

Social Responsibility and Public Radio: Using Community Reporters To Make News More
Responsible

A Senior Project

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ABSTRACT

Public radio has experienced a surge in listenership. With the rapid decline in newspaper readership, radio has become one of the only methods that news can be disseminated to people across a wide socio-economic stratum. The cost of a radio is cheap and most people are spending more and more time listening in their automobiles. Recent studies show 92% of Americans age 12 or older listen to the radio weekly if not more.

With the introduction of cheap digital audio recorders and broadcast quality microphones on most smartphones, it has never been easier for the general public to produce their own short audio stories. This convergence of increased listenership and ease of production presents a unique situation where the general public can participate in journalism in a more structured manner than social media. This all needs to be leveraged with training in traditional journalism ethics and conduct.

This study serves to examine the possibility of making public radio more accessible to locally produced content from the general public through the Social Responsibility theory of the press.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Public radio has enjoyed a surge in listenership over the past decade. The weekly listenership of public radio has increased from 14.6 million in 2000 to 23 million in 2006 (Kern 2005). Radio in general is currently one of the most popular ways that people of all socioeconomic levels get their news. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center's *State of the News Media* 2015, over 91% of Americans ages 12 and older listen to the radio at least once a week.

Conversely, public trust in the media is at a low. People feel more disconnected from the news outlets that serve them than in the past. Interestingly enough Pew Research Center has shown in a study of Denver, Macon, and Sioux Falls populations that less educated people tend to follow local news more closely. According to the 2015 study, in Denver, 58% of people with a high school or less education felt that they followed the local news closely. In contrast, only 36% of college graduates followed local news in the same Denver Metro area (Pew Research, 2015).

An influential text from the 1950's the *Four Theories of the Press*, outlines many different theories on the functions that media serve in society. According to the Social Responsibility Theory, the 20th century press should be a balance between reporting and public service (Ward, 2009). The media has an obligation to provide the public with a broad and unbiased view of the world around them so as to promote democracy and give people a true

sense of what is going on in their community. A key component of this is providing a diverse "forum of values and views" (Ward, 2009).

With public broadcasting stations on average producing around 40% of their own content ("How Do Public," n.d.), there is a huge amount of on air time available for community members to direct news towards stories that benefit the community and increase public trust in the media.

With public radio's ability to provide local content to a wide variety of community members, it seems a natural choice for journalism rooted in the Social Responsibility theory to be disseminated to the general public. In fact, the general public's participation in community reporting is an excellent way to promote this transparency between the media and the public.

Background of the Problem

Across the nation, recent studies have shown that local people feel very disconnected from legacy media outlets, especially newspapers. People of lower economic status, African-Americans and Hispanics are more likely to seek out local news to inform them about their communities.

Reporting done by local residents is an excellent way to keep others abreast of developing issues in local communities. With the surge in social media usage, people now have a greater ability to report on their own, but are choosing not to do so.

In a recent Pew Research Center study, *Local News in a Digital Age*, journalism and listenership and readership habits were explored in three cities. They found that local television was the single most important method that residents got their news, yet most of the stories were very short and required very little in depth reporting. Local residents play a key part in the

creation and proliferation of local news by legacy outlets and seasoned journalists. Studies in Denver, Colorado show that 20% of news stories contained sources from the general public. The public is also a huge facilitator in the spreading of news stories as social media sharing becomes more and more prolific. In the cities of Denver, Colorado, Macon, Georgia, and Sioux City, Iowa one in ten people felt that social media was the most important way they got their news (Pew Research, 2015).

However, local citizen participation in journalism is still at an alarmingly low level. The research conducted by Pew Research Center across these three cities found that less than 1% of all news stories have citizen bylines (Pew Research, 2015). Even with the availability of internet connectivity at an all time high and the ability for people to report about their communities via smartphones, the shift to a surge in citizen journalism has yet to happen.

Purpose of the Study

By examining the possibility of citizen-produced radio news in a public broadcasting forum, the public and media outlets combined can increase their journalistic value according to the Social Responsibility theory. The involvement and transparency between the public and the news in this manner can serve as a building block to gain trust, increase public participation in the news, provide more content for public radio stations, and raise the quality of content. By following the theory of Social Responsibility and allowing citizens to report their own stories, the media will benefit society at large by making people aware of the important issues around them. It will also help media providers attract a wider variety of listeners, readers and watchers as the digital age transforms the way that most people ingest information. Radio listenership, specifically public radio, is truly on the rise and the technology for citizen reporting is readily

available on most smartphones. The possibilities of journalism for the public's benefit are immense.

Setting for the Study

This study will take place as a data collection and research driven effort for a senior project at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Interviews will be conducted with the following people. The local news director at a mid-size public radio station can provide insight as to what standards are needed for citizen reporting and how to promote the education needed to insure that citizen reporters can provide the content. The business director at a public radio station will be interviewed to see if the model of citizen broadcast reporting could work to provide the station with benefits in their content that fit inside their business model. A professor at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo specializing in media ethics will be interviewed to provide a greater understanding of the ethical constraints of allowing non-traditionally trained journalists to report on a prolific level. Lastly, an interested and public radio-listening member of the local community will be interviewed to find out whether reporting their own stories is something that they would have the interest, time, and ability to complete on a regular basis.

Research Questions

This study will be centered around a series of research questions to maintain focus on the concept of utilizing modern technology to promote citizen reporting via public radio stations. This reporting will serve to better inform community members of local issues according to the Social Responsibility theory of the press which states that media outlets have to provide

valuable, accurate and transparent content to the public in order to promote and protect a democratic society.

The questions, as follows, will provide the groundwork that all the following chapters will revolve around:

1. What is the main mission of public radio news reporting?
2. How do citizens report accurately and fairly about their environments with little training in traditional reporting or journalism ethics?
3. What technologies must the general public have access to be able to report for broadcast?
4. How does the demographic of a city affect the way that the news is structured in a public media model?
5. What are the methods that public radio stations can train citizen journalists in accurate and ethical reporting?
6. How will the general public benefit from reporting its own local issues in a short and succinct manner?
7. How can public radio stations benefit from the increase in public generated content?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions will help the reader better understand the study and the issues involved.

Public broadcasting: Public broadcasting is defined as radio, television and electronic news outlets that have a primary goal of informing and serving the general population of citizens. They receive funds from license fees and donations from public and private entities. ("Public Broadcasting," 2015)

Social Responsibility theory: The Commission on Freedom of the Press was created during World War II to serve the purpose of examining the role of the press in a modern democratic society. In 1947 the commission concluded by agreeing upon the Social Responsibility model of the press. It states that the media has a "moral obligation" to consider the benefit of the public when reporting news so as to promote the public good. It is considered by many to be the formation of the concept that journalism should first and foremost serve the public benefit. ("Hutchins Commission" 2015)

Echo Chamber: The concept that editors and journalists tend to report on issues that are important to them mainly because of the homogeneous nature of the newsroom. Those that work together in the same industries and professions tend to echo thoughts and opinions. (Kern, 2008, p. 381).

Civic Transformation: The process of eliminating or reducing the ills of a society, including but not limited to poverty, homelessness, violence, corruption and environmental damage. The press has a certain obligation under the Social Responsibility theory to promote and encourage civic transformation through their coverage of events and issues. (Cooper, 1994, p. 95).

Smartphone: An Android or iPhone cellular device that has three main capabilities, as follows; audio recording, basic application editing, and internet connectivity. Smartphones are

the most common equipment that the general public can use to report their own local stories without the need for specialized and expensive equipment.

Visibility campaign: This campaign is to introduce the general public to the inner workings of a newsroom, highlighting the coverage and stating the benefits of listenership. The main example of which was NPR's 1998 visibility campaign in which NPR advertised in several magazines promoting the concept that "NPR Takes You There". The visibility campaign was intended to engage the listener in a more intimate news process. (Kern, 2008, p. 920).

Crowdsourcing: It is the creation of an online platform specifically designed to aid legacy media outlets in connecting with the general public to enhance the depth and accuracy of reporting (Briggs, 2013, p. 64).

Organization of the Study

This qualitative research study is organized into five chapters to facilitate the reader in interpreting the benefits of citizen reporting in public broadcasting grounded in the Social Responsibility theory of the press. Chapter One addresses the problems and limitations of public media outlets and their coverage of local news by utilizing only a few trained journalists to cover community news. Chapter Two is a literature review of the tenets of the Social Responsibility theory of the press and how it relates to the mission statements and goals of public broadcasting in local communities. Chapter Three introduces the methods used to gather interview data from qualified representatives of public media and possible citizen journalists. Chapter Four serves to examine the original research questions from this study and the information that was collected to answer these questions. The questions are also compared and contrasted to the answers given from the interview subjects. In conclusion, Chapter Five examines and summarizes all of the

results and introduces the possibilities for incorporation citizen broadcasts into public media news in an effort to promote more transparent local coverage and enhance the civic transformation capabilities of the news.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The review of literature examines the foundation and ideas behind the Social Responsibility theory of the press and the current state of public media. The review will elaborate on the socioeconomic and educational range of public broadcasting listeners and describe their involvement in the news gathering process. It will also delve into the function and mission of public media, specifically the benefits and nature of audio reporting. The literature review will conclude by examining what existing studies have show to be the benefits of more public involvement in the reporting of local events and issues.

Social Responsibility Theory of the Press

As a result of the Hutchins Commission formed in 1947 to examine the roles of the press, the Social Responsibility theory was formed. Frederick Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm argued then that the freedom of the press afforded in the 20th century must be leveraged with a sense of responsibility towards the public in their book *Four Theories of the Press* (Ward, 2009). The main concepts developed by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm indicated that the news had to go beyond sensationalism and stories that mainly served to increase readership and revenue for media outlets. This new Social Responsibility theory was also grounded in the fact that the press must serve the benefit of the public in a democratic society.

Journalists Jo Bardoel and Leen D'Haenens compiled the Commissions results and thoughts on the Social Responsibility theory in relation to their roles in society. The Commission found the following:

An over-all social responsibility for the quality of press service to the citizen cannot be escaped; the community cannot wholly delegate to any other agency the ultimate responsibility for a function in which its own existence as a free society may be at stake. (as cited in Bardoel & D'Haenens, 2004, p. 165.)

This was in stark contrast to earlier theories of the press that served the state or governmental entity such as the Authoritarian theory of the press and the Libertarian theory of the press. Journalists have an obligation to provide accurate and relevant news to the communities that they cover (Ward 2009).

John C. Merrill from the University of Missouri states that the Social Responsibility theory can help mitigate the "growing criticism of an 'irresponsible' press". (Merrill & Nerone, 2002, p.133).

John C. Nerone, a professor from the University of Illinois, states the timeless and invaluable nature of the *Four Theories of the Press*. While ideological in nature, Nerone states that its text is critical in training new journalists because it explains how the press operates in a "complex world" (Merrill & Nerone, 2002, p. 133). The ideas presented by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm transcend the 20th century blueprint of journalism and carry a formula for modern news outlets and journalists to emulate. In the Social Responsibility theory, the main function of the press is not to generate revenue or provide sensational content, rather it is to help the general public become better informed about the world around them. This is a direct link to the promotion and maintenance of a healthy democratic society.

Bardoel and D'Haenens (2004, p.165.) argue that in democratic societies with a dual media structure of public and private, the outlets must compete for listenership. This brings about

a new need for public media to focus on the public good and provide a more contextual and relevant view of issues to stay competitive.

Public Perception on Local News Reporting

It is important to understand how communities view and interact with media outlets. On a national level, the public's confidence in the ability of media to report “fully, accurately and fairly” is at one of the lowest points in 15 years (McCarthy, 2014).

According to a 2014 Gallup poll, only 40% of Americans feel that the media operates in the manner stated above.

A noted trend is that Americans also seem to be shunning mainstream media outlets and with the uprising of social media reporting. People don't want to have the most important news summarized and dictated to them by the same legacy outlets. As social media reporting becomes more common, the American public seeks a more personalized delivery of news reports (McCarthy, 2014).

The most recent study involving local communities and their interaction with the news media was conducted by the Pew Research Center for Journalism and Media and was released in March of 2015. It attempted to quantify the manner in which residents absorbed the news and also examined their participation in community journalism.

The study examined three cities as follows; Denver, Colorado, Macon, Georgia, and Sioux City, Iowa. They were selected to represent a metro, mid-size and small city. These cities were not meant to be indicative of media trends as a whole across the United States, but were singled out as a detailed account of several cities that may point towards more broad emerging

trends nationwide (Pew Research, 2015). Some of the other criteria noted were population size, demographic diversity, income distribution, broadband penetration, emergence of non-profit and new media outlets, and finally the presence of local NPR stations that produce original content.

The most interesting conclusion of this multifaceted study is that the city with the most diverse, yet least educated population (Macon, GA) ranked highest in how closely people follow local news. Out of the people surveyed in Macon, GA, 53 percent said that they followed the local news “very closely”. In Denver, Colorado, which boasts the highest education level per resident of all three cities studied, only 46 percent of people surveyed followed the local news on a regular basis (Pew Research, 2015). This may also point out that in a mid-size city, the public is more in tune with local events than in a large metropolitan area. Interestingly enough, in the mid-size city studied, there was the most limited number of media outlets.

Local television proved to be the most common way that the public received their news in most communities studied regardless of size. In Macon, Georgia, for example, 66% percent of the population reported watching local television news regularly for information about their communities. Local radio news, however, saw higher percentages in small cities and large metropolitan areas. While Macon, Georgia's news radio listenership hovered below 20%, both Denver and Sioux City reached nearly 25% listenership (Pew Research, 2015).

However, the news stories that people are viewing and listening to are extremely short in duration. While local broadcast media is the preferred measure of news delivery, especially in more diverse and less educated areas, approximately 20 percent of the stories produced are less than 2 minutes in length (Pew Research, 2015).

In addition to the manner in which local residents receive news about their communities, the type of people who actively seek out local news needs to be considered. Also, how citizens interact with local media outlets is a crucial consideration when gauging the value of local news in a manner that reflects the Social Responsibility model.

Not surprisingly, civic-minded people and those that engage in their communities on a regular basis were far more likely to follow local news. In Macon, Georgia, 56 percent of people who were considered civic minded (had taken part in at least 4 community events in the previous year) read the daily news as opposed to 26 percent of those otherwise considered disengaged from their communities (Pew Research, 2015).

It may be no huge surprise that people who are more engaged with their communities pay closer attention to the news. However the amount of public participation in local news is at a startlingly low level.

Citizens are often quoted as sources for news stories. In the three cities examined in the Pew Research Center's *Local News in a Digital Age* study, local residents were the most commonly cited source in all news stories over a five-day period. On average, across all sections of these cities residents, the percentage of people who had contact with a local media outlet hovered around 10 percent.

However, citizen participation in community journalism is virtually non-existent. Even civic minded and otherwise engaged and informed citizens seem to shy away from actively participating in generating content for the local media outlets. In the same five-day period in which the Pew Center staff observed citizens being quoted as the main sources across all media outlets, citizen produced stories or bylines comprised only 1 percent of all total stories.

On a qualitative level, journalists and the general public often have differing opinions on the most important attributes of the press. In 2005, University of Texas, Austin professors conducted a survey of the local population at the bequest of a local NPR affiliate news director. The news director reached out to professors Don Heider, Maxwell McCombs and Paula Poindexter to compile information that would allow him to focus the stations reporting around issues and concepts that were relevant to the general public. Throughout the study, the professors asked identical research questions to traditional journalists and compared the results.

When asked which attributes of local journalism they considered of utmost importance, 94 percent of people felt that accuracy was paramount. Next was the concept of unbiased reporting as 84% of respondents felt this was also extremely important. Less than fifty percent of respondents felt that “being a watchdog” and “rapid reporting” were important attributes of a local news outlet (Heider, McCombs & Poindexter, 2005, p. 954). The public's opinion on the important factors of local news was slightly skewed from what the professional journalists felt, as 70 percent stated that “being a watchdog” was one of their most important duties. In regards to the immediacy at which news is disseminated, 59% of professional journalists felt that “rapid reporting” was extremely important for local news outlets. Only 35% of local residents felt that the speed at which news is delivered was consequential to quality journalism (Heider, McCombs, & Poindexter, 2005, p. 956).

In summary, it appears that with the news digital transformation, people across all socioeconomic strata still rely on short broadcasts to keep them updated on events in their communities. It also appears that the local news is more important to those who have come from lower income and education levels. Still, the number of people actively involved in reporting events in their locales is strikingly low.

Public Interaction and Direction of National Public Radio

This qualitative research project examines the possibility of making public radio more involved with the community through the increase of citizen-produced journalism. This inclusion of the community serves to increase the value of public radio reporting according to the Social Responsibility theory of the press.

It is important to consider both the current goals and functions of National Public Radio throughout the United States. National Public Radio is a privately and publicly funded media organization that broadcasts news through member stations throughout the country. As of 2008, there are approximately 276 member stations (Kern, 2008, p. 133).

Bill Siemering, the first Director of Programming at NPR, said this about the purpose of the organization:

“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.”

("The NPR Mission", 2015).

On a more general level, NPR states that its primary purpose is to create a harmonic and collaborative relationship with its member stations. This is in effort to promote a more widely informed population. The programming itself intends to add depth to community issues ranging from important political events, new schools of thought, and the emerging arts.

In May of 2014 the Board of Directors of NPR decided to adopt a strategic plan to guide the organization through the changing landscape of radio news and journalism in general. The strategic plan is broad in reach, yet defines four key priorities that serve to be the focus of NPR's reporting in the years to come.

At the top of the list of priorities was the need to generate “exceptional” content. This content driven journalism serves the public's benefit and is intended to not only inform, but also satisfy what the Board considers a curious public (Board, 2014).

At the crux of content creation is a notion of emerging radio formats. The term radio does no longer signify the method of transmission of news to the listener. With the development of smartphone technology, radio news more accurately describes a method of communication of news by using an audio only medium (Kern, 2008, p. 278).

Veteran NPR reporter Jonathan Kern points out the many advantages to the medium of radio in its ability to provide excellent content to the public. First and foremost, radio is portable in nature; it has the ability to reach people while they are in their cars, cooking dinner at home, and everywhere in between. With the proliferation of smartphones with internet connectivity, the portable nature of streaming radio is endless (2008, p. 278).

Radio content is most importantly intimate. When a reporter is telling a story using only the medium of sound, it creates a genuine relationship with the listener. Often, to the listener, it sounds as if the reporter is having a unique conversation with them (Kern, 2008, p. 278).

