THE CASE FOR MEDIA IMPACT
A Case Study of ICIJ's Radical Collaboration Strategy

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Contents

Executive Summary

The media—and especially nonprofit media—has spent the past few years struggling to measure the impact of its work. Some outlets are compelled to do so by counting their philanthropic supporters; others see their impact as foundational to audience development and engagement, and still others are beginning to experiment with the role of impact measurement in advertising and other revenue streams. Of course, at its core, journalism is intended to have an effect: to inform the public so we can be civically engaged and hold the powerful to account.

But what does it mean for a journalistic organization to put the goal of impact at the center of its mission? In this report, we explore this question through the lens of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and its explosive project, "Evicted and Abandoned," in which a collaborative reporting project of more than fifty reporters and fifteen organizations in twenty-one countries took on the World Bank. The investigation found that, over the last decade, projects funded by the World Bank have physically or economically displaced an estimated 3.4 million people; that the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation have financed governments and companies accused of human rights violations; and that, from 2009 to 2013, World Bank Group lenders invested fifty billion dollars into projects graded with the highest risk for "irreversible or unprecedented"[1] social or environmental impacts.

Part One of the report introduces the current impact conversation in the media arena and describes ICIJ's structure and strategy. Part Two traces the forerunners to some contemporary journalists' discomfort with the notion of impact as a goal for media, and finds that, in fact, the notion of journalistic impact is nothing new. In Part Three, we examine how ICIJ's impact imperative affects the organization's approach to story choice, production, and distribution. The report also covers the challenges associated with this model and suggests what other journalistic organizations can learn from the experience of ICIJ.

Key Findings

1. A networked structure necessarily requires that ICIJ relinquish control of the investigation and content produced by partner organizations, which can result in reporting errors.
2. Measuring the impact of one organization and one project is difficult. Even knowing about the far-flung impact of ICIJ partner stories is near impossible. Collaborations, however complicated, result in increased capacity, larger audiences, and greater potential for impact.
3. ICIJ's above-and-below distribution strategy has proven effective. Large, international media generates attention to issues from international elites, while local and national media generates awareness among the most affected populations.
4. A rolling thunder approach whereby reporters stick with the story long after the initial publication keeps the spotlight on the issues.

Recommendations

1. **Impact is not a dirty word**: In our experience, news organizations are often wary of putting impact at the center of their operations for fear of getting too close to the ethical line separating unbiased journalism from advocacy work. The case of ICIJ demonstrates that an impact imperative need not cross this line, nor is impact necessarily a requirement that funders foist upon organizations. Instead, by having a clear mission that puts impact at the center of all it does, an organization can formulate its own theory of change (even if implicit) to guide strategy.
2. **Give your audience more—people like positive change more than bad news**: The next step for media organizations is to take the expansive notion of impact that helps to govern internal strategy and communicate these changes with audiences. Now, as the American public's trust in both media and government hovers at an all-time low, it is more important than ever to show the positive change that often stems from crucially important investigative reporting. This includes not just the political and institutional responses, but also the nuanced changes that happen at the level of individuals and communities.

Part One: Media Impact

In the wake of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists' "The Panama Papers" investigation, almost overnight a prime minister resigned; official investigations opened around the world; leaders from the United States, India, Australia, Norway, and France spoke out; and China began a censorship campaign to ensure its citizens would not access the findings. But the impact of "The Panama Papers" was not luck. It was the result of ICIJ's carefully planned campaign. While investigative reporting designed to achieve impact may seem antithetical to the principles of journalism, ICIJ has high reporting standards that are widely respected in the field.

But what does it mean for a journalistic organization to have a core mission based on generating impact? To begin to answer this question, we focused our research on determining the effects of ICIJ's impact imperative on the organization's structure, processes, and strategies.

Impact in a Historical Context

The relationship between media and culture has been examined for generations, and the current study of journalism impact has precursors. In the 1920s and 1930s, scholars focused on the relationship between media and politics—at just the moment when media began to claim impartiality. Politics and dominant culture are often seen as being inextricably linked, if not synonymous.

In later parts of this paper, we review those forerunners: from Antonio Gramsci's argument that media is a tool of the elite to create culture and dominate politics, thereby quieting the masses,[2] to arguments from economists like James T. Hamilton that assert the media is often instead a mirror reflecting consumer preferences.[3] We also cover those of social movement scholars who find that movements and organizations use the media to bring their cultural and political critiques into the mainstream, thereby shifting the broader cultural consciousness.[45]

For the moment, though, we will accept that "media impact"—whether intended or unintended—exists, and is a suitably complex topic that has preoccupied researchers and journalists alike for almost as long as the industry has existed.

Media and Impact: Why Are We (Still) Talking About It?

There are at least three particular forces that make media impact a timely subject.

Funding for nonprofit journalism comes with impact requirements

The rise of nonprofit news organizations roughly coincides with the decline in traditional, legacy news outlets. The nonprofit model is supported by philanthropic foundations, individual donors, and members. According to a recent Knight Foundation report, foundation support accounted for fifty-eight percent of nonprofit news revenue in 2013.[6] However, many of the current, large funders of journalism, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Omidyar Network, have historically funded service delivery organizations and projects, not media[78]—a trend widely discussed in the nonprofit media and philanthropic communities. This creates an immediate tension, as, for example, it's far easier to measure the impact of inoculations administered than the impact of a series of news reports on the importance of inoculations. Furthermore, service organizations have clear goals, while media organizations often have broader and more vague missions around values like contributing to a healthy democracy or protecting the public interest. However, as nonprofit media organizations and their funders have negotiated (often uneasy) partnerships, academics and other researchers have edged into the conversation and proposed other methods for understanding media's effects—both on individual behavior and more complicated processes like framing public debate on issues.

The crisis of trust in journalism has made impact a brand differentiator

This second trend has been less explored but may have more powerful implications for media, including commercial media. In an era during which the public's trust in legacy news organizations is rapidly eroding,[9] a media organization's ability to understand its impact and then communicate that

impact to its audience can potentially increase the organization's perceived trustworthiness in the eyes of the audience. If this hunch were proven to be true, this would have huge implications for the media industry and its long-term sustainability.

The rise of analytics data has produced a culture and means of measurement, and demanded a counterweight

The last decade's boom in newsroom analytics has influenced newsroom operations. It is commonplace to have loads of metrics that can be interpreted as indications of the success of journalists' output. The first wave of audience data tools focused on pretty crude measures (often aligned with the needs of those selling advertising)—clicks, unique visitors, and visits. The state of analytics has massively evolved since then, capturing virality and user actions on page, among many other data points. Many journalists, upon publishing a story, pay close attention to how it spreads on Twitter and Facebook. In her report, "The Traffic Factories," Tow Center fellow Caitlin Petre observed that while newsrooms' cultural values play a big part in how staff use and perceive analytics, the very existence of readily available data that could be used to indicate a story's worth is a potent force.[10] This defines the modern media, and separates the era of digital platforms from analogue. Some are troubled by this, whether they condemn it outright, or seek to synthesize the traffic and social analytics practices with computable indications of journalism's other social values—impact in particular.

ICIJ: Global Collaboration for Maximum Impact

Identity

Collaboration rarely happens in the news industry, especially in investigative reporting where projects are carefully guarded under lock and key until an organization chooses to break the story. But new media outlets, and especially nonprofits, are exploring collaboration and recognizing the potential for increased reporting capacity, distribution reach, and impact.

