PROFESSIONAL ROLE CONCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC RADIO JOURNALISTS:

A CLOSER CONNECTION TO THE AUDIENCE

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Camille Phillips

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ABSTRACT

Using the theoretical framework of professional role conceptions and the methodology of semi-structured interviews, 10 journalists at two Midwest public radio stations were interviewed in a qualitative study designed to answer the following overarching research questions:

*RQ1a: What are the professional role conceptions of public radio journalists at KCUR, KBIA and Harvest Public Media? RQ1b: Why do they see themselves in these roles?*

*RQ2: How does being a non-profit public media outlet impact the content produced at KBIA, KCUR, and Harvest Public Media?*

As this was a qualitative study, individual responses were unique and not intended to be generalized. Key findings, however, included a strong desire to provide balanced information uninfluenced by bias and an equally strong feeling of being closely connected to their audience. By offering a glimpse at what a few public media journalists see as the purpose of their job and how their stations’ revenue models influence the news content they produce, this research can help provide insight into how public media may differ from commercial media, both in content and motivation.
Chapter One: Introduction

When I started my studies at the Missouri School of Journalism, I was unsure whether I wanted to someday work for a newspaper or a public radio station. I did know, however, that I wanted to gain the skills to be versatile. For that reason, I enrolled in convergence journalism courses, learned the fundamentals of reporting across platforms and gained experience working in multiple newsrooms. A year and a half later, I knew that I would be happy reporting for either one, as long as I was given the time to explore issues thoroughly and cover topics that matter. I particularly enjoyed my time at the local NPR-affiliate, KBIA. As an advanced reporter at KBIA, I had the time and the feedback I needed to create thoughtful and interesting feature stories. There is something about the intimacy and power of sound that draws me towards audio stories, especially when visual components can be added. For that reason, my first choice for the professional component of my master’s project was public radio, and the first place I will look for a job after graduating will be as a public radio reporter. Beyond being a good fit because it is in public radio, I was excited about the emphasis on multimedia at Harvest Public Media and I looked forward to being able to put all my attention on one beat and develop a bit of expertise.
Professional Skills Component: Harvest Public Media

I completed the professional skills component of my master’s project at Harvest Public Media in Kansas City, Mo. Harvest is one of seven Local Journalism Centers funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to cover a beat of regional importance by embedding reporters in public media newsrooms throughout the region. Harvest is based in Kansas City and at the time of my internship had arrangements for reporters to be embedded in Columbia, Mo., Ames, Iowa and Lincoln, Neb. All of Harvest’s news coverage focuses on agriculture, or as Harvest divides it: “food, fuel and field.”

**Journalism area of emphasis: radio reporting.**

My primary role was reporting for radio, with the expectation of completing three feature stories. I was also expected to write stories for the Web, take photos, create photo and audio slideshows and help recruit sources for the Harvest Network, Harvest’s network of agriculture and farm experts who have volunteered to be sources for stories.

Educational and professional qualifications

The classes that most prepared me for working at Harvest were Convergence Fundamentals, Convergence Reporting, Advanced Reporting for KBIA, News Reporting at the Columbia Missourian and Investigative Reporting with Mark Horvit. In Convergence Fundamentals I learned the basics of how to use a Marantz, a video camera, and a still camera as well as how to edit audio, video and photos using the appropriate software. In Convergence Reporting I learned how to use those skills to report the news
across multiple platforms. In News Reporting, I gained experience in writing news stories for print, and in Advanced Reporting at KBIA I gained experience in creating radio feature stories. In Investigative Reporting I learned to seek and use available data as the basis for uncovering important news stories.

**Work dates and schedule.**

I worked 40 plus hours a week at Harvest from June 4 to August 17, 2012 for a total of 440 hours. Through the end of September I worked 5-10 hours a week as needed.

**Dissemination of work**

My work was published on [www.harvestpublicmedia.org](http://www.harvestpublicmedia.org) and broadcast on the six Midwest media stations that were partnering with Harvest at the time: KCUR in Kansas City (where Harvest is based), KBIA in Columbia, Kansas Public Radio, Iowa Public Radio, NET out of Nebraska, and High Plains Public Radio (which covers Western Kansas). Harvest stories also sometimes run in the Kansas City Star and on NPR. One of my feature stories was published as the cover of the business section of the Kansas City Star.

**Gathering abundant physical evidence.**

Scripts and audio of my radio stories, drafts of my Web text, photographs, infographics and links to my published work are included in my master’s project as physical evidence to the work I have completed. I also emailed my committee weekly updates of my work and thoughts during my professional component.
Supervision.

My on-site supervisor was Donna Vestal, the editor at Harvest Public Media. She was the one I pitched my stories to and received my assignments from, and the one who edited my work. My committee also supervised via the weekly emails from me summarizing my experience for the week, including what I had been working on and what I had learned.

Research Component: Professional Role Conceptions of Public Radio Journalists

The impetus for my research component came out of my interest in working in public radio. It was further developed during my time at the Missouri School of Journalism through being a teaching assistant to business journalism professor Randy Smith and through a trip I took to Germany sponsored by the German embassy to the United States. Professor Smith taught his classes how to develop successful business models for media start-ups, and through class discussions I began to wonder whether different business models would influence the news content produced. The embassy-sponsored trip to Germany took American journalism students on a tour of several news and political venues, among them the public radio station in Munich. I was in awe of the variety of channels the station had available to them and the high level of funding they were provided. In Germany, everyone who owns a radio pays a fee that goes directly to fund public radio, including the news. Federal funding for public media in the United States is notoriously low compared to other developed countries; $1.35 per capita in the
U.S. compared to $26 in Germany and $80 in the U.K. (Naureckas 2009). But with the additional funding, public radio in Germany has additional restrictions. We spoke with a man who works for a radio channel dedicated to youth. Due to broadcast limitations, the channel is only online. But their online content is also limited due to laws designed to enable commercial media to compete. It was an interesting paradigm shift for my American mind: a country where public media was not in the least bit in danger of losing government funding, but rather was considered to have the advantage. This brought me to the idea that perhaps in some ways public media even in the United States has advantages. From there, my research idea was born.

With the rising prominence of public media in the American media landscape, the question of whether or not journalists in the nonprofit sector fulfill a different mission is more relevant than ever before. This study is intended to be a first step in answering that question, through research undertaken at two Midwest public radio stations, KCUR in Kansas City, Mo. and KBIA in Columbia, Mo. as well as the Local Journalism Center (LJC) Harvest Public Media. Harvest Public Media is based out of KCUR and KBIA is one of Harvest’s partner stations.

**Theory.**

**Professional Role Conceptions.**

Professional role conceptions is a theory that developed from two broader and older theories: news sociology and gatekeeping. The basic idea of professional role
conceptions in the field of journalism is that the professional role(s) journalists identify with affects the news that they create. Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman conducted one of the earlier studies that would fall under the framework of professional role conceptions (1976). As part of a detailed national survey of American Journalists, Johnstone et al. asked eight questions about the tasks they carry out and how those are related to their job, and determined that most journalists fell into one of two categories: those that seek to simply distribute the news and those who encourage others to participate in a future action based on the knowledge they gain.

After the 1976 study, other researchers began looking specifically at the professional role conceptions of journalists. But at the time of the study, Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman were conducting a broader survey in the tradition of news sociology, of which role conceptions were only a part.

The process.

Through connections gained from working as part of Harvest Public Media in the KCUR newsroom and as a student journalist in the KBIA newsroom, I made arrangements to conduct semi-structured interviews with the content-producing staff of three newsrooms:

- KCUR, NPR affiliate in Kansas City, Mo.
- KBIA, NPR affiliate in Columbia, Mo.
- Harvest Public Media Reporting Team based in Kansas City, Mo. (Harvest)
Research Questions.

RQ1a: What are the professional role conceptions of public radio journalists at KCUR, KBIA and Harvest Public Media?

RQ1b: Why do they see themselves in these roles?

Since public radio gets its funding primarily from listener donations rather than the advertising that funds most newspapers and TV news, theoretically public radio journalists only have to please their listeners. Unlike commercial news outlets, public media don’t have to keep advertisers or shareholders happy. Quantitative research based on surveys have been done to see what roles journalists in general see for themselves, but there hasn’t been much qualitative research in that area, nor has a study targeted public radio journalists as opposed to commercial journalists. Weaver and Wilhoit (1986 and 1994) developed four titles for journalists based on the roles they self-identified with in their studies: adversary, disseminator, interpretive, and public mobilizer (Cassidy 2008 p. 108). The goal of speaking with public radio journalists was to determine whether the roles they identify with mirror those of their commercial counterparts or reflect a different perspective. Furthermore, why do they see themselves in these roles and how do these roles effect their decision-making process?
**RQ2: How does being a non-profit public media outlet impact the content produced at KBIA, KCUR, and Harvest Public Media?**

Because public radio has a different revenue model than commercial news, it seems likely that public radio journalists have different gatekeepers. It follows, then, that public radio journalists might have different influencers on the content they produce. For example, since part of their funding indirectly comes from the government, do public radio journalists ever avoid stories that reflect negatively on the government? Or is there ever pressure to put people who have donated a lot of money to the station in a good light? What about corporate sponsorships and underwriting? Does that influence content? It must be kept in mind, however, that because non-profits are partially dependent on donations, their listeners and supporters are often people with disposable income. Does that mean content is chosen that is thought to be favored by those in that economic bracket?

**Relevance of study.**

These research questions matter for the broader world of journalism because keeping the media content diverse allows for a freer flow of information and a more informed public. Having revenue sources outside of the media conglomerates sounds like it could help with that goal. Furthermore, the increasing need for alternate sources of revenue is making research on non-profit media more relevant than ever before. Even traditionally commercial newspapers have looked into obtaining audience support. The
Columbia Missourian, for example, has partnered with a company called Kachingle that enables Internet readers to donate a small amount of money each month. Some online newspapers have even sprung up running entirely as a non-profit organization. The online newspaper, St. Louis Beacon, for example, is a non-profit that depends on donations for much of its revenue.
Weekly Update 1

Monday, June 11, 2012

Hi Lynda, Janet and Mike,

My first week at Harvest went well. As you saw, Donna and I set up a game plan of what I'm going to work on while I'm here on Monday. So far I've written two editor's picks for the website: “Making local meat truly local” and “Opinion: trade journal questions link between farms and ‘superbugs.’” The editor's picks have been a great way for me to familiarize myself with the current issues and viewpoints in the world of agriculture. I now get Google news alerts for key phrases such as "livestock" to help me keep up to date.

I also did research for my agritourism feature and scheduled visits to agritourism farms to interview the owners. Today I went to two farms, Mule Barn Berries an hour north of Kansas City, and Gieringer Orchards half an hour southwest of it. I spent about 2 hours at each farm and about 3 hours driving. Between the camera and the Marantz I went through 16 batteries! *I later found out that I was using old batteries from the recycling basket!

It was really nice to get out on the farms and talk to the farmers. The first farmer I interviewed was enthusiastic and on point. I was able to get what I needed from her with
very little direction. The second interview started out slow and was interrupted by my batteries dying. But once I targeted my questions a bit more, I was able to get some interesting information. At the end I was able to get about ten minutes of nice narration that I think could turn into a good My Farm Roots story. He ended with the line "A farmer has to be an eternal optimist!" Great stuff.

One of the themes of the newsroom this past week seemed to be power dynamics. As a Local Journalism Center, Harvest is by nature regional. Donna interacts closely with the news directors at all the partner stations, having to balance the needs and wants of each newsroom with what is best for Harvest. But at the same time, Harvest is funded by CPB and has close ties with NPR. Stories have aired nationally frequently and Donna also is in frequent communication with the NPR editor in charge of the Midwest. With all of these interests at play, each entity can throw off the dynamics of all the rest. For example, the big news my first day at KCUR was that the news director of one of Harvest's partner stations was fired by that station's general manager. As a result, the hiring of the new Harvest reporter at that station is delayed.

Harvest’s multimedia editor and social media analyst went to an NPR training session last week, and when they returned they talked about the off-putting attitude of some of the people organizing the training. KCUR's news director, Frank Morris, commented that the tension between member stations and NPR is at a high right now, with NPR airing more and more content produced by member stations as they reduce
their reporting staff. The member stations bear the burden of paying the salary of the reporters while NPR benefits by having a massive network of reporters at their fingertips. Getting aired nationally is great for the career of the reporter, but doesn't help the station financially much.

During my time at the journalism school, I've often heard people say that if newspapers close than there won't be any online content. But I'd never realized public radio had a similar dilemma. Just as people get their news more and more online, so do people recognize NPR more than the member stations. Yet if newspapers and member stations didn't exist, than neither would NPR and online news.

Hopefully the balance of needs and interests can be maintained so quality news can continue to reach the public.

Talk to you next week,

Camille
Hi Lynda, Janet and Mike,

My second week was mainly spent on interviews and logging tape for my agritourism story. As I said last week, I spent all last Monday in the field touring and interviewing the owners of a berry farm in Lathrop, Mo. And a peach orchard in Edgerton, Ks. On Thursday I spent the morning at Carolyn’s Country Cousins in Liberty, Mo. Their agritourism business is on a completely different scale than the newer, smaller businesses I visited on Monday. In simple terms, they give school tours and have a u-pick pumpkin patch. But they have everything from a train track to pig races and 17,000 school kids visit each year.

I’ve attached a sample of the more than 300 photos I’ve taken to give you an idea of where I’ve been. I’d include my 15 pages of logged tape, but I can’t imagine you’d want to see it! I also did some more research into the economics and numbers behind agritourism in the Midwest and drew up the attached chart based on information I gathered from the 2002 and 2007 USDA Census of Agriculture.

I also wrote an editor’s pick yesterday on the EPA’s officially giving the go-ahead for some ethanol companies to sell E15 gasoline.

This week I’m doing phone interviews with Mo. and Ks. state officials and hopefully an MU professor who completed a study on the role of agritourism in Missouri two years ago. She’s been out of the office, so I haven’t been able to schedule an
interview yet. I may end up interviewing a researcher from Kansas State Extension next week if I can’t get a hold of her, but his research was based in Arkansas and isn’t as relevant.

My story as it stands now will be about the potential of agritourism in the Midwest, but it’s been difficult to nail down scope of the potential or lack thereof. The goal is to have a draft of the story complete by the end of the week, but we’ll see if that happens. I’m going to be in the field on Friday morning at the nearby Kansas City Board of Trade. A group of agriculture officials from Nigeria will be visiting, and the plan is for me to do a spot story for KCUR / Harvest to air that same day and to capture sound while I’m there for a bigger story on trade commodities another Harvest reporter is working on.

The biggest journalistic theme that stands out for me this week is the importance of social interaction and communication between parties both within the newsroom and between newsrooms. As I said last week, the nature of Harvest as a Local Journalism Center requires careful handling of power dynamics. This is particularly true for getting stories on air or published in different locations. It’s important for Harvest to build credibility and name recognition as a newer news outlet. That means getting stories aired on NPR and as many other stations as possible, published in the Kansas City Star, etc. so that as many eyes and ears as possible hear and see Harvest’s work. But if Harvest’s name isn’t included with that work, then Harvest doesn’t gain any name recognition from it.
Thus the origin of the “Great Back Announcer Wars” as Morning Edition producer Tracey Wahl calls it. She visited Harvest on Friday because she wants to get more farm stories on her show. She grew up in farm and ranch country in Colorado and feels it’s important that those type of stories air nationally. Plus she had a family reunion to attend in Kansas, so she had a personal reason to make the trip. Morning Edition is hosting “Meat Week” soon and a Harvest reporter is doing an explainer piece on the beef industry for the occasion. The usual chain of command at NPR has been shaken up due to sickness, and as a result the issue of back announcers came up. The official NPR policy when airing a regional story is to give credit to the station the reporter is from. But Harvest has reporters in various stations and thus wants a back announcer at the end of Harvest stories explaining what Harvest is. Tracey Wahl said that the policy was written before local journalism centers existed and recommended treading lightly and waiting for the usual Midwest bureau chief to return and take care of it. She said he knew the players involved with building policy and could handle the dynamics better.

I’m still waiting for approval from IRB before I can begin my research. Lynda took hours out of her day yesterday (thank you!) to renew her training, so as soon as she fills out the advisor approval form I can submit my application.

Have a great week everybody,

Camille
Hi Linda, Mike and Janet,

My apologies for the late update this week. I’ve been trying to complete final edits on last semester’s American Dream project for the Missourian during the evenings. Needless to say, it’s been a little stressful! But the American Dream project will be published beginning next week, and I’m glad that our work from last semester won’t have been for naught.

Last week I wrote an editor’s pick called “Trashing food: a growing trend.” Other than that, my time last week was taken up with the two radio stories I’m working on. Last Friday I went to the Kansas City Board of Trade and interviewed Nigerian millers and U.S. wheat industry officials about their trade partnership. I logged tape, wrote the script, and wrote a Web version of the story. I also ended up producing two audio versions of the story; a longer one for KCUR’s weekend talk show called KC Currents and a shorter one for Monday’s newscast at KCUR and NET in Nebraska. I’ll give you the links next week once they are on the website.

I also finished my last interview for my agritourism story and started working on that story’s script. Hopefully I can finish it next week. I never fully appreciated how many hours go into putting a feature radio story together. Now that I am spending all day working on one project rather than working on it here and there between classes and homework, the amount of time it takes is more obvious.
Next week I also plan on sending out emails asking people to participate in my research. IRB approved my application, so my research is now officially a go!

I’ve been thinking a lot lately about the need to balance efficiency with excellence. I like working with Donna as my editor because she gives me a lot of constructive feedback. For example, she listened to two different read throughs of my wheat trade script and gave me specific instructions on voicing. I wanted to get my voicing just right, so I taped version after version. And then ended up going back and doing it again once she edited my script again for length! As a result, I spent a lot longer on voicing and producing my story than I would have liked. (Pretty much most of yesterday and today, with some breaks for writing and editing the web story).