From the perspective of the radio reporter, content is easily generated because radio equipment is small, portable and unobtrusive in nature (Kern, 2008, p. 279). While television stations require large expensive cameras, news trucks and more staff to generate their daily

reports, radio journalists traditionally only have to rely upon small recorders and possibly microphones. With the built in digital recorders on most smartphones, the entry-level equipment needed to produce a decent sounding audio report has never been more accessible to anyone in the general public.

The Emergence of Crowdsourcing and Citizen-Collaborated Journalism

With the business side of journalism on the steady decline, news organizations are making cutbacks on staff at an alarming rate. This creates a void for content that unfortunately must be filled by creators that will work for less money than legacy journalists once required. With the changing landscape of journalism, especially web based reporting, the possibility for citizen based reporting has never been greater. There have been several examples in the recent future that speak to the success of these endeavors.

At the crux of this change is crowdsourcing in journalism. Crowdsourcing is a term coined by journalist Jeff Howe in a Wired News article from 2006 that refers to legacy media outlets creating online platforms to harness the power of an enthusiastic community in reporting (Briggs, 2013, p. 65). Stemming from the burgeoning technology journalism realm, this concept of including the general public in the development of sources and stories has proved worthy to many legacy media outlets.

John Cook is a former newspaper reporter and founder of Geek Wire, a technology news website and has strong opinions about the power of collaboration with the general public.

"I am a big believer that my readers are much smarter than me and have a better grasp of what's going on, so why not leverage that wisdom to do a better job of reporting?" Cook said (as cited in Briggs, 2013, p. 64).

In the medium of public radio news specifically, examples of crowdsourcing and collaboration with the public have already proved beneficial.

For example, in 2003, Minnesota Public Radio created the Public Insight Network (PIN). This is an online database where anyone can register as an expert source on specific topics. Journalists, and public radio journalists specifically, can have easy access to a wide variety of experts via collaboration with the general public ("Public Insight", 2013).

The Public Insight Network was created in order to facilitate the location of knowledgeable sources in order to foster better accuracy and greater depth of reporting. The benefit of the Public Insight Network was demonstrated in 2012 when PBS's "NewsHour" was reporting on the vanishing water supply in Texas (Briggs, 2013, p. 64). They used PIN to gain a broader knowledge of water issues around the nation and invited concerned citizens to comment on the story. Because of this, a narrow story (that once may have included only official sources from Texas) now took on a much larger scope. People from other water deficient states, such as Arizona, spoke about proven techniques such as recycling grey water, adding more value and a broader perspective (Briggs, 2013, p. 69). The inclusion of the public deepened and enriched a story that could have been very limited.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter serves to elaborate on the methods used in the data collection of this qualitative research study. It will describe in detail the data sources and participant backgrounds. The design of the interview will be explained in addition to the collection, presentation and any limitations of the study.

Data Sources

In this study, three professionals in the field of public radio and one civically engaged member of the general public (who has had no history of producing stories for broadcast) were interviewed to gain further insight into the possibility of citizen-produced audio journalism. The interview is structured around a questionnaire that attempts to elaborate on the main research questions developed to focus the study. First, a news director at a local public radio station will be interviewed. A public radio programming and new media director will be interviewed as well. Third, a local college professor specializing in media ethics and law will give his opinions. Finally a young, civically engaged employee at a college will offer his thoughts.

The questionnaire was created to explore the real life feasibility of citizens producing short stories for public radio and the news organizations ability to air them.

Participants

Randol White is the News Director at KCBX Public Radio in San Luis Obispo, California. He has over twenty years experience in the broadcast sector of news media.

Marisa Waddell is the Director of Programming and New Media at KCBX Public Radio, with a lifelong appreciation for public media and a broad knowledge of the big picture of putting together programming, she will be an expert on integrating citizen produced content into the program structure of local public radio. Professor Bill Loving is a college professor at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and his specialty is in media law and ethics. Finally, Cal Poly employee and civically engaged San Luis Obispo resident Aaron Borgeson will be interviewed as to his possible involvement in this new style of citizen reporting.

Interview Design

The following questions were developed in order to gain a better understanding of the possibility of including citizen-produced content into the public radio format. They are based around the fundamentals stated in the research questions that were developed for this study. There are variations in the questions asked of each participant in relation to their direct role in the study.

Interview Questions

The personal interviews were conducted with the following questions, and several specific questions were asked of each respondent according to their specialty:

1. What differentiates public radio reporting specifically from other forms of broadcast news? How is its content different? (Can you provide an example)
2. Why is public radio reporting relevant to local communities? How does the demographic and psychographic makeup of a city affect the news content?

3. How can civically minded individuals get their stories heard? What are the ways that these people can broadcast to their community?
4. Would the public benefit from having more transparent interaction with the media at the local level? How can this be achieved?
5. What are the ethical considerations that one must consider when allowing citizen journalists to produce their own stories? What are the legal implications to the responsible news organization?
6. Would public generated content from smartphones be of high enough quality for broadcast? What are the ways that people can give you this content?
7. (For the civically engaged citizen) Would you be interested in producing your stories for broadcast on a local level? What sort of time or training commitment would you be comfortable with in order to do so? Are the source's ethics even of a concern to the source? Are ethics a concern of the citizen or is it just providing content?

Data Collection

The data for this study will be collected in four separate interviews over the period of June 23, 2015 to August 31, 2015. The interviews will include all or a portion of the questions above depending on the subject being interviewed. If clarification is needed, additional follow-up interviews in person or over the phone may be used.

Data Presentation

The interviews will be conducted in person and recorded on a portable digital voice recorder to ensure maximum quality. The data will then be transcribed verbatim in order to retain the most accurate version of the in person interviews.

Limitations

There are a few limitations in this study that are outside the control of this study. The scope of this qualitative study will be limited to a single community and one single public broadcast outlet. It is not intended to be representative of any broad trend. This study was limited to fit within a 10 week academic quarter simultaneously with the researcher's work as a United States Merchant Marine stationed at sea for half the quarter. The amount of interviews is intended to reflect the best research in the time frame allotted.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study revolve around researcher participation in the public media system by working as a reporter at KCBX Public Radio. The subjects interviewed are more experienced in the field of public radio reporting and that may influence the structure of the interview questions. The civically engaged citizen may be slightly more biased towards participation in the public media system.

CHAPTER 4

Data Analysis

Chapter 4 will begin with brief descriptions of the participants in the interview questionnaire. It will also organize and summarize the interviewee's responses to the questions. Each interview was conducted in person and lasted approximately 30 minutes each. The answers will be paraphrased and organized in order to provide the most relevant answers to the questions posed. In addition, the answers will be analyzed in comparison with the original research questions posed in Chapter 1. The answers will then be further explored with the existing literature on the topics as reviewed in Chapter 2.

Description of Interview Subjects and Experts

Journalism Studies, Ethics and Law

Bill Loving is a professor of journalism at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. He holds a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism from the University of Texas at El Paso in addition to a law degree from Southern Methodist University. Professor Loving specializes in media law, First Amendment law and media ethics. He teaches these subjects the university and was also a visiting professor of these subjects at Tianjin Foreign Studies University in the People's Republic of China. He has also authored a major text on the subject of mass media law "Law of Mass Communications: Freedom and Control of Print and Broadcast Media".

Public Radio Program Direction

Marisa Waddell is the Director of Programming and New Media for the Central Coast public radio station KCBX, and NPR affiliate station. Waddell holds a Master's degree in Mass

Communication and Journalism from the California State University, Fresno. Currently, she is in charge of piecing together all of the programming that airs on KCBX. She is also in charge of the task of sourcing new and fresh content for digital media. Waddell has been involved in public radio since she was 19, when she was a volunteer announcer and classical music host. She is noted as one of the most passionate supporters of public radio and is constantly involved in developing and finding unique broadcast quality material.

Public Radio News Director

Randol White is the News Director at KCBX Public Radio in San Luis Obispo. He has a degree from Humboldt State University in broadcast journalism. White has been involved in broadcast news for over twenty years and has worked for television and radio stations all over the western United States. He has experience in both public and commercial broadcasting and knows the inherent difference in the style and quality of reporting. White was hired as the director when KCBX decided to carry local news in addition to NPR national programming. He has experience crafting a local public radio newsroom from scratch.

Civic-Minded Citizen / Possible Citizen Journalist

Aaron Borgeson is an admissions officer at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. A recent political science graduate, Borgeson remains active in the university community as well as the broader Central Coast. He is active in community church and issues involving the university. Borgeson listens to local public radio on a regular basis. He was interviewed as a potential candidate for citizen broadcast journalism.

Public Radio Reporting Questionnaire

Each in interview subject was asked the following questions in effort to paint a broader picture of public radio reporting and the possibility of the involvement of citizen journalism:

1. What differentiates public radio reporting specifically from other forms of broadcast news? How is its content different? Can you provide an example?

Question #1 was asked in order to outline the virtues and shortcomings of public radio reporting. It attempts to explain the differences in the type of content and focus that public radio reporting tends to gravitate towards.

- Bill Loving: " (Public Radio reporting) covers a story more completely. Ah, it provides additional information and the subtle nuances that help people understand what's going on." (APPENDIX A)
- Marisa Waddell: "If you listen to commercial radio news, the stories are thirty seconds maximum, so it's more, kind of like headline news...You won't find in depth features on commercial radio. But with public radio, you get, a two-hour news magazine with stories that are as long as eight or nine minutes. That's one big difference. " (APPENDIX B)
- Randol White: "There are times I listen to it and I think it sounds very similar. When I listen to the top of the hour NPR news or even our newscasts, the story length is about the same. It's really the content that differs a lot. We are not covering every local stabbing. We're not covering a lot of crime. What we try to do is look more at the reasons for the increase in crime. If there's a lot of things

happening in a community where day after day there's some sort of drive by or stabbing or those sorts of things; we should really be looking at what's behind all that. Why is that happening?" (APPENDIX C)

- Aaron Borgeson: " I think what differentiates public radio, especially the stations that I listen to, is that there definitely is the current events of things that are happening in the county or the city or if people are voting. There's something really romantic about it (public radio) because, um, for the ability of someone to describe what they are seeing, the ability, and I think public radio is so good at this and NPR is especially good at this, is incorporating background noise."
(APPENDIX D)

2. Why is public radio reporting relevant to local communities? How does the demographic and psychographic makeup of a city affect the news content?

Question #2 was designed to analyze how local public radio reporting affects communities in a socially responsible way. It asks subjects to analyze the role of public radio in local communities. The second part of the question was asked in order to objectively investigate the shaping of news by the local demographics.

- Bill Loving: "If you look at the networks, they'll do a story about Somali families living in Minneapolis in Saint Paul. And here, I say there, there are no Somali families living in my community. But there are people who have come to the community. Some are refugees and others are immigrants. And by talking about the difficulties and the successes of Somalis in Minnesota, you learn more about your own place because you're seeing it through different eyes." (APPENDIX A)

- Marisa Waddell: "We have so many cities on the Central Coast...each city has its own personality and its own concerns. But then there are common concerns throughout the Central Coast that effect all cities. So, as a public radio station, that does make it a little bit more difficult for us to serve, because we serve such a huge area, from Salinas all the way down to almost to Ventura. What our news department does is it tries to find the common links between what's happening in Salinas and Santa Barbara. Or, find something that's happening in a city that the citizens all around the Central Coast can relate to. Whether we want to be or not, we're a station that is listened to by white upper-middle class people. That's just the nature of where we live. But we have people in our area that we want to serve and that we do serve, who don't fit that mold, either. " (APPENDIX B)
- Randol White: "Well, because we're a public radio station, I really try to reflect the stories that I choose. I try to reflect who's listening. They're also the people that are putting money into the station. Whereas a commercial station is considering their advertisers because that's where money is coming from. I'm considering our donors who I believe to be everybody because we have a really long list of people that support us. So I'm just looking at the community and the community is paying for us and relying on us to reflect them. And so in that case when I think about a story I think is this reflective of who's listening and who's supporting? And I know ... And will it benefit them to know this information?" (APPENDIX C)
- Aaron Borgeson: " The content that's driven from the advertising I think is really different if you're in a mid-sized town or a small town, but I think also the true

content and what I've seen in San Luis Obispo and especially on KCBX is also going down in Santa Barbara and going up into maybe and bringing in content from there...I think that's also refreshing because yes, it may not be my backyard but it definitely does, um, reflect our, our region. It does inform me of things that are going on in the larger regional community and I think that's part of it. Content is sometimes driven, or new content can be driven out from out of the scope of San Luis Obispo proper." (APPENDIX D)

3. How can civically minded individuals get their stories heard? What are the ways that these people can broadcast to their community?

Question #3 was asked to explore the possibilities of how civic minded and aware community members can interact with the news. It hints at the beginnings of citizen journalism and also allows for other avenues to be explored for the public to interact with the media.

- Bill Loving: "Well, you can blog, you can tweet, you can speak for yourself, you can write letters to the editors and you can send emails. I get emails all the time from people talking about issues. So, people have the opportunity to approach established news entities." (APPENDIX A)
- Marisa Waddell: " One big way that we become aware of stories is through a press release, through an email, or through a phone call. People saying, 'Hey. Did you know this was happening?' Because we can't be everywhere. So, we count on citizens of the Central Coast who bring things to our attention. So, that's probably the biggest way that people can get stories on the air, or encourage us to get something on the air, is just to let us know that it's happening." (APPENDIX B)

- Randol White: "We have a show called Issues and Ideas on KCBX and that really is one of our major conduits for getting that type of information out there, because not everything fits. There are different types of things that are considered stories and I can judge them pretty quickly on whether they are worthy of 30 seconds... People can certainly e-mail me with their thoughts and ideas. Every public event that I'm at where there's an audience, I always end everything that I'm saying with 'If you have something that you believe needs to be covered in this community, please call me, e-mail, send me a Facebook message.' Let us know about it. That's a great source of information for us; all of those people out in the community."

(APPENDIX C)

- Aaron Borgeson: "I go to the media to consume, to be fed. With that, you know, there is the importance of articulating and really critically thinking about each story. It's a place where I go to be informed. So with that in mind, I view, and this is probably a limitation on my view, but it, for me it's more of a, one way street in terms of information being disseminated down to me, the viewer or the recipient."

(APPENDIX D)

4. Would the public benefit from having more transparent interaction with the media at the local level? How can this be achieved?

Question #4 examined the value of having easier access to the media and newsgathering process by local community members. It explores the many facets of how this can be achieved.

- Bill Loving: " But the important thing to know is that because of the Internet, everybody is a publisher. So you can do that, you can have a blog, you can have a

website and you can be telling the story of your community. In the City of Bell, a blogger covered the corruption in the City of Bell for 18 months before the Los Angeles Times picked up on the story." (APPENDIX A)

- Marisa Waddell: "We could put it out there more that we're looking for story ideas, that we're looking for issues that are of concern to citizens in the community. One way to do that is to utilize our technology and make it easier for people to access us." (APPENDIX B)
- Randol White: "Yeah. When the public sees how media is and how stories are put together, I think they realize where the value is a lot of times. If you've ever been interviewed by a television or a radio station or a newspaper and then you've looked at that article or piece and ... or heard it, and you're like, "What?" You know when you see inaccuracies after you've been a part of it. Or you see that your thoughts were really represented well, then you know what sort of organizations you're dealing with." (APPENDIX C)
- Aaron Borgeson: " I think the public would benefit from having a more transparent media and I think part of that conversation is better articulating how that would operate because I don't think in my experience listening to local radio or local TV... I don't see that when I'm listening that there's that ability to, 'Hey, call in and let us know what you're seeing or what you want reported on.'" (APPENDIX D)

5. What are the ethical considerations that one must consider when allowing citizen journalists to produce their own stories? What are the legal implications to the responsible news organization?

Question #5 was intended to provide a sense of the consequences involved when a news organization chooses to broadcast citizen produced stories. It examines the real world possibilities that can occur when people with little formal journalism training are allowed to enter the news gathering and production process.

- Bill Loving: " You run it, you buy it. And if there's something wrong with it, you get sued for it. And then, when you try to defend yourself, consider this. You're in a courtroom and the attorney for the plaintiff is asking you, 'And where did you get the story that defamed my client?' 'Oh, somebody sent it in.' 'And how much investigation did you do with the story?' 'Well, we just ran it.' And then, you look pretty silly in front of the jury because you were irresponsible. You wouldn't give the keys to your car to somebody you didn't know. Why give the keys to the news operation to someone like that?" (APPENDIX A)
- Marisa Waddell: "I'm, I'm sure there are liability issues if you have people out representing the station. It's more of a legal issue, if somebody is recording a person and doesn't inform them that they're being recorded. An ethical issue is who are these people who want to make these stories? Are they making anything up? Are they stretching the facts? Are they asking leading questions? Have they decided what the story is before the story unfolds? That's actually common among journalists" (APPENDIX B)

- Randol White: "We're putting our name on it. We're putting the KCBX on it and if they (citizen journalists) are passionate enough about this story to go to the trouble of putting it together and come in to sell it to me, then they're invested somehow... This person off the street; I don't know what their driving force is. But there is some force that has gotten them to the point where they're sitting in my office that has pushed them here to do it. And so the likelihood is the driving force is the content in the piece and we can't put that on the air as news. We could put it on the air as an opinion." (APPENDIX C)
- Aaron Borgeson: " Because we're talking about civic engagement in the radio or in the media I think (it's) important in contributing to the local content. (It) is important but where is the accountability, authenticity, and achieving non-biased reporting if content is solely driven from the audience." (APPENDIX D)

6. Would public generated content from smartphones be of high enough quality for broadcast? What are the ways that people can give you this content?

Question #6 is a general question that examines the technological advances of everyday devices that can aid both citizen and professional journalists in the newsgathering process. This question mainly focuses on the broadcast environment.

- Marisa Waddell: " We have iPhone content on the news all the time. One of thing that we do, is when Randol does a telephone interview, he'll ask the person on the other end to record their end of the conversation on their iPhone and then send him the file. Rather than recording in our production studio (with) the sort of bad

quality phone audio. If we can get somebody to do this, they'll send us their audio from their iPhone." (APPENDIX B)

- Randol White: " Absolutely. I think the latest versions of smartphones and even some older ones have audio quality that is used by us locally here extensively. NPR nationally uses the smartphone as a tool for collecting audio. In the field, sometimes they have reporters that are far-flung in the Middle East or wherever they may be reporting and they'll record their end of the conversation. If it's a two-way, they'll record their end of the conversation using an iPhone. We do that all the time." (APPENDIX C)
- Aaron Borgeson: "So I think we're in a world today where audio recordings and home video shot from your iPhone at the scene of a crime...is exciting and easily captured. There is an aspect of ownership and perhaps expertise that people have. They might be rookie or have no experience in media, but they're going to assume with the smartphone in their pocket that they do have a level of security or competency." (APPENDIX D)

7. (For the civically engaged citizen) Would you be interested in producing your stories for broadcast on a local level? What sort of time or training commitment would you be comfortable with in order to do so? Are the source's ethics even of a concern to the source? Are ethics a concern of the citizen or is it just providing content?