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists is one such organization that has flipped the traditional model on its head and embraced radical collaboration.

ICIJ is a project within the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit Center for Public Integrity and was founded by journalist Chuck Lewis in 1997. Observing the rapid globalization of the 1990s, ICIJ's original members believed that a journalism organization with an international mindset could be well suited to report stories that sprawled beyond any single country. At a time, according to ICIJ, when rapid globalization places "extraordinary pressures on human societies,"[11] it aims to be a globalized reporting network that counterbalances these pressures.

Mission and values

ICIJ's mission is, perhaps not surprisingly, to "be the world's best cross-border investigative team." However, that comes second to its first aim: "to bring journalists from different countries together in teams—eliminating rivalry and promoting collaboration."[12]

Interviews and participant observation with ICIJ staff clearly indicated that ICIJ's collaborative nature, cross-border reporting, and, more importantly, its syndicated distribution models are tactics in the service of impact.

Operating processes

ICIJ has a networked organizational structure with two spheres. First, its directly employed journalists, located across countries, form the network node. Then, ICIJ's network expands to include more than 190 investigative journalists in over sixty-five countries. They are generally employed by other newsrooms and publish under their employers' mastheads.

According to ICIJ website, "ICIJ reporters and editors provide real-time resources and state-of-the-art tools and techniques to journalists around the world."[13] In-country reporters contribute to the collaborative investigations through on-the-ground reporting. Reporters pool resources as needed and freely share information. ICIJ Computer Aided Reporters provide data and data support to reporters who might not otherwise have the skills or

programs necessary to conduct the analysis. Projects are then compiled and simultaneously published internationally in a syndicated manner, in multiple languages and publications across the globe.

Operational funding comes from philanthropic foundations and individual donations. Gerard Ryle, the leader of ICIJ's headquarters staff in Washington, D.C., has primary responsibility for identifying and securing funding for general operations (although some comes through the Center for Public Integrity's networks), which is not tied to specific editorial projects or topics. However, once an investigation is underway, ICIJ will often apply for smaller grants to fund additional reporting angles.

ICIJ's structure, operating model, and editorial focus flows from its purpose. According to Ryle, the organization reports stories that are international, where it has evidence that institutions have broken down, and where it there are significant problems which should be—and can be—remedied.

ICIJ and impact

ICIJ has an underpinning model of change, namely that the wider the reach of high-quality, investigative stories and the stronger the distribution partners (in audience size and credibility), the greater the potential for change to remedy the problem (impact). Although ICIJ unambiguously aims for impact and practices journalism in pursuit of exposing problems so that they can be fixed, the organization does not start with a prescription for particular outcomes.

ICIJ's model for change contrasts with many organizations that identify as social impact organizations. Social impact organizations with strong monitoring and evaluation processes generally work with what's known as a theory of change, or a set of logical steps working back from the desired outcome. For example, if the desired outcome is fewer children dying in a specific region and common causes of death are known, a public health organization will ask what intervention can be taken to prevent those causes of death, and what resources and actions are needed to achieve that intervention.

To better understand how ICIJ's collaborative process works and where "impact" fits into the big picture, we closely followed the reporting, production, distribution, and impact of one project, "Evicted and Abandoned:

The World Bank's Broken Promise to the Poor."[14] We were flies on the wall in editorial and production meetings, and conducted interviews with ICIJ staff and reporters from other organizations who participated in the project. This process is documented and explored in detail in Part Three of this paper.

ICIJ team shares responsibility for collecting impact indicators. Indeed, many functions within the organization are shared. Again, according to Ryle, that's necessary for such a small team. The journalists continue to follow the story, which can include reporting on reactions by subjects or stakeholders. The online editor compiles traffic and social metrics, and also has primary responsibility for updating the blog with impact indicators. Impact is often then reported back to audiences as follow-up content.

However, because ICIJ projects are published in multiple languages in newspapers, on websites, and throughout social networks across the world, compiling comprehensive analytics is effectively impossible. And, while some news of real-world change makes its way back to ICIJ staff and can be documented, much change that occurs in local, regional, or even national settings is never known by the organization.

Thus, for ICIJ, the operating model is an impact catch-22: the large and diffuse network leads to powerful investigative stories with sweeping scope and a huge potential for change, but these same qualities make understanding reach, audience, and the full scale of real-world change difficult, if not impossible.

Story selection

ICIJ's story selection adheres to journalistic news values that would be familiar to most investigative teams; however, to those news values ICIJ adds an extra filter regarding the potential impact of a project. Ryle says, "We're looking for obvious issues of global concern, always look[ing] for a systemic failure in things," and asking, "can we make a difference?"

He emphasizes that there is no direct relationship between funding and story selection. However, once a story is chosen, ICIJ will approach grant-making organizations it thinks would be interested in funding sub-projects, such as a reporting trip. For example, when reporters Sasha Chavkin and Mike Hudson realized that a part of the "Evicted and Abandoned" story

would require reporting on World Bank activity in Asia, ICIJ applied for a grant to do on-the-ground reporting in the region.

ICIJ also considers the type of stories it has already reported when selecting future projects. Ryle says that ICIJ is aware that the organization has a reputation for doing high-quality investigations into tax-haven stories fueled by leaks. The organization thus seeks out different types of stories, such as "Evicted and Abandoned," to avoid being perceived as a "one-trick pony." In Ryle's words: "You've got to satisfy your CEO. You've got to satisfy the board . . . Also, funders start mumbling . . . even though it's a series of stories on the same topic, they see it as one story."

This suggests a subtle influence of the funding model: The team looks for stories that fulfill ICIJ's primary criteria, but that can also widen and strengthen the organization's reputation as able to tackle a diverse range of stories.

Reporting and publishing strategy

ICIJ partners with other journalism organizations for both reporting and publication. ICIJ forms partnerships with organizations in countries relevant to the investigation both to increase on-the-ground reporting capacity and to ensure localized distribution of the investigation. In this way, ICIJ can maximize the amount of reporting that is possible with limited budgets and guarantee that the stories will reach the largest possible audience.

ICIJ does not partner with activist organizations. Ryle clarifies that ICIJ maintains a distance from activist organizations, and that, "[When] you even let them know that you're about to publish something, that is bordering on advocacy by itself." When there is an investigation that is relevant to advocacy organizations, ICIJ will often send the final, public version of the story to them in order to spur impact.

ICIJ's global reporting and publishing strategies are closely intertwined. "We need to have a story that will make its way onto the front pages of every newspaper or TV station that we work with," says Ryle. "It has to work equally well in France, as it does in Germany, as it does in Brazil, as it does in Japan." And, while ICIJ acknowledges that it is difficult to find and report stories that are global in nature, Ryle asserts that, "by getting the right one you're almost automatically guaranteed to get one

part of the impact, which is that . . . news organizations publish the story prominently."

Follow-up

After the launch of an investigation, ICIJ processes in place to track the project's impact both for journalistic and management purposes. As described above, the strategy requires that journalists stay assigned to the investigation, continuing to report out stories that were identified during the initial investigation, as well as following new leads generated by the first rounds of publication. Reporters also report on the impacts of the investigations.

ICIJ furthermore gives one of its major funders, philanthropist Graeme Wood, a report every six months on how, operationally, his money has been spent and what it has produced. That explicitly includes instances of impact.