I only have a little more than 7 weeks left at Harvest, and there is so much more I want to get done. Hopefully after my first two stories, the process will be more streamlined.

Have a great weekend,

Camille
Hi Lynda, Janet and Mike,

I hope you had a good 4th of July. The first radio piece of my internship aired on KCUR Sunday and Monday: “Importers get the whole wheat tour.” (Sunday evening a 4 minute version played during the news magazine KC Currents with a rebroadcast Monday night, and then a 3 minute played on Monday morning during KCUR’s Morning Edition time slot. You can find the Web text I wrote with that same audio version on the Harvest website. The story also aired Wednesday on KBIA’s Business Beat, and Nebraska Education Television & Radio (NET) will air it this coming Monday.

This week I have been writing the script for my agritourism feature and went through several revisions with Donna. I’ve got a rough track of the story now, but at 6 minutes it’s a little long. (5 and a half minutes is the max). This is a tricky one to piece together, because I did so much reporting on it and have so much ambi and actualities to choose from.

I’ve never had an editor that works so closely with me before, so it’s been a bit of a learning experience. Donna doesn’t have 50 student reporters working with her on a rotating basis like all of my professor/editors did, and she’s sitting right next to me all day, so communication is more immediate. The end result is that my work is scrutinized to a higher degree than I’m accustomed to. I’ve felt kind of like a rookie this week with
all of the corrections and suggestions coming my way. But the end result will be better for it.

The other published piece of work I did this week was an editor’s pick on the biofuel the Navy is using in its Green Fleet. Funnily enough, I heard an NPR story on the topic on my way home that same day. Mike asked me last week why I don’t get a byline for editor’s picks. I’m not sure why, but the editor’s picks never have bylines. But the blogs and regular stories do, of course. He made a good point; there is an element of interpretation involved in the editor’s picks that may merit a name being attached.

Next week I will finish mixing my agritourism audio and produce the web components of the story. In addition to text, the web will have a photo slideshow and a graphic. I probably will be writing a print version of the story for the Kansas City Star, too. Donna pitched the story to the business editor there and he was interested.

Next Wednesday the My Farm Roots project launches, so the focus this week at Harvest has been on the Web design for the project (Jeremy’s job, as he’s the multimedia editor) and the Homestead Act story Peggy, the social media and Harvest Network analyst, wrote. It airs on Monday as an introduction of sorts for My Farm Roots. I haven’t gotten a chance to listen to it, but it sounds fascinating. You should check it out!

I sent out the official, IRB-approved email to the content-producing staff of KCUR and KBIA yesterday asking them to participate in my research. So far I’ve heard
back from seven people, all agreeing to participate. Next week’s update should include my impressions of my first couple interviews.

On a lighter note, if you haven’t seen the youtube parody “I’m farming and I grow it” yet, go watch it now! Peggy found it early last week when it first started going viral and posted it on the Harvest Tumblr. It is nicely done and quite humorous. It also encapsulates the growing feeling among farmers, especially younger farmers, that they need to tell their story in response to some negative press.

Until next week,

Camille
Hi Lynda, Janet and Mike,

I seem to have lost a week in my updating. I counted it up today, and last week was actually my sixth week at Harvest. I can hardly believe it, but I only have five weeks left of my professional project. I feel like I just started and it is more than halfway over.

The first part of last week I made final edits to the agritourism script and finished producing the agritourism audio story. It scraped by under the limit for a feature story at 5:20 before the intro. It will be awhile before it airs though; it's being pushed back again to make room for time-sensitive stories on the drought. Now the plan is for it to air on July 30. I also wrote an editor's pick on Tuesday, "Energy beets in Kentucky earmarked for ethanol production."

On Wednesday, I wrote the first draft of a blog on liability issues in agritourism, an aspect of the story I reported on that didn't fit in the audio story, "Inviting customers out to the farm carries risks." It was published on Sunday after edits and revision on Friday. I built out the story and photo onto the web using the content management system (CMS) Harvest uses (Drupal) and the Web guide the multimedia editor wrote. I'm playing guinea pig for the new reporters Harvest is hiring by making sure the Web guide makes sense. I'm not sure if there's a step missing or if I'm doing something wrong but for some reason the photo I took turns up blurry on the site despite it looking fine in the original.
It's got to be something to do with Drupal changing the ratio or me not editing the ratio correctly via Paint (I don't have Photoshop on my computer).

I left for Columbia early Wednesday afternoon and conducted my first two research interviews with KBIA reporters Kellie Kotraba and Rehman Tunkegar. It was nice to have the first interviews with people I know pretty well. I worked with Rehman last semester on Global Journalist and Kellie and I were snowed in together at the Missourian during the 2011 blizzard.

On Thursday morning, I went to the Bradford Research Center for its annual Pest Management Field Day and put a spot together on farmers reactions to the drought for KBIA’s Friday morning newscast.

On Friday, I revised the liability blog post and started building graphics and choosing photos for the Web components of the agritourism story. Yesterday I wrote a blog on the more technical aspects of the MU Ag. Field Day I attended; "New GM plants an attempt to stay ahead of nature." Today I wrote a draft of the Agritourism Web text and an opinion editor's pick on the Washington Post's stance against farm subsidies in this year's Farm Bill.

I also conducted my first research interview with a KCUR staff member: Andrea Silenzi, the producer for the daily talk show KC Currents. All three of my research interviews so far have been with younger journalists who felt their experiences with public media were very positive and identified providing information as one of their
primary roles. I should interview some more experienced journalists in the coming weeks, which will provide some more context.

It's been interesting for me this week to communicate with busy co-workers and with an editor over the phone and via email. It took some careful conversation and a bit of perseverance, but nothing too difficult. Another thing I've been contemplating lately is the fact that noticing details and doing research comes easier to me than writing. I enjoy interviews and I feel a sense of accomplishment when I finish a reporting project, but I wonder if I would be a better editor than reporter. I enjoy reporting though, and I think I would miss it if I didn't do it. In the end, I guess it's not something I need to worry about yet as I need to get more experience under my belt before I could become an editor. I do know that I'd rather be a reporter than a producer. I didn't like the lack of control over nuance and story focus when I was producing for Global Journalist.

I hope you're having a good week. I'll be back in touch with another update soon.

Camille
Hi Lynda, Mike and Janet,

    Well, I did it again. It's been two weeks since I last sent an update, so I have a lot to catch you up on. I put a note in my calendar as a reminder, so I should remember to do it next week!

    When I emailed you last, I had just finished the audio portion of my agritourism story, and we were waiting to air it while drought coverage came in. Well, it aired on KCUR and NET (Nebraska) yesterday and on KBIA on Friday. There was some discussion during yesterday's news meeting with the partner stations about Iowa Public Radio and Kansas Public Radio airing the story, but I don't believe they have yet. Since it's not time-sensitive (evergreen appears to be the industry term), they may air it later if/when they have holes to fill.

    I've received a lot of compliments from people in the newsroom on the story, which has been nice. I'm also pretty happy with how the Web package turned out. I built it out learning how to best use Harvest's CMS as I went (Drupal), copy and pasting html code from other stories to be able to add a photo, graphics and sidebars to the body of the text. The code I learned from Multimedia Design class last semester really came in handy there.

    In addition to building out the Web package for the agritourism story, in the past two weeks I created the graphics for the story using Adobe Illustrator. There was a bit of
a learning curve there, as I haven't used Illustrator as much as other software. But I'm proud of how it turned out, and I can say I have experience with more software now. You can see the graphics full size on KBIA's site or at the bottom of the agritourism story on Harvest's site. I also wrote an explainer piece to accompany the graphics about how the numbers are somewhat questionable due to the open-ended definition of agritourism the USDA provided in their questionnaire.

I also did a more extensive re-write of the Web text following edits with Donna. That's also what the Kansas City Star will publish if they end up taking it (they were interested before, so fingers crossed).

I also rewrote the captions for the photos I used. Donna made me explain why each image added to the story I was telling and had me include what I told her in the cutlines. Basically, she wanted the slideshow of photos to be able to stand alone as a story. That was a good new challenge for me; I'm used to photos being an afterthought that grabs attention rather than an independent element.

Last Monday I went back to the Kansas City Star library and looked at its microfilm to verify that it had published a version of the story about my great-aunt as a baby. As I believe I wrote before, she is the subject of the first My Farm Roots story I taped and edited. She mentions an article in the Star being published about the story she tells in the interview - "Little Miss Janice Ann Robinson and the Cow." Amazingly enough, my aunt still had copies of the local news articles about it, so I was able figure
out the date. From there, it was much easier to search the microfilm and this time I was able to find it.

That My Farm Roots is this week's story, and it's up online along with the blog post I wrote to complement it: “My Farm Roots: Lightening the load.” It will air on all partner stations this week.

As I've been winding down one story, I've been starting up my next feature, the one about genetically-modified food and allergies. I gathered up research and wrote a draft of query to be sent to the Harvest Network. Peggy, the Harvest Network Analyst, used my draft as the basis of hers, modifying it using her expertise. You can find the published version of the query here.

So far, I've received four responses back from the Harvest Network, but they all seemed to have an agenda and didn't have children with allergies so they were not appropriate sources for the story. Instead, I made contact with local allergy support groups here in KC and have arranged to tag along the next time a mom and her severely allergic daughter go to the grocery store. On Thursday I will be traveling to Lincoln, Nebraska to talk to a scientist who used to work for Monsanto and is continuing to research food technology and allergens. I'll probably interview a few people for more My Farm Roots story on the way back Friday.

In the past two weeks, I've also written 8 editor's picks: “Farm bill amendment favorable to biotech companies meets with protest,” “COWPOCALYPSE: Prepare for the
largest-ever drop in livestock herds,” “Analysis: Why the U.S. ethanol mandate is
drought-resistant,” “Missouri farmers to get help drilling deeper wells,” “USDA supports
Meatless Monday? Not a chance,” “Walmart thinks big with small format,” “U.S.
Drought 2012: Farm and Food Impact” and “Opinion: Farm bill amendment restores
commerce clause.”

So that's my professional work update. As far as my research goes, I've done three
more research interviews, so I now have a total of six completed. I'd like to get six more
in these last three weeks. I'm in the process of emailing specific people and setting up
times.

An interesting journalistic observation from these past two weeks: the varying
roles of news directors and how that fits into the dynamic of newsrooms. KCUR's news
director, Frank Morris, has kind of become NPR's go-to man for agriculture stories.
Which is great in that Harvest may not exist without him and that role. It's also great for
KCUR in that it gives the station national exposure. But according to Donna, Frank is
unusual among news directors in the amount of reporting he does.

For example, he did a major drought story for NPR that took him out of the
station for almost a week to travel through Colorado and Kansas. It was a great story and
I learned a lot about technique from listening to how he planned his reporting and did on-
location stand-ups along the river. At the same time Frank was out reporting, the program
director was on vacation and the station was without a GM as the new general manager
starts tomorrow. But the newsroom has an experienced enough staff that it was able to run smoothly in their absence.

On the other end of the spectrum, news directors at tiny stations like Cape Girardeau, Mo. serve dual roles as the only reporter. Points to the fluid nature of titles in public radio.

If you made it through the long update, thanks for sticking with me! I hope you had a great July.

Camille
Hi Lynda, Janet and Mike,

After last week's clip heavy email, I'm back in the gathering and interviewing stages of my next feature. Last Wednesday I prepared for my trip to Nebraska by making travel arrangements, scheduling two My Farm Roots interviews, and writing interview questions. On Thursday I drove three and a half hours to Lincoln, Neb. and then spent four hours at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln interviewing Rick Goodman and seeing his lab. Goodman is the scientist I mentioned last week who works for the food safety department at UNL and used to work for Monsanto. As you may know, Monsanto is the world's largest seed company and one of the major providers of genetically-modified seeds. Needless to say, Goodman is quite verbose. He also used a lot of terminology I needed explained to me.

Every feature story requires a certain amount of research, but this one requires more than most. I've been thanking my lucky stars for Ms. Pitts, my wonderful AP Bio teacher from high school. It's thanks to her that I understand as much as I do. Now if I just had a few less years between then and now...

On Thursday evening, I drove out to a farm in Firth, Neb., an hour south of Lincoln to interview Nathan Dorn for a My Farm Roots piece. Dorn is in the Harvest Network and had responded to our My Farm Roots query. He's 29 and grew up on a farm but just started working there full time last year. We sat right next to his feedlot while he...
talked about how he feels misunderstood by the average American consumer. He also
shared some more upbeat memories, but his frustration stood out best. He may end up in
my GM feature story saying "I feed my family the same food I sell." Or something to that
extent.

I spent the night in Nebraska City. The next morning I drove to a farm in nearby
Percival, Iowa for another My Farm Roots interview, this time with a couple in their 70s
that former Harvest reporter Clay Masters had met in the course of his reporting on the
first anniversary of the Missouri River flood. The Handy's had to move out of their home
before the levee broke, and the farmland they owe was under water last year. They're
settled back in their home now, with 70 less trees around their house and sandy dirt in the
yard. They had some wonderful memories to share of dancing to big band music. Lynn
Handy also remembers meeting German prisoners of war during the last big flood. The
prisoners were brought out to his family's property to help bevy up the levee.

I got back to the station late Friday afternoon, caught up with Donna and
organized all of my audio and photo files. Today I began logging tape from Goodman's
interview struggling through the hours worth of tape to find the nuggets I need. To my
dismay, I discovered that in his winding tangents Goodman never fully answered some of
my best questions. They should be sufficient, but I wish I had pushed a bit harder and not
gotten lost in his tangents alongside him. If I hadn't been struggling to understand all of
his technical references, I think I would have been more on top of it. From what I
understood, though, all of Goodman's explanations sounded very reasonable.

Jeffrey Smith, however, had a very different take on things. Smith is the author of
two popular books about the dangers of genetically-modified food: Seeds of Deception
and Genetic Roulette. He's also the one quoted by all of the websites I found linking the
increase in allergies to GMO. I interviewed him this evening over the phone and asked
him for references to scientific, peer-reviewed studies to support his claims (Goodman's
suggestion). According to Goodman, the weight of evidence shows that genetically-
modified food is safe and not likely to cause allergies. But Smith says the scientific
studies he told me about show otherwise.

I also wrote two editor's picks this morning: “Big livestock farms breed
controversy in Illinois” and “Consumer groups cry foul on proposed poultry regs.” (Titles
borrowed from original headlines).

Tomorrow afternoon I am going to talk to the leader of an allergy support group
and her 10-year-old daughter, who has a severe peanut allergy. I may also attend another
allergy support group meeting tomorrow evening, depending on whether or not the
meeting will be held. The rest of the week will be spent logging tape and writing the
script. I've got to pick up the pace on this feature, because I only have until the end of the
next week before the end of my professional component.
I haven't completed anymore research interviews since last week, but I'm trying to arrange for two this week and at least two next week.

My journalistic conundrum for this week: the line between being rude and being an independent journalist. In other words, how do you know when it's polite to accept food and when its unethical. I tend to fall on the side of being careful and avoiding eating anything offered to me. For example, when I was at the Pest Management Field Day, lunch was served but I didn't eat anything. When I was reporting for the agritourism story, one of the farmers tried to give me a bag of produce to take with me. I told them thank you, but as a journalist I couldn't accept.

On Friday morning, however, Barb Handy had made a coffee cake especially for our conversation and was looking forward to a cup of coffee. Sitting in their home, preparing to ask about their memories, I felt it would be rude to decline and wouldn't negatively affect my ability to interview them. So I sat and had a cup of coffee and ate some of her homemade coffee cake before we began taping. And you know what, I think taking the time to let them eat breakfast and get to know me made the interview more relaxed and detailed than it would have been otherwise. I don't know if I'll ever do something like that again; it would definitely have to be a special circumstance. But in this instance, I think I made the right call.

Have a great week!

Camille
Hi Lynda, Janet and Mike,

Here it is: the last week of my professional project. Only one more update to go after this.

I made some good progress this past week on my feature on genetically modified food and allergies. Last Tuesday morning I logged tape from my phone interview the evening before with Jeffrey Smith, one of the most vocal and involved critics of genetically-modified food in the country. Thankfully, I was able to catch him at his office in Iowa in between trips to California. He's doing a lot of speaking there right now, gearing up for the state ballot initiative to require labeling of GMOs. On Tuesday afternoon I interviewed Jenny Giles and her daughter Avery about living with a severe peanut allergy, then tagged along while they went grocery shopping. When I got back to the station, I wrote a blog post on my reporting trip to Nebraska and my initial thoughts on the topic, “Seeking answers to GMO questions.” That evening I went to a support group for the parents of children with food allergies and got some tape there too.

On Wednesday I finished logging tape and wrote an outline for the radio story. On Thursday and Friday I wrote a draft of the script and started putting an audio session together. On Friday Donna and I also went over the list of things I need to accomplish during my last week to tie up loose ends.
I did final edits of the script yesterday and completed a draft of the audio. Today I revised the audio and made the necessary cuts and changes to fit time constraints.

Tomorrow I need to write the Web text and photo captions. There's going to be a graphic as well comparing the rise in genetically-modified crops with the rise in food allergies, but Donna will probably have to put that together due to time constraints.

I still have to edit down the audio from the two My Farm Roots interviews I had last week, and write blog posts to accompany them. I also need to build out the resource page based on the plan I put together a few weeks ago. I'm not sure I'm going to be able to get that all done in three days, but I can finish some of it next week if need be. Donna has some money set aside for freelance work and I'm going to continue working part-time with Harvest while I work on the research component of my Masters project.

Speaking of the research component, I did two key interviews on Thursday and Friday, one with KCUR's news director, Frank Morris, and the other with the program director, Bill Anderson. This week I plan on interviewing the three Harvest journalists based in Kansas City: Donna, Jeremy and Peggy. As of now I have eight interviews, and with those three added I'll have 11. I'd like to interview one of the KCUR reporters in charge of newscasts, but I'm not sure I'll have time. But my plan was to get between 10 and 12 interviews, so I should be set to meet that goal.