Question #7 was asked specifically of the potential citizen journalist to get a sense of whether or not he would be interested in participating in the news producing process. Variations were asked of the experts to gather a sense of their thoughts on the possibility.

- Bill Loving: " A citizen blogger did it and people can do it on their own. And it may be that that gets the attention of an established news entity which would then look at the story." (APPENDIX A)
- Marisa Waddell: " We have had people in the community who are already trained journalists who have offered to volunteer for us. That is a way that we can bring people from the community in to provide us with really good content."
(APPENDIX B)
- Randol White: " We could put it on the air as an opinion... We try to remove as much of that blur as possible by putting things into boxes when you're listening... We have other shows like Central Coast Voices and Issues and Ideas. Those are not news shows." (APPENDIX C)
- Aaron Borgeson: " Probably not because I want to leave it up to the experts. You know when I practically know the names of the people on air; you know, Patty or Jordan Bell or that other young guy that does some radio broadcasts for KCBX. They're professionals. They know how to articulate; they know how to use their words. I enjoy hearing from the experts in terms of radio broadcasts in terms of that content." (APPENDIX D)

Public Radio Research Questions

These questions were developed for this study to examine the value of public radio reporting to the local community. The questions are grounded in the Social Responsibility theory of the press that suggests that the media has an obligation to inform citizens about events that are

relevant to their lives. The questions also explore transparency in media and the possibility of public generated content being a viable tool for local media to use aid in this obligation.

Research question 1: What is the main mission of public radio news reporting?

- Bill Siemering, the first Director of Programming at NPR, said this about the purpose of the organization:

“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.”

(as cited in "The NPR Mission," 2015).

- At the top of the list of priorities was the need to generate “exceptional” content. This content driven journalism serves the public's benefit and is intended to not only inform, but also satisfy what the Board considers a curious public in ("The NPR Mission," 2015).

Research question 2: How do citizens report accurately and fairly about their environments with little training in traditional reporting or journalism ethics?

- Former newspaper reporter and founder of technology news site Geek Wire feels that citizens can participate in the news process if their knowledge is "leveraged" by the professional.

"I am a big believer that my readers are much smarter than me and have a better grasp of what's going on, so why not leverage that wisdom to do a better job of reporting?" Cook said (Briggs, 2013, p. 64).

- Dealing with public radio exclusively, citizens prove more valuable as highly trained expert sources than content creators. A relevant example is Minnesota Public Radio's Public Insight Network (PIN, an online database where anyone can register as an expert source on specific topics. Journalists, and public radio journalists specifically, can have easy access to a wide variety of experts via collaboration with the general public. The Public Insight Network was created in order to facilitate the location of knowledgeable sources in order to promote accuracy and depth of reporting. ("Public Insight", 2013)

Research question 3: What technologies must the general public have access to be able to report for broadcast?

- For the radio reporter specifically, content is easily generated because radio equipment is small, portable and unobtrusive in nature (Kern, 2008, p. 279). While television stations require large expensive cameras, news trucks and more to generate their daily reports, radio journalists traditionally only have to rely upon small recorders and possibly microphones. With the built in digital recorders on most smartphones, the entry-level equipment needed to produce a decent sounding audio report has never been more accessible to anyone in the general public. (Kern, 2008, p. 279).

Research question 4: How does the demographic of a city affect the way that the news is structured in a public media model?

- The most recent study involving local communities and their interaction with the news media was conducted by the Pew Research Center for Journalism and Media and was released in March of 2015. (Pew Research, 2015)
- The most interesting conclusion of this study is that the city with the most diverse, yet least educated population ranked highest in how closely people follow local news. This may also point out that in a mid-size city, the public is more in tune with local events than in a large metropolitan area. (Pew Research, 2015)

Research question 5: What are the methods that public radio stations can train citizen journalists in accurate and ethical reporting?

- Currently, citizen participation in community journalism is virtually non-existent according to the Pew Research Center study titled *Local News in a Digital Age*. Even civic minded and otherwise engaged and informed citizens seem to shy away from actively participating in generating content for the local media outlets. In the same five-day period in which the Pew Center staff observed citizens being quoted as the main sources across all media outlets, citizen produced stories or bylines comprised only 1 percent of all total stories. (Pew Research, 2015).

Research question 6: How will the general public benefit from reporting its own local issues in a short and succinct manner?

- In 2005, University of Texas, Austin professors conducted a survey of the local population at the bequest of a local NPR affiliate news director. In the study, the professors asked members of the public and professional journalists the same questions in regards to the strengths and weaknesses of local media. (Heider, McCombs & Poindexter, 2005, p. 954).
- Members of the local community felt that the most important attributes of the local media were "accuracy" and "unbiased reporting". The public felt that "being a watchdog" and "rapid reporting" were of far less importance. This is in stark contrast to the opinions of professional journalists in the study, the majority of whom felt that the latter two attributes of media were the most paramount qualities. (Heider, McCombs & Poindexter, 2005, p. 954).

Research question 7: How can public radio stations benefit from the increase in public generated content?

- The mission of NPR public radio is stated as "to create a harmonic and collaborative relationship with its member stations...in effort to promote a more widely informed population." ("The NPR Mission," 2015).
- The role of citizen participation may not be clearly defined in this statement, but NPR's first Director of Programming Bill Siemerling stated that public radio "will encourage a sense of active constructive participation, rather than apathetic helplessness." (as cited in "The NPR Mission," 2015)

Public Radio Reporting and Citizen Participation Data

In current journalism research, there has been little done in the field of citizen participation in public radio reporting. Commercial broadcast has a history of short stories, produced mainly to offer the public a timely and concise overview of daily events in their community. With the surge of citizen journalism on the web and crowdsourcing on mainstream media websites, the possibility certainly exists for this type of participation to bleed into the more unique reporting and longer formats found on public radio.

In this study, three experts and one potential citizen journalist were interviewed with a sequence of questions. These interview questions serve to expand upon and provide depth to the research questions that serve as the outline for this study. Professor Bill Loving, Programming Director Marisa Waddell, News Director Randol White, and Admissions Officer Aaron Borgeson were all asked a series of similar questions. The tables listed below summarize the interview subject's answers and compile them in a succinct format that references the original research questions.

Research question 1: What is the main mission of public radio news reporting?

This question was asked to gain a detailed perspective on the fundamental strengths and weaknesses of public radio reporting. According to the mission statement of NPR, it is paramount that the organization uses its reporting in effort to create a "more widely informed population" ("The NPR Mission," 2015). Included in this information are broad ranging community centered topics from local politics to the emerging arts.

As referenced from the interview question, most respondents replied by describing the differences between public radio reporting and other forms of local broadcast. All respondents

agreed that the depth of reporting in public radio was greater than that of other more commercial and traditional forms of radio. Table 1 explains the significant differences that each respondent noted in addition to examples that they were able to provide.

Table 1

The Difference in Public Radio Reporting

Respondent	Main mission of public radio?	Examples of stories
Bill Loving	Cover stories more completely	Somali immigrants and refugees in small town USA
Marisa Waddell	Provides more in-depth coverage than commercial radio	Mental illness and shootings at UCSB, California drought
Randol White	Looking at the driving forces that are causing the current events	In general, taking a look at local crime and providing a greater context.
Aaron Borgeson	Provides more romantic coverage due to application of natural sound	Story about fishing in Morro Bay that includes natural sound from the scene

Research question 2: How do citizens report accurately and fairly about their environments with little training in traditional reporting or journalism ethics?

This question was asked specifically to see if news directors and program directors felt confident in having members of the general public complete their own stories for broadcast news.

With the emergence of crowdsourcing and utilizing the power of citizens to enhance reporting, this question speaks to the next level of involvement. This power has been harnessed by many legacy media outlets; often in the forms of crime footage, weather reports, and community event reportage (Briggs, 2013, p. 64).

Research question #2 could be considered the cornerstone question of this study. If news directors not trust citizens to produce stories, other means must be available for citizens to effectively help create a more transparent relationship with the news media.

Table 2

Possibility of Citizen Produced Journalism

Respondent	Best way citizens can become involved with media?	Can citizens effectively report on community issues with no training?
Randol White	Contact the newsroom and pitch stories. Interact with reporters and send in sound under their direction.	No, because they have something personally invested
Bill Loving Aaron Borgeson	They can write, email, or reach out to established media. Citizens can also start their own blogs. Enjoys the one-way relationship with media. Listens to public radio to consume information.	No. They need to leave the reporting to trained professionals. Would not be interested in reporting because it should be left to the experts
Marisa Waddell	Contact the newsroom OR volunteer to learn the standards of reporting	They need training to ensure that they understand the process of reporting

All respondents from news direction, programming and academic backgrounds agreed that citizens cannot be trusted to produce their own stories

with little or no training in the process of reporting. However, they did not say that every reporter had to have a journalism degree.

The civic-minded citizen showed no interest in presently reporting on community issues. The driving force behind this was a conscious effort to consume rather than participate in media.

Research question 3: What technologies must the general public have access to be able to report for broadcast?

This question was asked in succession to the previous in order to grasp the technological requirements behind producing broadcast quality material. Traditionally NPR reporters have used iPhones to file reports from far-flung corners of the world and as backup recorders.

According to News Director Randol White, the latest smartphones produce clear enough audio to be "used by us locally extensively" (APPENDIX C). The ubiquity of smartphones enables news directors like White to gather sounds from around the county through a variety of methods, from reporter back-up devices to asking citizens to record natural sounds from events.

The premier website that discusses radio reporting techniques, Transom.org, has over five separate articles that discuss various methods to enhance radio reporting through the use of smartphones. "Radio producers have long been intrigued by the idea of bootstrapping an iPod or iPhone to make legitimate field recordings," said Jay Allison from Transom.org. "Kludges have fallen short, but they're falling a good deal less short these days." (Towne, 2010).

Research question 4: How does the demographic of a city affect the way that the news is structured in a public media model?

This question was asked to find out specifically how the demographic structure of a specific community affects the news content. Since public radio is essentially a web of member stations around the country, a collaborative effort produces the most in depth national coverage. ("The NPR Mission," 2015).

On the local level, the socioeconomic, educational and racial background of community members has a profound affect on the media. Current research points to demographics as an indicator of the levels of involvement and consumption. A finding of the Pew Research study titled Local News in a Digital Age showed that out of three cities studies, the city with the lowest education level and highest diversity index heavily relied upon local broadcasts for their news. (Pew Research, 2015).

Research question #4 was crafted to answer the other side of this equation. Well-funded studies have show how the demographics of local communities shape the citizens news consumption habits. This question serves to answer the ways in which the news media alters its contents based upon the demographics (and specifically psychographics) of the community in which they broadcast.

Table 3

Local Demographics and Content

Respondent	How does demographics affect news in community?	Examples of influence
Bill Loving	Must look to donors. Public radio listeners tend to be better educated	Stations that cater to more affluent and educated listeners must disseminate ideas that are important to those that are not as well off.
Marisa Waddell	There is no way around the fact that most of listeners are mostly white and upper middle class (in San Luis Obispo specifically)	Providing a broad range of stories around the county to make sure to include those who are not in the target listenership
Randol White	Looking at the community and donors and finding content that is relevant to them	Issues and Ideas program which includes local content in a longer less timely format.
Aaron Borgeson	Suburban areas often shorted in local coverage due to geographic placement	Residents in Temecula often are stuck in between major coverage areas of Los Angeles and San Diego.

Research question 5: What are the methods that public radio stations can train citizen journalists in accurate and ethical reporting?

This research question was developed to expand upon the previous question asking whether citizens could be properly trusted to produce stories without training. Provided that

civic-minded community members wanted to produce their own stories, the question served to explore the avenues by which people can gain this experience.

Marisa Waddell provided the most direct answer to this research question.

" You need a training session" Waddell said. "So, you need funding, you need a grant, and most of the radio stations that have a project like this (have) applied for a grant and they've got funding so that they can teach people how to be community broadcasters. It is feasible, but it takes money. And it takes taking the time to write a grant and get that funding. And it takes the time of the staff." (APPENDIX B)

Waddell describes a scenario where necessary training requires an immense amount of money and time. This is often required of staffers, who are already extremely busy during their daily reporting.

Other than personal research and training in the field of ethical reporting, few avenues are available to the American citizen in a mid-size city who is looking for journalism training. In fact, much of the free training in citizen journalism is aimed at citizens in Middle Eastern nations. In a Google search titled "training citizen journalists", the top two websites referenced projects in Libya and Egypt.

Research question 6: How will the general public benefit from reporting its own local issues in a short and succinct manner?

This question was also a qualitative extension of research question #2. All of the interview participants felt that citizen journalists were not qualified to report their own stories about local events. News Director Randol White felt that if a citizen took the time and effort to

produce their own broadcast, that they must have something "invested" in the story. It could be considered an opinion broadcast, but would not qualify as a news broadcast. (APPENDIX C)

Academic research points to a different conclusion. In a report titled *Examining the Effects of Public Journalism on Civil Society from 1994-2002: Organizational Factors, Project Features, Story Frames and Citizen Engagement*, the authors argue that public participation in journalism makes them feel like citizens that are accountable for what goes on in their communities (Nichols, Friedland, Rojas, Cho & Shah, 2006, p. 78). They state that issues facing civil societies are extremely complex in nature and that by participating in the media, citizens are able to better comprehend the depth of these issues. It can also be a valuable tool for holding people accountable for their understanding of the world around them. The authors argue that citizen journalism fosters an attitude of "public deliberation" and "civic problem solving" (Nichols, Friedland, Rojas, Cho & Shah, 2006, p. 78).

Research question 7: How can public radio stations benefit from the increase in public generated content?

Research question #7 assumes that public radio stations are interested in citizen-generated content. The interview subjects did not appear to be interested in this sort of material unless the citizens had been trained in some way. Marisa Waddell is interested in quality reporting from local citizens if they have volunteered for enough time in the newsroom to gain the experience necessary to report from an objective and unbiased position. She also requires non-traditionally trained journalists to have a working knowledge of media law such as how to gain consent from people who are being interviewed on air. Waddell also wants to make sure that the volunteers are proficient in the technical aspects of recording. (APPENDIX B)

On *Transom.org*, NPR reporter Jay Allison describes the benefit that radio stations can get from apprentice, volunteer and trained citizen journalists. He describes his humble beginnings at NPR as a "citizen, suddenly armed with the tools of production" (2001).

"We have a calling to mission and public service that exists outside the marketplace and squarely in the civic realm. We can serve that mission through traditional reporting and documentary, but we also have the chance to help citizens speak for themselves, to one another, directly." (Allison, 2001).

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Recommendations

Summary

This study was crafted to examine the recent proliferation of citizen journalism and the possibility of its integration with public radio. The values of public radio and its mission are to better inform and engage the community. With the traditional media using citizen journalists more often, community voices are rarely the source of short local broadcasts on public radio member stations.

A news director and programming director from an NPR affiliate in a mid-size California city were interviewed to provide expert opinion on the possibility of using citizen journalists. A professor with a law degree who specializes in media law was interviewed to find out the legal and ethical implications of using these non-traditionally trained journalists. Finally, a civic-minded individual was interviewed to see if he had any interest in reporting his own stories in his community using little more than his smartphone.

These subjects were interviewed with a specific questionnaire that originated from a broad set of research questions posed at the beginning of this study. The original research questions are listed as follows:

1. What is the main mission of public radio news reporting?
2. How do citizens report accurately and fairly about their environments with little training in traditional reporting or journalism ethics?

3. What technologies must the general public have access to be able to report for broadcast?
4. How does the demographic of a city affect the way that the news is structured in a public media model?
5. What are the methods that public radio stations can train citizen journalists in accurate and ethical reporting?
6. How will the general public benefit from reporting its own local issues in a short and succinct manner?
7. How can public radio stations benefit from the increase in public generated content?

Discussion

By comparing the data collected through interviews in Chapter 4 against the existing literature, several conclusions can be drawn that stem from the original research questions posed in this study.

Research question 1: What is the main mission of public radio news reporting?

All three media experts and the professor interviewed agreed that the main mission in public radio reporting was to go above and beyond the normal scope of broadcast news and provide a sense of depth to current issues. White went as far as to say that they tend to look at the reasons causing the issues and the effect they have upon the public. Waddell also alluded to the fact that the length of broadcast stories that public radio affords provides the public with a better sense of the community around them. Professor Loving noted that even though stories may span

from different geographical regions, the public will gain a greater understanding through the commonality of the human experience reported on.

The literature, and specifically the direct mission statement of NPR speaks to the same strengths of public radio reporting as the experts interviewed in this study. The main focus of public radio reporting is to create a "more widely informed population" ("The NPR Mission," 2015). Bill Siemering, the first Director of Programming at NPR, stated that the organization was created to serve the "individual" and explore the fact that humans have many varied experiences and promote development of the individual. A sense of community participation is also hoped to be achieved through public radio reporting ("The NPR Mission," 2015).

Overall, public radio reporting is less focused on breaking news and single shocking events. Its function is to enrich local communities and foster a sense of social responsibility.

Research question 2: How do citizens report accurately and fairly about their environments with little training in traditional reporting or journalism ethics?

The short answer is; they don't. No experts interviewed were willing to accept broadcasts from untrained journalists. The stakes are too high as public radio stations put their name and credibility on the line when they air stories. White argued that if a citizen were to take the time to research and produce a story for broadcast that they must have something personally invested in that story. Waddell was extremely concerned that citizen reporters wouldn't be able to understand the legalities behind interviewing the general public. She also felt that untrained journalists would produce bad stories because they lack the news perspective that comes with training.

Interestingly enough, the potential citizen journalist didn't feel comfortable enough participating in the news making process. Borgeson enjoys the one-way relationship he has with

the local media and wants to stay a consumer of information. He feels that news should be left up to the experts, but did add that when he is older and has more time, he would consider becoming involved in citizen reporting. His main reason would be to promote the interests and events surrounding his church, which he is actively involved in. Borgeson was also concerned that participation in citizen journalism could get him reprimanded in his job, as a college admissions officer.