Conclusion

The awareness that media has an impact on society, culture, and politics is not new. However, journalism's focus on media impact has surged in recent years, especially in nonprofit, investigative reporting organizations and those that fund this type of work. ICIJ is a new type of news organization with collaboration at its core and impact in its mission. This focus influences how ICIJ approaches story choice, partnerships, reporting processes, publication strategies, and follow-up reporting.

Part Two of this report explores theories of media and social change, as well as theories from other industries and academic fields, such as health and development, advertising and marketing, the social sciences, and documentary film. In Part Three, we use ICIJ's "Evicted and Abandoned" project as a case study to more deeply understand how an impact imperative permeates one investigation.

Part Two: Impact Theory

The notion of journalistic impact—that is journalism having an effect on individuals, organizations, and society—is not an invention of this century. At the very least, the practice of collecting, making sense of, and distributing information is built upon an assumption that individuals will access the information, which will inform their perspectives, decisions, opinion, attitudes, and knowledge. However, in recent years, impact has become a hotly debated topic in the media industry. Amid the failure of the legacy newspaper model, paranoia around "new media" that doesn't follow long-established journalistic rules of the game, and an obsession with whether and how millennials access and consume news and information, is in the zeitgeist.

This section traces the forerunners to journalists' current concerns with impact, starting with the years before the press adhered to a rhetoric around disinterested objectivity. Later on, a theoretical and evidence base developed to show that journalistic influence not only existed but could, in certain circumstances, be identified and measured. However, other fields have more precise and established impact-assessment regimes. This paper briefly surveys some that may be interesting and relevant to journalists.

Media, Impact, and Politics: Easy Allies in the Early Days

Newspapers in the United States were not founded on the principle of existing as an unbiased fourth estate to keep government in check. Instead, during the majority of the eighteenth century, newspapers were largely (directly or indirectly) supported by political parties.[15][16][17] Their raison d'etre was influence.

Party papers often suppressed stories that were damaging to their party and/or politicians, failed to publish facts about events when stories were not suppressed, and printed stories with significant spin.[18] Newspapers were produced with the express goal of supporting the party and ensuring that the party's candidates were elected.

In the 1870s, the number of independent papers began to increase in the United States' urban areas. Economist James T. Hamilton and others have made compelling economics-based arguments for the growth of independent

presses from 1870 through 1920 (a foreshadowing of the current era's economic upheaval in media economics). First, technological advances in the steam cylinder printing press, wood-pulp paper, and the telegraph lowered the cost per unit of a paper, even if they increased the up-front cost of production. Second, urban growth meant more consumers in a geographic area, providing opportunity for new papers to enter the market. Independent papers were able to attract a heterogeneous audience, and thus were more profitable than party papers aimed only at attracting a homogenous audience. Third, the growth in audience brought increased advertising revenue. Advertising revenue, paired with increased subscription revenue, meant that party support was no longer the most profitable option for newspapers.[19]

While "independent" did not necessarily equate to "unbiased," independent papers were not affiliated with political parties, suppressed fewer relevant news stories, had less (at least obvious) bias in their stories, and provided more facts.[20] However, these new independent newspapers were not without a mission. In fact, the owners and editors of independent papers worked to expose corruption in politicians, parties, and government institutions. Whether or not the independent press resulted in better informed or less partisan voters is difficult to prove. However, in the words of Gentzkow et al., "While we cannot prove that a more informative press helped diminish corruption, it does appear that campaigns against corruption succeeded when they were supported by news coverage."[21]

So, while impact might not have been a media industry buzzword in 1890, the media was undoubtedly working to effect political change in the United States. With a change in the market size and an increased economy of scale, independent newspapers between 1870 and 1920 grew in popularity (and profitability) based upon the premise that independent news was credible news. It seemed consumers agreed with them, and by 1900 independent papers accounted for more than forty-seven percent of all dailies and more than fifty-five percent of circulation.[22]

Professionalization and (the myth of) neutrality

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, literacy in the United States became more widespread, the population expanded, new cities formed, and journalism and media products multiplied to serve these populations. The

changing operating environment for news businesses swung their explicit identities and goals even further away from influencing a populace on behalf of their owners or funders. While Michael Schudson and Chris Anderson urge us to avoid the pitfall of looking for a genesis moment for the journalism profession, they agree with other journalism scholars that the rise of the neutrality norm coincides with the field's professionalization.[23] For many authors, "Objectivity continues to be the *sine qua non* of journalistic professionalization: explain the reasons behind the emergence of objectivity as an occupational practice, fix a date at which it first emerged, and you have gone a long way towards uncovering the "secret" of professional journalism.".[24]

If, then, journalists were not explicitly aiming to have impact or influence, researchers have looked for the field's alternative value and role in society. What was it that justified audiences paying money, workers providing their labor, and owners their capital? (Owners' profit and workers' wages could only be produced if the enterprise provided value to readers, perceived or real.)[i]Retrospectively, scholars of journalism identified the concept of "newsworthiness," an idea that the subjects of the news have *within them* elements which make them worthy of being a media product, and thusly deserving the attention around which a business model could be built. At the heart of the idea of newsworthiness is an implicit belief that what journalists are covering is worthy of the audience's time and attention.

Those scholars have spent much time studying, documenting, and critiquing news values. In 1965, Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge put forth what they hypothesized to be the top twelve factors of newsworthiness: frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, reference to persons, and reference to something negative. They, and those who follow in their tradition, focus on the supply side of the media equation. That is, while they hypothesize that these factors have "certain effects among the audience," the effects of journalistic news values are not the social phenomena under consideration.[25]

i. We acknowledge that advertisers paid a lot of the financial costs of journalism, but readers still need to find value if they are to "pay" for the product with their attention.

While researchers and practitioners alike have used Galtung and Ruge's study as a starting point to delve deeper into supposed news values,[26][27] others have critiqued the endeavor by arguing that it ignores the ideological underpinnings of news values.

One early critic of media as an instrument of ideological power was Antonio Gramsci. Writing in Fascist Italy, he argued that the regime exerted indirect power over civil institutions such as schools, the legal profession, trade unions, and the print media in order to control and incorporate the proletariat into its ideology.[28] This interpretation is strongly associated with the concept of "hegemony." However, the media's ideology was not generated in a vacuum. Kellner explains:

> The hegemony model of culture and the media reveals dominant ideological formations and discourses as a shifting terrain of consensus, struggle, and compromise, rather than as an instrument of a monolithic, unidimensional ideology that is forced on the underlying population from above by a unified ruling class . . The hegemony approach analyzes television as part of a process of economic, political, social, and cultural struggle. According to this approach, different classes, sectors of capital, and social groups compete for social dominance and attempt to impose their visions, interests, and agendas on society as a whole. Hegemony is thus a shifting, complex, and open phenomenon, always subject to contestation and upheaval.[29]

Writing specifically about U.S. media of the twentieth century, Gamson et al. argue that the frames journalists use, which are constructed through "routine, taken-for-granted structures of everyday thinking contribute to a structure of dominance."[30] As with Gramsci's dialectic, they acknowledge that the audience has agency in interpreting these frames.[31] But ultimately, the imbalance in power means the common sense, or "gut feeling" of the journalist (and the editor, company, and industry) is perhaps the strongest contributor to their readers' perceived reality.[32] For current readers considering journalistic impact, these theorists provide an argument that, despite journalists' claims to objectivity and the intrinsic newsworthiness of their stories, societal power-holders use the media to exert their control and influence audiences' views.