This week's journalistic insight: adapting to a new people in charge. KCUR's new general manager started last Wednesday, Nico Leone. Previously he was the manager of
an independent music and arts radio station in St. Louis. Because of this, he's very community-minded and everyone is excited about bringing a greater focus on community engagement at the station. He doesn't have much experience with News/Talk, though, so he's sitting back a bit and learning the ropes right now on that end.

I was lucky enough to listen in on a few discussions Donna has had with Nico about finding new funding sources for Harvest. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting has agreed to extend Harvest's grant for one additional year, so funding is set through 2013. But if Harvest wants to survive after next year, they need to start planning soon.

Nico has a connection with an advertising firm in St. Louis and suggested that some of their clients could provide underwriting. Donna is hesitant to do that though, because she doesn't want to lessen Harvest's reputation as an unbiased news organization; she doesn't want to give the appearance of being under the influence of Big Ag. They decided to hold off on making any underwriting official until January so that the reporting partnership with Mike McGraw at the KC Star isn't undermined. The Star is planning a five-part series for December on an investigation of the beef industry, and the management at the newspaper are gunning for a Pulitzer out of it.

It should be interesting to see how both the KC Star series and the Harvest underwriting exploration unfolds.

Until next week,

Camille
Hi Lynda, Janet and Mike,

Last Friday was the last official day of my professional project at Harvest. My second feature story is published online now, so you can take a look: “Link or no link? Controversy simmers over allergies and genetically modified food.” NET out of Nebraska aired it yesterday, so it is up on their website as well. KCUR should air it soon, although I'm not sure when because they also have a few other stories on the pipeline that may have time constraints. I'm not sure Iowa Public Radio or KBIA will be able to air it unless they cut it; it's around 5:40 with the announcer intro.

Last Wednesday I wrote the Web text for the GMO story, lengthening quotes and removing the opening scene from the radio story. I also added an emailed quote from Monsanto, who I had called for a comment. On Thursday I revised the Web text and added further detail on the rise of food allergies after several conversations with people at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention trying to make heads or tails of their data sets. Eventually I got permission from the author of a CDC allergy study to use her personal records, because the data available online wasn't computing correctly and I needed statistical software to download the data sets. I was wishing I'd had the time to take the Computer Assisted Reporting class, believe me!

On Wednesday and Thursday evening I logged tape from the two My Farm Roots interviews I did during my trip to Nebraska and Iowa at the beginning of August. On
Friday morning I chose the best 8-10 minutes of those two interviews and cut down an audio file with an accompanying log. That way Jeremy, who is in charge of the My Farm Roots series, could cut them down to the final 3 minutes of tape. On Friday afternoon I wrote a blog post on the recent influx of cash into the campaign to stop the labeling of genetically modified food in California: “The money behind the No on 37 Coalition.”

Since I am working part time for Harvest through September, I was able to come into the station on Tuesday and write the photo captions for the GMO feature and the two upcoming My Farm Roots. I also interviewed a scientist for an upcoming blog post on the future of food. On Wednesday I made final edits on the GMO feature from the Panera in Columbia, and today I am coming into the station to record my intro to the Handy's My Farm Roots. They are the couple in their 70s from Percival, Iowa that I interviewed, and their story will be next week's My Farm Roots. I also will write the accompanying blog post today.

Last Thursday morning I interviewed Donna for my research component, and on Tuesday I interviewed Jeremy. I wasn't able to squeeze Peggy in, but I went to Columbia on Wednesday and was able to interview Ryan Famuliner then. Ryan is the assistant news director at KBIA. So all told I have 11 interviews to transcribe and analyze for my research component, 8 from KCUR and 3 from KBIA. Two of the eight from KCUR are from Harvest, with Frank somewhat counting as a third since he has reported for Harvest and is the news director overseeing Harvest.
All in all, I had a great experience working at Harvest. Donna was a very thorough and demanding yet encouraging editor, and I enjoyed being able to sink my teeth into some meaty stories and give them the weight they were due. I want to hold onto the good work I've done here and use it to give me confidence going forward in job interviews and further reporting.

In two hours I will be talking with Lynda about the plan going forward, so I should be in touch with you soon with more information and possibly to ask about your availability for defense.

I hope you had a good summer and that your first week back for the fall is going well.

Camille
Chapter Three: Evaluation of Work Product

My professional project at Harvest gave me the opportunity to pitch, report, research, and produce in-depth feature stories—the kinds of stories that drew me to public media in the first place, and the kinds of stories that I can be proud to include as work samples on job applications. I am especially proud of the enterprise feature story I produced on agritourism in the Midwest, my investigation into the theory that genetically modified food caused the rise in food allergies among children, and the three contributions I made to the personal narrative series “My Farm Roots.”

The professional project also gave me an opportunity to develop expertise and familiarity with a beat, from setting up Google alerts for key agriculture phrases to following key names on Twitter and keeping up to date with what’s being published on food and farming in the day’s news. By writing editor’s picks (overviews of pertinent news articles, opinion pieces and studies) and blogs, I was able to practice writing quick pieces and get ideas for longer stories. Because Harvest focuses on the Web as well as the radio, I was also able to hone my photography, info-graphic and Web text writing skills in addition to my radio reporting and producing skills.

At the end of the professional project, I am a better, more confident journalist. I’ve learned to trust my instincts, but not be afraid to ask for feedback and advice from my editor. And I have the multi-media work samples to show potential employers what I
have to offer. All told, I have 38 links to my published work from my time at Harvest, as well as a PDF of the version of my agritourism story that was published in the business section of the Kansas City Star.
Chapter Four: Abundant Physical Evidence of Work

Links to Work Published Online

(PDFs of these webpages, plus audio and jpeg files are included in the Media Folder.)

1. Blog post 1: [Dead-end jobs in the food sector](#)
2. Editor’s pick 1: [Making local meat truly local](#)
3. Editor’s pick 2: [Opinion: Rancher questions link between farms and "superbugs"](#)
4. Editor’s pick 3: [E15 gasoline clears one more roadblock](#)
5. Editor’s pick 4: [Trashing food: a growing trend](#)
6. Feature 1 (KC Currents): [4 minute version of Importers Get the Whole Wheat Tour](#), as played during the news magazine KC Currents (starts at 16:15)
7. Feature 1 (KCUR): [3 minute version of Importers Get the Whole Wheat Tour](#), which played on KCUR during Morning Edition
8. Feature 1 (Harvest): [Web text and audio of Importers Get the Whole Wheat Tour](#)
9. Feature 1 (KBIA): [Flying overseas - to look at wheat?](#)
10. Editor’s pick 5: [Navy’s Green Fleet pays the price for biofuel](#)
11. Editor’s pick 6: [Energy beets in Kentucky earmarked for ethanol production](#)
12. Blog post 2: [Inviting customers out to the farm carries risks](#)
13. Spot 1 (KBIA): [Farmers talk drought at MU field day](#)
14. Blog post 3: [New GM plants an attempt to stay ahead of nature](#)
15. Feature 2 (NET): [When Midwest farming and tourism intersect, optimism and caution abound](#)
16. Feature 2 (KBIA): Paying to do farm chores? It’s called agritourism
17. Feature 2 (Harvest): When Midwest farming intersects with tourism, cautious optimism prevails—with web text, photo slideshow, audio, and graphic
18. Feature 2 (KCUR): When Midwest farming intersects with tourism, cautious optimism prevails
19. Graphic (KBIA): How big is the agritourism industry?
20. Special Report 1 (Harvest): My Farm Roots: Lightening the Load (blog post and audio compilation)
21. Harvest Network Query 1: Are genetically modified crops to blame for food allergies? (as modified by Harvest Network Analyst Peggy Lowe)
22. Editor’s pick 7: Farm bill amendment favorable to biotech companies meets with protest
23. Editor’s pick 8: COWPOCALYPSE: Prepare for the largest-ever drop in livestock herds
24. Editor’s pick 9: Analysis: Why the U.S. ethanol mandate is drought-resistant
25. Editor’s pick 10: Missouri farmers to get help drilling deeper wells
27. Editor’s pick 12: U.S. Drought 2012: Farm and Food Impact
28. Editor’s pick 13: Opinion: Farm bill amendment restores commerce clause
29. Editor’s pick 14: Big livestock farms breed controversy in Illinois
30. Editor’s pick 15: Consumer groups cry foul on proposed poultry regs
31. Blog post 4: Seeking answers to GMO questions
32. Feature 3 (Harvest): Link or no link? Controversy simmers over allergies and genetically modified food (audio, web text, photos)

33. Feature 3 (NET): Controversy simmers over allergies and genetically modified food

34. Feature 3 (KBIA): On genetically modified food and allergies

35. Feature 3 (Kansas Public Radio): GMOS: Are Allergies Connected with Genetically Engineered Food?

36. Blog post 5: The money behind the No on 37 Coalition

37. Special Report 2: My Farm Roots: Too deep to wash away

38. Special Report 3: My Farm Roots: Entrusted with a legacy
Hey Camille,

Yes of course you can publish your work with Harvest, including all audio files, photographs and documents.

Best,
Frank

Frank Morris
Executive Supervisor

HARVEST

News Director

KCUR, 89.3 FM, KCUR.ORG
Kansas City, MO
O (816) 235-2867 M (816) 651-1942
Hi Camille:

Greg passed along your request to include your piece in your master's project. My department handles such permissions, and you certainly have our okay to do that. So please proceed.

Best of luck with your project and your career!

Doug Weaver

Doug Weaver | Director, Book Publishing and Retail Merchandising
Publisher, Kansas City Star Books

Kansas City Star Books | KansasCityStarBooks.com
1729 Grand Blvd. | Kansas City, MO | 64108
P: 816-234-4292 | F: 816-234-4584 | E: dweaver@kcstar.com

-------- Forwarded message --------
From: Hack, Gregory <ghack@kcstar.com>
Date: Fri, Oct 19, 2012 at 10:51 AM
Subject: Fwd: letter of permission
To: Doug Weaver <weaver@kcstar.com>

Doug, here it is. Thanks.

[Quoted text hidden]
Drafts and Other Examples of Work

Edited draft of blog post 1.

Dead-end jobs in the food sector

Millions of American food workers struggle to make ends meet in low-paying jobs. They have little hope of advancement in their field of work, and rarely receive health-care benefits. They often go to work even when they are sick because they can’t afford to take time off and their employers don’t offer sick pay.

This is the bleak picture the advocacy group Food Chain Workers Alliance paints with its recent report based on a survey of more than 600 workers nationwide.

“More than 86 percent of workers reported earning subminimum, poverty, and low wages, resulting in a sad irony: food workers face higher levels of food insecurity, or the inability to afford to eat, than the rest of the U.S. workforce,” the alliance writes in the introduction to the survey.

This huge number – 86 percent earning below a “living wage” — is the focus of several of news stories: from an LA Times article, “Few American food industry workers treated well, report says” to a Mother Jones piece, “Only 13.5 percent of food workers earn a living wage.”

The alliance calculates a “living wage” to be 150 percent higher than the regional poverty level, with an average salary of more than $18 an hour.
“According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), the Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom unit in the United States is $959. A full-time food service worker, working 40 hours per week, would have to earn $18.25 an hour to afford the two-bedroom unit.”

As someone who has earned an hourly wage much lower than $18, this definition rang hollow for me.

I currently earn less, in fact. And although I’ve lived in locations with both high cost of living (New York City) and low cost of living (Missouri) I’ve never paid more than $650 a month on rent. I’ve lived comfortably, but frugally, sharing apartments with roommates and spending little on clothes or entertainment.

The difference between myself and the 20 million people represented in this report, however, is that I have the potential to advance in my career and earn more income in the future. I can expect to someday receive benefits such as sick pay and healthcare.

Meanwhile, 81 percent of the workers surveyed have never received a promotion. The types of jobs available in the food industry—working on farms, in processing plants, warehouses, grocery stores and food service aren’t the type where you can work your way up.
Is this the price we pay for cheap food, or can something be done? As a society, we call jobs such as these “dead-ends” and dream of our children getting an education and earning a better living. Yet without people willing to work these jobs, we would not have food on the table.

……The END?

With these facts in
Almost 80 percent do not have sick days or don’t know if they do and 57 percent have been injured or developed a health problem due to their work.

Does speak to just how many people – and you should share the number – don’t get much of a career out of the food industry. NOTE that these are farm, food processing, warehouse, grocery store, and restaurant and food service jobs

The anecdotes and other statistics the survey reveals still show many problematic situations. For example, 23 percent of those surveyed reported that they are paid below minimum wage, even though that is illegal. More than 80 percent had never received a promotion, and almost 80 percent do not have sick days or don’t know if they do.
Earning the industry average of $9 to $10 wouldn’t be so bad if there was the possibility of earning more in the future, and if the worker could be assured a positive working environment.

I DON’T THINK YOU HAVE TO MAKE THIS STATEMENT, ACTUALLY..

Not – It’s

Price we pay for cheap food… or
Kansas wheat farmers may be tied to the land, but their crop isn’t. About half of the wheat grown in the United States each year is exported. To help sustain these markets, the wheat industry invites these overseas customers to come to the U.S. to see how the wheat they buy gets from the farm to the port. Harvest Public Media’s Camille Phillips joined a group from Nigeria for a portion of one such tour—a visit to the Kansas City Board of Trade.

It’s 9:30 a.m. and the wheat market at the Kansas City Board of Trade opens with little fanfare. Seven Nigerian men look down from the balcony into the pit, watching traders swap papers and peer onto laptops. Deborah Bollman, the board’s assistant vice president of marketing, describes the activity below.

“But you see there’s a few people that are standing here in the pit. You have the gentleman that’s in the black jacket that’s a broker.”

It’s likely that the wheat price being decided on in the pit right now will impact the bottom line for the flour mills the Nigerian men represent. Nigeria is one of the top three importers of American wheat.
On the surface, a flour mill in Nigeria doesn’t make much sense. After all, the climate is not conducive to growing wheat. But Nigerian flour mills are successful, Muyiwa Talabi says, because Nigerians love bread. Talabi works for the U.S. wheat industry in Lagos, Nigeria.

Talabi

“The British colonized Nigeria and bread was one of the staples for the British. And Nigerians picked up that attitude of eating bread.”

Talabi says that there are 22 commercial milling companies in Nigeria. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Nigeria imported more than 3.7 million tons of wheat from the United States last year. Only Japan and Mexico bought more.

U.S. Wheat Associates is the industry organization that sponsors the Nigerian tour and about nine others each year. It represents the international trade interests of 19 state wheat commissions.

Trade visits such as this are a vital part of keeping the wheat export business successful, says Aaron Harries, director of marketing for the Kansas Wheat Commission.

Harries

“It’s reassuring to them to come and see where the product is coming from, seeing individuals face to face. And relationships are very important to them. Some buyers of wheat are what we call price buyers, where they ultimately buy the cheapest wheat available. Nigerians don’t do that.”
This particular tour through three states will last 10 days and take the Nigerians to research labs, shipping yards and grain elevators. Before arriving at the Kansas City Board of Trade, the Nigerians had already visited farmers in Nebraska and Kansas.

That was a highlight for Tunde Adebayo, human resource manager at Honeywell Flour PLC.

Adebayo

“I had the opportunity to see the wheat farmers, to see the wheat being harvested, and also look at the quality checks that goes on to insure that the quality of the wheat that gets to us even in Nigeria is the right quality.”

Babatunde Idowu, division head for Flour Mills of Nigeria, says the technology and skills he witnessed on this trip encourages him to dream of a future where his own country has a stronger agricultural presence.

Idowu

“So I appreciate what they do. I wish we could do the same thing back home. (Wish you could do the same thing back home?) Back home, yes. That is, produce at least where we have advantage, like rice, maize…So that we can also be like U.S.”

That doesn’t mean the U.S. wheat industry needs to worry.

Idowu

“(But will you continue to buy U.S. wheat?) Yes, of course we would. No doubt about that.”

The Kansas Wheat Commission is hosting a Colombian team in July in honor of the new Colombia / U.S. free trade agreement. If the trade agreement had not been reached, U.S.
Wheat Associates estimates up to $100 million annually in wheat sales could have been lost.

I’m Camille Phillips for Harvest Public Media.
I need to find style for U-pick.. just not sure. dsv

Inviting customers out to the farm is more than fun and games

By Camille Phillips

When I was a child picking blueberries at Persimmon Hills Berry Farm, the idea of getting stung by a bee or suffering from heat stroke never entered my mind. All I cared about was putting as many ripe berries in my pail as I could. But it is on the mind of some Midwest landowners involved in agricultural tourism, known as agritourism. More specifically, they are concerned about being liable for customers being injured on their land.

Outside Frank and Melanie Gieringer’s U-pick peach orchard in Edgerton, Kan., is a waist-high sign declaring that the Gieringers aren’t liable for accidents. It is part of a law that Kansas passed in 2004 to help develop agritourism in the state.

Frank Gieringer said the law helps because although they tell people not to climb the peach trees, children still do so.

“If Junior climbs to the top of the tree, falls out of the tree and breaks his arm…read the sign out there. This is an inherent accident…don’t come back and threaten to sue me,” he said.

The law grants limited liability to agritourism operators if they post warning signs and aids with marketing and promotion via registration with the state agritourism agency. It also is designed to make it easier to obtain liability insurance.
Linda Craghead with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism said that the law helps by putting “an incentive in place to encourage our farmers and ranchers to consider getting into the agritourism business by providing them protection from the consumer who might have other motives in mind.”

As Harvest has previously reported, similar bills have been introduced in Nebraska and Missouri, but have yet to make it into law. (Iowa does not have such a law either.) Carolyn Raasch would be happy to see it become a law in Missouri. She and her husband Buddy are the owners of Carolyn’s Country Cousins in Liberty, Mo. Thousands of schoolchildren come out to their pumpkin patch every year.

“It would definitely give us peace of mind,” Raasch said, adding that it would help them with liability insurance. “Everything has become harder in the insurance world since 9/11…It’s been extremely hard to find liability insurance…”

But Raasch wouldn’t want to put up a big warning sign like the Gieringers have.