Literature indicates that the best possible use for untrained citizen experts is that of easily located sources. Minnesota Public Radio's Public Insight Network (PIN) is an online database that gathers experts on specific topics from the general public ("Public Insight", 2013). Public radio reporters can then garner the power of collaboration and still maintain control, objectivity and accuracy when the source's information makes it into a broadcast.

Without training, there is little hope for citizen journalism to effectively thrive in the medium of public radio. The in-depth nature of reporting does not lend itself to community members who do not know the intricacies, legalities and process of creating broadcast stories.

Research question 3: What technologies must the general public have access to be able to report for broadcast?

The technology needed to produce radio quality recordings is carried around in the pockets and purses of most everyone in the United States. Smartphones are a ubiquitous tool, which have become a standard recording device in public radio. White stated that while smartphones originally started as last report devices for national reporters stuck in remote locations, they are now used quite commonly on the local level.

Existing literature points to the exact same conclusion. Radio is a medium that doesn't require a lot of expensive equipment to produce. Content is easily generated because radio equipment is small, portable and unobtrusive in nature. Smartphones now make recording at a high quality available to the masses (Kern, 2008, p. 279).

As digital technology improves at a rapid pace, the tool needed to produce broadcast quality sound is something that most people carry around with them on a daily basis.

Research question 4: How does the demographic of a city affect the way that the news is structured in a public media model?

There is an undeniable link between the demographics and psychographics of a community and the way the content of news is shaped. The educational, racial, and economic status of residents plays a huge part in the way that news directors choose their programming.

All three experts seemed to agree that public radio specifically caters to people with a higher level of education. In terms of the local community that Program Director Marisa Waddell serves, she feels that there is no way to escape the fact that her primary listeners are upper-middle class white residents. Waddell argues that the reporters have to actively seek out stories that effect communities outside this target demographic in order to paint the broader picture of the community. News Director Randol White feels that the local public is the main donor to the station, so the content must reflect issues that benefit those that support the station.

Civic-minded citizen Borgeson added an interesting observation that residents in suburban areas (especially in Southern California) often feel sandwiched in between major metro areas that cover stories that are only relevant to those large cities. Sometimes the coverage overlooks the mid-sized cities.

The literature from the Pew Research Centers most recent *Local News in a Digital Age* study indicate, surprisingly, that more diverse and less educated populations tend to be more in tune with local news, especially broadcast. Local television is the main source of information that these citizens get their news from (2015). While the study may show a strong indication that local television is the preferred medium of news content for lesser-educated and more diverse populations, the potential for other forms of broadcast to reach out are certainly there.

To deny the fact that a population's demographic and psychographic make up shape the news content is impractical. The key appears to be recognizing the content and making a concerted effort to include stories that cover the broadest range present in the community. Public radio reporting has to stay relevant to its local communities, but pains must be taken to insure that certain groups aren't being excluded from the news content.

Research question 5: What are the methods that public radio stations can train citizen journalists in accurate and ethical reporting?

Besides the traditional and expensive route of attending a journalism school, there are ways that citizens can get the proper training in how to become reporters. Waddell points to the fact that her station has several volunteers that have learned the reporting process from the ground up, by apprenticing with seasoned news veterans. She noted that larger stations that have had some citizen-produced stories almost always train those citizens before in the art of reporting. The training takes time away from staff members and costs a considerable amount of money, which usually comes from grants. For mid-size public radio stations, the possibility of training citizen journalists becomes unattainable.

Some existing authorities in public radio reporting cut their teeth in radio reporting by getting training the old fashioned way by apprenticing and volunteering. On *Transom.org*, radio reporter Jay Allison describes himself as one of these neophytes that started off as a "citizen, suddenly armed with the tools of production" (2001).

Overall, it appears that training really only comes to those that seek it out. It either costs money to attend a formal journalism school or time in the form of volunteering at a local station. Learning the delicate ropes of audio reporting, like any other trade, is something that takes effort and certainly doesn't happen overnight.

Research question 6: How will the general public benefit from reporting its own local issues in a short and succinct manner?

The experts agree that the public reporting their own ideas is not a good idea. Without the aforementioned training, citizen journalists can fall into the traps of biased, inaccurate, and illegal reporting far too easily. White felt that reaching out to the public for story ideas was the best way to benefit the public through its interaction with the media. Waddell reiterated the same concept. When the public generates story ideas, and turns over the reporting process to professionals, they are benefitting their community by doing so.

The potential civic-minded citizen journalist Borgeson also felt that being directly involved in the news making process would detract from the quality of journalism. He felt that reporting was better left to the professionals. Borgeson strongly suggested that he benefits from local public radio reporting because he feels he has a one-way relationship with the people that produce the news. He sees himself as an interested and well-informed consumer of information.

Academic research suggests a startlingly different conclusion. In *Examining the Effects of Public Journalism on Civil Society from 1994-2002: Organizational Factors, Project Features, Story Frames and Citizen Engagement*, the authors argue that public generated reportage benefits the greater population by giving them a sense of unity and purpose. Societal issues are incredibly complex and the authors of the article feel that the more involvement from the public directly, the greater the depth of the reporting. This study did not reference short broadcast pieces or radio reporting specifically (Nichols, Friedland, Rojas, Cho & Shah, 2006, p. 78).

On this subject, the opinions of working professionals interviewed in this study and the existing literature differ sharply. The impracticality of public journalism in a working newsroom doesn't justify the potential virtues spoken about in an academic context.

Research question 7: How can public radio stations benefit from the increase in public generated content?

Public radio stations can only benefit from the involvement of well-trained journalists. The experts interviewed agree that the training doesn't necessarily have to be in the form of a college degree. Waddell mentioned that her station conducts workshops that people can attend to further their knowledge of radio reporting. The workshops are most commonly attended by a small pool of staff reporters and enthusiastic volunteers.

Professor Loving states very bluntly that public generated content, left unchecked and unedited, can be the death of a small radio station. One suit for libel or slander against the station could cost them their entire business.

The existing literature is essentially devoid on this subject. There simply aren't enough examples of public generated content to quantify the benefit to public radio. In depth reporting is

always in need, but the skills required to produce these reports for public radio are not widely known by the general public.

Recommendations for Practice

At the conclusion of this study, a significant amount of information has been documented regarding the possibility of using citizen journalists in the realm of public radio. It is important to analyze and extract the key findings from this research in order to give professionals and academics alike an idea of key areas to focus upon in further studies. There are a couple unifying themes that kept reappearing throughout all of the responses to the interview questionnaire and research questions. The need to train citizen journalists is great. Finally, no matter what the capacity, the public's active involvement in the reporting process is necessary and needs to be facilitated.

Training is Paramount

The most commonly cited issue with citizen journalism amongst the experts interviewed was the fact that potential journalists, no matter where they come from, need training. The ability to report on an issue fairly, accurately, and legally relies upon training.

White states that when he runs a story on air, he is putting the station's name on the line when it comes to the authenticity of the story. White is not only risking the credibility of the station, but also his job.

Waddell points out that volunteering is always available and is the best way for non-formally trained journalists to achieve the skills they need to report in the field and on the air.

Current free training for citizen journalists is not widely available in the United States. Potential citizen reporters must seek out stations that are willing to accept volunteers and sacrifice their own time to do so. The risk of letting an untrained citizen report the news is far too great for a station to undertake. There is possibility for citizens to become directly involved in the opinion section of public radio, but not news without some experience under their belt and guidance from a director.

Public Involvement is Necessary

Public involvement in the media, and public radio specifically is absolutely necessary to serve the news to communities in a socially responsible manner. As stated above, citizen's direct involvement in the news process is detrimental to organizations without proper training. However, public radio depends upon public involvement for story ideas and sources. The interaction and transparency with the local community is crucial to developing the more informed public that NPR states in its mission statement ("The NPR Mission," 2015).

White states that whenever he is at a public event, he asks people to let him know about potential stories. White states the general public is, "a great source of information for us...all of those people out in the community" (APPENDIX C). White stresses to not overlook the fact that reporters live in the community as well and are often actively aware of the issues going on around them. He feels that public involvement is absolutely critical, because "they are what the news is about." (APPENDIX C).

He also stresses that by public interaction, they will get a glimpse of how the news is compiled and have a greater respect for the media. They will also see the value in the process.

Study Conclusion

In conclusion, given the scope of this research, further qualitative research should be done on better ways to integrate the knowledge of the general public with the reporting process in public radio. Specifically, citizens need to be able to reach out to public broadcasters in an easily accessible way in order to generate story ideas. Citizens prove a valuable resource for information in the crafting of a story, but also need to be more involved in the inception of original stories. News organizations need to create new ways to harness the knowledge of the public and train potential journalists without compromising accurate reporting.

This study examined the opinions of working professionals at a mid-sized public radio station. It also explored existing research about the usefulness of citizen journalism in respect to promoting a democratic society. It serves as a manual to explore the possibility of more citizen involvement and promote better ways to create transparency between local residents and the public radio system. There is a delicate balance between open public involvement in reporting and maintaining high standards of journalistic integrity.

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Appendix A

Interview Transcripts: Professor Bill Loving

The following interview was conducted to gain perspective from an expert in media law and ethics.

Interviewer: Spencer Marley

Respondent: Professor of Journalism at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

(Professor Bill Loving)

Date of Interview: 7/22/2015

Interview Transcription:

Spencer Marley: "Some of these questions are ... all of my interview questions are asked of different people in different occupations. So, some of them are like catered to your area of expertise and other ones might be slightly awkward, so (snickers) bear with me. Um, how do you feel that public radio reporting is different from other forms of broadcasting is?"

Bill Loving: "In a lot of ways, it's the same because if you're doing a 5-minute evening newscast, you still have the same constraints. You want your stories to be no longer than 30 seconds. Ah, on the other hand, if you're gonna be doing a long form recording as we have with all things considered for morning edition, then you're gonna have enough time to cover a story ... still going?"

SM: "Uh-huh. "

Bill Loving: "Cover a story more completely. Ah, provide additional information, ah, the subtle new onesies that help people understand what's going on."

SM: "Um, how do you think that affects the content? How does that make the content different because of the format?"

Bill Loving: "The longer story is you have more content, you have more context, it's less about ah, 3 second sound bite and more about what the story is, is going to be about. That's important. Ah, you cannot ah, simply tell people what's going on ah, and [uplip 00:02:11]. You have to have time. You have to have the words. You have to have the sources."

SM: "So, what I was gonna ask is one thing I've noticed is that it does seem awesome public radio that the, their content for local stations is still like really time constrained and short. You know, like there might be a top [inaudible 00:03:29] newscast and there's only 4 stories that are a

minute, 2 minutes a piece where there's you know, 1 sound bite. Do you think that the content of public radios is kinda shifting in the wrong direction that way and what you noticed or-

Bill Loving: "Ah, you have to understand it. When I started out as a student, ah, radio news was a strong and viable concern. Ah, there were any number of stations and networks that were providing news on the radio. Ah, that kinda went away especially with the consolidation of radio station ownership. Nobody did more anymore. In fact, not only did you not do local news, you also didn't have vocal talent so that more stations were either carrying a fee from a central location or were robots."

SM: "Ok."

Bill Loving: "Ah, so people didn't have a place to learn their trade. Ah, eh, I'm not saying that the coverage was great, everybody did wonderful jobs; but there was more information out there. You could see the stor-, hear the story from several different sources in trying to feel what was going on. Now, local NPR or local public radio stations are trying to put some more from his back, but they don't have the tradition, they don't have the veterans. And they're following the only model they have that's ongoing which is either to do the, the lengthy pieces that the National Public Radio or American Public Radio ah, are doing or emulating local TV stations in which you know, a story that's a minute has to be a blockbuster and a lot of them are a lot shorter. So, eh, ah, it's nice that there are some more voices, but the content ah, really should be more in depth."

SM: "Ok. Yeah, it sets a good transition into my second question which is why is public radio reporting relevant to local, small local communities?"

Bill Loving: "If you look at the networks, they'll do a story about Somali families living in Minneapolis in Saint Paul. And here, I say there, there are no Somali families living in my community. But there are people who have come to the community. Ah, some are refugees, others are immigrants. And by talking about the difficulties and the successes of Somalis in Minnesota, you learn more about your own place ah, because you're seeing it through different eyes. Now, if you're talking about the you know, having a, a 5-minute newscast at noon and in the morning during dry time in the afternoon during dry time, well, you got a microphone out there and with any luck, they're down at the city hall, they're down at the board of supervisors, they're seeing what's going on in the community. There are more opportunities for coverage because as budgets have shrunk ah, legacy news media are doing a lot less because they have a lot, fewer people."

SM: "Right".

Bill Loving: "If you add a couple of reporters, that can only help."

SM: "Yeah. How do you think the demographic and psychographic makeup of the community ah, you know, affects the content?"

Bill Loving: "You're going to play to your strength. If you look at the donors to public radio, they will generally fall into category of more educated, higher income ah, and so, that's a lot of what the content is gonna be tailored to. Things that will get their interest because you want to be ah, seen as a, as a, as an asset to the community by the people who write checks. And by the same token, ah, you're also gonna be covering stories that appeal to a broader audience ah, simply because people who go into news ah, have that idea that they're covering ah, a new skate park that might keep kids away from games or talking about the difficulty of being a single mother ah, trying to raise her kids, have an income so that you could provide good things. Ah, those are the obligatory stories. Now, I'm well off, but I should do a story about people who are not as well off so people could understand what's going on especially if the government is trying to cut benefits or put other restrictions on those folks who haven't done as well. Ah, if ah, state legislatures is going to look at requiring everybody getting public assistance to have to take a drug test, then that's a story that's important ah, from the point of view of politics, from the point of view of the people being affected. And having the opportunity to ask the question, are you also going to drug test ah, these major corporations who get tax breaks, ah, who get special treatment, or are you only going after the people who may be getting \$125 a week."

SM: "Right. Um, ahem, that sounds like what you're saying that you know, there's a, as kind of a strong tradition of like watchdog journalism from, from those local reporters that's something that you're like you're saying it needs to be up-, taken seriously in that helm."

Bill Loving: "Yes, exactly."

SM: "Ok. Um, so, ahem, jumping to the other side, how do you think that if like a civically-minded person in the local community can get their stories heard or should they?"

Bill Loving: "Well, you can blog, you can tweet, you can speak for yourself ah, you can write letters to the editors, you can send emails. I get emails all the time from people talking about issues. You know, we're working on this, we love to have you cover it, or have you heard about this thing going on, we think that it should be investigated. So people have the opportunity to approach established ah, news entities as if, whether those news entities have the resource to be able to check everything out. And a lot of cases, they don't, we don't."

SM: "I'm gathering that you think that's a more appropriate relationship between the public and the media to have to interact with these organizations as opposed to having a direct line to having their ideas published."

Bill Loving: "The problem with that is every time I'm looking at a story with the idea of putting it up online or sending it to the [inaudible]; I know the reporter, I know the process the reporter has engaged in. I'm relatively confident as to the accuracy and completeness of the story. Some person who comes in off the street or better yet, some person who emails and then sends a file with audio and video and their views; I have no idea as to providence. I don't know what inspired the story. I don't know about the process of reporting the story, who was included, who was left out. Ah, if it's a story where there are interviews, I don't know what has been edited out of the interview, what comes in."

So, the difficulty with that is if we get citizen journalism. We want it, we would want it spending as much time recording the recording as if we would do the story ourselves. Ah, citizen journalist don't know about the process of interviewing, don't know about the process of ah, of ah, being sure to include all communities, don't know media law, and don't have media ethics. And they may be well intentioned, but you know what they say about good intentions."

SM: "Right."

Bill Loving: "They, they-"

SM: "Go by-"

Bill Loving: "Came to the road to help."

SM: "Yeah. Um, I think it was interesting that like when you mentioned that you're gonna spend more time reporting on the reporting, it almost seems like fun even from a business perspective like from a newsroom that's already impacted for time and budget that it's ... might almost do them more harm to have to take that much extra out of their day to sort of you know, fat check and and report on things that people are you know, reporting from their perspective or what their intentions in mind. Like it might even be worse for a station to have to do that-"

Bill Loving: "Yes."

SM: "Spend the time doing that."

Bill Loving: "When I think about it in other context, you wanna a hamburger joint. Somebody says, 'I want to bring in the hamburgers I've made so that you can sell them.'"

SM: "(Snickers) right."

Bill Loving: "You don't know the content you know, what goes into the hamburgers, how they were handled. Ah, you were selling furnitures also, so I've built some furniture, I want to sell it through your store. You don't know how it got to be where it is. You know, how was it made? Is it gonna do a good job? Is it, does it ah, include hazardous materials? Ah, if you're ah, if you work for the longshoreman, somebody says, 'Hey, I wanna you know, move some containers for you.' You're not gonna be excited about that because you don't know about the relative skills of the person and how they're going to affect your business, and it is your business."

SM: "Right. Well, um, what are the legal implications for the news organization that does choose to use citizen journalists?"

Bill Loving: "Well, you run it, you buy it. And if there's something wrong with it, you get sued for it. And then, when you try to defend yourself, well, consider this, you're in a court room and the attorney for the plaintiff is asking you, 'And where did you get the story that defamed my client?' 'Oh, somebody sent it in.' 'And how much investigation did you do with the story?' 'Well, we just ran it.' And then, you look pretty silly in front of the jury because you were irresponsible."

And that you wouldn't give the keys to your car to somebody you didn't know. Why give the keys to the news operation, to someone like that?"

SM: "Do you think there's any sort of like possibility where there can be training for like nontraditional journalists so that they could achieve some level of competency to produce short stories?"

Bill Loving: "It's possible (coughs). We do that here. It takes 4 years."

SM: "Right."

Bill Loving: "Um, I mean look at citizen journalism as it is now, send us some video, send us a photo. Ah, it's reality. There's no interpretation. There's no investigation. But, they're not having people report the stories from the field. They're only taking the content that is easily verifiable. Ah, if you wanted to have that, you have to put people through a, a course of training. Ah, and that's resources, that's resource intensive, time intensive. Ah, whether or not you would want to then bet-, make that investment, I don't know. Ah, I wouldn't necessarily be inclined to do so because I want people who are dedicated to telling the truth about everything, not a pet issue."

SM: "Right"

Bill Loving: "Ah, I want people who are going to be willing to spend the time getting the story and putting it together correctly. And the citizen journalist may or may not have either the resources, or the inclination, or the mindset to be a good journalist."