Nonetheless, since at least the mid-1900s, journalists have claimed objectivity and neutrality as a core tenet of the profession, and cited these factors as justification for their position of power in creating our shared

reality through broadcast and print media. In the words of Schudson and Anderson:

> U.S. journalism's claim to objectivity—i.e., the particular method by which this information is collected, processed, and presented—gives it its unique jurisdictional focus by claiming to possess a certain form of expertise of intellectual discipline. Establishing jurisdiction over the ability to objectively parse reality is a claim to a special kind of authority. In sum, journalistic objectivity operates as *both* an occupational norm and as object of struggle within the larger struggle over professional jurisdiction.[33]

But what of the audience? Gamson et al. assert that the social constructions disseminated through media are likely to be both unconscious on the part of the journalists and unrecognized as such by the reader.[34] "News is both a permanent social structure and a means of social reflexivity and contestation; a product as well as a productive process."[35] But the question begs to be asked: What do citizens believe to be newsworthy? What do they want more of? And, perhaps most importantly, why?

Ida Schultz dances around these questions when she writes: "Where most of the classical newsroom studies used titles such as making,' creating,' manufacturing,' or constructing' the news, the best title verb describing journalistic practice within the analytical framework of reflexive sociology would be *positioning* the news."[36] Following Bourdieu, Schultz recognizes that journalists and media companies are part of the journalistic field, and as such they interact with other producers of culture and knowledge. Thus, rather than constructing a news story with an unintentional but powerful frame, she posits that journalists *position* their work internally to get their stories green-lit. Furthermore, media organizations actively work to externally *position* their content in such a way as to maximize its appeal to audience members.[37] Now, not only had "news values" been identified, but critics had articulated a tension between journalists' claim to being a neutral filter for the news and their self-interest in amplifying or, at least, emphasizing newsworthy elements. If their work could be seen as consequential, it was more important and more valuable.

Mainstream media in the United States has been loath to acknowledge the power inherent in its industry, the ends that result from their means of communication, and the news values of its audience(s). Note Schudson and

Anderson: "Journalism seems to simultaneously make a grandiose knowledge claim (that it possesses the ability to isolate, transmit, and interpret the most publicly relevant aspects of social reality) and an incredibly modest one (that really, most journalists are not experts at all but are simply question-asking generalists)."[38]

The evidence base for journalistic evidence

Researchers have long worked to identify and quantify the influence of the news media on individuals, society, and politics alike. Particularly relevant to our study, in 1972 Max McCombs and Donald Shaw put forth their theory of Agenda Setting, which aimed to develop an empirical basis for how the media affected what the public paid attention to. Comparing the issues that the media emphasized in its coverage of the U.S. presidential election campaign and the issues that survey respondents recalled, the researchers found that the more the media covered an issue, the more audiences considered that issue to be important.[39]

The theory was extended to how the media influences audiences' perceptions of facts within an issue, such as the positive and negative attributes of people and organizations in the news.[40] Researchers investigated the ways in which agenda setting worked in non-political subjects, including business reputations, sports, and religion (generally speaking, the principles held true). They also started to find that the recency and volume of individuals' exposure had a significant influence on how much they retained the information in memory, (i.e., when issues drop out of the media agenda, most people mostly forget the details).[41]

In the mid- and late 2000s, the growing prominence of digital media, and in particular the early social media technologies (blogs, comment boards and the like), prompted researchers to extend their understanding of a changing environment that allowed, as never before, individuals to participate in fragmented, conversational groups and clusters (and for the conversations to be studied on a mass scale).[42] The framework of "agenda melding" was one result; the idea that individuals join groups and partially assimilate the group's opinions of what's important, or maybe stay silent.[43] Mostly, after joining a broadly like-minded group they do not seek

to change the group's dominant views to align with their own outlier views on minor matters.

A study of 2012 U.S. election-time Twitter also observed differences between how people with different political affiliations absorbed salience: The researchers, using the relatively new term "network agenda setting," concluded that supporters of the Republican nominee Mitt Romney appeared to absorb their online network's views on salient topics and facts more than did Democratic nominee Barack Obama's supporters.[44]

While the foci of agenda setting studies have varied across time, platforms, and individuals' characteristics, the field of research has provided a range of empirical bases from which to understand the way news media can and has influenced public perceptions of events, individuals, and organizations.

Rediscovering an impact mission

In recent years, media organizations have been motivated to explicitly embrace the reality that they are, in fact, influential social forces. Having lost their dominance over channels of communication, and as consumers of news look to new and unconventional sources for information, legacy companies are coming to grips with the fact that evolution is now necessary for their survival. They have started to attend to what happens post-publication: Audience engagement, especially via social media, is an accepted practice in newsrooms, and engagement editors are common in media companies across the United States. The proliferation of nonprofit media has allowed for a wave of experimentation in the co-creation of news, and deep audience and community engagement by media.

An increasing number of both nonprofit and commercial media organizations are betting that impact—that is, any change in the status quo as a result of an intervention on their part (content, engagement, etc.)—is key to their long-term sustainability.[45] While this trend started in the nonprofit news space and was largely pushed by philanthropic foundations with a history of program evaluation around the NGOs they support, many commercial media outlets are taking it as a given that to show real, positive change as a result of their reporting will build a deeper relationship between their brand and their audience. The logic goes something like this: The more

impact a news organization has, the more people will trust that brand and the greater affinity they will feel for it; thus, they'll return more regularly to the organization's website/broadcast program/newspaper, ultimately generating more revenue for the organization.

However, impact is still not the most important metric for the vast majority of media organizations. For example, again in Caitlin Petre's ethnographic research report, "The Traffic Factories," she finds that traditional media metrics rule newsrooms, and that these metrics have an effect on journalism. Especially relevant is her finding that traffic-based rankings can "drown out" other forms of evaluation, thereby engendering a range of emotions in journalists such as "excitement, anxiety, self-doubt, triumph, competition, and demoralization."[46]

Measuring Impact in Other Fields

If a history and literature review of how journalism has approached its influence and impact is useful as a look down deep into the topic, then this next section may be useful as a survey of adjacent fields' approaches. Some pertinent professions' practices are briefly outlined below.

Impact and metrics in development and health

Journalism researchers looking for expertise in achieving and evaluating impact can turn to the development fields, in particular the NGOs, foundations, and international organizations focused on health and social well-being. Their best practice, when planning an intervention, is to develop a "theory of change."[47] The first step is to envision and articulate the ultimate outcome (e.g., bringing down rates of infant mortality in Afghanistan from 115 per thousand to forty per thousand), then work backwards through each precondition needed to change from the status quo to the desired condition. One of the many preconditions might be all children getting vaccinations, for which a precondition is parents knowing and agreeing to vaccinations, for which a precondition is an effective public information campaign, and so on. At each step the theory of change relies on cause and effect models that are accurate for the local environment. Ideally each intermediary step has indicators, which can be meaningfully measured.

Funders in the development field have also driven the adoption of standardized metrics to express the value of their outcomes. The DALY and QALY, favored by parts of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the World Health Organization, exemplify this practice, but the fundamental idea (having a comparable metric for expressing outcomes) underpins similar methods used by the Hewlett Foundation, the Acumen fund, and the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, among others.

In 1994 a movement to professionalize health development reached a milestone by establishing the DALY, or Disability Adjusted Life Year, intended to be a single metric to capture the impact upon a human of any condition, such as a disease or a trauma.[48] (Development organizations' interventions aim to reduce that number.)