“We don’t want to scare people,” she said. “And we don’t want to really have a problem with that. We have had no problems, so we really don’t want to suggest anything.”

Even though the other three states don’t have laws limiting liability for agritourism businesses, they do have programs designed to help develop agritourism. In Missouri, producers can join AgriMissouri for $50 a year. According to the state department of agriculture, AgriMissouri grew from 350 to 1,400 members last year, following a program overhaul.

The agritourism program in Kansas has comparatively few members — 350, despite free registration.
Transcript of field day spot for KBIA.

7/12/2012 0712AgFieldDay Camille Phillips

More than 200 farmers, researchers and sales representatives gathered at the University of Missouri’s Bradford Research Center on Thursday for the annual Pest Management Field Day. Although they came to learn about the latest research on pesticides and herbicides, conversation buzzed about the worst drought since 1988. Harvest Public Media’s Camille Phillips has this report.

0712AgFieldDay TRT: SOC

On Monday, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported 60 percent of the corn crop in Missouri to be in poor condition. That’s no surprise to Billy Thiel [Teal]. He farms corn and soybeans in central Missouri.

Thiel1 TRT: 0:19 OC: half a crop

“The drought’s hitting us pretty hard. It’s the hardest I’ve seen it. We’re really hurting on corn. We’re hoping to catch the rain. Keep beans alive til later in August. We’re not gonna have half a crop.”

Thiel is also the president of the Missouri Corn Growers Association. He says corn farmers across the state are in about as bad of shape as his farm, with the possible exception of the very northwest corner.

George Topel of Sweet Springs, Missouri echoes Theil’s sentiments.
“Corn is really hurting. If we got a lot of rain nearby, we’ll still have a crop of corn. And the beans, I’m concerned they’ll die before the rain comes here.”

Topel’s here to learn about controlling the weeds that have sprung up in his soybeans due to uneven growth. But if the weather doesn’t turn soon he won’t have much of a crop no matter what spray he uses.

“We don’t have any irrigation facilities. So we’re just waiting on the good Lord.”

On Wednesday, the National Weather Service declared almost all of Missouri to be in a moderate to extreme drought, leaving farmers like Thiel and George Topel with their eyes on the sky, hoping for rain to come in time for them to salvage part of their crop.

For Harvest Public Media, I’m Camille Phillips
Nature and scientists play game of one-upmanship

By Camille Phillips

When you spray a pesticide to kill the weeds growing around a crop, you run the danger of hurting the crop itself. Unless, that is, your crop is specifically engineered to resist that pesticide.

That’s one reason why genetically modified plants have become popular with some farmers: they allow for the use of powerful pesticides which in turn gives them better yields.

Recently, chemical companies have developed two new genetically modified plants: HPPD-resistant soybeans and 2,4 D resistant-soybeans. Like Monsanto’s Roundup Ready and Bayer CropScience’s LibertyLink, these plants have been genetically engineered to resist specific herbicides, in this case the herbicides HPPD and 2,4 D.

At last week’s Pest Management Field Day, scientists at Bradford Research Center in Columbia, Mo. showed trials of these new soybeans. A patchwork of light green weeds and dark green plants dissected by lines of clear earth showed the varied success of different trials. In some spots, patches of light green weeds over-ran the dark green rows of soybeans. In other rows, bare earth stood out starkly around the dark green leaves of the soybean plants.
In his thick Tennessee accent, master’s student John Schultz introduced the HPPD-resistant soybean trials, “These are beans that are resistant to herbicides that we normally can’t spray on soybeans. So if you were to go out there and spray Balance-Pro pre-emergent on any run-of-the-mill soybeans, it would not look like this. So don’t do that.”

The crowd, sitting in tarp-covered wagons pulled by tractors, chuckled in response.

Balance-Pro is an HPPD herbicide approved for sale on certain crops, like corn. As of now, use of Balance-Pro is not approved for soybeans.

These new genetically modified soybeans have been created, Schultz said, because new herbicides are needed. Weeds are developing a tolerance to the more commonly used herbicides, such as glyphosate. Glyphosate is the active ingredient in Monsanto’s Roundup.

Schultz said they are testing HPPD on established weeds such as glyphosate-resistant waterhemp at other locations.

“And in the trials that we have there, the pre-emergent herbicides that we have put down in our HPPD trial have been spectacular, to say the least. It’s been a month and a half, and there’s still excellent, excellent control in those…So we’re on track to have a very good technology with us in 2014, 2015, when these beans are starting to be released onto the market,” Schultz said.

But despite the positive trial results, some are wary.
A man from the audience asked whether it was true that weeds were already developing a resistance to HPPD.

“There is some resistance; we should not lose sight of that,” said Dr. Kevin Bradley, the lead researcher on the trials. “There is some resistance to HPPD herbicides in waterhemp in Illinois, Iowa, and I believe even Nebraska now.”

“This is probably not that popular amongst my chemical folks here,” Bradley added, “but most all of these crops are just a bigger Band-Aid. If we abuse them, they will—you will get resistance to them as well.”
Transcript for feature 2 (agritourism).

07/10/2012       0710AGTOURISM                     Camille Phillips

Picking fruit, tasting wine, petting a goat, roping a cow. When customers pay for the honor of taking on such farm chores...or delights…it’s called agritourism. California, Texas and Colorado have the lion’s share of this business. Now Midwestern states are planting the seeds to grow their agritourism industry. But as Harvest Public Media’s Camille Phillips reports, for Midwest farmers it may not be a road to riches.

For a tourist attraction to succeed, it helps if customers can find it.

Seba 1 “We’re illegal to have anything on the road.”

That’s Renee Seba, the owner of Mule Barn Berries, in Lathrop, Missouri, just northeast of Kansas City. On this crisp sunny morning, she’s telling a why there isn’t a sign for Mule Barn Berries on the highway.

Ambi - “We’re new enough still that we don’t want to be stuck with what we put up…!”

This is the second year of operation for the u-pick blackberry patch. Seba and her husband Charlie are still figuring out how to make a go of it.

Last year they didn’t have enough customers come out. With bushels of berries rotting on the vine, they scrambled to find other ways to sell their fruit.

Seba2             TRT:0:12             OC: panic moment

“My husband said, well call Lydia’s restaurant. Or just call. Let’s pack up fruit and take it to grocery stores and see if they’ll buy anything. It was this panic moment.”
Now they are better prepared, Seba says. Several area restaurants buy their berries, they’ve made arrangements to sell at more farmers markets, and as a last resort they can call gleaners to pick the remaining fruit. But u-pick is still the focus.

“U-pick, everyone’s happy. They come out, they have a great experience. I get to talk to people, which I really like… It’s all win-win-win when it’s u-pick.”

Still, the Sebas aren’t over the hump.

“We hoped to be profitable by the end of this year, but that’s not going to be reality. We spent too much money. Didn’t budget well enough.”

Even when the Sebas begin making a profit, odds are it won’t be enough to make a living. Agritourism businesses in Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri and Kansas brought in an average of $12,300 in 2007. That’s according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Ag. Census.

Still, policymakers in the Midwest are enthusiastic about the potential of agritourism. State governments and universities have websites, agencies and staff devoted to developing agritourism into an industry. Linda Craghead has been promoting agritourism in Kansas for 10 years. She now works for the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. The idea, she says, has been slow to catch on.
“It’s new. It’s new for Kansas. Even though we passed the law in 2004 to promote Kansas as an agritourism---as an industry, it’s not something people have just truly embraced…”

There are some pioneers – like Gieringer Orchards in Edgerton, Kansas, 30 miles from Kansas City.

Owner Frank Gieringer farms about 1000 acres and produces corn, soybeans and beef cattle – that’s his family’s primary source of income.

But about ten years ago, Gieringer added a new crop—peaches—and invited people out to the orchard to pick. Today, he has 12 acres of peach trees, a couple of acres of blackberries, sweet corn and five hoop houses full of tomatoes and other vegetables. In addition to u-pick, Gieringer and his wife Melanie sell their produce at a country store on their property, and at several area farmers markets.

Inside the store, Gieringer explains that they found that the best way to get people out to their orchard is to hand out flyers at the farmers market. At the same time, their orchard is a big help in selling their produce at the market.

“But when we set up—we only sell what we grow. And we usually put up a u pick sign too, so people automatically key into the fact that well, they’ve got to grow their stuff.”

Selling their peaches directly to the consumer through u-pick and the farmers market enables the Gieringer’s to make a profit despite their relatively small orchard.
Another pioneer is Carolyn Raasch in Liberty, Missouri.

Ambi – Carolyn – this is our corn maze…

In 1991 she opened Carolyn’s Country Cousins on her farm to sell the pumpkins and other produce she had been selling at a farmers market. That same year, a school asked if they could bring students out to see a farm. Now 17,000 schoolchildren tour their place each year.

Raasch1 TRT: 0:17 OC: all the time

“People used to be able to go to grandma’s and grandpa’s every weekend or aunt’s and uncle’s. And now, we are not one generation removed from the farm, we’re three and four generations removed from the farm. Some of them have never set foot on a farm and just played in the mud and played in the dirt.”

But their school tours offer a lot more than dirt! There’s an animal barn, a pig race, a hay bale maze, a slide and jungle gym made of farm supplies, a train ride and to top it off: a u-pick pumpkin patch. Raasch’s sons also operate a corn maze right next to Carolyn’s Country Cousins.

One of the reasons agritourism appeals to farmers is that it takes advantage of the land, equipment and knowledge they already possess. Raasch and her husband Buddy farm full time, as do their two adult sons. They use the same farm equipment and expertise to plant their 8000 acres of row crops as they do to plant the 60 acre u-pick pumpkin patch and corn maze.

Raasch2 TRT: 0:10 OC: by far
“Would you say you make more money doing agritourism than the row crops?” “Oh no, Row crops is our number one income. Row crop is our number one income by far.”

Still, the attractions draw thousands of paying customers each year and employ 150 people each fall. That kind of success can create a ripple effect of economic growth in a rural community.

Linda Craghead -- with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism -- takes the potential even further – envisioning Kansas farms as vacation destinations.

Craghead2 TRT: 0:11 OC: very few.

“But there are so many people that want to experience what we do every day…How many people out there have really ever ridden on a combine? …Very few.”

A family vacation milking cows or harvesting wheat may never have the appeal of Disneyland. But for the farmers that decide to branch out into agritourism, perhaps the opportunity to share their way of life is enough. Especially when it can help bring an influx of cash to their community and put a few extra thousand dollars in their pocket.

I’m Camille Phillips for Harvest Public Media.
When Midwest farming and tourism intersect, cautious optimism prevails

By Camille Phillips

Harvest Public Media

Are Midwestern farmers overlooking an opportunity ripe for the picking?

Farm-based tourism attractions like “u-pick” berry patches, wine tastings, dude ranches and guided hunting trips have operated in the region for years. But California, Texas and Colorado have the lion’s share of this type of business, often called agritourism. Recently, however, Midwestern policymakers have begun planting the seeds to grow the agritourism industry in their states.

And more farmers seem to be recognizing the potential for rural community building and additional income.

Renee Seba and her husband Charlie are among those figuring out how to make a go of it. They own Mule Barn Berries, in Lathrop, Mo., north of Kansas City.

Last year they didn’t have enough customers for their u-pick operation. With bushels of berries rotting on the vine, they scrambled to find other ways to sell the fruit.

“My husband said, well call Lidia’s Restaurant. Let’s pack up fruit and take it to grocery stores and see if they’ll buy anything. It was this panic moment,” Renee Seba said.
But this year they are better prepared. Several area restaurants buy their berries, they’ve made arrangements to sell at more farmers markets, and as a last resort they can call gleaners to pick the remaining fruit. And, of course, they have u-pick.

“U-pick, everyone’s happy,” Seba said. “They come out, they have a great experience. I get to talk to people, which I really like. It’s all win-win-win when it’s u-pick.”

Still, the Sebas aren’t over the hump.

“We hoped to be profitable by the end of this year, but that’s not going to be reality,” Renee Seba said. “We spent too much money. Didn’t budget well enough.”

Even when the Sebas begin making a profit, odds are it won’t be enough to make much of a living. Agritourism businesses in Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri and Kansas brought in an average of $12,344 in 2007. That’s according to the Census of Agriculture undertaken every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

As modest as the 2007 Midwest agritourism numbers were, they show a marked improvement from the 2002 Agriculture Census. In the five years between 2002 and 2007, the average revenue of agritourism businesses in Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri and Kansas increased by almost 260 percent from $3,443 to $12,344.

Over the last few years, state agencies and universities have developed numerous resources and web sites devoted to agritourism, which may be part of the reason revenue improved.

Missouri, for example, has AgriMissouri, a program begun in the 1980s to promote agricultural products. The 25-year-old program — which producers can join for $50 a
year — grew from 350 to 1,400 members last year, following a program overhaul, according to the state Department of Agriculture. More than 400 of those members have agritourism businesses. Now the program focuses on “connecting producers to consumers and consumers to agriculture.” Its new focus is also reflected in a new website, which includes a map of agritourism operations in the state.

Kansas also has a map of agritourism businesses on its state websites, simplykansas.com and kansasagritourism.com. There are about 350 businesses listed, but among that number include companies that have more to do with selling products such as jams or baked goods than offering experiences such as u-pick or hunting.

Officials in both states agree that their states have barely scratched the surface of agritourism’s potential. Less than 2 percent of farms in the four-state region have agritourism operations, according to the 2007 ag census.

“It’s new for Kansas,” said Linda Craghead with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. “Even though we passed the law in 2004 to promote Kansas as an agritourism -- as an industry, it’s not something people have just truly embraced.”

That law is the Agritourism Promotion Act, which was passed with the aim of encouraging Kansas farmers and ranchers to get into agritourism. It limits the liability of agritourism operators and aids in marketing via free registration.

Gieringer Orchards in Edgerton, Kan., is among those who have registered with the state. Owners Frank and Melanie Gieringer said adding a u-pick component to their peach orchard was a natural progression.
Frank Gieringer farms about 1,000 acres and produces corn, soybeans and beef cattle—which is his family’s primary source of income.

But he also has 12 acres of peach trees, a couple of acres of blackberries, sweet corn and five hoop houses full of tomatoes and other vegetables. The smaller acreage of these specialty crops make it necessary to sell directly to the customer in order to make a profit, Gieringer said. As such, inviting customers out to the orchard 10 years ago to pick their own peaches made sense.

In addition to u-pick, the Gieringers sell their produce at a country store on their property, and at several area farmers markets. Going to farmers markets gives them an opportunity to hand out flyers about their orchard, Gieringer said from inside the store. At the same time, their orchard is a big help in selling their produce at the market.

“But when we set up, we only sell what we grow,” Gieringer said. “And we usually put up a u-pick sign too, so people automatically key into the fact that well, they’ve got to grow their stuff.”

Much like the Gieringers, Carolyn Raasch in Liberty, Mo., kind of fell into agritourism.

In 1991 she opened Carolyn’s Country Cousins on her farm to sell the pumpkins and other produce she had been selling at a farmers market. That same year, a school asked if they could bring students out to see a farm. Now 17,000 schoolchildren tour the farm each year.

Raasch has become a sort of ambassador for agriculture, educating the children and adults who come on the tours about farm life.
“People used to be able to go to grandma’s and grandpa’s every weekend or aunt’s and uncle’s,” Raasch said. “And now, we are not one generation removed from the farm, we’re three and four generations removed from the farm. Some of them have never set foot on a farm and just played in the mud and played in the dirt, like we used to all the time.”

But their school tours offer a lot more than dirt. There’s an animal barn, a pig race, a hay bale maze, a slide and jungle gym made of farm supplies, a train ride and to top it off: a u-pick pumpkin patch. Raasch’s sons also operate a corn maze right next to Carolyn’s Country Cousins.

Despite their originally modest intentions, the Raasches have stayed in the agritourism business and expanded their operations because it makes sense for them. It takes advantage of the land, equipment and knowledge they already possess. Raasch and her husband Buddy farm full-time, as do their two adult sons. They use the same farm equipment and expertise to plant their 8,000 acres of row crops as they do to plant the 60 acre u-pick pumpkin patch and corn maze.

Still, traditional farming remains the Raasch family’s primary income.

“Row crop is our number one income. Row crop is our number one income by far,” Raasch said.

While agritourism may provide a limited contribution to Midwest farmers’ bottom lines, there’s yet another way to measure the value: impact on rural economies.
Carolyn’s Country Cousins draws thousands of paying customers each year and employs 150 people each fall. That kind of success can create a ripple effect of economic growth in a rural community, said Sharon Gulick with the University of Missouri Extension. After all, tourists need places to stay, restaurants to eat in, and a variety of things to do.

Gulick, who oversees rural economic development projects in the state, helps identify the potential on a regional basis. Often times, she said, the food of the region is what stands out most.

"And that’s where the unique opportunity comes in, because the wine in Mississippi River Hills is very different than the wine that’s in Old Trails,” Gulick said.

A regional agritourism magnet for tourists? Some state officials think it could happen.

Craghead, with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism, envisions Kansas farms as vacation destinations.

“But there are so many people that want to experience what we do every day,” she said.

“How many people out there have really ever ridden on a combine? Very few. How many people have stood in a grain truck and felt the warm grain around them as it comes out the auger of a combine? Very few. ”

A family vacation milking cows or harvesting wheat may never have the appeal of Disneyland. But for the farmers that decide to branch out into agritourism, perhaps the opportunity to share their way of life is enough. Especially when it can help bring an influx of cash to their community and put a few extra thousand dollars in their pocket.
So how big is this industry?

Fully understanding the potential of agritourism in the Midwest and the country as a whole is hampered by two factors: the lack of an official definition of agritourism and the limited amount of economic data available.

