do that by you know, telling stories across the spectrum of incomes, of genders, of races of sexual orientations."

Other interviewees found the lack of diversity among the staff troubling. When asked if there was a push to have a culturally diverse staff, one interviewee said, "Absolutely not, which I find infuriating at times," but conceded that this might be because there is a small pool of culturally diverse applicants for positions at the station. With little attention paid to the racial diversity of the employees at WKMP, it could mean that the station isn't fulfilling the goals set forth by the CPB. However, with its emphasis on diversity within the content and issues covered, WKMP might be fulfilling the CPB's mission. It would be interesting to explore this issue further in another study on diversity and NPR.

Along with the newsworker's high ethical and journalistic standards for their work, another influence on their work was the newsworker's daily routines. The structure of their daily work as well as how they chose stories and created content were habitual in nature. Like the journalists in the Bantz, et al. (1980) study, the newsworkers had systems

for selecting stories, assigning stories, and gathering materials. The news program newsworkers had a more structured day than the news magazine program newsworkers, but both groups of newsworkers used the same structure for creating news content. They used similar sources for finding stories and sources and the process for creating the stories was often the same.

The newsworkers did not actively examine what made a story newsworthy or which sources were best to interview because they had ingrained routines for these activities. The gatekeepers at their work, their relatively structure daily routines, and their need for efficiency and productivity due to a small staff led to the newsworkers creating subconscious habits. Like the journalists in the Gardner, et al., the WKMP newsworker's small budget forced them to make decisions to be more efficient, which led to certain routinized activities such as the sharing and re-use of sources and understood guidelines for writing and editing news stories.

Even with their daily frustrations, the newsworkers were motivated to consistently produce high quality news content. They defined success not through ratings and clicks, but on a personal level. They loved the work they do and they wanted to do it well. They also remained inherently optimistic about the future of their work and the station.

The Bigger Picture

The newsworkers at WKMP had a strong sense of their mission to create excellent news. They did not appear naïve about what it takes economically to run a radio station, but they chose to keep themselves as separate as possible from anything that might create ethical issues with their work. They felt a duty not only to the public and to

the people they interview, to create accurate, unbiased, interesting content. Finally, they were dedicated to working for NPR. Even with stagnant salaries and heavy workloads, the newsworkers could not imagine working anywhere else.

If applied to the larger context of NPR, this could indicate that there is a moral and mission-driven group of journalists working to air the best possible news content at NPR. This description is hopeful but if true, it could give an indication as to why so many NPR stations win awards and are among the most trusted sources of news (McCourt, 1999, p. 14; Mitchell, 2014). It also could imply that the mission of NPR, which scholars described as "lofty ideals" and vague platitudes, might resonate with the NPR newsworkers and attract newsworkers with a similar mission (Aufderheide, 1996; McCourt, 1999). However, as evidenced by the varying views on what constitutes "diversity" among the interviewees, these goals might need to be more well defined.

In regards to the budgetary frustrations at NPR, McChesney, Nichols, and Croteau, et al. suggested requiring the federal government to fully fund PBS and NPR so that there would be no need to fundraise to make up budget shortfalls. Without the frustrations of the small staff, limited resources, and the pressure to fundraise, the newsworkers could pursue the type of strong in-depth news coverage that the interviewees in this study wished they could.

In terms of further research, there are only a minimal amount of studies on U.S. public media. I hope this will change in the future, and that this study will help spur more research into this area of news media studies. Though the interviews I conducted were insightful and proved enlightening, a more in-depth study of NPR is needed. It would be

beneficial for more stations to be interviewed or of ethnographical research to be conducted at the stations.

I am as optimistic as the newsworkers I interviewed. I do believe that NPR will continue to broadcast for a long time. With NPR's longevity, scholars and researchers should take the opportunity to examine the work that NPR does and further the research into the inner workings of the federally funded institution.

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APPENDIX A

Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Part 1: Introductions

1. What would you like your alias to be?
2. What is your occupation?
3. What is your current job title?
4. Where are you currently employed?
5. How long have you worked at your current job? (SEE QUESTION 22)
6. Where else have you worked?
    a. For how long at each place?
    b. What were your job title(s) there?
7. Why did you decide to work in news broadcasting?
8. Why did you decide to work in non-profit journalism?

Part 2: Organization and Decision-making

9. Tell me about your job
10. What does a day at your job look like?
11. Who does what at your job? Who reports to whom?
12. What is the process for deciding if a story goes on the air?
    a. Who ultimately decides?
13. How do you find stories?
14. What makes a story newsworthy?

15. How are decisions made in regards to which stories go on the air and which don't?
16. What factors do you consider when promoting a story for air?
17. Are there any guidelines for choosing stories?
18. Are there any guidelines for the writing/editing of stories?
19. Has there ever been a time when a story you were working on couldn't be done? Tell me about that.
20. Have you ever stopped yourself from suggesting a story for the program?
    a. Yes:
        i. Why? What stopped you?
21. Is there a process for finding sources or guests?
22. (SEE QUESTION 6) How does work at a non-profit differ from work at a for-profit program?

Part 3: Budget and Other Influences

23. Let's talk about the pressures you might feel at work. What are the external pressures you feel at your job?
24. How does the program you work on fit within your NPR station?
25. Do you ever have to interact with upper management?
    a. If yes, please tell my about those interactions.
26. When it comes to money and fundraising for NPR, do you have to worry about that?
27. How does the station's budget impact your program?

28. Please tell me about pledge/fundraising seasons.
    a. How long do they last?
        i. Has this changed over the years?
    b. Does your work-life change during pledge weeks?
    c. How do work-decisions change during pledge weeks?
    d. Compare a regular week to a pledge week in terms of type of stories covered.

Part 4: Beliefs and Values

29. What personal ethics, morals, and values do you hold in regards to your work?
30. What are your goals for your work?
31. What do you consider “good journalism”?
32. What goals do you believe your news organization holds? For this program?
33. Tell me about NPR’s mission statement.
34. Do you ever feel the pressure to follow this mission statement?
35. Does your work have an ethical code?
    a. How does it affect your day-to-day job?
    b. Have you ever come across any situations where ethics came into play?
36. How do you determine if your program/content/decisions were successful?

Part 5: Ending Questions

37. Is there anything you would change about your job or work?
38. What do you see for the future of the program? the station?

39. What do you see for the future of non-profit radio news?

40. Anything else you would like to add?