Using this framework, individuals in the target population experience a condition that burdens them a given amount. For example, total blindness is expressed as a sixty-percent burden, death is a 100-percent burden, whereas protein malnutrition to the point of wasting is considered a 5.3-percent burden. If a person lives with blindness for ten years, they would have lost six DALYs. Protein malnutrition for ten years becomes 0.53 DALYs, and so on. The figure can then be combined into a formula to express costs and benefits across populations: An intervention costing five dollars per person which prevents otherwise certain blindness, given to 100 five-year-olds with a life expectancy of seventy-five years, might be expressed as:

100 * (75-5) * 60% = 4,200 DALY
at a cost of
100 * $5 = $500

So this intervention has a cost per DALY of about 12c ($500/4,200) and thusly can be compared to any other intervention.

However, many readers will immediately see that while this might be precise, it has many points incorporating assumptions and estimations which risk losing accuracy and even meaning, while also flattening the lived experience of many individuals into a single number. Within the rich literature critiquing DALY, a Health Policy paper published one year after its introduction acknowledged limitations—including that the DALY sits within a narrow utilitarian value system—but did not wholly reject it.[49]

Three years after DALY's introduction, two more economists from Oxford and Harvard, Sudhir Anand and Kara Hanson, detailed both technical and ethical problems, concluding that DALY's results would be practically flawed and decisions based on them would also be inequitable.[50] As late as 2014, Princeton researcher Rachel Parks charted the rise, resilience, and continuing use of the DALY through important centers of global health policy.[51]

Impact-minded journalists may be interested in the DALY for two main reasons, aside from its persistent power. Philanthropists have the option of giving their money to organizations that can express a likely value of their intervention in a simple number. (Responsible organizations will include caveats and acknowledge uncertainty, but at least they offer a comparable data point.) However, the underlying theory of change in journalism is far less direct than health organizations'. Journalists may need to articulate that their case for funding must embrace that uncertainty. For example, in James T. Hamilton's book Democracy's Detectives, he conducts an economic analysis of the cost of producing investigative reporting versus the monetary social value to provide a quantifiable economic societal cost savings.[52]

Impact and Metrics in Information and Communication Worlds

Science and social sciences

Moving from the fields of development closer to the world of journalism, we pass academia and scientific research where there has been an established and highly structured metric for impact. When researchers publish formal articles in peer-reviewed journals, those publications will have an "impact factor," calculated by taking the number of times the journal has been cited in a year and dividing by the total number of articles published over the previous two years, as recorded by Thomson Reuters' "Journal Citation Report" (JCR). Tenure and promotion committees pay heed when researchers, especially those in the sciences and social sciences, publish papers in highly rated journals such as Science and Nature. However, the "JCR" does have

its critics who say that Thomson Reuters' database skews toward North America, its data is hard to verify, that the calculation cannot fathom whether the citation is approving, disapproving, or central to the citing author's argument, and a host of other problems.

As a counterpoint to the "JCR" impact factor, some academic researchers have started to pay attention to "Alt-Metrics," a system which also includes indicators of usage (in the form of views and downloads), peer review, discussion on social media, data usage, as well as citations.[53] Researchers add their own expert understanding to either of those frameworks of whether peers' findings have become useful and built-upon in the field. For particularly important findings, studies are replicated; theoretically, when the research is done again, in the same way, it should produce the same results.

Advertising/marketing

Leaving aside, for a moment, the vast chasms of motivation, methods, and form (at least traditionally) that separate advertising and journalism, there are still similarities. Advertising intends to persuade the audience, as does some journalism. Advertising's success metrics, however, are much more clearly linked to driving revenue for businesses (although that relationship became complicated in later years).

Indeed, the early performance indicators for marketing executives in products and services firms were found in the financial statements. In the 1950s and 1960s, according to marketing historian Bruce Clarke, most advertising was judged on whether revenue and/or operating profit went up (more sales being made or products commanding a higher price compared to the cost of production), and/or market share increased.[54] As advertising management became more sophisticated, executives argued that those indicators lagged their output by too much. Their solution was to measure softer, but standardized indicators: primarily, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and brand equity.[55] (At this point, journalists might start to see potential lessons: These labels refer to attitudes held by people exposed to media works, although the difficulty remains of proving causality in an intrinsically chaotic environment.) Customer satisfaction was expected to drive future sales revenue in volume and the higher prices customers would

be prepared to pay because they were already satisfied with the product. The financial premium derived from satisfaction, loyalty, and audiences' overall improved perception of the brand, in the form of increased revenue and lower subsequent customer acquisition costs, was called brand equity. Surveys of marketing professionals have revealed more attitudinal metrics, and myriad combinations of financial and non-financial measures, but they still follow the logic that a population's perception of a product or service will influence the financial statements over time.[56] Marketing and advertising firms traditionally used surveys and focus groups to measure these attitudinal factors, although the advent of social media has produced a set of tools promising to deliver customer insights and measure the impact of marketing and communications.[57]

Although journalists may balk at adopting practices from the marketing industries, that field has developed expertise in measuring the effects of their activity.

Documentary filmmaking

Journalists and documentary filmmakers are perhaps the closest relatives in this survey. The fields overlap. However, the inclusion of philanthropic funding sources in documentary economics precedes the rise of the online news organizations like ProPublica and The Marshall Project, which are strongly associated with impact and foundation-funded journalism. As such, the documentary community has established a practice and rhetoric around impact which is more recognized than in other mission-driven journalism.

Media-funding philanthropists, including the Ford Foundation, the Knight Foundation, the Bertha Foundation and the Sundance Institute, underwrote a guide to impact for the documentary field. Its roots lie in a model published by political and communication theorist Harold D. Lasswell in 1948. Lasswell said, simply, the best way to describe an act of communication was:

Who
Says What
In Which Channel
To Whom

With What Effect?[58]

Jana Diesner, a researcher in computer science with relevance to impact assessment, applied this approach in a framework for measuring the impact of documentaries. She called it the CoMTI model, suggesting research techniques and suitable metrics for measuring results throughout four dimensions of a film: its content, medium, target, and impact. Within the impact dimension Diesner uses the preexisting idea that effects can be on individual, communal, societal, or global levels, which may take the form of changes to awareness, sentiment, and actions.[59] Although Diesner's CoMTI paper was an intermediary step toward building a computational tool to analyze text from the network of stakeholders around a documentary, the model and its constituent parts is valuable as an extensive catalogue of metrics and research techniques for assessing journalistic impact.

Conclusion

The history of thinking around how journalism affects society supports a conclusion that journalists must accept that their work can and frequently does have consequence. However, unlike some of the other professional fields outlined above, it is easier to see something like influence—one element within a suite of factors leading to an end result, rather than the direct impact of a health intervention like immunizations or cataract surgery. Nonetheless, each of the impact and influence theories discussed above have their limitations. Journalism, which necessarily operates in the chaos of the uncontrolled real world, must expect to tackle uncertainty, which is antithetical to a stable and predictable theory of change.

Part Three: ICIJ Case Study

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists was founded by Chuck Lewis in 1997 as part of the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit Center for Public Integrity (CPI). Observing the rapid globalization of the 1990s, ICIJ's founders believed that a journalism organization with an international mindset could be well suited to report stories that sprawled beyond any single country. As a time of rapid globalization places "extraordinary pressures on human societies,"[60] according to ICIJ, the organization aims to be a globalized reporting network which counterbalances these pressures.