The only comprehensive source on the economic impact of agritourism available in the United States comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Census of Agriculture. Every agriculture producer in the country is required to fill out the agriculture census questionnaire, which comes out every five years. However, the questionnaire leaves the definition of agritourism open to interpretation, describing it as “farm or winery tours, hay rides, hunting, fishing, etc.” It depends on the individual producer what they report, and it is possible, for example, that winery owners only reported the amount they received directly from wine tours and omitted money from overnight stays, restaurants and selling the wine itself.

According to the Wine Institute, an organization that represents the interests of the California wine industry, California wine contributed $2.1 billion to the tourist industry in 2006. That’s $2.07 billion less than what the entire California agritourism industry made in 2007 according to the agriculture census. The Census questionnaire also has a separate section for reporting income received from selling products directly to the customer. That means income from u-pick and country stores may not be included in the agritourism numbers.

Still, here's what the USDA numbers show: (followed by infographic)
Transcript of first My Farm Roots audio.

Script:

[HIT MUSIC HOT]

[FADE MUSIC UNDERNEATH]

ANNOUNCER INTRO: It’s time now for My Farm Roots, a series from Harvest Public Media in which we hear Americans’ stories and memories of rural life. Because when you hail from farm country, roots run deep.

[BRING MUSIC UP, DOWN, OUT UNDERNEATH]

REPORTER INTRO:

I’m Camille Phillips, a reporter for Harvest Public Media. Last month, several generations of my family came to Parsons, Kansas to celebrate my grandfather’s 90th birthday party. With all eight living Phillips siblings and their families gathered in one place, there were many stories of growing up on the farm to share. This is one from my great-aunt Jan Phillips, a teacher by trade.

TK:

My name is Jan Phillips. I grew up at Miller, Missouri on a farm. I live in St. Louis now. I’m 75 years old and I have wonderful memories of the farm. When I was young my parents had a dairy farm. And so, I was rolled out in my baby buggy to the barnyard. And the cows were curious because I had invaded their barn lot. And one cow in particular got very close down into my baby buggy to see what was happening. I don’t know if I was making noise or flinging my arms around, but here was a cow down right next to me. And then she stood up. I must have sort of hit her a little bit...
on her nose. And when she stood up, my baby buggy was around her neck because she had put her head under the handle of my baby buggy, so it’s hanging around her neck like a necklace. And the wheels come down and sort of hit her on the legs. She jumps. Well, the baby buggy goes out and comes back and whacks her on the legs again. And she starts running down the hillside out of the barnyard, down and then up a little hill on the other side.

And apparently my folks came out panicked to see cow, baby buggy and baby Jan going across the barnyard and down the hill. And I’m assuming that the wheels of the baby buggy must have hit the grass as she was going up the hill on the other side. And somehow she just sort of lowered her head, took it out from under the handle bars and started grazing.

Well my folks came running up to find me laughing. They said that they were quite certain I was going to be a very adventurous person later on.

This is a very small community; Miller was probably 1500, a very small little community. And the Kansas City Star was big time newspaper for that area. And there was a cartoon and an article with a cow dressed up like a nurse with a hat, pushing a baby buggy and it told the story of little Miss Janice Ann Robinson and the cow story.

REPORTER OUTRO:

You can find that 1937 cartoon on the My Farm Roots page at Harvest Public Media dot org.

[HIT MUSIC VERY HOT, then underneath]
ANNOUNCER OUTRO: Harvest Public Media is a collaboration of [INSERT STATION] and other public media stations across the Midwest. To hear more My Farm Roots stories – or to share your own – visit Harvest Public Media dot org, slash My Farm Roots.

[BRING MUSIC OUT]
My Farm Roots: Lightening the load

Ninety years ago this May, my grandfather, Ronald Merle Phillips, and his twin brother, Robert Earl, were born on a farm near Chetopa, Kan. His twin died of influenza before their second birthday, but my grandpa is still alive and well. To celebrate that fact, 150 family and friends gathered at the community center in Parsons, Kan. last month.

After the party, the family continued the celebration at my great-uncle Terry’s nearby farm. All eight living Phillips siblings were there, with several generations of family laughing and reminiscing on the patio, splashing in the pool and laying out food in the kitchen.

My grandpa and his nine siblings grew up moving from farm to farm in Southeast Kansas, so they have lots of farm stories to share. Their parents were sharecroppers, which meant the family was more transient and less wealthy than those who owned the land they farmed.

I drove my grandpa home after the party, and asked him about his experience with sharecropping.

“Sharecroppers were not the most highly-rated people,” he said. “Because a lot of people owned their own farms. Sharecroppers were thought to always have big families and be poorer. We moved from farm to farm every two or three years. I probably went to five or six schools in eight years.”
But despite the hardships they experienced growing up during the Depression as the children of sharecroppers, most of the stories they told about the farm were light-hearted — a horse getting stung by a bee while baling hay, playing “whipcracker” on frozen fields by spooking a cow and holding on to its tail as it spun around, rigging up old buggies to race down the hill.

Perhaps it was the party atmosphere, or fondness lent by the passage of time, but I also think it’s an attitude gained from growing up working the land during that time and place. They learned to work hard, use what they had, and to focus on the positive to get them through.

Humor and good stories were in high demand beyond just the Phillips family, too. A tale about my great-aunt Jan Phillips caught the ear of the local newspaper editor in Miller, Mo., who published the story. Another newspaper published a version of the story and a cartoon in its “Goings on in the Ozarks” section. And the morning edition of the Kansas City Star, the Kansas City Times, reprinted the article as well (on Aug. 24, 1937).

Jan’s story about “Little Miss Janice Ann Robinson and the cow” is the subject of this week’s My Farm Roots. Her well-turned phrases and fluid speech reflect the oft-told nature of the tale. After all, Jan was too young when the story occurred for her to remember it happening of her own accord. Jan’s ease with words is also reflective of her vocation; she taught at a private school in St. Louis and wrote a book about wild edibles for the Missouri Department of Conversation.
Jan said growing up on the farm inspired her to write the book. “I wrote a book on wild edibles that was a result of my father giving me the green persimmon before it was ripe, which is a very, very dry, pulling number,” she said with a wry chuckle.
Draft of blog post four.

It all comes down to belief

By Camille Phillips

Last week I took a trip up to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to talk to food safety scientist Rick Goodman about his research on the risks of allergens in genetically modified crops. Goodman is a former employee of Monsanto, one of the major providers of genetically modified seeds.

In the midst of complex explanations about the allergenicity of proteins, two of Goodman’s comments stood out: people should rely on the weight of evidence and in the end it’s a matter of belief.

When it comes to genetically modified crops, however, it’s more about relying on the scientist than the evidence. The average consumer doesn’t have the knowledge base to accurately interpret scientific studies.

My high school forays into biology, for example, leave me able to follow a basic scientific explanation, but my knowledge is too limited to be able to judge for myself how sound the science is. So I have to rely on the scientists to explain their research to me. This is fine when all the scientists agree, but in this case they don’t.

According to Goodman, the weight of evidence shows that the genetically modified crops currently on the market are safe for consumption. But according to Jeffrey Smith, author or Genetic Roulette, scientists funded by biotech companies avoid undertaking studies
that might show negative results. He references preliminary studies from other parts of
the world as more independent and definitive.

Smith's background is in business, not science, but he has become the definitive voice
against genetically modified food in the United States. "I've been talking to scientists and
translating their work to common English for 16 years," he said.

So who does the consumer believe? For that matter, who does the farmer trust?

Nathan Dorn, a farmer from Firth, Neb. is among the 80 percent of corn and soybean
farmers in the country who grows genetically modified crops. These farmers are relying
on the biotech companies to give them safe seeds. Talk in the media against GMOs
(genetically modified organisms) makes Dorn feel misunderstood.

“My family eats the same food I grow,” Dorn told me. To him, if he believes the food is
safe for his family to eat, then consumers should trust that it is safe as well.

When it comes to GMOs, farmers and consumers are in it together. As long as
government agencies approve the sale of genetically modified seeds and biotech
companies Farmers grow genetically modified crops because it helps them have greater
yields and thus more profit. With their livelihood on the line, they have decided to trust
the biotech companies who have developed the science and the government agencies that
have approved them for commercial use. Consumers have power by deciding what they
buy. But only among the options presented to them.
When it comes to GMOs, farmers and consumers are in it together. They both are dependent on the information coming to them from advocates and scientists, biotech companies and government agencies. And the more voices added to the mix, the more perspectives there are to sift through. As far as the biotech companies and government agencies are concerned, the matter is closed.

The research has been done, the products currently on the market have been approved for sale. But for others the conclusions aren’t so clear.
Eighteen years ago, genetically modified food was introduced in the United States. First there were tomatoes, then soybeans, potatoes and corn. As the years passed, more and more farmland was planted with genetically modified crops—plants with a gene added to their DNA, giving them new traits such as pesticide resistance.

During that same period, a growing number of children developed allergies to food. Despite assurances of safety from biotech companies and government agencies, the parallel timing has raised suspicion. Harvest Public Media’s Camille Phillips checked out the research.

At this grocery store in Liberty, Missouri, some people are reading labels because they’re counting calories or want to eat healthier. Jenny Giles is reading labels to avoid buying something that could harm her daughter Avery.

“Well those are all right for you. (They’re Blue Bunny) It has allergy information right there. If you want to get those banana pops I’ll let you.”

Ten-year-old Avery Giles is highly allergic to peanuts. [Just sitting next to a friend eating a peanut butter sandwich could cause her to break out in hives.] Eating a peanut could cause her throat to swell up, put her in a coma or even kill her.
“I get really scared sometimes of the ambulance and shots…”

A food allergy like Avery’s used to be pretty rare, but it’s becoming more common.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of children with food allergies rose 18 percent between 1997 and 2007.

It may be that more people report that their children have food allergies today because they are more aware of the possibility. Or perhaps, as some argue, more children in the United States develop food allergies because children are less exposed to germs and allergens.

But others point out that the mid-90s today’s children and teenagers have been eating genetically modified food all their lives, in steadily increasing proportions.

Just because the timing coincides, though, does not necessarily mean eating genetically modified food caused the rise, says Rick Goodman. He is a Food Science and Technology professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

“We have to kind of look at our whole world, the whole context. If so many things are changing in our diets, in how much exercise we get, in vaccinations that keep us from having certain diseases, in the number of visits to the doctor, in how many times we take antibiotics during our lifetime…”
Goodman’s specialty is assessing the risk of allergens in genetically modified products, a skill he developed working for the biotech giant Monsanto. St. Louis-based Monsanto makes some of the most popular genetically modified products on the market, including Roundup Ready Soybeans and Corn.

At his lab on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus, Goodman explains the steps he takes to test the likelihood that products may cause an allergic reaction.

First, the protein created by the added gene is isolated. Then that protein is tested on a serum made from the antibodies of people allergic to similar proteins.

According to Goodman, this process is enough to determine whether a genetically modified product is at risk of causing allergic reactions.

“…under the current system and products that are available, there is really no reason concern for a health impact from genetically modified crops.”

But Jeffrey Smith disagrees. Smith is a longtime critic of genetically modified food who has made it his mission to expose the dangers he believes they pose and get the products removed from the food supply.
“The process of genetic engineering can cause hundreds or thousands of mutations up and down the DNA and up to 5 percent of the existing natural genes can change their levels of expression. And these are not evaluated in the superficial studies that are being done before the crops get on the market as food.”

Smith gets some of his information from published studies, but much of it comes from personal communication with scientists. He acknowledges that there’s not a lot of conclusive research yet, but he thinks initial findings are worrisome enough to merit further study. Many of the studies Smith does reference are animal studies, because there are few human studies.

Smith 02  TRT: 0:09  OC: in laboratories

“We know that animals consistently react to GMOs when their immune system is tested in a competent way in laboratories.”

But according to Goodman, current animal studies only predict human reactions half the time. He says testing people for allergic reactions can be dangerous and complicated—which is why researchers use human antibodies in pre-market tests. As for studies on people eating genetically modified food already on the market, Goodman says those are too hard to control.

Goodman05  TRT: 0:11  OC: a population?

“We don’t know who ate Roundup Ready soybeans versus quote unquote conventional soybeans. So how can you make a correlation and how do you study a population?”
It’s fairly safe to say that most everyone in the United States has eaten genetically
modified soybeans—for the past five years more than ninety percent of the U.S. soybean
crop has been genetically engineered. And soy can be found in a lot of different types of
food, especially processed food—everything from breads and pasta to meat and dairy.
If genetically modified food were labeled, then maybe scientists could keep track and
these types of studies would be more feasible. Labeling is one of the activist Smith’s
primary goals. He thinks labeling genetically modified food will lead to customers
rebelling against the technology.

AMBI – support group

At a restaurant in Lee’s Summit, Missouri, however, three members of a support group
for parents of highly allergic children see another problem.

Hawkins01       TRT: 0:07       OC I’d be like-ugh!

“I don’t see that there would be much left to buy. And I’m already so limited; I’d be like-
ugh!”

Labels on genetically modified food could soon be put to the test. A ballot initiative to
require labeling will be voted on in California come November.

I’m Camille Phillips for Harvest Public Media.
Eighteen years ago, genetically modified food was introduced in the United States. First there were tomatoes, then soybeans, potatoes and corn. As the years passed, more and more farmland was planted with genetically modified crops—plants with a gene added to their DNA, giving them new traits such as pesticide resistance.

During that same period, a growing number of children developed allergies to food. Despite assurances of safety from biotech companies and government agencies, the parallel timing has raised suspicion in some circles.

Just because the timing coincides, though, does not necessarily mean eating genetically modified food caused the rise, said Rick Goodman. He is a Food Science and Technology professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

“We have to kind of look at our whole world, the whole context,” said Goodman. “If so many things are changing in our diets, in how much exercise we get, in vaccinations that keep us from having certain diseases, in the number of visits to the doctor, in how many times we take antibiotics during our lifetime, things like that.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prevalence of children with food allergies rose 18 percent between 1997 and 2007.

Data on food allergies was not consistently collected prior to 1997, so it’s unknown how common they were before then. Still, the data that is available indicates a significant increase over time, Amy Branum with the National Center for Health Statistics said in an email. She is co-author of the CDC report on allergies.
According to Branum’s records, 5.5 percent of parents surveyed in 2011 reported having a child with food allergies. That’s a 67 percent increase from 1997, when just 3.3 percent of parents answered positively to the question. In straight numbers, that’s an estimated additional 2.7 million children in a fourteen year time span.

It may be that more people report that their children have food allergies today because they are more aware of the possibility. Or perhaps, as some argue, more children in the United States develop food allergies because children are less exposed to germs and allergens now.

But others point out that the first genetically modified food hit grocery store shelves in the mid-90s. That means today’s children and teenagers have been eating genetically modified food all their lives.

Goodman’s specialty is assessing the risk of allergens in genetically modified products, a skill he developed working for the biotech giant Monsanto. St. Louis-based Monsanto makes some of the most popular genetically modified products on the market, including Roundup Ready Soybeans and Roundup Ready Corn.

At his lab on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus, Goodman explained the steps he takes to test the likelihood that products may cause an allergic reaction.

First, the protein created by the added gene is isolated. Then that protein is tested on a serum made from the antibodies of people allergic to similar proteins.

According to Goodman, this process is enough to determine whether a genetically modified product is at risk of causing allergic reactions.
“Under the current system and products that are available, there is really no reason concern for a health impact from genetically modified crops,” Goodman said.

Monsanto’s director of corporate affairs, Tom Helscher, agrees with Goodman. “We do not find any credible evidence associating GM [genetically modified] food with the occurrence of allergy in children or adults,” he wrote in an email to Harvest.

But Jeffrey Smith disagrees. Smith is a longtime critic of genetically modified food who has made it his mission to expose the dangers he believes they pose and get the products removed from the food supply. Based in Iowa, Smith has written two books on the topic, Seeds of Deception and Genetic Roulette.

“The process of genetic engineering can cause hundreds or thousands of mutations up and down the DNA and up to 5 percent of the existing natural genes can change their levels of expression,” Smith said. “And these are not evaluated in the superficial studies that are being done before the crops get on the market as food.”

Smith gets some of his information from published studies, but much of it comes from personal communication with scientists. He acknowledges that there’s not a lot of conclusive research yet, but he thinks initial findings are worrisome enough to merit further study. Many of the studies Smith does reference are animal studies, because there are few human studies.

“We know that animals consistently react to GMOs [genetically modified organisms] when their immune system is tested in a competent way in laboratories,” Smith said. But according to Goodman, current animal studies only predict human reactions half the time. He said testing people for allergic reactions can be dangerous and complicated—
which is why researchers use human antibodies in pre-market tests. As for studies on people eating genetically modified food already on the market, Goodman said those are too hard to control.

“We don’t know who ate Roundup Ready Soybeans versus quote unquote conventional soybeans,” Goodman said. “So how can you make a correlation and how do you study a population?”

It’s fairly safe to say that most everyone in the United States has eaten genetically modified soybeans—for the past five years more than ninety percent of the U.S. soybean crop has been genetically engineered. And soy can be found in a lot of different types of food, especially processed food—everything from breads and pasta to meat and dairy. If genetically modified food were labeled, then maybe scientists could keep track and these types of studies would be more feasible. Labeling is one of the activist Smith’s primary goals. He thinks labeling genetically modified food will lead to customers rebelling against the technology.

At a support group in Lee’s Summit, Missouri, however, three mothers of highly allergic children see another problem.

“I don’t see that there would be much left to buy,” Melody Hawkins said. “And I’m already so limited; I’d be like-ugh!”

Opponents of mandatory labeling say it would be difficult, costly and give the inaccurate perception that genetically modified food is a health concern. Supporters say labeling is a matter of the public’s right to know. Californians will have a chance to show who they
agree with come November, when a ballot initiative requiring labels on genetically modified food will be put to the vote.
The money behind the face of the No on 37 Coalition

By Camille Phillips

The biotech companies and food manufacturers threw their weight behind the No on 37 Coalition en mass this week. The coalition opposes an initiative on California’s November ballot that would require labeling on any food containing genetically modified ingredients.