SM: "I guess the only situation I can think of I'll hand is there's some pretty like powerful reporting where like let's say for example, a news organization will work with like underprivileged kids and now, you know, give them a smartphone and say, "Oh you know, record your daily life," and then they'd sort of do a quick edit on that. Like I know they did that in Oak-, Oakland. There is like a radio project up there. And what about something like that where there was you know, a little bit of oversight I guess. And people were allowed to go out and record with their smartphones or with a video camera on their own, but under some sort of like guidance for a project-"

Bill Loving: "Yes"

SM: "More or less."

Bill Loving: "Yeah. That would be a feature project. That's not hard news. That's not telling people that the mayor is corrupt, or that the manufacturer of this product is selling defective thing. Um, ahem, that's a sort of personality thing. It doesn't have a whole lot of weight. People are simply recording their experiences and that can be fine because we won't get that same perspective. But news is more than that. Ah, I mean we could simply have you know, send in your stories about you and your dog, and that probably would work out. But in terms of the

pressing issues of the day, things that affect the public generally, ah, that's a whole different story. [Inaudible 00:17:56], he's got something to say. Well, people-

SM: "As um, I'm done with the questions. I'm just kinda interested ... I mean, basically, the, the distinction between the hard using features that it seems to me like this is getting more feature based. I mean, obviously you know, you're gonna have AP and some you know, hard-hitting organizations that are costly doing breaking news and they're obviously staffed by you know, the veterans, the well-trained people that you're talking about.

But, for local stuff, it seems like that a lot of the local content is the dog shows and the you know. And um, so I guess, what I'm trying to get a sense of is you're saying that if it's feature based, newsrooms are you know, it's more of a possibility for them to use citizens if they have more feature-based content as opposed to breaking news or-

Bill Loving: "Right. Realizing of course that there are news features that can tackle pretty serious subjects. I know a news feature on a, a young man who has gone to court to emancipate himself from his parents because they're abusive, a news feature on a young woman who is raising her kid while she goes through high school ah, and how she wound up in that situation of more serious news features. Ah, we have to work on a, on a case-by-case basis, which means you have to allocate at, with at least 1 staff member to go through the process. And what you get may not be ah, cost-benefit analysis may not be worth it. People can get their stories to local organizations 'cause we have that happen all the time-

SM: "Yes."

Bill Loving: "Help those citizens. They'll say, "Look at this." And they may be willing to be interviewed or they may know someone who has information that would be helpful to a reporter. But, you know, having them or giving them you know, the keys to the office, I don't think so ah, because all it takes is learn the libel suit, [inaudible 00:20:16] the privacy suit and you're out of business."

SM: "Yeah. That's a pretty tough risk to take for a few citizen-generated stories I think."

Bill Loving: "Yes. And the, and the reason that local news has a lot of dog shows or you know, were playing with a fire hydrant ah, is because they don't wanna spend the money to hire the people who know how to cover the stories, they're not willing to spend the money and the time to investigate those stories.

So, the, the, at the, the staple of local news are fires, car accidents, and crime because they're easy to cover. I mean if you look at local news, you're gonna see a lot of stories about oh, the fire department is responding to fire at a house at 3:00 in the morning, and you get dramatic video of the flames and the fire fighters spraying water. Ah, and then, they'll simply report that no one was hurt and now, they're doing cleanup. And you never get the reason why the fire took place to begin with."

SM: "Right."

Bill Loving: "The reason we have a lot of fires especially of abandoned houses or even the homes is because people get underwater, they have insurance if they torch the place. The insurance pays off the mortgage. They don't have a place to live, but they wouldn't have a place to live because the bank would repossess it so why not?"

SM: "And then, be [crosstalk 00:21:45], so why not torch it?"

Bill Loving: Right. And accidents, oh, here's you know, terrible accident here, terrible accident there, and that's it. Nothing as to why it happens. No one else as to how many accidents occurred on a particular place. Those things that contribute to the accidents ah, and crime. You know, it's, if it bleeds, it leads. But nothing about the cause of the crime, things being done to reduce crime by attacking the problems before they begin. No, it's the "We can do this quick and dirty and cheaply," and that's the driving news factor.

SM: "Well, let's say that you know, you live on your block or in your neighborhood you know, 2 houses from [inaudible 00:22:32] like that. And you know why they broke it down, you might know the pe-, you know, know the people or know the situation, and, and you know, you are sitting there and you know, this isn't right, someone needs to know about this. So you call out you know, the city editor at the paper and say, "Hey, I'm you know, resident and here's what I think is going on." A lot of times, they're gonna say, "Ok, well, we'll look into it," click, and they don't have the resources to do that you know. Or if you can't produce any kinda proof or documents or sources, they're just gonna pass. But it seems like that might be ah, something that will be valuable for the news to know about. Um, is, do you think there's any way to facilitate that process? I mean for ... you're saying that the public should interact with media-"

SM: "I get what you're saying about the, the public has lots of opportunities to interact with the media."

SM: "Right."

SM: "Cause there's a cycle of rejection people are gonna abandon."

Bill Loving: "Yes. But the important thing to know is that because of the Internet, everybody is a publisher. So you can do that, you can have a blog, you can have a website, you can be telling the story of your community. The City of Bell. A blogger covered the corruption in the City of Bell for 18 months before they, a Los Angeles Times picked up on the story."

SM: "Oh, the ah, city council member that was embezzling all kinds of money."

Bill Loving: "It's not embezzlement. They were getting themselves like \$600,000 a year salaries-"

SM "Oh."

Bill Loving: "And bonuses ah, and, and \$800,000 a year salaries. That blogger was covering that. And then, the LA Times kinda tweaked to what was going on, started its coverage,

nationally known. But a c-, you know, a citizen blogger did it and people can do it on their own. And it may be that that gets the attention of a, an established news entity which would then look at the story. But, I have to tell you, I have had to deal with people calling up. Oh, ah, back in, in the previous century, some woman called up and she said, "I think they are harvesting interferon at the local hospital. I know because I have a scanner and I'm listening to the cab companies and I heard one of them say, 'I'm going to the hospital to make the pickup,' and must be for interferon that they get from births." And I said, "Thank you very much, ma'am." And there was no story there."

SM: "Why?"

Bill Loving: "You know, not some local hospital in North Central Texas."

SM: "Right."

Bill Loving: "But people get the damnedest ideas."

SM: "Yeah. And maybe they shouldn't have the ability to instantly publish those ideas on a major platform."

Bill Loving: "Right. They can publish, but on their own platform."

SM: "Um, yeah, I tend to agree. But, seems like the climate is pushing off on towards citizen journalism."

Bill Loving: "No, the climate is pushing toward cut the cost to the bone. And if that means citizen journalism, then that's fine. In the old days it used to be oh, someone sent a picture of a, a great sunset from their cabin and you throw that up during the weather segment-"

SM: "Right."

Bill Loving: "To get people to watch."

SM: "Yeah."

Bill Loving: "But that's not journalism"

SM: "A shell of its former self."

Bill Loving: "Yeah."

SM: "Well, that's, that's it. That's all I, that's all I have."

Bill Loving: "Ok. If you think of anything, email me or call me."

Appendix B

Interview Transcripts: Marisa Waddell

The following interview was conducted to gain perspective from a programming director at a public radio station and was based upon a questionnaire about the mission of public radio reporting and the emergence of citizen journalism.

Interviewer: Spencer Marley

Respondent: Director of Programming and New Media, KCBX

(Marisa Waddell)

Date of Interview: 7/22/2015

Interview Transcription:

Marisa Waddell: [laughs] I'll try that. Okay. [slamming sound]

Spencer Marley: All right. So, I have defined interview questions that are, that fit the format of the project ...

MW: Mm-hmm (affirmative) ...

SM: ... but I probably would like to steer away from that. Some of these questions are aimed at, you know, different, different people. So I'll have to, you know, ask all of them, but I'll kinda try to tailor them to your specialty as director of programming ...

MW: Okay.

SM: ... in [inaudible 00:00:36] media. But basically, like, you know, I was saying before, uh, my project just kind of examines the possibility of, of using, like, civically minded people in the community to record short news pieces ...

MW: Mm-hmm (affirmative) ...

SM: ... on their iPhones ...

MW: Mm-hmm (affirmative) ...

SM: ... and somehow submit that to a station like KCBX, and have maybe an editor look it over, fact check it, and then integrate that with the content.

MW: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SM: And just exploring whether that's even a good idea, all the ethical implications of that. So ...

Marisa: Mm-hmm (affirmative) ...

SM: ... that's kind of the background, I guess ...

Marisa: Yeah.

SM: ... in a nutshell. So, what I'd like to ask you first is: What differentiates public radio reporting specifically from other kinds of broadcast news?

Marisa: Oh. Well, public radio, if you want to just talk about radio ...

Speaker 3: [inaudible 00:01:34]

Marisa: Yeah.

Speaker 3: Did you already try it?

Marisa: Yeah, it didn't work, 'cause I can hear you. [laughter]

Speaker 3: Hmm, hmm, hmm. Well, let me look in the manual then, 'cause ...

Marisa: Well ...

Speaker 3: I mean, it seems like the obvious thing.

Marisa: Yeah. That's okay, don't worry about it.

Speaker 3: Okay.

Marisa: I'm, I'm in the middle of an interview with Spencer.

Speaker 3: Oh, okay. Well, um, I will try to keep any call ... oh, you have a direct line.

Marisa: Well, nobody calls my direct line, so, except for Patty.

Speaker 3: Okay, well then, I will, I will, I will hold your call.

Marisa: Okay, thanks. I appreciate it.

Speaker 3: Okay. Bye. [click]

Marisa: Okay. [laughter]

SM: If you don't want to hold calls, that's fine. It's ...

Marisa: Okay.

SM: Yeah.

Marisa: That's, that's, uh, I don't mind. Um, because then that just totally breaks my train of thought. [laughing]

SM: [laughing] Okay.

Marisa: So, so, just talking radio, with the difference between public radio and commercial radio news?

SM: Um.

Marisa: Or ...

SM: Sure. We can ...

Marisa: I mean, I mean, then we can expand it to, you know ...

SM: Broadcast ...

Marisa: ... television, you know, other kinds of broadcast, or Internet. Um, but if you just want to compare, um, if you just compare commercial radio news with public radio news, the difference is depth and length. If you listen to commercial radio news, the stories are thirty seconds maximum. So it's more, kind of, it's more like headline news.

SM: Right.

Marisa: You won't find in depth features on commercial radio. Um, but um, public radio, you get, you know, a two hour news magazine with stories that are as long as eight minutes, or nine minutes. And, um, so that's one big difference.

SM: And you think that difference ... I guess, after you mentioned that, I was thinking ... I guess the question is really just differentiating between, in a community like San Luis Obispo, where you have, you know, maybe five or six broadcast outlets, where does public radio reporting fit into that? And I guess it would be the same thing, where you just have more in depth reporting ...

Marisa: Right.

SM: ... as far as the local stuff. Where do you think it fits in in that?

Marisa: Um, it's similar. The local commercial radio stations have very limited coverage of local issues. Their news primarily comes from the network. Um, but they do have news headlines, um, and they do some local news, but it's very short, it's not in depth. At a station like KCBX, we're very lucky now that we do have a news department. The stories that we do can be as long as four minutes. You would never hear a four minute story on, um, a commercial station.

SM: Right.

Marisa: And then we have our feature show, Issues and Ideas, where it, there's a full hour, and we can have interviews that are up to a half hour long.

SM: So can you think of a good example of when the reporting went in depth here at KCBX?

Marisa: Yeah, well, another thing we can do, is we can do series. And that would be a better question for ...

SM: Uh-huh ...

Marisa: ... since he's the one who is covering the stories.

SM: Okay.

Marisa: Um, but, we did, we did do a series on the drought, with a very talented journalist from Cambria named Jason Lopez. And he traveled around the central coast, looking at how the drought is effecting communities in different ways, and how it's effecting different parts of our community in different ways. From agriculture to citizens living in their own homes. So that's an example, where he did several stories on one topic, and we ran them in a row ...

SM: Over ti- over time?

Marisa: Mm-hmm (affirmative) ...

SM: Okay. Um, why do you think that public radio is relevant to local communities?

Marisa: I think the main thing is that our mission is to serve our community, and to be connected with our community, and to help our community be aware of what's happening in, uh, government, and in environmental issues, and in, uh, all ... all the issues that concern us as citizens. It's really, [clears throat] excuse me, helped, helped people understand the context of their world on the central coast.

SM: Right. How do you think that demographic and psychographic makeup of a city determines the content of the news in public radio?

Marisa: Well, that's a good question. It's a hard one, too [laughs]. Yeah, it's a really good question, because we have so many cities on the central coast ...

SM: Right ...

Marisa: ... um, each city has its own personality, um, and its own concerns. But then there are common concerns throughout the central coast, the, you know, from, that effect all cities. So, as a public radio station, that does make it a little bit more difficult for us to serve, because we serve such a huge area, from Salinas all the way down to almost to Ventura.

SM: Right.

Marisa: We have so many different cities that have their own, um, concerns and issues. Um, but what our news department does, is it tries to find the common links between what's happening in [Salinas?, [Tassajara?], or Santa Barbara. Or, find something that's happening in a city that the citizens all around the central coast can relate to.

SM: Like the drought.

Marisa: Right.

SM: Yeah.

Marisa: The drought is a perfect example. Um, or even, for instance, in Santa Barbara. When that man killed so many people, ah, just outside the Santa Barbara UCSB campus.

SM: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Marisa: Um, that happened in Santa Barbara, but that's something that could happen anywhere. Um, the same thing with, um, if we, if we cover an issue that's being addressed by, um, the ... say, the Pismo Beach City Council. So many times, the things that they're addressing at the city council are, are similar to things that other, hap- other cities are facing. Whether it's, I mean, a big one is development. What are we gonna do with the land ...

SM: [clears throat]

Marisa: ... that's in the city?

SM: Right.

Marisa: Um, and that, that goes for larger governmental, I mean, bodies that cover, uh, governmental bodies that cover a larger area, like County Boards of Supervisors.

You know, one of, probably, the major thing that they make decisions on is land use. And, um, and so, there are commonalities between cities. So, that's really kind of a roundabout way of answering the question, is that, how does a personality of a ... Can you restate that question, was it, how does a personality of a city ...

SM: Yeah. Well, basi-...

Marisa: ... influence the news?

SM: The demographics, you know, and also, like, the psychographics, or, you know, the climate of the people. How does that effect the content of the reporting ...

Marisa: Yeah ...

SM: ... in public radio.

SM: Um ...

SM: Which I think you answered.

Marisa: Yeah ...

SM: I mean, to the T, pretty much.

Marisa: Yeah. I think the demographics and the psychographics, there are some cities that are more conservative or more liberal than other cities. Um, there are some cities that have a higher, uh, or some parts of each county that we serve, that have a higher number of, say, Latino residents. Um, where we would cover, you know, more issues that effect the Latino population, say. Um, the central coast is, in some areas, like Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, very white, upper middle class ... [chuckles]

SM: Yeah. [chuckles]

Marisa: Environment, um, and so that means that we're likely covering things that are of concern to that white, upper middle class audience. Which is the audience of KCBX [chuckles] ...

SM: Yeah ...

Marisa: ... you know. We, w-whether we want to be or not, we're a station that is listened to by white upper middle class people. [chuckles] That's just the nature of where we live. Um, but we have people in our area that we want to serve and that we do serve, who don't fit that mold, either. They're a different demographic.

SM: So how can people that are, let's say, civically minded, you know, or kind of, well informed about the community, how can they, sort of, get their stories heard?

Marisa: That's a very good question. Um, one way that, um, I mean, a lot of these questions are perfect for Randol, since, since he's the one who's picking the stories that we put on or air. Um, but one big way that we become aware of stories is through a press release, or through an email, or through a phone call. So [inaudible 00:11:41] saying, "Hey. Did you know this was happening?" Because we can't be everywhere. And so we count on citizens of the central coast who bring things to our attention. So, that's probably the biggest way that people can get stories on the air, or encourage us to get something on the air, is just to let us know that it's happening.

SM: Just m- interact ...

Marisa: Right ...

SM: ... with the media.

Marisa: Right.

SM: Um, do you think that it would benefit the public to have more transparent interaction with the media? And do you think there are any better ways that public radio specifically can kind of achieve that transparency with people?

Marisa: Mm-hmm (affirmative). We, we could put it out there more, that we're looking for, um, story ideas, we're looking for issues that are of concern to citizens in the community. Um, one thing that Randol has started to do is, um, invite people to call in and, uh, leave a message. [chuckles] We have a new phone system that's connected to our computers, and if they leave a message, it ends up as a sound file in his email, and then he can use that to edit and put it into a story. Um, so that's one way to do that is to, to utilize our technology, to make it easier for people to access us.

SM: So, as the director of programming ... and I'm just thinking based on what we're talking about ... would you be more apt to include programming where the public interacts with the newsroom? The newsroom generates the content. You can use that, as opposed to, not necessarily eliminating the newsroom, but, the public generates the content, the newsroom does a quick fact check, then you decide where it goes [inaudible 00:13:42].

Marisa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SM: You know.

Marisa: Um ... there are radio stations, public radio stations that have, um, projects where they do, um, encourage people in the community to produce stories and submit them. But they provide training to the people who are in the community, so they know how to get good audio, know how to ask good questions, um, know how to pick an angle to a story. Because you, you, you have to, you have to pick one aspect of a story and focus on that. Otherwise, you know, it ends up being too broad, you know, as a journalist. [chuckles]

SM: Yeah.

Marisa: You have to pick an angle. [chuckles]

SM: Right.

SM: And, and so, I would likely ... and the thing is, when you have a project like that, it takes money, because it takes time.

SM: So is it ...

Marisa: You need ...

SM: So is it even feasible for ...

Marisa: You need a training session. So, you need funding, you need a grant, and most of the radio stations that have a project like this? They've applied for a grant and they've got funding so that they can teach people how to be community broadcasters. Um, so it is feasible, but it takes money. And it takes taking the time to write a grant and get that funding. And it takes the time of the staff. S-s-so, that's not a reason not to do it. [chuckles]

SM: But if your staff is, you know, not necessarily impacted for time, but if, you know, the days are hectic, and there's a lot of work to do ...

Marisa: Yeah, we have a very small staff.

SM: Yeah. I mean, it almost kind of paints a picture where, like, the want is there ...

Marisa: Mm-hmm (affirmative) ...

SM: The interest is there, but it just isn't really feasible ...

Marisa: Yeah.

SM: Because you have to provide some kind of training.

Marisa: Yeah.