In October 2016, the CPI announced that ICIJ would spin off to become a free-standing organization. In a press release, the CPI stated: "The CPI's Board of Directors has decided that enabling ICIJ to chart its own course will help both journalistic teams build on the massive impact they have had as one organization, and allow each to pursue new opportunities and options for funding and pursuing their crucial work."[61] According to ICIJ director Gerard Ryle, the fundamental differences in ICIJ's networked, collaborative structure and processes were at odds with the more traditional Center for Public Integrity, which focused on U.S. national, watchdog, and government accountability reporting. Furthermore, international philanthropic entities are governed by the laws, rules, and regulations of the state in which they are based. And, there can be limits to donations on international organizations. An independent ICIJ will then potentially have access to a different and/or increased pool of funders.[62]

In this chapter, we examine how ICIJ's impact imperative affects the organization's approach to story choice, production, and distribution. We also ask what challenges are associated with this model and share what other journalistic organizations can learn from the experience of ICIJ. We use ICIJ "Evicted and Abandoned" investigation into the World Bank as a prism for separating the structures, processes, calculations, and strategies that together form ICIJ's high-impact model.

I. ICIJ

ICIJ's stated mission is to "be the world's best cross-border investigative team," which it does by bringing "journalists from different countries to-

gether in teams—eliminating rivalry and promoting collaboration."[63] While there are indications that collaboration is becoming an emerging norm in today's new media landscape, ICIJ has been ahead of this curve. In this landscape of increasing collaboration, ICIJ stands out due to the sheer size and scope of its projects, many of which involved dozens of journalists and media organizations across the globe.

The network structure of ICIJ and its syndicated content model were developed with one goal in mind: impact. In interviews and through participant observation with ICIJ staff, we found clear indications that ICIJ's collaborative nature, cross-border reporting, and, more importantly, its syndicated distribution models continue to be tactics in the service of impact. According to editor Mike Hudson: "Everything is predicated on writing powerful stories: accurate, hard-hitting, deep digging, powerful journalism. And then, readership. But these all dovetail. The primary discussion is about the content, but knowing [the rest] will lead to impact."[64]

Hudson recognizes that impact—real-world change—may take "many years to manifest." For example, he says, "Action plans are announced but not implemented." While change might be promised, action can be just "mere spasms of reform that don't do anyone any good." The real impact, he adds, "is that change that is sustained attention beyond PR and press releases."

ICIJ's networked organizational structure consists of two spheres. At its core, ICIJ directly employs journalists located across the globe (at the time of writing, staff includes six full-time and seven contract journalists), who report, coordinate the reporting efforts of others, and develop projects' distribution strategies. ICIJ's extended network includes more than 190 investigative journalists in at least sixty-five countries. These reporters are generally employed by other newsrooms and publish under their employers' mastheads. ICIJ provides monetary and other resources such as data reporting to in-country reporters, as necessary.

ICIJ assumes that for high-quality investigative stories, the greater the reach of a story and the stronger the distribution partners (in audience size and credibility), the greater the potential for change to remedy the problem (impact). Although ICIJ unambiguously aims for impact and practices journalism in pursuit of exposing problems so they can be fixed,

the organization does not acknowledge or promote any specific prescription or outcome.

On the surface, ICIJ's model seems almost absurdly obvious: Partner with as many reporters and organizations across the globe to conduct in-depth investigations and distribute them globally to reach maximum audience. But the elegance of the model obscures the degree of complexity required in the scaffolding for these projects. The success of ICIJ projects relies on the successful maneuvering of ICIJ to manage partner relationships, expectations, information, and much more. ICIJ senior editor Michael Hudson acknowledges that the partnership model is inefficient if one considers only the number of stories published based on effort put into investigations. However, he says that this model is not necessarily set up for maximum output, but instead for impact: "A key part of impact is agenda-setting and dominating the conversation."

ICIJ director Gerard Ryle notes that there are two main advantages to the organization's partnership model, through which they bring partners in early in the reporting process: First, partners are able to contribute reporting resources, and local knowledge and expertise; and second, partners provide almost guaranteed publishing platforms across the globe. He says that with this model, in some cases, "A story can be published in thirty-five countries in a single day."[65]

As a nonprofit, the collaborative model has additional logic for ICIJ. "The basic business model [of journalism] is failing," Ryle says. "Organizations aren't spending the kind of money they used to spend on investigative journalism. By pooling resources, we're able to cut out a lot of the cost." By sharing photographs, graphics, and travel and document costs, ICIJ is able to manage large-scale projects much more quickly and at lower cost than a traditional newsroom.

Case study: ``Evicted and Abandoned"

Spoiler alert: ICIJ's collaborative "Evicted and Abandoned" investigation found that, over the last decade, projects funded by the World Bank have physically or economically displaced an estimated 3.4 million people; that the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation have financed governments and companies accused of human rights violations; and that,

from 2009 to 2013, World Bank Group lenders invested fifty billion dollars into projects graded the highest risk for "irreversible or unprecedented" social or environmental impacts.[66] But how did they get this story? And how did an ICIJ investigation result in a powerful international institution, the World Bank, changing its own internal policy?

ICIJ is known for its big investigations with a leak at the center. However, in 2014, ICIJ wanted to diversify the types of stories it covered so as not to be pigeonholed as an outfit that "just" gets leaks. The brief came down for reporters to begin poking around and pitch ideas. Reporter Sasha Chavkin, sensing a possibility, started going to World Bank seminars in the spring of 2014, where he heard complaints about adverse effects of World Bank projects. Chavkin started to research and found that the complaints panel was hearing from complainants in Kenya, Honduras, and India, and that there were many impoverished people who were having their lives disrupted as a result of World Bank projects.

The World Bank's state mission is to "end extreme poverty within a generation and boost shared prosperity."[67] The bank has a promise of no harm, and for infrastructure or other physical projects, it is required to resettle or otherwise recompense affected people. However, Chavkin found indications that there is chronic undercounting of the actual harm done and individuals displaced as a result of World Bank projects, and that, often, the action plans that are designed to mitigate negative effects of bank projects are not implemented. Furthermore, there is no effective redress to any private processes or projects funded in whole or in part by the World Bank, and there are examples of violent evictions and people being displaced into lands controlled by tribes hostile to the new settlers. In one example, it became clear to Chavkin that a sum of the one to two billion-dollar fund made available to an Ethiopian health and education program were going toward forcible resettlement (theoretically to where there was more education infrastructure).

Chavkin says he wanted to understand the deeper roots of this story. Of the investigation, he notes, "I think it's about both the scale of displacement and human rights abuses and violence associated with World Bank projects, and then the fact that pretty systemically the World Bank seems not to be following its rules for protecting the people who are in the path

of its projects." While local media covered individual cases of violence or wrongdoing resulting from these projects, Chavkin says it took reporting to determine that there was actually a larger systemic problem of forced resettlement that the World Bank seemed to accept fairly routinely as a part of its projects. Furthermore, he says, "There seemed to be very broad failure to take the required steps to protect the people who were being displaced."[68]

Chavkin and his editor, Mike Hudson, found sociologists and others who had been tasked with assessing the potential adverse impact of World Bank projects and who are meant to provide checks on approvals. However, they recognized that these experts do not hold any meaningful power and are often sidelined. Instead, "The World Bank approval side of the operation has all the power," says Hudson, adding that the World Bank is "run and staffed by engineers and economists who have a very modeled, abstract way of understanding the world."