On Tuesday, 79 donations were filed with California’s Secretary of State’s office, totaling $23.7 million. Prior to August 14, the campaign had received less than $2 million total. According to the Associated Press, much of the money will be spent on ads and mail warning consumers that voting yes on the initiative will make the cost of groceries go up. In addition to making groceries more expensive, members of the coalition also argue that requiring labels implies a health concern where none exists.

“Proposals that would require labeling of GM ingredients where there is no meaningful difference in nutrition or safety risk misleading consumers into thinking products are not safe when in fact they are,” said biotech giant Monsanto’s director of corporate affairs, Tom Delscher, in an email to Harvest.
“There is reason to be concerned about misleading consumers – some of the leading proponents of mandatory GM labeling have been outspoken in proclaiming that GM products are not safe, which is simply not true,” Helscher said.

Jeffrey Smith is one of the outspoken proponents to which Helscher is referring. Smith is the author of two books on the dangers of genetically modified food. He is currently traveling through California on a speaking tour in support of the Yes on 37 campaigns.

“It’s absolutely irresponsible of the government not to require labeling of genetically-modified foods,” Smith told Harvest last week in a phone interview.

The anti-labeling campaign is officially called No on 37: Coalition against the Deceptive Food Labeling Scheme, Sponsored by Farmers and Food Producers, but the main contributors to the campaign are all biotech companies and food manufacturers, not farmers and ranchers.

Five of the top six biotech companies (Monsanto, DuPont, Dow Agrosciences, Bayer CropScience and Basf PlantScience) have donated more than a million dollars each, with the sixth, Syngenta, donating more than $800,000. Monsanto and DuPont both donated more than $4 million.

Rounding out the top ten contributors are four big names in food manufacturing: PepsiCo, Nestle, Coca-Cola and Conagra Foods, all donating more than $1 million.
The campaign’s website also downplays the role of biotech companies and food manufacturers. Clicking through to the Who We Are page brings a long list of farm bureaus and growers associations, followed by chambers of commerce and food associations. At the bottom of the list lies one entry for science: the Council for Biotechnology Information.

Read the small print at the bottom of the screen, however, and new names appear. “Major funding by Monsanto Company, E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Co., Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) and more than 40 food company members,” reads the text in the space generally reserved for website copyright information. A link to a list of donors follows. The only way to find the donor page is via this link. It is not one of the tabs at the top of the page.

The Grocery Manufacturers Association and the Council for Biotechnology Information were the first to file donations to the coalition back in April. But individual biotech companies didn’t file donations until July, after the end of the reporting period at the California Secretary of State’s office.

Despite the appearance of hiding, perhaps the lack of emphasis on the major companies funding the campaign is simply a matter of putting the best face forward. After all, a biotech company would hardly be in favor of an initiative that implies their products are unsafe. But farmers and consumers give a more friendly face to the campaign.
Tom Helscher certainly didn’t try and hide Monsanto’s connection to the campaign in his email to Harvest. “Monsanto is part of the growing coalition of California family farmers, doctors, scientists, food producers, grocers, small business, labor and taxpayer groups opposed to Proposition 37,” Helscher wrote. “For details about the onerous initiative, please contact the No on Proposition 37 coalition media contact, Kathy Fairbanks.”

Granted, the email was sent on August 14, the same day Monsanto filed its $4.2 million donation with the Secretary of State.
Helping AgTourism Grow as an Industry

Are Midwestern farmers overlooking an opportunity ripe for the picking?

Farm-based tourism attractions such as “u-pick” berry patches, wine tastings, dude ranches and guided hunting trips have operated in the region for years. But California, Texas and Colorado have the biggest share of this type of business, often called agritourism.

Recently, however, Midwestern policy-makers have begun planting the seeds to grow the agritourism industry in their states. And more farmers seem to be recognizing the potential for rural community building and additional income.

Renee Seba and her husband, Charlie, are among those figuring out how to make a go of it. They own Mule Barn Berries in Lathrop, Mo., north of Kansas City.

Last year they didn’t have enough customers for their u-pick operation. With bushels of berries rotting on the vine, they scrambled to find other ways to sell the fruit.

“My husband said, ‘Well, call Lida’s Restaurant. Let’s pack up fruit’...
Chapter Five: Analysis Component

Professional Role Conceptions of Public Radio Journalists:

A Closer Connection to the Audience

It’s no secret that the news industry has taken an economic beating over the past few years. According to the PEW Research Center, newspaper newsrooms have shrunk by 30 percent since 2000 (State of the News Media Report 2011). “After two dreadful years, most sectors of the industry saw revenue begin to recover” the report overview reads. “With some notable exceptions, cutbacks in newsrooms ended.” The end of cutbacks, however, does not mean a return of pre-recession numbers in newsroom staff. The bleeding has stopped, as it were, but there has been no infusion of new blood to aid in the recovery. The result for the American audience is a loss of news coverage, particularly local news and accountability reporting. According to a 2010 PEW Research survey, 20 percent of newsroom executives (including both newspaper and broadcast) think “their staff is too small to do more than ‘the bare minimum level of reporting.’” Likewise, only eight percent of those surveyed feel their newsroom is “still plenty big to do the job.” In the commercial radio news industry, there have been declines as well. According to Arbitron, for example, there were only 30 all-news commercial stations in the country in 2009 (PEW State of the Media 2011). The Audio section of the 2011 PEW Research State of the Media report goes on to acknowledge that 3,446 stations identified
as “news/talk/information” but suggested that “the evidence suggests that means heavily talk” (PEW State of the Media 2011).

A report released by the Federal Communications Commission in 2011 echoes some of these same concerns. One of the major findings of the report was that “An abundance of media outlets does not necessarily translate into an abundance of reporting” (FCC p.1). In other words, just because there is a lot of content out there doesn’t mean it is unique content. However, the report also found one area where a lot of unique content was available: nonprofit media. “The nonprofit media has become more varied, and more important, than ever before” was another major finding of the report (FCC p.1). In 2010 and 2011, even among staffing controversy and a vote in the House of Representatives to abolish federal funding, the number of listeners tuning in and logging on to NPR continued to grow and donations continued to rise (PEW Research 2011 and 2012).

Where commercial media may have to let go of staff in order to maintain enough profit-margin to please shareholders, public media only has to balance the budget. Where commercial media companies struggling to make ends meet might need to sell to the big corporation, public media outlets need only maintain federal funding and cultivate generous donors. Carl Sessions Stepp interviewed journalists at PBS NewsHour and other nonprofit news outlets and found that those he spoke with felt working for a nonprofit gave them greater freedom to cover the topics they felt mattered and take the time to
analyze all sides of an issue (Stepp, 2004). Jennifer Hlad pointed to non-profit news outlets as a means to plug “news holes” caused by the newspaper recession (Hlad, 2009). In response to the growing trend to add pay walls to news websites, Jim Naureckas called for increased funding for public media as a means of “decomodifying” the news; moving news content from a good to be paid for to a service to the public (Naureckas, 2009). But the most ringing endorsement for public media comes from Bill Kling, the founder of Minnesota Public Radio and American Public Media. He says that local public media are needed imminently to fill gaps in news coverage, but that we as a country are not ready due to lack of infrastructure and potential conflicts of interest (Meares 2011).

Public media as they exist in the United States today have their origins in the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. The Act created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which distributes federal funds to public radio and television stations throughout the country. The Carnegie Commission that was the impetus for the Act said the mission of public broadcasting was to “provide a voice for groups in the community that may otherwise be unheard” and to “be a forum for controversy and debate” (Hoynes, 2007, p. 370). It has been argued, however, that public broadcasting does a better job with the second mandate than the first (Hoynes, 2007; McCauley et al., 2003) because the audience of public media tends to be white, at least middle class, and well educated. Even so, those in the field of public media still see it as having a vital role. McCauley et al. outline three approaches to the media: the “public service approach” that is designed to
be anti-market and guide public conversation but “sometimes give off a strong scent of paternalism,” the “commercial approach” (traditional private business model), and the “public sphere approach,” with the goal of “societal integration.” McCauley et al. suggest the public sphere model as the ideal and describe it as an extension of the coffee house; a virtual “third place” (McCauley et al., 2003, p. xix). The literature on public media in the United States (Avery, 2007, McCauley et al., 2003, Hoynes, 2007) as well as the trade journals (Stepp, 2004; Naureckas, 2009; Hlad, 2009; Meares, 2011) all imply that public media works on a different paradigm, but little research has been done to test the assumption. With the rising prominence of public media in the American media landscape, the question of whether or not journalists in the nonprofit sector fulfill a different mission is more relevant than ever before. This study is intended to be a first step in answering that question, through research undertaken at two Midwest public radio stations, KCUR in Kansas City, Mo. and KBIA in Columbia, Mo. as well as the Local Journalism Center (LJC) Harvest Public Media. Harvest Public Media is based out of KCUR and KBIA is one of Harvest’s partner stations.
Research Questions

*RQ1a: What are the professional role conceptions of public radio journalists at KCUR, KBIA and Harvest Public Media?*

*RQ1b: Why do they see themselves in these roles?*

Since public radio gets its funding primarily from listener donations rather than the advertising that funds most newspapers and TV news, theoretically public radio journalists only have to please their listeners. Unlike commercial news outlets, public media don’t have to keep advertisers or shareholders happy. Quantitative research based on surveys have been done to see what roles journalists in general see for themselves, but there hasn’t been much qualitative research in that area, nor has a study targeted public radio journalists as opposed to commercial journalists. Weaver and Wilhoit (1986 and 1994) developed four titles for journalists based on the roles they self-identified with in their studies: “adversary,” “disseminator,” “interpretive,” and “public mobilizer” (Cassidy 2008 p.108). The goal of speaking with public radio journalists was to determine whether the roles they identify with mirror those of their commercial counterparts or reflect a different perspective. Furthermore, why do they see themselves in these roles and how do these roles effect their decision-making process?
**RQ2: How does being a non-profit public media outlet impact the content produced at KBIA, KCUR, and Harvest Public Media?**

Because public radio has a different revenue model than commercial news, it seems likely that public radio journalists have different gatekeepers. It follows, then, that public radio journalists might have different influencers on the content they produce. For example, since part of their funding indirectly comes from the government, do public radio journalists ever avoid stories that reflect negatively on the government? Or is there ever pressure to put people who have donated a lot of money to the station in a good light? What about corporate sponsorships and underwriting? Does that influence content? It must be kept in mind, however, that because non-profits are partially dependent on donations, their listeners and supporters are often people with disposable income. Does that mean content is chosen that is thought to be favored by those in that economic bracket?

**Relevance of study**

These research questions matter for the broader world of journalism because keeping the media content diverse allows for a freer flow of information and a more informed public. Having revenue sources outside of the media conglomerates sounds like it could help with that goal. Furthermore, the increasing need for alternate sources of revenue is making research on non-profit media more relevant than ever before. Even traditionally commercial newspapers have looked into obtaining audience support. The
Columbia Missourian, for example, has partnered with a company called Kachingle that enables Internet readers to donate a small amount of money each month. Some online newspapers have even sprung up running entirely as a non-profit organization. The online newspaper, St. Louis Beacon, for example, is a non-profit that depends on donations for much of its revenue.

This research is personally relevant because of the researcher’s work as a public radio journalist for Harvest Public Media during the professional component of her masters project. She is also planning a career as a public radio reporter upon the completion of her degree. Interviewing journalists at KBIA and KCUR has enabled her to have a better understanding of what her future in public radio may be like.

Theory

Professional Role Conceptions.

Professional role conceptions is a theory that developed from two broader and older theories: news sociology and gatekeeping. The basic idea of professional role conceptions in the field of journalism is that the professional role(s) journalists identify with affects the news that they create. Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman conducted one of the earlier studies that would fall under the framework of professional role conceptions (1976). As part of a detailed national survey of American Journalists, Johnstone et al. asked eight questions about the tasks they carry out and how those are related to their job, and determined that most journalists fell into one of two categories: those that seek to
simply distribute the news and those who encourage others to participate in a future action based on the knowledge they gain.

After the 1976 study, other researchers began looking specifically at the professional role conceptions of journalists. But at the time of the study, Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman were conducting a broader survey in the tradition of news sociology, of which role conceptions were only a part.

**News Sociology.**

The sociology of news framework has its origins in a 1955 study done by Warren Breed. Through observation and in-depth interviews, Breed found that newspaper reporters learned to conform to the expected slant of their newsroom through socialization. Breed also noted that publishers had a strong role in creating that slant as an enforcer of their vision for the news (pp. 326).

A second major study that forms the basis of news sociology is Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality (Tuchman 1978). Tuchman’s book is the result of ten years worth of observing newsrooms and interviewing staff, with the key finding that news making is a cyclical process between journalist and newsroom norms. The journalist decides what is news partly by norms created in the newsroom, yet at the same time the journalist helps to create and evolve those norms.

Herman Herbert Gans completed a third major study that cast a long shadow within the framework of news sociology in 1979. He did case studies of two national
news stations, NBC and CBS, and two weekly national news magazines, Newsweek and
Time, over a period of four years. One area of research Gans focused on was the role of
the journalist in deciding the content of news. Using existing theory, Gans found that
events were the impetus for most stories but that news was also generated by media
routines and by the perspectives and judgment of the journalist. Gans also argued for two
more influences on how journalists write the news: social norms and organizational cues.
As he put it, “Journalists do apply news judgment both as members of a profession and as
individuals, but they are by no means totally free agents” (pp. 79).

Gatekeeping.

The idea of journalists being gatekeepers of the news was first introduced by
David Manning White (1950) when he observed a wire editor decide which wire copy to
include in his city’s newspaper. As mentioned earlier, another early study often
mentioned in the development of gatekeeping theory is Breed’s research (1955). A good
overview of the role gatekeeping has in creating the content of news can be found in
Shoemaker and Reese’s Mediating the Message (1996). They identify five rings of
influence beginning with the individual journalist and moving outward to media routines,
organizations, outside influences such as sources, and ideology. Shoemaker and Reese
built these five rings on Gans’ study and a study by Gitlin in 1980 and posit that each ring
represents another gate that content must go through to become news. The influence
organizations have on content is of interest as media companies consolidate and come
under the ownership of stockholders. In 2009, Pamela Shoemaker and Tim Vos published Gatekeeping Theory, an update on the role of gatekeeping in constructing social reality via the news. In the introduction to the section of the book on levels of analysis, Shoemaker and Vos describe the five levels as being in a continuum, from which researchers can pull more specific and relevant influencers (pp. 31).

For the purposes of this study, three rings of influence are of particular interest:

1.) The role of the individual public radio journalist; how the role they perceive themselves having as professionals influences what news they cover and how they cover it.

2.) The public radio newsroom as an organization; how expectations and social norms influence the speed and depth of coverage.

3.) Revenue and income sources; the government by way of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, companies and individuals who provide donations, and the universities who often provide studio space and write the paychecks.

Methods

This research was conducted through the use of semi-structured interviews, building a bridge between Breed (1955) and Gans' (1979) qualitative case studies that created the foundation of the theory of professional role conceptions and the quantitative surveys that generated basic categories with which journalists can identify (Johnstone et al., 1976; Weaver et al., 1986; and Weaver & Wilhoit, 1994). By conducting interviews, I
was able to gather information about why participants see certain tasks and roles as more important than others. This is data surveys cannot easily collect. At the same time, using semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask follow up questions and deviate from the set questions slightly as needed (Fontana 1994 pp. 364-365). In structured interviews, the interviewer follows a script set ahead of time without deviation in order or content. This allows for answers to be given under the same conditions. As Fontana and Frey note, “The predetermined nature of structured interviewing is aimed at minimizing errors” (pp. 364). However, forbidding clarification for the person interviewed and follow-ups on the part of the interviewer can be too limiting. It also ignores the fact that interviews are a form of social interaction, with a give and take (Fontana pp. 364). Unstructured interviews were developed as a tool embedded in the social environment, with no questions developed ahead of time. At most, the interviewer would plan topics to bring up (Fontana pp. 365-366). As such, unstructured interviews are not concise enough for the type of information the researcher wished to obtain. Therefore, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and asked the same general questions in all interviews, but allowed room for clarifications and follow-up. This enabled the researcher to compare answers across interviews while leaving room for flexibility the social situation called for.
The process.

Through connections gained from working as part of Harvest Public Media in the KCUR newsroom and as a student journalist in the KBIA newsroom, this researcher made arrangements to conduct semi-structured interviews with the content-producing staff of three newsrooms:

-KCUR, NPR affiliate in Kansas City, Mo.

-KBIA, NPR affiliate in Columbia, Mo.

-Harvest Public Media Reporting Team based in Kansas City, Mo. (Harvest)

Those interviewed included:

-Frank Morris, News Director of KCUR and Managing Editor of Harvest

-Bill Anderson, Program Director of KCUR *(His answers are not included in the results, as it was determined he did not produce news content).*

-Stephen Stiegman, Producer of KCUR call-in show Up to Date

-Andrea Silenzi, Producer of KCUR call-in show Central Standard

-Suzanne Hogan, fill-in Producer of KCUR weekly news magazine KC Currents

-Elana Gordon, KCUR Health Reporter

-Ryan Famuliner, Assistant News Director of KBIA

-Kellie Kotraba, Religion Reporter for KBIA and Editor of Columbia Faith and Values

-Rehman Tunkegar, Producer of KBIA talk shows Intersection and Global Journalist

-Donna Vestal, Editor of Harvest Public Media

-Jeremy Bernfeld, Multi-media Editor and Reporter for Harvest Public Media
As motivation to participate, the newsrooms have access to the research as a self-reflective tool in how they do their work and why they do it. The sampling was purposeful, with the criteria for participation being that the individual is a member of the content-producing staff of that newsroom. Each journalist was a unit of analysis.

**Recording method.**

The audio of each interview was recorded in order to ensure accuracy of the transcript.