SM: They ... they ... people might not have to go to college and get a journalism degree, but they have to know, like you said, the technical aspects, and then the ethical aspects. And that kind of ...

Marisa: Mm-hmm (affirmative) ...

SM: ... parlays into my next question. Was, like, what are the ethical considerations that you would have to consider, using citizens in journalism?

Marisa: Mm. That, actually, would be a good question for Frank [chuckles], because I'm, I'm sure there are liability issues if you have people out representing the station. If that's, in fact, what they're doing, they're representing the station. Um, the, is, that, that's not an ethical, necessarily an ethical issue, but it's more of a ...

SM: More of a legal ...

Marisa: ... more of a legal issue. Um, if somebody is recording a person and doesn't inform them that they're being recorded. I was just thinking yesterday about, uh, a cool story we could do on ... [chuckles] I know a guy who, who drives a van to pick up college aged kids from parties and make sure they get to their next place safely, without, um, because they've been drinking.

SM: Right.

Marisa: And, he's funny, and he's [chuckles], um, he's entertaining, and the, um, students who write on his van love him. He's got lots of really good stories. And I was thinking it would be kind of neat to do kind of a ride along with him. Um, but if you do something like that, you can't just go on the van and start recording. [chuckles]

SM: Yeah. You'd have to ask every single person ...

Marisa: Right ...

SM: "Hey, I'm recording. Are you okay with that?"

Marisa: Right. So, if we have people out in the field who are just deciding, "I'm gonna do a story!", and they start recording, but they don't have permission of the people to put their audio on the air, then that could be a problem for us. So that's one issue that we might face. It's not an ethical issue, um.

An ethical issue, I mean, that we could get into, uh, who are these people who want to make these stories? And are they making anything up? Are they stretching the facts? Are they, um, asking, um, leading questions? Uh, have they decided what the story is before the story unfolds? That's actually common among journalists ...

SM: Mm-hmm (affirmative) ...

Marisa: Who, who have training. Is that they decide that, "Oh, here's a story", and then they kind of push the story that direction. And that's something that a journalist learns the more experienced he gets, is that you, you can't decide what the story is. [chuckles]

SM: Yeah.

Marisa: You might think there's a story, and you go out, and you discover: "Oh, wait a minute. This is a totally different story." And you let the story unfold in front of you, rather than pushing it. So those are some, some ethical considerations. There are lots more, but those are a few.

SM: And it seems like, based on what you were saying earlier, like, those are issues that are mitigated with training. And training requires grant money.

Marisa: Right. [chuckles]

SM: [chuckles] So, I mean, not to completely, like, simplify it, but, I mean, it, it definitely seems to me like, you know, it's something that could be done. But, like, there's a lot of pretty steep consequences from just letting people say, "Here. Play reporter.", because then you have to, to, you know, take the time to fact check all that. And, given the resources that, you know, a mid sized station would have, and without grant money, it doesn't, it almost seems unfeasible.

Marisa: Yeah. Uh, um, we have had people in the community who are already trained journalists, who have offered to volunteer for us. And that is a way that we can bring people from the community in, to provide us with really good content. Jason Lopez is a perfect example. We've paid him for some stories.

Marisa: Hopefully that won't happen. Um, so. Um, this guy Jason Lopez, he has done some stories for us. Just, gratis, because he wants to participate in his local public radio station. He has, he's done work for NPR. I mean, he's a really high level journalist. And he happens to live in Cambria, and he wants to help us. So, we, he's, he's volunteered some stories, and we've paid him for some stories.

Um, and we've had other, um, journalists volunteer here and there over the years, too. We've had people from the Tribune, years ago, who've, who've done stories for us. We've had independent writers do stories for us. And we have our program, Issues and Ideas, um, where, on a regular basis, um, Tom [Wilmer?], for instance, he's a travel writer. And he does stories on a volunteer basis for us. They're, they're just, really, just what he does are straight interviews. Um, not news stories that he writes.

SM: Hmm.

Marisa: He's just interviewing people, um, about destinations on the central coast. And, you know, that kind of thing.

SM: So it seems, like, with, if you, you know, cast the net wide enough, that w- there are trained journalists out there, who are involved enough with public radio to where you know they're, they're sort of the ones that are generating the content.

Marisa: Mm-hmm (affirmative) ...

SM: ... and then, the news doesn't suffer, and you don't have to worry about, you know, whether something's made up, or there's a ... Like, there's a certain level of competency that someone has to have, sort of, do on their own ...

Marisa: Mm-hmm (affirmative) ...

SM: ... and then, their partic-ip-participation is welcome ...

Marisa: Right ...

SM: ... more or less.

Marisa: Yeah. And that's how we do things now [chuckles]. Because we don't have a citizen journalist program of any kind, um, where we're training people. Um, that, I'd be totally open to that, if we could get the money to do it.

SM: [chuckles] Yeah. Do you ...

Marisa: [chuckles]

SM: Do you think that, um, smartphones ... and, I'm, uh, you know, gonna ask Randol this, too, uh, he's actually, uh, I'm gonna, pretty much all the same questions ... but, um, do you think that smartphones, like iPhones, are high enough quality to broadcast?

Marisa: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, yeah. We, yeah, we have iPhone contact on the news all the time. We, one thing that we do, is when, um, Randol does a telephone interview, he'll ask the person on the other end to record their end of the conversation on their iPhone, and then send him the file. Rather than recording in our production studio, um, the, sort of, bad quality phone audio, we, if we can get somebody to do this [chuckles], uh, they'll send us their audio from their iPhone. And then we edit it together, so it sounds like they're, um, both ...

SM: Right ...

Marisa: ... in the same room, almost.

SM: So, instead of dealing with, like, bad reception, or bad, you know, on the, if you're, is that, if he's talking to someone on a cell phone ...

Marisa: On a land line. If he's talking on a land line, they, they call on a land line, and ...

SM: He'll have em record on an iPhone ...

Marisa: ... or some other cell phone. [chuckles] And he'll have em record ...

SM: For ...

Marisa: on their phone.

SM: As a,as a backup.

Marisa: Um, right.

SM: And he can edit in?

Marisa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SM: Huh.

Marisa: And that makes the, the audio quality much better than a phone line. The sound of a phone line.

SM: Well, it sounds like, you know, the technology's there, the interest is there, but the, the training, the training time, and money, are the three, like, major ...

Marisa: Right, yeah ...

SM: ... hurdles.

Marisa: And time is a big one, too. Because, as you know, we have ...

SM: ... yeah ...

Marisa: Really, a one person newsroom.

SM: Right.

Marisa: I mean, Jordan is a part of the newsroom. So, it's a, it's a two person newsroom, but half of her job is being our on-air host in the afternoon. And that takes a lot of time and, and she also engineers interviews that other people are doing, live in our production studio. So ...

SM: ... right ...

Marisa: So she's got a lot of other responsibilities besides what she does for Randol. And then, we're very lucky, because we've got Cal Poly, and we've got people like you coming in to volunteer and intern with us. And so that expands our abilities. Um, but, when it comes down to it, you know, the, the guy who would be doing the training would be Randol.

SM: And he's already extremely busy.

Marisa: He's pretty busy. [laughs] And, uh, so, but, you know, he's also willing to come in on weekends sometimes, and do classes. I mean, he's done it, a couple of workshops already. And, so, we're lucky that we have somebody who, who wants to do a little bit extra. So, it's possible. It's possible to do something like this.

SM: Well, thank you for letting me interview you on this stuff. I hope that some of the questions weren't too awkward or, I don't know.

Marisa: No, they're, they're good questions.

SM: Um, it's definitely, it's almost like, um, you were saying how, when you, like when I started this project, I kinda had an idea of what people might say, and it's totally morphed into something different.

Marisa: Really?

SM: You know. Yeah. Well, I mean, it's, um, time, um, it's time and money, really.

Marisa: Yeah. It is.

SM: And I hate to break it down into such a, like, business model sense, but, you know ...

Marisa: That's what everything is. [laughs]

SM: [laughs]

Marisa: That's what it comes down to. And, you know, I mean, um, the person who's in charge of such a project wouldn't have to be Randol. I mean, it could be somebody like you, because you have training, you know?

SM: Right.

Marisa: And you have enough of an idea of, um, I mean, you're getting, you're gonna be getting better and better as a journalist, but, you know enough right now to teach the basics. And then, you know, Randol could augment, um, and, and help.

Somebody like you, or someone else, maybe somebody like Jason Lopez, who's a long time journalist ...

SM: Right ...

Marisa: Could come in, and he's just doing maybe a special project for us, but we're giving him a stipend for coming in and, and being the head of a project like this.

SM: Well, it's nice to ... I mean, it is, it's nice to know that, you know, there's still value in journalism.

Marisa: Yeah.

SM: You know, I mean, 'cause, with, with a lot of stuff that you see on the Web, and just, the brevity of things now, it, I guess, it's sometimes, you know, easy to get pessimistic. But, I think you brought up one of the most interesting points, it's, it's just that you have to have volunteers. You know, and if you're a trained journalist, there are things you can do to help paint a more broad picture of your community.

Marisa: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SM: And it might, you might not be paid for it, you know, it might take up a lot of your time. But that, you know, people like Jason Lopez and, you know, when Randol comes in and does these extra workshops, it's almost like, you sort of have, like, a, you know, obviously there's a sense that, y-, of responsibility to the community when you're a journalist when you're at work, and you're producing stories.

But it kind of, you know, goes beyond that, and there are things that journalists can do that can help facilitate the transparency ...

Marisa: Yeah ...

SM: ... between people and the newsroom.

Marisa: Yeah.

SM: And the general public.

Marisa: Yeah. Well, and here's another example. Jason [chuckles] is coming in next month to do a weekend workshop about field recording. Um, so I encourage you to come to that. [chuckles]

SM: I'm probably gonna be on the ship, unfortunately ...

Marisa: Oh, that's too bad.

SM: Yeah.

Marisa: That's too bad. Um, and, but we're going to invite all of our on-air volunteers who are interested to ...

SM: Right.

Marisa: To come to that workshop, and get some training from a guy who does it all the time. And, so that's just one example of how we are sort of doing it. Um, because we're trying to give the people who either volunteer for us or work for us better skills. So, um, and he's doing that for free. [laughs] Um, but, you know, like, if, if we got a grant, then we could pay somebody like that, to do more.

SM: Right.

Marisa: So. All right?

SM: Well, thank you.

Marisa: Sure!

SM: We'll hope for some grants. [chuckles]

Appendix C

Interview Transcripts: Randol White

The following interview was conducted to gain perspective from a news director at a public radio station and was based upon a questionnaire about the mission of public radio reporting and the possibility of including reports from citizen journalists.

Interviewer: Spencer Marley

Respondent: News Director, KCBX

(Randol White)

Date of Interview: 7/23/2015

Interview Transcription:

Randol White: What's that? They're both recorders.

Spencer Marley: Yeah.

RW: In case one goes out.

SM: Yeah. That's only where I can mitigate like ...

RW: Yeah. Do I need to clap to sync them up? [laughter 00:00:09].

Speaker 3: Come on now. [laugh 00:00:11]

SM: All right. Question number one: What differentiates public radio reporting specifically from other forms of local broadcast news?

RW: I won't start every question with, "That's a good question." But it is a good question because there are times I listen to it and I think it sounds very similar. When I listen to the top of the hour NPR news or even our newscasts, the story length is about the same. Um, the ... It's really the content that differs a lot. We are not covering every local stabbing. We're not covering a lot of crime.

What we tend ... What we try to do is look more at the reasons for the increase in crime. If there's a ... You know, if there's a lot of things happening in a community where day after day there's, uh, you know, some sort of drive by or stabbing or those sorts of things; we should really be looking at what's behind all that. Why is that happening? Why is there an increase in it? Not just come on and ... Come on the news and tell you, you know, there's been some sort of attack.

If it's a random attack, like if it's an attack that happened to someone who is not part of a gang or not part of some criminal element and just leaving a grocery store and walking home or something; then there's a general public concern especially if the person hasn't been caught.

SM: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

RW: In that case, that's a crime I would cover. If it's between two known violent groups and it happens on a regular basis in their specific communities and the people involved, the people getting hurt are participating in these activities then I don't think there's a greater concern for the people that are listening to our station because they're not participating in those groups.

As soon as, like, bullets fly and hit somebody else that's not related to this then it starts to become more of a general concern. In those ... In those ... And I don't feel like commercial radio or television covers the underlying problem enough. They're ... They're really quick to just jump on whatever happened because it's sensational and it's easy to report.

Um, that's not to say that we don't, you know, fall into that same trap sometimes, but, uh, in general we try to avoid those, those sorts of things.

SM: Can you, uh, think of like a recent example of something like that, like crime that you did cover that was more of a qualitative, I guess.

RW: I can't think of something we've covered along. I've steered ... Oh! You mean something that we've covered ...

SM: Well, like you're saying that, you know, maybe, uh, local broadcast was all over but ...

RW: That we passed it?

SM: Yeah, that you passed on.

RW: Well, they come out almost daily.

SM: No. Actually [inaudible 00:03:35]. I'm at the opposite. Something that you took on and went into further that ...

RW: I see. Yeah, let me think.

SM: Yeah, that was ...

Speaker 3: You did the man of the year one, the guy who got arrested for, you know ...

RW: We did, yeah. That ... That's one that we covered that was, um, I feel like there needs to be certain aspects that aren't just about the crime, um, to make it worthy of getting into our newscast. And, uh, there was, uh, there was a really well-known guy in Arroyo Grande who was named, uh, man of the year for the community. He sat on just numerous boards and was really a big part of the Arroyo Grande overall community. Um, and he was busted for, uh, having, uh, sex with really young girls. And the police department thought there might be more victims out there.

So I thought covering that was worthy because, a; we're getting the word out and possibly there are parents that will be listening and like, "Oh! Yeah, we brought our daughter to that party at that house." You know, those sorts of things. Um, and secondly, he's so well-known in the community that, um, it's sort of a, I believe, raised it to, uh, another level that someone with this level of respect would be committing these crimes, people didn't know about it. You know. So, uh, that's the transcended story.

But I think you are saying have we dug deeper on a crime story. Is that what you're asking? Like, have we dug to see what the underlying problem is?

SM: No. I was just wondering about [clears throat 00:05:33] an example of ...

RW: A time we covered a crime story?

SM: Right.

RW: Yeah.

SM: Because you're saying, you know, that's mainly not what we do but we'll do it if there's, you know, there's, uh, like a greater ...

RW: Yeah. So it was a perfect example then.

SM: Yeah, a greater, like, benefit to the community and that's where the public radio local broadcast differs than just like, "Oh! This happened today." or someone got attacked or ...

RW: We covered, uh ... We also covered a woman accused of stealing information from Cuesta Community College.

SM: Oh yeah, I saw that.

RW: Yeah, she worked ... She was an employee there and is accused of, uh, skimming a lot of the other employee's information. So that's a ... You know, she's arrested for a crime. But once again, uh, there's a greater concern because people are worried about their information right now and this was a really good example of

how, uh, you can be an unwitting victim. You know, you're working for an organization like Cuesta. You don't think your information is going to become available to everybody.

SM: Right.

RW: And, uh ... And so I felt that had a greater ... I thought it was information that needed to be known and also, uh, you know, what's happening to these people who had their information compromised. We wanted to get that information out there. And, um, we actually covered that one more than, more than once because she ended up not showing up for, uh, court.

SM: For the hearing.

RW: Hearing, yeah, and so then she have like this, you know, not really an APV but, uh, they were looking for. Yeah. And she ended up being found in brought back in. So I felt that that ... I felt that that was something that had enough general interest.

SM: Why, um ... Why do you think that public radio reporting is relevant to mid-sized local communities?

RW: You know, I've become such a huge believer in public radio because I've worked in both commercial and the public sector. And I know on several occasions, I did not feel comfortable with these stories that I was being assigned at the various places where I worked, commercial places where I worked. Because I felt I was on those stories specifically because the sales department at that station had sold airtime and now I'm being sent out on something that's "a story". And it might even have sort of some, some genuine journalistic story qualities to it.

But I know that I'm there not because we independently thought this was a good story but because there's a connection to the sales department. And then that taints what the final product is. What ... You know, what if I get there and it's not as rosy as we thought. You know, do I report that?

Uh, and so I was really uncomfortable and, and had several trips into the news director's office saying that I wouldn't cover certain things because I know that there's a connection. Uh, so then they would just give it to somebody else.

Whereas, we don't have that here. You know, we have, we have underwriters but they make up a really small percentage of our budget and there is a major wall at the station between our news department and the sales department. And, uh, there is not a story that I could do that I would be told, "Don't do that." because they're a big underwriter of ours. Uh, that just wouldn't happen here.

And so we're willing to lose that underwriting contract to get the information out there. Um, and I wouldn't even be told that that's a major underwriter to begin with, you know, unless I've heard it myself on air and I just happen to know that they're connected to the station. But I don't know what sort of contract we have, you know.

So, uh, our sales department is not allowed to come into the news department and I only go into the sales office because there's a closet in there where I have to get like pens and that sort of thing. Uh, that is pretty much the extent of my communication with the sales department here.

And so it is, uh ... There is a total line in the sand. And for me, that is the biggest difference of all between commercial and, um, public radio stations, is who's paying for that news to get on the air. And that will, in many cases, determine the content that shows up.

SM: How do you think the demographics and, um, well, psycho-graphics too of, of a community effects the content?

RW: Well, because we're a public radio station, I really try to reflect, uh, the stories that I choose. I try to reflect, um, who's listening and they're ... They're also the people that are putting money into the case [inaudible 00:10:52]. So whereas, uh, whereas a commercial station is considering their advertisers because that's where money is coming from. I'm considering our donors who's ... Who I believe to be everybody because there ... Because we have a really long list of people that support us.

So I'm just looking at the community and the community is paying for us and relying on us to reflect them. And so, uh, so in that case when I think about a story I think is this reflective of who's listening and who's supporting? And I know ... And will it benefit them to know this information? You know.

SM: So if, um, like community members are civically-minded people in the community have stories about the community.

RW: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SM: How can they get those heard?

RW: We have a ... We have a show called Issues and Ideas on KCBX and that really is one of our major conduits for getting that type of information out there, because not everything fits. There are different types of things that are considered stories and I can judge them pretty quickly on whether they are worthy of 30 seconds.

And when I say worthy, there might be a really important story that's told in 30 seconds. Um, it's just the depthness of ... The depth of the facts that you have.

The, um ... All the different elements that go into making up a story, the timeliness factor. Some stories aren't ... Some stories are really important but they don't ... They're not really time ... Uh, they don't have a time element.