When asked what ICIJ identified as a hypothetical "win" would be for the "Evicted and Abandoned" project, editor Mike Hudson says: "A win would be if ICIJ can penetrate the World Bank and write about what's going on. [To] give voice to the marginalized, give a hearing to the people who are seen as peripheral." He is clear that, as a news organization, ICIJ can not aim at for specific policy changes, but he asserts: "We want the world, the World Bank, policy makers, politicians, academics, "real people," activists, voters, media to sit up and listen and read. This is important."

For "Evicted and Abandoned," Hudson estimates that ICIJ ultimately partnered with about fifteen other organizations.[69] From the outset, key partners in the United States included the Huffington Post, which was tasked with reporting and building a data interactive, the Global Post, NPR (through a freelancer), the GroundTruth Project, and the Investigative Fund. Internationally, early partners were *The Guardian* in the United Kingdom, El País in Spain, and three Swiss newspapers. Other partners included the German stations WDR and NDR. ICIJ recognized there was a reporting hole in Asia, so it applied for a grant to do reporting in the region. Ultimately, other partners included Nigeria's Premium Times, BIRN in the Balkans, a Slovenian freelancer (Blaz Zgaga), radio freelancer Keane Barron (funded through the Fund for Investigative Journalism), freelancer

Barry Yeoman (funded by The Nation Institute's Investigative Reporting Fund), and Fusion.

ICIJ wrote, "In all, more than 50 journalists from 21 countries worked together to document the bank's lapses and show their consequences for people around the globe."[70] ICIJ also analyzed thousands of World Bank documents and made them accessible through an interactive database.[71] The byline for the main story read: "By Sasha Chavkin, Ben Hallman, Michael Hudson, Cécile Schilis-Gallego and Shane Shifflett. *With reporting from Musikilu Mojeed, Besar Likmeta, Ciro Barros, Giulia Afiune, Mar Cabra, Anthony Langat, Jacob Kushner, Jeanne Baron, Barry Yeoman, Bla Zgaga and Friedrich Lindenberg.*"

Differing journalistic norms, practices, and standards pose challenges in cross-country collaborations. Hudson says that ICIJ defaults to U.S. standards and style because they stand up elsewhere in the world. While he emphasizes that he doesn't necessarily think that U.S. journalism is "better" than others, using this as the standard has worked so far.

ICIJ carefully selected reporting and publishing partners to maximize on-the-ground reporting capacity, reach, and potential impact of this investigation. According to Hudson, while "most of the consideration was about the fullness of the story," there was a deep awareness of audience. "The composition of the partners was totally informed by balance, coverage, and ability of various partners to meet certain needs. For example, [ICIJ selected] Fusion for [its reach and expertise on] social media."

Early in the reporting process, ICIJ selected the Huffington Post as a core partner with the intent of reaching a wide audience of "non-wonks." The team immediately began thinking about the design: who would host the project, who would do the reporting, who would be responsible for editing, and who would do the data and design work. In the end, reporters said the reporting and writing was "pretty evenly split" between ICIJ and the HuffPo.

There were two separate data visualizations for this project, one hosted by the Huffington Post and the other by ICIJ. We asked HuffPo data reporter Shane Shifflett how the decision was made to have two visualizations. Shifflett says that HuffPo's team decided that for its general audience, a map was the easiest way to present the complex information from

the investigation. "HuffPo is eager to clue readers into what they can do, talk about solutions, and see how they can help. ICIJ is interested in impact and goals," he says.[72] So, ICIJ's visualization was in-depth and made the deep data and records it had used during reporting accessible to its more technical and informed audience in order to provide the necessary information to pressure the World Bank directly.

On the HuffPo side, Shifflet says the team had to completely rethink the way in which it told this investigation for its audience. For example, he says he and his colleagues worked from the assumption that the HuffPo audience would know what the World Bank is, but that they wouldn't be familiar with the intricacies of how international policy is made or the institutions in place to hold them accountable. Shifflet produced an interactive map and visualizations for the stories hosted on the HuffPo, with the central goal being to increase awareness of the World Bank. Shifflet also recounts that the HuffPo welcomed the opportunity to work with ICIJ's investigative reporters, and to be able to champion such an important project.

ICIJ shared the full text stories with the Huffington Post and agreed to its posting the content on its website. According to ICIJ's online editor Hamish Boland-Rudder, "The things I wanted in return for that was guarantee that we'd be able to have access to analytics to track the traffics website on that site, as well as have links back to our site and, more importantly, that these links be fairly prominently displayed. Also, we requested that there be an email sign-up."

At launch, "Evicted and Abandoned" country-specific stories included Kenya,[73] Ethiopia,[74] Peru,[75] India,[76] Honduras,[77] and Kosovo.[78] The stories were written by a combination of ICIJ staff and partners, with local reporting partners in all cases. According to reporter Sasha Chavkin, ICIJ "chose our case studies based on the severity of impact to displaced communities, the quality of existing documentation, and the extent to which they illustrated larger themes [ICIJ] wanted to investigate (human rights abuses, financial intermediaries, etc.)." He says they also worked to have geographic diversity and to have stories that would be of interest to ICIJ's partners on the project.

II. Strategizing for Impact

The project launch date was a key piece of ICIJ's strategy for "Evicted and Abandoned," designed to maximize audience reach and the potential for impact. Prior to publication, lead ICIJ reporter on the project Sasha Chavkin explained: "Our launch is going to be the day before the World Bank spring meetings this year. That's not a coincidence. Right now the Bank is rewriting its safeguard rules.[ii][...] And we want our story to come out before the second version is published." And while Hudson says that the team did not talk explicitly about the impact the project would have, it did make explicit predictions about readership potential, assuming that wide readership was most likely when there was a news hook.

ICIJ decided to have a rolling release of its prepared stories over a four-week period. This strategy was designed to drive sustained traffic, which (in its tacit theory of change) would produce impact. At the time of project launch, ICIJ had eight known stories. Chavkin explains:

> We are trying to present the most compelling body of work to the widest audience we can . . . Some of that requires strategic decisions. For example, there are eight stories overall that we have planned. We could release all eight on the same day. We think no one would possibly read of all of them. So that's why we're going with four on the first day, and then the others will come out a week at a time after that.

ICIJ had also committed Chavkin and Hudson full time to the project for the remainder of 2015, after having already worked on it for ten months. Mike Hudson says, "That's where the true impact comes from . . . We get a big bump on the first publish then the traffic reduces. More time allows the team to cover reactions, and respond to any leaks or sources who emerge to suggest new lines of reporting." He suggests that this style of rolling release and ongoing coverage is different from "most other news organizations." While he names a few exceptions, such as The New York Times, he says, "Most do big splash then move on." In addition to a rolling release sustaining public attention and increasing the potential for impact, he says it also allows the story to evolve.

ii. The World Bank safeguard rules are those designed to minimize potential harm to individuals affected by World Bank projects and activities.

III. Impact

ICIJ staff members emphasize the importance of delineating journalism from advocacy. Ryle, for example, says that while he recognizes that advocacy groups "do fantastic work" with ICIJ stories that contribute to investigations' impact, "We don't want to be the advocates for a number of reasons." He adds: "If our stories are good enough, they'll get picked up by these groups, and if they're not, then we're failing as journalists." For Ryle, impact can mean many things. "For me, impact is, you know, outrage—public outrage, companies changing laws, parliamentary debates, you know, protests in the streets, all of which we actually do get," he says.