**Justification of method.**

Semi-structured interviews allow for individuals to convey their thoughts and explain their motivations and experiences beyond the confines of a survey. The methodology for this research followed in the tradition of Breed (1950) by holding interviews to understand what individual public radio journalists perceive as their professional roles. Also similar to Breed, further validity was gained by observing the newsroom environment of Harvest Public Media during the researcher’s professional project.

**Existing study that is methodologically similar.**

Randall Sumpter’s case study on the routines of daily newspaper editors is a good example of an existing study that is methodologically similar (2000). Sumpter discovered that editors at that daily based decisions off what a hypothetical reader would be interested in. Sumpter was also looking for insight into the motivations of professional
journalists and the methods he used were observation and interviews, like I used.

However, he used non-participant observation as his primary research method followed by in-depth interviews to validate his findings, while the primary research method for this study was semi-structured interviews supplemented by relevant observation.

**Interview questions.**

1. Describe in your own words what you see as the purpose of your job.
2. What role do journalists have in society and the community?
3. Do you see yourself as a participant in the news?*Is there someone else in the newsroom who fits that role?
4. Or are you better described as an information provider?*Is there someone else in the newsroom who fits that role?
5. Do you see yourself as a community organizer, someone who motivates the public to action?*Is there someone else in the newsroom who fits that role?
6. Would you describe yourself as a watchdog? Who do you watch over?*Is there someone else in the newsroom who fits that role?
7. Does one of those four roles fit you better than the others? Or is there a better description for what you do?
8. Does working for a non-profit newsroom change the way in which you work? How so?
9. Does your role as a public media journalist differ from one who works in commercial media? How so?

10. Does your audience influence the news content you produce? How so? (Public radio listeners tend to be white, well-educated, and at least middle class).

11. Since part of your funding indirectly comes from government, how does your newsroom handle reporting on the government?

12. Since you are technically employees of the university, how does your newsroom handle reporting on the university?

13. Is there ever pressure to put people who have donated a lot of money to the station in a good light?

14. What about corporate sponsorships and underwriting? Does that influence content?

*The questions with an asterisk are modified from the roles Weaver & Wilhoit defined (1994).

Limitations of the study.

It is important to note the limited nature of this research. As it is qualitative research and limited in scope, it is not generalizable. Instead, the purpose is to develop a rich and complex understanding of the roles the participants self-identify as having of their own regard.
Directions for future research.

The understanding gained through learning the roles a few public radio journalists see for themselves could help inform survey questions for a national quantitative study. By surveying a generalizable sample, hypotheses about public radio journalists seeing themselves in a different role and thus serving an important purpose in keeping the media content diverse can be tested.

Importance of the study.

If this research can foster further interest in studying how public media add to the United States’ media mix, then further knowledge can be gained about the role public media have in our society. In addition to helping public media journalists understand their own role moving forward, research in this area could help support the continued funding of public media by serving as an example of why public media are important to Congress and prospective donors alike. With the recent memory of Congress debating pulling funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 2011, the need for such research to support the role of public media is a real possibility.

Literature Review

William Cassidy is among the most modern researchers of the professional role conceptions of journalists. In 2008, Cassidy surveyed more than 500 newspaper journalists in all 50 states to compare the professional role conceptions of male and female journalists, and in 2005 he compared the professional role conceptions of print
and online journalists (2005). His 13 survey questions were adapted from studies done by Weaver and Wilhoit (1994) who adapted their questions from a national survey conducted by Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman (1976). Both of the earlier studies were broad in scope and collected data on everything from demographics to the level of autonomy journalists had on the job. But the section of the surveys Cassidy adapted for his own use asked journalists to rank the importance of various tasks for or aspects of their jobs.

Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman asked eight questions and divided the answers into two types of professional roles for journalists: those who take an active role in news discourse and those who take a more passive role (Table 7.1, pp. 230). They called the roles “participant” and “neutral” journalism and found that most journalists felt the participant role was more important than the neutral one. For example, more than 75 percent of those surveyed found it extremely important to “investigate claims and statements made by the government” while only 56 percent found it extremely important to “get information to the public as quickly as possible” (the highest percentage for each role).

Initial studies done by Weaver, Drew, and Wilhoit (1986 pp. 691) separated journalistic roles into three types: “adversary,” “interpretive,” and “disseminator,” but later studies completed by Weaver and Wilhoit (1994) added a fourth: “public mobilizer.” The purpose of Weaver, Drew and Wilhoit’s 1986 study was to compare radio, television, and print journalists. For television and newspaper journalists in large organizations, the interpretive role resonated most strongly, while the disseminator role was the most
common designation for radio journalists. In small organizations, radio and television journalists maintained the same areas of dominant professional roles, but newspaper journalists were almost equally divided between disseminator and interpretive. Interestingly, the 1994 study on print journalists found a greater number of participants rating the neutral, or disseminator, role as important than the 1986 study or the 1976 study done by Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman. This time, 70 percent of journalists found a task in the disseminator role to be highly important, tying for the most important with a task in the interpretive, or participant, role.

Jane Singer has also completed a relatively recent study on professional role conceptions of journalists (1997). Her research followed Breed’s lead by being qualitative in nature – a combination of a case study and a Q study. The Q study was created by William Stephenson and is designed to group people with similar opinions along a spectrum (1997). As Singer’s research topic was the impact of the then-emerging Internet on newspaper journalists, the Q study asked participants to rank statements about online tools for media and from those rankings found six groups of journalists sorted by their attitudes towards the Web: the “Benevolent Revolutionary,” the “Revolutionary,” the “Nervous Traditionalist,” the “Traditionalist,” the “Rational Realist,” and the “Realist” (pp. 4). Singer completed another study in 2001 under the theoretical framework of gatekeeping. She did a content analysis of the online and print editions of
six Colorado newspapers to see if they reflected different slices of the world, and found that online editions had more local content than their print counterparts.

Conclusions

Over the course of the researcher’s professional project at Harvest Public Media, eleven interviews were conducted with staff at KBIA in Columbia, Mo. and KCUR in Kansas City, Mo. Upon reflection, it was decided that the program director interviewed didn’t truly fit the definition of a journalist, as he didn’t produce or edit news content. Therefore, 10 interviews were analyzed, both for content and comparison. Those interviewed had varied positions and levels of experience: five men and five women; three in editorial/managerial positions, four producers and three reporters; three with 10 or more years experience, three with five or more, and four with less than three years. Three of the journalists were on staff at KBIA, and seven were at KCUR (three of those seven were affiliated with Harvest). Most of those interviewed included reporting in their job description, but interestingly only one was a reporter full-time without any additional responsibilities. Additionally, it bears repeating that those interviewed were not selected for any characteristics beyond being members of the newsrooms I had access to, and therefore this study has no statistical significance.

The first half of the interview questions were designed to discover the journalists’ professional role conceptions, beginning with big picture, open-ended questions and then moving to specific terms generated from prior research mentioned in the literature.
In the course of the interviews it became apparent that some of those terms had negative connotations for the journalists interviewed, so attempts were made to find terms that gave different shades of meaning but stayed within the intended spectrum of the researchers who coined the terms. The terms “participant in the news” and “newsmaker,” for example, appealed to none of the journalists interviewed as a role to strive for. However, most of them acknowledged active choices they made in producing content, such as selecting topics, choosing actualities (sound bites) to include, and adding analysis and context. Yet even when asked more generally whether they considered their role active, most still said no. In the parameters of this research, it is difficult to know whether this insistence is an accurate reflection of the work they do or a blind spot reflective of a desire to not overly influence their audience. Their answers to an earlier question about the role of journalism in society reinforces the possibility of a blind spot, however. Nine answers to that question included wording that suggest journalists actively shape news, even if it’s nothing more than by choosing what is important enough to cover. The health reporter for KCR, for example, said part of a journalist’s role is to shed light on important issues. Other common ideas in the same vein included filtering and framing information and encouraging the audience to think critically and seek clarity.

 Conversely, those interviewed were much more comfortable with the idea of being more neutral information providers. This mirrors the findings of Weaver et al. from 1986--radio journalists surveyed then also felt most comfortable with the disseminator
role. Nine of the 10 journalists interviewed said being information providers was a part of their job as public radio journalists. Six of them thought it was their primary role or one of the most accurate descriptors for what they do. The only one who didn’t say she was an information provider was the editor of Columbia Faith and Values. She was torn between the description of being a reporter distant from the story and a writer who more actively created news. Interestingly, in the more general question about the role of journalists in society, there was less mention of providing information. Three talked about being fair and unbiased sources of information, and one talked about being a mirror of society. Two others included informing the public as a role, which overlaps with the most prevalent response: some variation on serving or engaging the community.

Eight of the 10 people interviewed described engaging the audience or serving the public as part of the role journalists have in society. And although they were at first put off with the terminology Weaver and Wilhoit coined “community organizer” and the phrase “motivating the public to action,” further questioning also highlighted that most of the journalists felt like involving the community was an important part of their job. Eight of the 10 journalists interviewed described fostering community conversation or facilitating dialogue as one of their main professional roles.

The fourth and final role designated a specific question based on prior research was that of watchdog. Half of the journalists interviewed said being a watchdog was one of the roles they fulfilled, although more thought it was an important role. Some
producers thought it was more of a role for reporters, and some reporters wished more
dog reporting was being done but said it was difficult with many tasks to fulfill and
the small number of staff the stations have. Again, their earlier responses to the more
general question about roles of journalists in society bear out their belief in the
importance of investigative or watchdog journalism. Even before it was mentioned
specifically, six people indicated being a watchdog was an important role for journalists
(although only one person called it by that name--others called it digging out truth, being
an advocate for the community or holding people accountable).

The second half of the interview questions were designed to answer the second
research question: whether or not working for a non-profit influences the content
produced. There was much greater consensus and a lot less ambiguity in these responses.
In a nutshell, the journalists interviewed felt that working for a nonprofit positively
impacted the work they produced without creating negative side effects.

All but one of the journalists interviewed, for example, thought that working for a
nonprofit newsroom changed the way in which they worked. When asked how it changes
the way they work and how it differs from commercial media, variations on two phrases
were used repeatedly: fewer conflicts of interest and a closer bond with the audience.
Several journalists said working for a nonprofit gave them more freedom to cover
whatever topics most need covering. Similarly, others said that they had fewer conflicts
of interest, which gave the station more credibility and afforded the station a positive
connotation. Several of the journalists interviewed also stated that being supported by the people who listen to the station makes them more aware of the audience, creating a feeling that they are serving the listeners and the community. In turn, the listeners are tangibly showing the value they place on the journalists’ work by monetarily supporting the station.

All ten of the journalists interviewed said that even though the stations they work for receive funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and thus indirectly from the government, their reporting is not impacted. “I don’t think that it’s an influence in any way,” said the fill-in producer for KC Currents. The KCUR news director said the newsroom handles reporting on the government “as if there were no connection at all.” The common refrain in answering this interview question was a variation on “I don’t think about it” or “I don’t worry about it.” Two journalists mentioned that there is a firewall between funding sources and the newsroom. Two KCUR journalists mentioned that the portion of the station’s budget that comes from CPB is insignificant when compared to the portion that comes from underwriting and listener donations. “It’s like eight percent of our budget,” said the KCUR health reporter (it’s actually less than five percent). And the producer of Up To Date said he felt like “the funding we get from CPB usually goes straight back to NPR” (to pay for NPR programming). It’s important to note that Harvest was funded solely through a grant from the CPB at the time of the interviews. Even so, both the Harvest journalists interviewed said they were unconcerned
about fallout from reporting negatively on government entities such as the Department of Agriculture. “The needs of our audience is more important than job security,” said the multimedia editor. “I can’t posture in a way that would make the government either fund me or not fund me,” said the editor of Harvest, “It’s to big for that...so taxpayer or government funding doesn’t really [impact my work] other than making me feel accountable...to live up to it.”

Similarly, the journalists interviewed felt being licensed to and employed by the university did not place constraints on their reporting. Several commented on it being potentially more of a problem than reporting on the government since the university was closer at hand, but that the newsroom still covered the university fairly. “There’s no favoritism but there is scrutiny,” said KCUR’s health reporter. And KCUR’s news director said that the newsroom covers the university “as if it were any other university,” but with perhaps “a tiny bit of deference.” “Sometimes we give them a heads up but we never shy away from a topic,” said the producer of Up to Date. The assistant news director of KBIA said that being affiliated with the university might give the newsroom greater access because of proximity and perhaps a mistaken belief on the part of university spokespeople that the station would treat them more kindly than other journalists would. The fill-in producer for KC Currents mentioned that at times she feels like she has relied too heavily on university faculty to be guests on the show.
To sum things up, the journalists interviewed felt working for a nonprofit radio station gave them greater independence to report on relevant issues that needed coverage without adding negative constraints. Just as the 2011 FCC report found, having firewalls and diverse sources of donations and/or revenue adds to the ability to report freely. Two key findings also stood out: a close connection to the audience and a strong desire not to introduce bias into their work. Those interviewed almost uniformly shared an awareness of the needs of their audience and community, often expressing a desire to serve. This sense of journalistic service to the community informs their actions at a basic level. From their adamant aversion to being public mobilizers and participants in the news, it is obvious that the journalists interviewed wanted to give their audience the tools to draw their own conclusions without telling them what to think. They felt more comfortable being disseminators than interpreters of information, sometimes to the point of underestimating the influence their decisions make on the end product. Perhaps the reason for this lies partly in the restrictions placed on being a 501 (3) c organization. As the 2011 FCC report noted, activities that are commonplace among commercial newspapers, such as endorsing political candidates, would put nonprofit radio stations in danger of losing their FCC nonprofit license and the tax incentive of being a 501 (3) c organization (FCC Nonprofit 2011).
REFERENCES


Appendix: Project Proposal

Camille Phillips

Public Radio Journalists: Providing A Different Voice

Master’s Project Proposal

May 22, 2012

Lynda Kraxberger, chair

Mike McKean

Janet Saidi
Introduction

When I started my studies at the Missouri School of Journalism, I was unsure whether I wanted to someday work for a newspaper or a public radio station. I did know, however, that I wanted to gain the skills to be versatile. For that reason, I enrolled in convergence journalism courses, learned the fundamentals of reporting across platforms and gained experience working in multiple newsrooms. A year and a half later, I know that I would be happy reporting for either one, as long as I was given the time to explore issues thoroughly and cover topics that matter. Of the newsrooms I worked in this past year, I particularly enjoyed my time at the local NPR-affiliate, KBIA-FM. As an advanced reporter at KBIA, I had the time and the feedback I needed to create thoughtful and interesting feature stories. There is something about the intimacy and power of sound that draws me towards audio stories, especially when visual components can be added. For that reason, my first choice for the professional component of my master’s project was public radio, and the first place job I will look for after graduating will be as a public radio reporter. Beyond being a good fit because it is in public radio reporting, I also enjoy the emphasis on multimedia at Harvest Public Media and the focus on one beat. I reported on several agriculture stories over the past year, and I am looking forward to being able to put all my attention on one area and develop a bit of expertise.

My research component developed initially out of my interest in working in public radio. But it was further developed during my time at the Missouri School of
Journalism through being a teaching assistant to business journalism professor Randy Smith and through a trip I took to Germany sponsored by the German embassy to the United States. Professor Smith taught his classes how to develop successful business models for journalism businesses, and through class discussions I began to wonder whether different business models would influence the news content produced. The embassy-sponsored trip to Germany took American journalism students on a tour of several news and political venues, among them the public radio station in Munich. I was in awe of the variety of channels the station had available to them and the high level of funding they were provided. In Germany, everyone who owns a radio pays a fee that goes directly to fund public radio, including the news. Federal funding for public media in the United States is notoriously low compared to other developed countries; $1.35 per capita in the U.S. compared to $26 in Germany and $80 in the U.K. (Naureckas 2009). But with the additional funding, public radio in Germany has additional restrictions. We spoke with a man who works for a radio channel dedicated to youth. Due to broadcast limitations, the channel is only online. But their online content is also limited due to laws designed to enable commercial media to compete. It was an interesting paradigm shift for my American mind: a country where public media was not in the least bit in danger of losing government funding, but rather was considered to have the advantage. This brought me to the idea that perhaps in some ways public media even in the United States has advantages. From there, my research idea was born.
The Professional Skills Component: Harvest Public Media

I will complete the professional skills component of my master’s project at Harvest Public Media in Kansas City, Mo. Harvest is one of seven Local Journalism Centers funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to cover a beat of regional importance by embedding reporters in public media newsrooms throughout the region. Harvest is based in Kansas City but also has reporters embedded in Columbia, Mo.; Ames, Iowa; and Lincoln, Neb. - All of Harvest’s news coverage focuses on agriculture, or as they describe it “food, fuel and field.”

**Journalism area of emphasis: radio reporting.**

My primary role will be reporting for radio, with the expectation of completing several feature stories during my eleven weeks at Harvest. I will also be expected to write print stories, take photos, create photo and audio slideshows and help recruit sources for the Harvest Network, Harvest’s network of agriculture and farm experts who have volunteered to be sources for stories.

Educational and professional qualifications

The classes that have most prepared me for working at Harvest are Convergence Fundamentals, Convergence Reporting, Advanced Reporting for KBIA, News Reporting at the Columbia Missourian and Investigative Reporting with Mark Horvit. In Convergence Fundamentals I learned the basics of how to use a Marantz, a video camera, and a still camera as well as how to edit audio, video and photos using the appropriate
software. In Convergence Reporting I learned how to use those skills to report the news across multiple platforms. In News Reporting, I gained experience in writing news stories for print, and in Advanced Reporting at KBIA I gained experience in creating radio feature stories. In Investigative Reporting I learned to seek and use available data as the basis for uncovering important news stories.

Work dates and schedule.

I will begin work at Harvest on June 4 and end on August 17, working 40 hours a week for a total of 440 hours.

Dissemination of work.

My work will be published on www.harvestpublicmedia.org and be intended for broadcast on the six Midwest media stations that partner with Harvest: KCUR in Kansas City (where Harvest is based), KBIA in Columbia, Kansas Public Radio, Iowa Public Radio, NET out of Nebraska, and High Plains Public Radio. Harvest stories also sometimes run in the Kansas City Star and on NPR.