Um, and so those types of stories tend to fall more into the issues and ideas category. Uh, we, we can, we have a longer period of time to tell them. It's usually an interview sort of situation to get the information out like you were saying. Um, how do these people get their stories out? Well, we just sit down and talk to them about it on air and then people can hear that.

Uh, other stories like if there is, um, a wildfire burning in ... Outside of Long Polk. You know, people might need to know that there are no evacuations at this time. You're seeing a lot of smoke. Firefighters are getting a handle on it. It broke out earlier today. You don't really need to know more than that. You know.

But it's important at the same time, uh, but it, you know, it only covers 30 seconds. So you can kind of look at a story and just know how much time it deserves and whether it should be in our news breaks at the top from the bottom of the hour or this is something, you know, we get requests all the time and Jordan and I will look at each other and say, uh, "That's really interesting. It's perfect for issues and ideas." You know.

SM: So, um, most of them come in the form of requests from community members. That's ... As of now, that's basically the way that, you know, if I'm the guy that owns, you know, a business and they're chopping down trees in front or whatever and I think that's worthy or think that it might be something that's relevant, whether it is or not. Um, I would submit that in the form of a re ... request directly to you.

So that's pretty much the interaction that, that you have or we have with the public is all in ... Informed if they have to reach out.

RW: No. I would say that, um, there are a great deal of stories that come to us that way. Uh, but on any given day, on any given week, for issues and ideas, um, it has to do with, uh ... There's also a great number of stories that come from the people who work here at the station, who live here and experience things and know someone who's having this problem or ... You know, because we all live in the community too.

SM: Right.

RW: So I'll things and I'll think, "You know, that's a pretty good story." and then I'll reach out.

SM: I should ... Yeah, I should have differentiated that I wasn't referring to, like, reporter generated content versus public related content. It was more of a

qualitative question. Like, how can these pep ... You know, how can someone in the public ...

RW: Yeah, they can ... They can certainly e-mail me with their thoughts and ideas. Every public event that I'm at where there's an audience that I'm sort of speaking to and I'm on a stage, I always end everything that I'm saying with, uh, I ... Whether you're a listener in the case of yes or not, I really hope that you will, uh ... If you have something that you believe needs to be covered in this community, please call me, e-mail, send me a Facebook message, whatever. Um, let us know about it. You know, because that's ... That's a great source of information for us, is all of those people out in the community that's, you know ...

SM: Yeah.

RW: They are ... They are what the news is about.

Speaker 4: Yeah.

SM: Do you want to join the conversation too?

Speaker 4: Oh, I was just checking in.

Speaker 3: Just checking. [Inaudible 00:16:07]

RW: I sent you a thing on ...

Speaker 4: Gchat. Oh! I don't have my laptop with me.

RW: Oh! [Inaudible 00:16:15]. I want to tell you about a great educational opportunity and then you can read the rest from there.

Okay.

SM: Do you think that that public can benefit from having more transparent interaction with media how to look a level?

RW: Yeah. When the public sees how media is ... How stories are put together, uh, I think they realize where the value is a lot of times. Um, if you've ever been interviewed by a television or a radio station or a newspaper and then you've looked at that article or piece and ... Or heard it, and you're like, "What?" [laughs 00:16:55] if that's ... You know, it's not exactly what I said. I ... You know, when you see, um ... When you see inaccuracies after you've been a part of it or you see that you're what you ... What your thoughts were were really represented well, then you know what sort of organizations you're dealing with.

And, um, we, we try extremely hard at KCBX to make sure that somebody's thoughts ... Sometimes, and I'm doing it right now, people will rumble on and sort of change their thought mid-sentence, but the beginning and the end of what they were saying totally relate to each other and you have to cutout that middle part.

SM: Yeah.

RW: If you're going to do that and shrink a sound byte so that it's digestible over the radio for the people listening, you have to absolutely make sure that the content of what was being said and the purpose and the intention has not been altered in any way if you remove that middle part.

Um, and so, that's, you know, extremely important. And we try to have sound bytes that are a little bit longer than what you might hear in commercial radio and television. Sometimes they're ... You know, I know we were being pushed in different stations that I worked for to have sound bytes that were 5 to 10 seconds, 10 seconds, we're starting to push the end of it, you know.

And here, uh, we tend to go anywhere between like 8 and 20. Um, and so just because typically the person you're interviewing is going to tell their thoughts better than you can, you know. Um, that's not always the case.

But, uh ... So, I like to let them go on a little bit longer just to get the flavor of what they were trying to say. Um, that, uh ... That answer your question?

SM: It did, and I guess I'm also wondering ways that you think that more transparent interaction between the public and local media or local public radio can be achieved.

RW: By telling people throughout your storytelling process things that went into collecting it, you know. So, like ... We have a piece of paper that's on the wall in here and it was a couple of, uh, of surveys that were done by the Poynter Institute asking what are the three most important things listeners, you know, um, consumers of news were asked, "What are the three most important things to you?"

And, um, in both ... So they were done like 10 years apart. Uh, in the most recent one, the top one is truth and in the one from like a decade ago, the top one was truth.

Um, the second one changes. Independence was 10 years ago. So they want you to be completely independent. Meaning, you don't have a position and you don't have, uh, a horse in the race or whatever. Um, that's not always realistic because reporters are human. News rooms are human organizations.

So there's ... There's ... I believe there's zero case where everyone's 100% independent. That just doesn't really happen in human life, you know. So the number two quality that people wanted most recently was transparency. So they don't care if you have a horse in the race. They want to know that you have a horse in the race when you're telling the story.

So, they can then digest the information differently. And so we really try to do that. If there is, um ... I'm trying to think of something that we were even working on recently, and I believe to let them know that.

SM: Oh! When we were talking about, um, the VRBO story possibly. It's like, "Oh! We should let them know that that ... This is your friend and you've stayed here before." or, you know, because ...

RW: That's really important you know, because, um, to the listener, uh, especially if the way you're presenting the facts maybe makes your friend not look so great. They're really going to be, "Wow! Um, not only is this guy a great reporter but he's really honest about what he's saying." You know.

Whereas before, I think people had this cloak of independence that didn't really exist. So in my mind, transparency is far more important, uh, to just let people know, this is where things stand. And in certain cases, if you're connection to a story is such that you can't tell it, uh, honestly, like you were doing what, what ... Like you're currently doing. Um, then you need to pull out and have somebody else do the story. And, uh, you don't really have to tell the listeners that because it doesn't really matter. That's all, like, in the background.

Um, but there does come a point where you do have to, uh, you know, you have to weigh how much you're invested in the information that is being put out there. And we have a ... We have a form online, a story pitch form that asks reporters all of these sorts of questions, you know.

If you're doing a story on ground water in the, you know, Paso Robles Basin and you're a homeowner on a well, then how do you ... How do you tell the story about, uh, you know, the way in which ... You know, especially if it's a two sides thing, you know, where you would totally benefit at one side, uh, was victorious in this, you can't do that story.

I mean, we have to put a different reporter on it that doesn't own a home in the Paso Robles Basin, you know. So, um, there's other cases where it's not as black and white. Um, like for instance with the recent, uh, gay rights stories. Yo know, they're talking about this judge in San Francisco on the prop 8 case. As it turns out, he was gay.

But ... And so they said that he wasn't, um ... He was ... So his ... Therefore, his, you know, ruling was biased. Well, it was only two sides really. So, he's either

gay or straight. So if he was straight would ... Then, would he be biased to be anti-gay, you know?

And if ... So, and that same thing with like ... Uh, we've been in ... I've been in newsrooms where there are, uh, you know, reporters of varying ethnicities. Uh, so do you put that reporter on that story or do you not put them on that story, um, because ... And, uh, I just ... I just feel like most reporters or, you know, stories that have to do with, uh, way women or men are treated and you put a male or female reporter on that.

You know, in those situations, um, unless that ... Unless the reporter is a member of a ... Um, of a group, and I don't mean a generic group. I mean, like a member of, of like a politically active group, uh, that is pushing for those specific elements that are in this story, then you would absolutely pull them.

But otherwise, you know, Hispanic, a white, a black reporter I think can ... The job is to walk into it not knowing anything and to collect the information that's there, and you can do that regardless of the color of your skin your gender or your sexual preference. And, um, that's the sign of a really good reporter.

I just heard you on the phone recently. This woman was, like, saying to you, um, "Well, what do you have ... What do you have against VRBOs or whatever?" And you're like, "I don't have anything against them. I'm just trying to find the facts." You know. And that's ... Like, that's the sign of a reporter, like, you don't ... Or even if you did have something against them, you still can go into the story. And I've seen reporters who change their mind halfway through a story. They were like, "You know, I wasn't really like big on this when I got started on this story. But as it turns out, this other side has a total point." You know.

And, um ... And that just goes to the whole human element that I was talking about before. You know, you can ... We all have opinions going into things. Those just can't be reflected in what you report.

SM: So, keeping that in mind, because like you said, you know, we all have opinions. And, um, that's kind of at the heart of citizen, you know, or the blanket term citizen journalism, you know. Like, everyone in the community has, you know, an opinion about things or maybe stories that they want heard.

Keeping the transparency thing in mind, would you ever ... Would you ever have a citizen journalist report stories for you?

RW: You know, there are probably citizens out there who could walk into a situation, remove their biases, biases, their bias on a topic and return information to me that was totally airable. But, that would be such a hard process to figure out who does and who doesn't. So, I would be extremely reluctant to use somebody's story off the street. And I don't know anything about their background and, um ...

Um, you know, I think when we go out and interview people that are connected to a story, that's sort of a citizen voice, citizen ... You could call it citizen journalism I guess. You know, if there's a problem in a neighborhood and we go into that neighborhood and talk to somebody who's there. We've put their voice on the air as a citizen and that ... Of that neighborhood, and that's part of the transparency factor. We're saying, "This person lives here. They're connected to this ... To this story in this way, and this is what they have to say." You know, and then we give them their, their 20 second sound byte or if it's a longer story we hear, hear even more from them.

But we have completely, you know, thrown down all of the transparency that we've learned to do through our training. Whereas, if someone just walks in and says, "I have this really great story. Here it is." Uh, yeah, I don't, I don't think I would be able to use that on the air as a news piece because I'm telling the listeners out there when I put it on in our new segment that this has been completely vetted.

And if I'm going to go through the process of completely vetting that, then we could just report it ourselves because that would be an extremely time consuming process and the amount of time I would spent vetting that story, I might as well just be doing it, you know.

SM: What are some of the ethical considerations you think that, I mean, you're basically ... You know, you're saying you wouldn't do it and I completely understand why. Uh, what do you think just off-hand are some of the ethical ... Well, I guess you mentioned that. I mean, it's ... It's a true thing, you know.

RW: Yeah.

SM: It's like you, you don't, you don't necessarily know if somebody comes in off the street. You don't know their training. You don't know their background. They say I have story for you. Um, you're basically taking liability of that story as a news director, right?

RW: And we're putting our name on it. We're putting the KCBX on it and, uh, if they are passionate enough about this story to go to the trouble of putting it together and then, and then come in to sell it to me, then they're invested somehow. Uh, and ... So, you know, the people that are volunteering or interning or working here to collect news, they've already made it clear that news is their driving force.

This person off the street; I don't know what their driving force is. But there is some force that has gotten them to the point where they're sitting in my office that has pushed them here to do it. And so, uh, the likelihood is the driving force, is the content in, in the piece and, uh, we can't put that on the air as news. We could put it on the air as an opinion.

But I ... That would never fall in to my ... That doesn't fall into my jurisdiction because I'm in the news department. So that would go through, like, Maurice.

SM: Right, and that was what I was talking with Maurice about yesterday, um, in a ... You know, in a very similar interview. So basically, that's really interesting, because ... So people can get in the public, can get their idea. Like you were saying, you know, they can get their ideas out but it has to be clearly defined as opinion.

RW: Yeah.

SM: And opinion and news and this also goes back to what you're saying about why public is better, or in your opinion, better than, you know, commercial as far as the depth of the reporting because there is that wall that says, "This is news. We're removed from all these other stuff."

RW: Yeah. And newspapers have an entire opinion section.

SM: Right.

RW: And I guess you could look at that as public journalism. Um, usually, a lot of these columns that are written in the opinion section come from members of the community who have a very specific view on something and that throw it, you know, they throw it into the paper. And that's really worthy content. It's good to know what these people are thinking.

And sometimes, pieces of that will end up in our stories but they are completely setup to let you know when you hear it, this is what someone thinks in relation to this story. And then we'll try to find the other side of that. And sometimes there's not just an A side and a B side or a black and a white, whatever, however you want to define it. Sometimes there are four or five different opinions on one given topic and you need to find as many of those that exist.

Uh, and then, I mean ...

SM: Do you ever think that because radio is such, or I should say audio I guess because, you know, the ... I mean, there's a lot that goes on the web too. But as a form of storytelling because it's so intimate that sometimes it's easier to blur the line between, uh, news and opinion.

Like, with the newspaper, you know, it's like here is, you know, National A1 then you got your local then there's OP-ED and it's like people have this history of ... You know, because they're reading where it's like, "Oh! This is letters to the editor and this is this one guy's opinion," you know, "he works for the newspaper but," you know, "he's not covering breaking news." Um, do you ever think it with radio because it's spoken and people are maybe outside of the sound byte realm

where it's more of an in depth feature that it's kind of like there is that ... There's more of a blur between this opinion?

RW: We try to remove as much of that blur as possible by putting things into boxes when you're listening. So you know when you're listening to Morning Edition or All Things Considered, these are news magazine shows. And nearly all of the content during this is news especially the local news breaks are like 100% news. Um, no, no opinion unless it's setup as ... Unless it's connected to a news story and you're hearing the opinion setup that way.

Uh, other larger chunks within All Things Considered. Uh, they, you know, they have a commentator, Frank Deford who is, uh, he comments on, on sports. But he ... They're like ... And now for our commentator, Frank Deford ... I mean, you know, there's no ... It's not coming across as news, it's through this guy's opinion on, you know, whatever it might be.

Um, and so, uh ... So we have those news magazine shows. Then we have other shows like Central Coast Voices and Issues and Ideas. Those are not news shows. Issues and ideas has more of a news bent to it because, uh, the news department plays a huge hand in producing it. And, um ... But it is clear from the moment of the show whether something is really strictly a news piece or whether something is more opinion related.

Uh, Central Coast Voices, uh, is not produced by the news department here and that one tends to be more opinion related. But they still do a pretty good job and it's open up to callers so callers can come in and they're clearly, you know, expressing their opinions and that sort of thing.

So, uh, we really try to let people know whether something is an opinion show or whether it's a product to the news department. And if it's a product to the news department, at the end of everything, you'll hear, uh, ... At the beginning and the end, you'll hear so and so, KCBX news. You know, and that's makes a big diff ... To me, that's an exclamation point on, on how you should be absorbing it as a listener.

SM: Right.

RW: So, I hope that ... I hope that we do that the same way a newspaper has sections. You know, when you've entered the, uh, OP-ED portion of our broadcasting. Which has a very valuable role. I think the OP-ED is super important. Um, it's just, uh, not part of the news department.

SM: Right. And so with radio, you have to use, you know, the spoken words that create those breaks.

RW: Those divisions.

SM: Those ... Those divisions.

RW: Uh-huh.

SM: Yeah. It's interesting.

RW: And they're all ... And, you know, it's also a time thing. Just like you know that the OP-ED is like the third section in the, um ... In the newspaper or wherever it might be.

SM: You'll know that the commentary comes on, you know, after, if you're a regular listener.

RW: Yeah, if you're listening to Amy Goodman and, uh, you know that that is produced by Pacifica Radio. What's the name of that show? Um, Democracy Now. I mean, it clearly has a bend to the left. And so as a listener of that, you know that going into it.

SM: Um ...

Speaker 4: Hi.

SM: Hi. You can be the talker now.

Speaker 4: No.

SM: I just have one more question. Yeah. And then I know we're going to wrap this up. But, um, I forgot to ask this earlier. Are smartphones now, uh, broadcast quality, do you think? Like, can people go out and effectively, like, record in a field with iPhones and stuff and have it play?

RW: Absolutely. I think the latest versions of smartphones and even some older ones, uh, have audio quality that is used by us locally here extensively. And NPR nationally uses, uh ... Uses that ... Uses the smartphone ... Uses smartphones as a tool for collecting, uh, audio. In the field, sometimes they have reporters that are, you know, far-flung in the Middle East or wherever they may be reporting and they'll record their end of the conversation. If it's a two-way, they'll record their end of the conversation using an iPhone. We do that all the time.

And especially given our budget and how large our listening area is, you know, driving from Gonzales in Monterrey County to Carpenteria in Sta. Barbara is no short drive. And that's the length of our listening area.

And so to, to think that this newsroom based in San Luis Obispo could drive out to all of these places, you know, Creston, Cambria, uh, [O-Hi 00:37:19] and try to get voices from all of that with professional equipment is just not doable.

The phones today have quality that is right there. It's ... It's not ... You know, it's not as good as you might get with, uh, a beautiful record ... Sennheiser recording equipment or something. But it's good enough that when you're broadcasting it over the air, it doesn't turn off the listener.

SM: And when you do that, you're having people recording their own sound but it's under your direction. Like you're saying, [clears throat 00:37:52] "Oh, there's a ..." Let's say there's some festival in Cambria and you have a source and you could ... You know, you're giving him directions saying, "Hey, can you turn on your iPhone and get me a sound of ..." Is that ... Is that ...

RW: Yeah, you do lose some level of control when you are ... When you are asking the person you're interviewing to be in charge of collecting that sound. Uh, so, for instance, when I'm doing that same thing with a politician, I record my end of the conversation here at the studio and they record their end of the conversation where they are.

I will make sure that I'm still recording their end of the conversation, uh, which is not going to be as good of quality and I'll just remove all that when I ...

SM: So you can verify that ...

RW: That it hasn't been altered or changed, or if I ask them a really pointed question and they decide, "I don't want to give you this interview anymore and I'm not going to send you the audio." That would ... That would be typically out of my control if I wasn't still recording their end of the conversation. I could say, "Well, I still have ... I still have what you said." You know, it's just ... It's going to sound like it came over a phone and instead of directly into, uh, a smartphone that you're using there.

But, um ... So you have to be careful about when you use it, how you use it, who you're using it with and, uh, who you're releasing that control to. If it's something highly controversial or something that could be altered and then you don't get it in its true form, that's worrisome. Um, but you have to think about those things ahead of time. So, we've never fallen into any situation that's even remotely, uh, has remotely had that sort of issue. But I could see where that would happen.