Gathering abundant physical evidence.

Scripts of my radio stories, copies of my published photos, and printouts of my text pieces will be included in my master’s project as physical evidence to the work I have completed. I will also include the url’s to my work online. For the members of my committee, I will provide an electronic form of all my work so they can hear the radio stories and see the audio slideshows. As additional evidence of my work, I will include a
running journal of my time at Harvest Public Media, detailing the same elements I will include in my weekly email to my committee chair.

**Supervision.**

My on-site supervisor will be Donna Vestal, the editor at Harvest Public Media. She will be the one I pitch my stories to and receive my assignments from, and the one who edits my work. My committee will also receive weekly emails from me summarizing my experience for the week, including what I’ve been working on and what I have learned.

**Research Component:**

**The Professional Role Conceptions of Public Radio Journalists**

In the past few years, public media has been touted as a possible solution to two major journalistic concerns: downsizing newspapers causing holes in news coverage, and the possibility that media company consolidation could hurt the variety of news sources available. Where commercial media may have to let go of staff in order to maintain profit-margin to please shareholders, public media only has to balance the budget. Where commercial media companies struggling to make ends meet might need to sell to the big corporation, public media outlets need only maintain federal funding and cultivate generous donors. Carl Sessions Stepp interviewed journalists at PBS NewsHour and other nonprofit news outlets and found that those he spoke with felt working for a nonprofit gave them greater freedom to cover the topics they felt mattered and take the time to
analyze all sides of an issue (Stepp, 2004). Jennifer Hlad pointed to non-profit news outlets as a means to plug “news holes” caused by the newspaper recession (Hlad, 2009). In response to the growing trend to add pay walls to news websites, Jim Naureckas called for increased funding for public media as a means of “decomodifying” the news; moving it from a good to be paid for to a service to the public (Naureckas, 2009). But the most ringing endorsement for public media comes from Bill Kling, the founder of Minnesota Public Radio and American Pubic Media. He says that local public media is needed imminently to fill gaps in news coverage, but that we as a country are not ready due to lack of infrastructure and potential conflicts of interest (Meares 2011).

Public media as they exist in the United States today has its origins in the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. The Act created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which distributes federal funds to public radio and television stations throughout the country. The Carnegie Commission that was the impetus for the Act said the mission of public broadcasting was to “provide a voice for groups in the community that may otherwise be unheard” and to “be a forum for controversy and debate” (Hoynes, 2007, p. 370). It has been argued, however, that public broadcasting does a better job with the second mandate than the first (Hoynes, 2007; McCauley et al., 2003) because the audience of public media tends to be white, at least middle class, and well educated. Even so, those in the field of public media still see it as having a vital role. McCauley et al. outline three approaches to the media: the “public service approach” that is designed to
be anti-market and guide public conversation but “sometimes give off a strong scent of paternalism,” the “commercial approach” (traditional private business model), and the “public sphere approach,” with the goal of “societal integration.” McCauley et al. suggest the public sphere model as the ideal and describe it as an extension of the coffee house; a virtual “third place” (McCauley et al., 2003, p. xix). The literature on public media in the United States (Avery, 2007, McCauley et al., 2003, Hoynes, 2007) as well as the trade journals (Stepp, 2004; Naureckas, 2009; Hlad, 2009; Meares, 2011) all imply that public media works on a different paradigm, but little research has been done to test the assumption. This study will attempt to fill a part of this void by answering the following research questions.

**Research Questions.**

RQ1a: What are the professional role conceptions of public radio journalists at KCUR, KBIA and Harvest Public Media.

RQ1b: Why do they see themselves in these roles?

Since public radio gets it’s its funding primarily from listener donations rather than the advertising that funds most newspapers and TV news, theoretically public radio journalists only have to please their listeners. Unlike commercial news outlets, public media don’t have to keep advertisers or shareholders happy. Quantitative research based on surveys have been done to see what roles journalists in general see for themselves, but there hasn’t been much qualitative research in that area, nor has a study targeted public
radio journalists as opposed to commercial journalists. Weaver and Wilhoit (1986 and 1994) developed four titles for journalists based on the roles they self-identified with in their studies: “adversary,” “disseminator,” “interpretive,” and “public mobilizer” (Cassidy 2008 p.108). The goal of speaking with public radio journalists is to determine whether the roles they identify with mirror those of their commercial counterparts or reflect a different perspective. Most importantly, I want to find out the reasons why they see themselves in the roles they identify with because this gives insight into their decision-making process.

RQ2: How does being a not-for-profit public media outlet impact the content produced at KBIA, KCUR, and Harvest Public Media?

Because public radio has a different revenue model than commercial news, it seems likely that public radio journalists have different gatekeepers. It follows, then, that public radio journalists might have different influencers on the content they produce. For example, since part of their funding indirectly comes from government, do public radio journalists ever avoid stories that reflect negatively on the government? Or is there ever pressure to put people who have donated a lot of money to the station in a good light? What about corporate sponsorships and underwriting? Does that influence content? It must be kept in mind, however, that because not-for-profits are partially dependent on donations, their listeners and supporters are often people with disposable income. Does
that mean content is chosen that is thought to be favored by those in that economic bracket?

**Relevance of study.**

These research questions matter for the broader world of journalism because keeping the media content diverse allows for a freer flow of information and a more informed public. Having revenue sources outside of the media conglomerates sounds like it could help with that goal. Furthermore, the increasing need for alternate sources of revenue is making research on not-for-profit media more relevant than ever before. Even traditionally commercial newspapers have looked into obtaining audience support. The Columbia Missourian, for example, partners with a company called Kachingle that enables Internet readers to donate a small amount of money each month. Some online newspapers have even sprung up running as a complete not-for-profit. The online newspaper, St. Louis Beacon, for example, is a not-for-profit that depends on donations for much of its revenue.

As this research focuses on public radio journalists, it is doubly personally relevant to me. I will be working for public radio this summer as my professional component. I also hope to find full-time employment following the completion of my degree as a public radio reporter. Thus, obtaining a greater understanding of the roles public radio journalists use to define themselves and the influences they experience on
the road to producing the news will enable me to have a better understanding of what my future in public radio will be like.

Theory.

*Professional Role Conceptions.*

Professional role conceptions is a theory that developed from two broader and older theories: news sociology and gatekeeping. The basic idea of professional role conceptions in the field of journalism is that the professional role(s) journalists identify with affects the news that they create. Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman conducted one of the earlier studies that would fall under the framework of professional role conceptions (1976). As part of a detailed national survey of American Journalists, Johnstone et al. asked eight questions about the tasks they carry out and how those are related to their job, and determined that most journalists fell into one of two categories: those that seek to simply distribute the news and those who encourage others to participate in a future action based on the knowledge they gain.

After the 1976 study, other researchers began looking specifically at the professional role conceptions of journalists. But at the time of the study, Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman were conducting a broader survey in the tradition of news sociology, of which role conceptions were only a part.
News Sociology.

The sociology of news framework has its origins in a 1955 study done by Warren Breed. Through observation and in-depth interviews, Breed found that newspaper reporters learned to conform to the expected slant of their newsroom through socialization. Breed also noted that publishers had a strong role in creating that slant as an enforcer of their vision for the news (pp.326).

A second major study that forms the basis of news sociology is Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality (Tuchman 1978). Tuchman’s book is the result of ten years worth of observing newsrooms and interviewing staff, with the key finding that news making is a cyclical process between journalist and newsroom norms. The journalist decides what is news partly by norms created in the newsroom, yet at the same time the journalist helps to create and evolve those norms.

Herman Herbert Gans completed a third major study that cast a long shadow within the framework of news sociology in 1979. He did case studies of two national news stations, NBC and CBS, and two weekly national news magazines, Newsweek and Time, over a period of four years. One area of research Gans focused on was the role of the journalist in deciding the content of news. Using existing theory, Gans found that events were the impetus for most stories but that news was also generated by media routines and by the perspectives and judgment of the journalist. Gans also argued for two more influences on how journalists write the news: social norms and organizational cues.
As he put it, “Journalists do apply news judgment both as members of a profession and as individuals, but they are by no means totally free agents” (pp. 79).

**Gatekeeping.**

The idea of journalists being gatekeepers of the news was first introduced by David Manning White (1950) when he observed a wire editor decide which wire copy to include in his city’s newspaper. As mentioned earlier, another early study often mentioned in the development of gatekeeping theory is Breed’s research (1955). A good overview of the role gatekeeping has in creating the content of news can be found in Shoemaker and Reese’s *Mediating the Message* (1996). They identify five rings of influence beginning with the individual journalist and moving outward to media routines, organizations, outside influences such as sources, and ideology. Shoemaker and Reese built these five rings on Gans’ study and a study by Gitlin in 1980 and posit that each ring represents another gate that content must go through to become news. The influence organizations have on content is of interest as media companies consolidate and come under the ownership of stockholders. In 2009, Pamela Shoemaker and Tim Vos published *Gatekeeping Theory*, an update on the role of gatekeeping in constructing social reality via the news. In the introduction to the section of the book on levels of analysis, Shoemaker and Vos describe the five levels as being in a continuum, from which researchers can pull more specific and relevant influencers (pp. 31).

For the purposes of this study, three rings of influence are of particular interest:
1.) The role of the individual public radio journalist; how the role they perceive themselves having as professionals influences what news they cover and how they cover it.

2.) the public radio newsroom as an organization; how expectations and social norms influence the speed and depth of coverage.

3.) revenue and income sources; the government by way of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, companies and individuals who provide donations, and the universities who often provide studio space and write the paychecks.

Methods.

This research will be conducted through the use of semi-structured interviews, building a bridge between Breed (1955) and Gans' (1979) qualitative case studies that created the foundation of the theory of professional role conceptions and the quantitative surveys that generated basic categories with which journalists can identify (Johnstone et al., 1976; Weaver et al., 1986; and Weaver & Wilhoit, 1994). By conducting interviews, I will be able to gather information about why participants see certain tasks and roles as more important than others. This is data surveys cannot easily collect. At the same time, using semi-structured interviews allows me to ask follow up questions and deviate from the set questions slightly as needed (Fontana 1994 pp. 364-365). In structured interviews, the interviewer follow a script set ahead of time without deviation in order or content. This allows for answers to be given under the same conditions. As Fontana and Frey note,
“The predetermined nature of structured interviewing is aimed at minimizing errors” (pp. 364). However, forbidding clarification for the person interviewed and follow-ups on the part of the interviewer can be too limiting. It also ignores the fact that interviews are a form of social interaction, with a give and take (Fontana pp. 364). Unstructured interviews were developed as a tool embedded in the social environment, with no questions developed ahead of time. At most, the interviewer would plan topics to bring up (Fontana pp. 365-366). As such, unstructured interviews are not concise enough for the type of information I am trying to obtain. Therefore, I will conduct semi-structured interviews and ask the same general questions in all interviews but allow room for clarifications and follow-up. This will enable me to compare answers across interviews while leaving room for flexibility the social situation might call for.

The process.

Through connections gained from working as part of Harvest Public Media in the KCUR newsroom and as a student journalist in the KBIA newsroom, this researcher will make arrangements to conduct semi-structured interviews with the content-producing staff of two to three public radio newsrooms in the area for a total of 10 to 12 interviews. Possible newsrooms include:

- KCUR, NPR affiliate in Kansas City, Mo.
- KBIA, NPR affiliate in Columbia, Mo.
- Harvest Public Media Reporting Team based in Kansas City, Mo.
As motivation to participate, the newsrooms will have access to the research as a self-reflective tool in how they do their work and why they do it. The sampling will be purposeful, with the criteria for participation being that the individual is a member of the content-producing staff of that newsroom. Each journalist will be a unit of analysis.

**Recording method.**

The audio of each interview will be recorded in order to ensure accuracy of the transcript.

**Justification of method.**

Semi-structured interviews will allow for individuals to convey their thoughts and explain their motivations and experiences beyond the confines of a survey. The methodology for this research will follow in the tradition of Breed (1950) by holding interviews to understand what individual public radio journalists perceive as their professional roles. Also similar to Breed, further validity will be gained by observing the newsroom environment of Harvest Public Media during my professional component. It will be more of a case study than participant observation, as only highly relevant scenes and conversations will be noted at the end of the day in a journal of my professional component.

**Existing study that is methodologically similar.**

Randall Sumpter’s case study on the routines of daily newspaper editors is a good example of an existing study that is methodologically similar (2000). Sumpter discovered
that editors at that daily based decisions off what a hypothetical reader would be interested in. Sumpter was also looking for insight into the motivations of professional journalists and the methods he used were observation and interviews, like I will use. However, he used non-participant observation as his primary research method followed by in-depth interviews to validate his findings, while my primary research method will be semi-structured interviews supplemented by relevant observation.

**Proposed Analysis.**

After a transcript of each interview is made, each transcript will be analyzed for themes and then compared both within and across transcripts to find patterns and differences between interviewers. Once patterns have been established, the transcript will be read again to discover any abnormalities to the patterns. Those will be included in the findings as well in order to increase validity.

**Interview questions.**

1. Describe in your own words what you see as the purpose of your job?
2. What role do journalists have in society and the community?
3. Do you see yourself as a participant in the news?*Is there someone else in the newsroom who fits that role?
4. Or are you better described as an information provider?*Is there someone else in the newsroom who fits that role?
5. Do you see yourself as a community organizer, someone who motivates the public to action? *Is there someone else in the newsroom who fits that role?

6. Would you describe yourself as a watchdog? Who do you watch over? *Is there someone else in the newsroom who fits that role?

7. Does one of those four roles fit you better than the others? Or is there a better description for what you do?

8. Does working for a not-for-profit newsroom change the way in which you work? How so?

9. Does your role as a public media journalist differ from one who works in commercial media? How so?

10. Does your audience influence the news content you produce? How so? (Public radio listeners tend to be white, well-educated, and at least middle class).

11. Since part of your funding indirectly comes from government, how does your newsroom handle reporting on the government?

12. Since you are technically employees of the university, how does your newsroom handle reporting on the university?

13. Is there ever pressure to put people who have donated a lot of money to the station in a good light?

14. What about corporate sponsorships and underwriting? Does that influence content?
*The questions with an asterisk are modified from the roles Weaver & Wilhoit defined (1994).

**Limitations of the study.**

It is important to note the limited nature of this research. As it is qualitative research and limited in scope, it will not be generalizable. Instead, the purpose is to develop a rich and complex understanding of the roles the participants self-identify as having of their own regard.

**Directions for future research.**

The understanding gained through learning the roles a few public radio journalists see for themselves could help inform survey questions for a national quantitative study. By surveying a generalizable sample, hypotheses about public radio journalists seeing themselves in a different role and thus serving an important purpose in keeping the media content diverse can be tested.

**Importance of the study.**

If this research can foster further interest in studying how public media adds to the United States’ media mix, then further knowledge can be gained about the role public media has in our society. In addition to helping public media journalists understand their own role moving forward, research in this area could help support the continued funding of public media by serving as an example of why public media is important to legislature and prospective donors alike. With the recent memory of Congress debating pulling
funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 2011, the need for such research to support the role of public media is a real possibility.

**Literature Review**

William Cassidy is among the most modern researchers of the professional role conceptions of journalists. In 2008, Cassidy surveyed more than 500 newspaper journalists in all 50 states to compare the professional role conceptions of male and female journalists, and in 2005 he compared the professional role conceptions of print and online journalists (2005). His 13 survey questions were adapted from studies done by Weaver and Wilhoit (1994) who adapted their questions from a national survey conducted by Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman (1976). Both of the earlier studies were broad in scope and collected data on everything from demographics to the level of autonomy journalists had on the job. But the section of the surveys Cassidy adapted for his own use asked journalists to rank the importance of various tasks for or aspects of their jobs. Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman asked eight questions and divided the answers into two types of professional roles for journalists: those who take an active role in news discourse and those who take a more passive role (Table 7.1, pp. 230). They called the roles “participant” and “neutral” journalism and found that most journalists felt the participant role was more important than the neutral one. For example, more than 75 percent of those surveyed found it extremely important to “investigate claims and statements made by the
government” while only 56 percent found it extremely important to “get information to the public as quickly as possible” (the highest percentage for each role).

Initial studies done by Weaver, Drew, and Wilhoit (1986 pp. 691) separated journalistic roles into three types: “adversary,” “interpretive,” and “disseminator,” but later studies completed by Weaver and Wilhoit (1994) added a fourth: “public mobilizer.” The purpose of Weaver, Drew and Wilhoit’s 1986 study was to compare radio, television, and print journalists. For television and newspaper journalists in large organizations, the interpretive role resonated most strongly, while the disseminator role was the most common designation for radio journalists. In small organizations, radio and television journalists maintained the same areas of dominant professional roles, but newspaper journalists were almost equally divided between disseminator and interpretive.

Interestingly, the 1994 study on print journalists found a greater number of participants rating the neutral, or disseminator, role as important than the 1986 study or the 1976 study done by Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman. This time, 70 percent of journalists found a task in the disseminator role to be highly important, tying for the most important with a task in the interpretive, or participant, role.

Jane Singer has also completed a relatively recent study on professional role conceptions of journalists (1997). Her research followed Breed’s lead by being qualitative in nature – a combination of a case study and a Q study. The Q study was created by William Stephenson and is designed to group people with similar opinions along a
spectrum (1997). As Singer’s research topic was the impact of the then-emerging Internet on newspaper journalists, the Q study asked participants to rank statements about online tools for media and from those rankings found six groups of journalists sorted by their attitudes towards the Web: the “Benevolent Revolutionary,” the “Revolutionary,” the “Nervous Traditionalist,” the “Traditionalist,” the “Rational Realist,” and the “Realist” (pp. 4). Singer completed another study in 2001 under the theoretical framework of gatekeeping. She did a content analysis of the online and print editions of six Colorado newspapers to see if they reflected different slices of the world, and found that online editions had more local content than their print counterparts.
References