Speaker 4: I think one thing that is good to keep in mind is, um, as far as the only troubles we've really truly run into it are people being intimidated to record things on their end.

RW: Yeah.

Speaker 4: Like in my experience with young people, I've had no problem. I'm talking like ...

RW: 30 or younger.

Speaker 4: Younger than 40.

RW: Yeah.

Speaker 4: Yeah. Um, they have no problem. But if it's like someone who's middle aged or older, they're typically less inclined or not very ... I don't think I can get that.

RW: Yeah.

Speaker 4: You really can but it ... It's ...

RW: It's really super easy.

Speaker 4: Both the story that I filed a-about the [inaudible 00:40:17] I had the girl, she was in 30s. She just ... She spoke on the phone with me.

RW: Yeah.

Speaker 4: And then she sent me the file after and I got exactly what I wanted but very clear.

RW: I'm finding it's easier and easier as more people migrate to smartphones. Uh, just in the year and a half that this newsroom has been operating. In the beginning it was like, I had to send a video to explain. Uh, there's a video produced by Aspen Public Radio that shows how to do which [Jordan 00:40:48] was just showing.

And, um, I would send them a link to that and say, "Watch this. [laughs 00:40:54] If you think you can do that, uh, I'd like to record the interview that way."

Um, in the last 6 months I haven't had to send that video one time. Most people are like, "Oh yeah. Oh yeah, voice memo? That comes on my phone." You know. They all seem to get it. So the times are rapidly changing and the fact that you ... You know, I can have a slew of volunteers and interns that go out and collect sound with their smartphone, uh, is pretty impressive.

Alex, who's here right now, interviewed Representative Lois Capps, the congress ... Congresswoman and it was really windy outside so they got into her car and he interviewed her with his smartphone, you know.

Speaker 3: That was the first real interview I ever did.

RW: Yeah.

Speaker 4: In the car with Lois Capps.

Speaker 3: Yeah, it was in the backseat of a car with Lois Capps right off at Johnson.

RW: With a smartphone, you know. And so ... You know. So, I mean, that shows you right there how far, uh, the technology has come that I can ... You know, just throw something in your back pocket and go out and record, broadcast quality sound.

SM: That's pretty cool.

RW: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

SM: Well, thanks. That's about it.

RW: Cool!

SM: I appreciate it.

RW: I can put my food in my mouth and anything, I'm trying to think. I don't think so. Everything I said is what I believe.

Speaker 3: Is it weird being interviewed?

RW: Uh, yeah, because I would say in my career it's been like 99.9 ...

Appendix D

Interview Transcripts: Aaron Borgeson

The following interview was conducted to gain perspective from a civic-minded citizen who could be considered a prime candidate to become a citizen journalist. The questionnaire included several additional questions formulated to gain the maximum information from the potential journalist.

Interviewer: Spencer Marley

Respondent: Admissions Officer, California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo
(Aaron Borgeson)

Date of Interview: 7/23/2015

Interview Transcription:

Spencer Marley: Looks like we're recording.

Aaron Borgeson: Okay.

Spencer: Levels are pretty good. So we're here with Aaron Borgeson?

Aaron: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Spencer: And you are an admissions officer at Cal Poly?

Aaron: That's correct.

Spencer: And did you also go to Cal Poly?

Aaron: I did. I, uh, uh a political science graduate and I was here from 2009 to about, um, 2013.

Spencer: Okay. Um, so earlier we were talking and you said N, NPR is always on. What do you think differentiates public radio reporting from other types of broadcast?

Aaron: Other broadcast, uh, radio or all different news outlets such as TV, online?

Spencer: Let's talk about just local broadcast.

Aaron: Okay.

Spencer: So if, I mean I know that's kind of encompassing, but if we could incorporate local radio and local TV.

Aaron: Okay.

Spencer: As opposed to local public radio.

Aaron: Okay. So I don't have a cable account. Um, sometime- I do have bunny ears cable, uh, bunny ear, uh, uh, TV antenna to just capture, you know, ABC or Fox to watch some sports and whatever. If I want to I will from time to time, but, um, my main media consumption and my main news consumption comes from either reading things online, uh, or I would suspect that I'm one of the only people of our generation that owns, uh, or that gets a paper, uh, newspaper. I get, uh, once a month, or once a week New York Times Sunday Edition delivered, um, to my house, so that's how I'm consuming more national news, um, and then I usually have NPR on. When I'm driving to work I have about a ten minute commute, uh, to and from work, so I'll have NPR on there.

Um, typically when I'm driving it's going to be consuming, uh, like weather or local broadcasts, and I think what differentiates, uh, public radio, especially the one, the stations that I listen to, is there, there definitely is the current, um, events of things that are happening in the, the county or the city or if people are voting on this or maybe, um, a, a month ago it would have been going down to Santa Barbara reporting on the oil spill or things that are happening within the greater central coast. Um, and I think there is something that is, uh, for me, um, with public broadcasting and radio, um, first there's something really romantic about it because, um, for the ability of someone to describe what they are seeing, the ability, and I think public radio is so good at this and NPR is especially good at this, is incorporating background noise.

Like let's say if you're interviewing someone on the docks in Morro Bay, here you might hear a seagull or you might hear some people yelling in the background on a fisherman dock, or let's say, um, someone's reporting on, um, a sporting event. You're going to hear a crowd, so I think, uh, for me there's a lot of really cool, uh, audio stimulus that is incorporated through public radio and then it also allows, it's not like, it's not TV where you're cut for 15 seconds to a car accident and you move on. They really massage out a story, which I really enjoy.

Spencer: Uh, why do you think that it's, (clears throat) that is that content is relevant to local communities?

Aaron: Why is that content relevant to local communities? Um ... I think, uh, we can do a disservice to the public if the only thing that we're reporting on in, um, on TV broadcast is a car accident or a DUI or a burglary. Yes, they're very important and, you know, sensational, you know, these stories are grabbing and attentive, um, but I also think we do a disservice to, um, our viewing public if the only thing

that they are viewing are short excerpts of exiting, graphic moving images of a, of a, car accident or a, or a fire, a wildfire or house fire because the, and this is what attracts me to the NPR is, or local broadcast is, they might take a story on, um, an oil spill or, uh, maybe a county vote, something that, you know, non-profit or a current event and take two, three minutes to interview maybe the opposition, maybe, uh, and review, uh, an advocate to the situation and really massage out and go in depth to the story, which I think you miss in a 30 second sound bite on TV.

- Spencer: Yeah. How do you think the, um, you know, considering that relevancy, how do you think of the demographics of a community, we can say San Luis Obispo if that makes it, you know, easier, but how do you think the demographics of a mid-sized community would effect the content of the local broadcasting?
- Aaron: Hmm. Good question. Um, well I come from an area in southern California that is more than twice the size of San Luis Obispo. It's still very suburbia and most people are commuting out of Temecula, I'm from Temecula, California.
- Spencer: Oh, okay.
- Aaron: Um, for work, and the broadcasting that we have is not necessarily local TV broadcasting when it's coming down from LA. Yeah, coming down from LA, the local TV broadcast.
- Spencer: TV and radio, or?
- Aaron: I sus-, yeah, I think so. Yeah I think. I, I know our newspaper comes up from san Diego in fact.
- Spencer: It's the Union Tribune?
- Aaron: Yeah.
- Spencer: Okay.
- Aaron: So it's a little bit different because we get our TV from LA and our newspaper from San Diego, but we also get our, um, like, you know, Angels broadcast and Dodgers broadcast.
- Spencer: Right because you're...
- Aaron: Yeah, Temecula is kind of stuck in that, exactly where it's no man's land and sort of, uh, uh, ownership.
- Spencer: Right.

Aaron: Um, so with that in mind, um, I think there, there's less competition in the market for, um, advertising and marketing from local TV and local ads, um, in journalism. Um, so, you know, you're more inclined to hear like a mom and pop shop that owns a shoe company selling something on radio or TV and less likely to see a car ad, uh, because that's, I feel like that's a consuming thing if you're listening to more of like a, you know, large southern California broadcast.

Spencer: Right.

Aaron: So, there's the mar- there's the advertising bit. There's the, the content that's driven from the advertising that I think is really different if you're in a mid-sized town or a small town, but I think also the, the, the true content, um, um, and what I've seen in San Luis Obispo and especially on KCBX is also going down in Santa Barbara going up into maybe Monterey or, you know, southern Monterey County, uh, and bringing in content from there and I, I think that's also refreshing because yes, it may not be my backyard but it definitely does, um, reflect our, our region.

Spencer: So you think that it paints maybe a broader picture of your regional community?

Aaron: I think, I think it, it, it does. Um, it does inform, it, it, living in a small town does inform me of things that are going on in the larger regional community. Um, and I think that's part of content is sometimes driven, uh, or new content can be driven out from out of the scope of San Luis Obispo proper.

Spencer: Right. So as far as that, and, you know, I'm not trying to make a stretch, but as far as people like yourself that are civically minded, they're informed about their community and the regional area ...

Aaron: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Spencer: How, how can you get st- how do you feel that you can interact with the media or get stories heard that you think are important, or have you ever reached out to the media to try to be a part of it?

Aaron: Uh ... Have I ever reached out to the media? I would suspect, I would say that I don't think I have ever, you know, shot an e-mail of to a, a producer or a, a broadcaster to say, "Hey, look into this," or, "You guys should think about reporting this," or, you know, "What do you think about that story?" Um, and I've never, I think that's something that I, I go to the media to consume, um, and to be fed, um, and of course with, with that, you know, there is a, of course the importance of articulating and, and really critically thinking about each story that I'm thinking but also, uh, it's a place where I go to be informed. So with that in mind I, I think I, I view, um, and this is probably a limitation on my view, but it, for me it's more of a, um, one way street in terms of information being disseminated down to me, the, the viewer or the, the recipient, the audience. Um ...

Spencer: That's really interesting because that's something I haven't heard yet, almost that there's, there's a, a one way street type of relationship that you have with the media and interacting almost like jeopardizes that relationship, you know? Like if you suddenly were to become a part of something that it not necessarily detracts but, like it kind of takes away from, like, the comfort zone.

Aaron: That type of engagement. Yeah, you're right. It would be a comfort zone. It would absolutely be stepping out of my comfort zone if I were to say, "Hey, you know, I've been thinking of, um, I'm super passionate about water conservation." And, you know, I, let's, I'm not, or I'm not terribly passionate. Let's use that example and, and say, "Hey, you know what? This is my thoughts. This is, can we create a story out of that?" That would be stepping out of my comfort zone. Absolutely.

Spencer: That's interesting. Um, do you think that the public could benefit from having more transparent interaction with local media?

Aaron: Uh, yeah. I think the public would benefit from having a more transparent media, and I think part of that conversation is better articulating how that would operate because I don't think, um, in my experience listening to local radio or local TV, well, local TV a little bit more like, "Hey, if you see something great, you know, text us." Um, I don't think that, that is really the case with KCBX. I don't see that. I don't see that when I'm listening that there's that ability to, "Hey, um, call in and let us know what you're seeing or what you want reported on." Um, if I can think back there might be a couple times here and there maybe on a broadcast where it's, you know, feedback and comes welcome, but not directed at if you see new content or want new content let us know.

Spencer: Right. Um, I mean, this kind of ties in with my next question but you got me thinking that if, if you have to jump out, you know, let's say for example, someone is really into water conservation and, you know, like you said, um, you wouldn't jump out of your comfort zone to contact a news organization and say, "Hey, I have something."

Aaron: For a press release, not just someone.

Spencer: Right. Do you think there's an ethical issue, like, if someone didn't, like if someone was completely comfortable with just telling the media, "This is what's going on. This is what I want to report on," do you think that they would probably be more inclined to be someone that is, like, automatically biased about that subject and would have, you know, kind of violate ethics in the fact that they're trying to be an expert or ...

Aaron: Push an agenda.

Spencer: Yeah, exactly.

Aaron: Absolutely. Absolutely. I think that's why, I think that's why, uh, we're talking about something that's interesting because we're talking about civic engagement in the, in the radio or in the media and I think, uh, important in contributing to the local content is important but where is the accountability, authenticity, and, you know, achieving non-biased reporting if, if content is solely driven from the audience.

Spencer: Right. Um, kind of moving forward, do you think that, um, you know, you have some, you have some experience with doing video and doing recording, do you think that, do you have an iPhone or an Android phone?

Aaron: Mm-hmm (affirmative). iPhone.

Spencer: Okay. Do you think the, uh, have you ever messed with the recording function on the iPhone?

Aaron: No, I really have not, honestly.

Spencer: Okay. Because I was going to ask you-

Aaron: I'd have to search where it is.

Spencer: Yeah. Yeah, I was going to ask if you thought, if you felt like, obviously we've already stated that you felt like you're outside of your comfort zone reporting for local media, but, um, do you think that the tech, the average person has the technology to even do this kind of stuff or should it be left to a more professional level where people are, you know, setting up actual recorders?

Aaron: Um, I, I do think, um ...

Spencer: Like, when you see an iPhone video on KCLY or something where it's like, oh, someone at the scene, you know and it's like.

Aaron: Well, we all, we all get frustrated when someone's holding their phone or Android and it's in the vertical position and the, the video is teeny because it's not in landscape, so we, everyone in the internet and users. If it's on the radio, if it's on YouTube and someone's got their phone vertical, that's frustrating. But, um, you know, I think there's, I think we're in a world today where, um, video and audio consumption, uh, if it's, you know, uh, going back to, what was it? The Clippers CEO or the Lakers CEO that, like, was caught talking about, uh, a girl, uh, women and, as like objects or his girlfriend and that was just captured on like an audio recording from some girl's phone.

Spencer: Oh, was that the, was it Donald Sterling?

Aaron: Yeah.

Spencer: It was the racist comments.

Aaron: Yes. It was racist. It wasn't sexist. That's right.

Spencer: He was talking to his girlfriend. He said, "I don't want-"

Aaron: It wasn't sexist it was racist. Yes, that's right. And that was just captured from, I think someone's phone or her phone. That's an audio recording and then, you know, there's, uh, um, uh, and so I think we're in a world today where, uh, audio recordings and home video shot from your iPhone at the scene of a crime at a, you know, someone ripping a person out of a, you know, burning car is, is, is exciting and easily captured. Um, uh, so I, I think back to your original question, there is, you know, an aspect of ownership and, and perhaps expertise that people have, um, you know, they might be rookie or have no experience in media, but they're going to assume with the smartphone in their pocket that they do have a level of ...

Spencer: Right. It almost gives them a, a false sense of confidence.

Aaron: Security or competency. Yeah.

Spencer: Huh. So would you-

Aaron: But I don't think that's a bad thing because I think it allows people, and getting back to the conver-, why we're having this conversation is the ability for those people to engage in what they're seeing or what they're passionate about.

Spencer: So would you ever be interested in producing your own story for broadcast?

Aaron: Would I ever be interested in producing my own story for broadcast? Um, (laughs). Um, for radio?

Spencer: Yes.

Aaron: Probably not. Um, because I want to leave it up to the experts. You know, when, when, uh, I mean I practically know the names of the people on air, you know, Patty or Jordan Bell or that other young guy that does some radio broadcasts for KCBX. They're professionals. They know how to articulate, they know how to use their words and use them, I don't think word [inaudible 00:17:54], inflection? Um, you know, being louder or articulating or using pauses effectively. I enjoy hearing from the experts in terms of radio broadcasts in terms of that content.

Spencer: You think even if, well, and I mean that basically answers all the rest of the questions, but one thing that I was talking to and, uh, when I was interviewing, like the program director at KCBX and, you know, there's some interesting examples of citizen journalism usually at bigger stations that have big budgets.

Aaron: Yeah.

Spencer: Because they can provide a little bit of training.

Aaron: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Spencer: Like let's say, you've already said that you probably, you'd probably rather leave it up to the experts, um, but like let's say there was like a one day class on how to report breaking news or how to, even how to interact with the media.

Aaron: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Spencer: Like, hey, if something happens, you know, if there's something going on at Cal Poly that you're privy to, like, here's the best way to let the experts know about that. What sort of level of, you know, training would you be interested in if any at all?

Aaron: I don't know, I think, Spencer, that's a, you used the example of Cal Poly and from my side of things I have to protect an employer and so I know if someone reaches out to me, um, a media request, I don't say a single thing. So I think, work, work can be an interesting touchy subject on media, um, but, uh, uh ... Let's go back to when Ira Glass was at the pack performance because he came and did, you know, a talk from This American Life about his, his career and how they came up with their production. That was fascinating hearing him give us the behind the scenes on "This is how we pared music to broadcast," or "this is how I incorporate, you know, um, sounds in the background into my stories," or "this is why we chose to do a story on this topic." Um, that's fascinating learning the behind the scenes of radio broadcasting. Um, more so that's more intriguing, um, or more interesting for me to be a part of than, uh, or you know, a how to become a reporter 101.

Spencer: So it's, um, as far as being a participant, no, no interest really.

Aaron: Um, I wouldn't say no interest because I think that is, like, premature to say because who knows. In five, ten, fifteen years I could be extremely passionate about something that may not necessarily be where I am know, um, but you know, I might be a part of, um, a movement or, uh, uh, like I'm involved in my church here in [inaudible 00:21:09], so like let's say like I'm, I'm on a project that's, you know, I'm super passionate or, or an outreach event or a community based event through church. Then I would, of course, step into that. Step out of my comfort zone and be a part and try to reach out to the media to then put my story or my project or my agenda out to the media. So I think that's premature to say, no, no, no, you know.

Spencer: Uh, but as of now, um, you know, given, like you said, you have this work balance where, you know, you can't really bring your work into broadcast because it could jeopardize your job.

Aaron: True.

Spencer: That it's-

Aaron: I wouldn't report about anything that's going on here.

Spencer: Right.

Aaron: Yeah.

Spencer: And so it's better that, like you said earlier, I think.

Aaron: There's the separation.

Spencer: That was the sound bite. It's, it's like it's better that it's a one way street.

Aaron: Yeah.

Spencer: You know, like obviously this is not going on the air, but if it was it's like, "Hey, I'll leave it up to the experts, you know. It's better. I'm better as a listener than as a participant right now."

Aaron: Right now.

Spencer: I think that's it.

Aaron: Sweet.

Spencer: Thank you.

Aaron: Absolutely, Spencer.

Spencer: I appreciate it. Yeah. That was ...

Aaron: Probably a different lens than you typically get.

Spencer: That was actually the best.