Online editor Hamish Boland-Rudder says that ICIJ does not have any "official" way to monitor the impact of its projects:

> The best thing that I can point towards is I've started a tag on our blog: impact tag. And because we have no formal measurement tool setup, I'm not formally reporting things at all. That's kind of the place where we try and collect the most important stuff or what seems to be the most important stuff. That's really the only record of it that we have.

Chavkin says he finds out about the impact of his projects mostly from the news, through Google alerts, on Twitter, and from other ICIJ members around the world who tell ICIJ when "stuff is happening." When something seems important enough to share, Chavkin says, "I put it in a post."

In the case of "Evicted and Abandoned," ICIJ knew it had hit a nerve when the World Bank began pushing back on the story before it had even been published. ICIJ reported that, "In March 2015—five days after the reporting team send detailed questions informing the bank it had found "systemic gaps" in its protections for people displaced by its projects—World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim issued a statement admitting "major problems" with the bank's resettlement practices and announcing a reform plan to fix them.[79] The World Bank also released a five-and-a-half page document titled, "Action Plan: Improving the Management of Safeguards and Resettlement Practices and Outcomes."[80] It is worth noting here that ICIJ directly links its reporting to the World Bank response. ICIJ published a follow-up story in May that said former World Bank top

employees did not think the Action Plan addresses the deepest flaws in the system.[81]

When the investigation was published in mid-April of 2015, the bank pushed back in a more direct way. *The Guardian* ran a version of the story in which it misstated some of ICIJ's findings. According to Chavkin and Hudson, "Essentially [*The Guardian*] said that 3.4 million people had been forced from their homes, which was not our finding. It was that 3.4 million were physically or economically displaced. And so the bank made a formal complaint to *The Guardian. The Guardian* corrected the things they had misstated." *The Guardian* readers' editor wrote a column, "The Readers' Editor on . . . the Pluses and Perils of Journalistic Partnerships," in which he admitted the paper's mistakes and said: "*The Guardian*'s writers and editors failed to get their heads around a complex exposé on which our partners in the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists had been working for months."[82]

The Guardian blunder aside, "Evicted and Abandoned" generated an impressive global response. Chavkin and Hudson followed the global pickup of the story, both by ICIJ partners and other news organizations. While they do not know the number of media outlets that ran the story, they informally kept track of the coverage estimate that there were "more than fifty, probably close to 100" articles written across the globe about the project. "Some of these are about the general findings [of the project], and some have actually used [ICIJ] data to look at displacement occurring within their own countries. So we're glad to see all of that pickup," they say.

ICIJ has closely followed the long tail of impact stemming from the project and, in many cases, its team members have written follow-up stories about these changes in order to communicate them with their audiences. However, in these stories about the impact of "Evicted and Abandoned," ICIJ does not explicitly tie the changes to the investigation.

Immediately following the investigation in April 2015, EarthRights International filed a lawsuit in the United States against the World Bank's private-sector lending arm, the International Financial Corporation, on behalf of people living and working near a coal plant in northwest India.[83] While ICIJ about this lawsuit, which charges the World Bank with serious

environmental and economic to fisherfolk, farmers, and villagers and the parallels to the findings of its own investigation, the post does not say that the lawsuit has any direct relationship to "Evicted and Abandoned." In July 2015, the IFC claimed legal immunity from being sued in the United States.

In June, ICIJon the dismal results of a World Bank employee survey that found staffers did not have a clear understanding of the direction of the institution, nor did they agree that the bank "creates a culture of openness and trust."[84] Again, ICIJ did not claim that these survey results, which were worse for the bank than the prior year's, were a result of "Evicted and Abandoned." However, the article does construct a timeline in which the World Bank's surveys shifted significantly from 2014 to 2015, with "Evicted and Abandoned" being one of two incidents that happened between the two (the other being demotions and reduced salaries), thereby implying that it played a role in the employee dissatisfaction. ICIJ also reported that a leaked document with open-ended answers to the survey revealed that staffers fear retaliation from senior management.

In July 2015, ICIJ reported that a World Bank Inspection Panel found that the bank had used outdated census data when funding a power transmission line project in Nepal.[85] This resulted in many more families being displaced and compensation being slow, if at all.

Finally, in December 2015, the World Bank implemented reforms to address the economic and environmental resettlement costs to individuals living in areas where bank projects were developed.[86] The reorganization gives autonomy to specialists who enforce social safeguards, including independent staff and budgets; hires new social safeguard specialists; requires "Resettlement Boot Camp" for all safeguards staff; and increased overall funding for safeguards support. ICIJ reported that the World Bank's "Resettlement and Safeguards Management" factsheet was a response to its continued reporting on the issue.[87]

Honors and awards

Honors and awards are common indicators of the success of any journalistic endeavor. By this standard, "Evicted and Abandoned" was a considerable success.

- National Headliner Award—Online Writing
- Online News Association—The Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award (Large Newsrooms)[88]
- Overseas Press Club of America—Whitman Bassow Award for International Environmental Reporting[89]
- New York Press Club—Gold Keyboard Award for Outstanding Enterprise or Investigative Reporting[90]
- New York State Society of CPAs—Excellence in Financial Journalism Award
- Society of Professional Journalists/Sigma Delta Chi Award—Feature Photography[91]
- Investigative Reporters and Editors Award—Finalist
- Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business and Financial Journalism—Finalist
- Society of American Business Editors and Writers "Best-in-Business" Award—Finalist
- John B. Oakes Award for Distinguished Environmental Journalism—Finalist
- D.C. Chapter of Society of Professional Journalists Dateline Award—Finalist

IV. Challenges and Learnings

A collaborative reporting project of more than fifty reporters and fifteen organizations in twenty-one countries, taking on a behemoth like the World Bank—what could go wrong? While certainly there are nearly infinite answers to this question, in fact, very little did go askew.

According to editor Mike Hudson, the largest challenge with "Evicted and Abandoned," as with most ICIJ projects, is working with partners in different countries where journalistic norms, practices, and laws vary greatly. However, by using American journalistic norms as the standard and then working closely with reporters who are producing work that will contribute to ICIJ stories, Hudson says they meet issues head on. However, as was seen with *The Guardian* story that misrepresented "Evicted and Abandoned"'s findings, the model is not bulletproof.

Another challenge when working with partners arises when trying to understand the widespread and multifaceted impact of such a massive undertaking. At the most basic level, ICIJ staff members say that it is difficult, if not impossible, to get web and social media metrics from partners in order to truly know the reach of a project. Furthermore, it's likely that only a fraction of the on-the-ground, real-world change that happens in the wake of ICIJ projects ever makes its way back to the eyes and ears of ICIJ staff. And, because there are not ICIJ staff dedicated analytics or impact, there is little bandwidth to improve these processes.

But even with these challenges and an incomplete understanding of the scope of impact of "Evicted and Abandoned," there are at least three lessons worth stating.

First, collaborations, however complicated, result in increased reporting capacity, larger audiences, and greater potential for impact. Having in-country reporters contribute to investigations means reporting can be done more cheaply than otherwise, and with greater cultural competency. This means there is a built-in audience for the stories in countries across the globe.

Related is ICIJ's above-and-below distribution strategy, where large international media like the Huffington Post and El País generate attention to issues from international elites, while local and national media generate awareness among the most affected populations. The resulting pressure from the grassroots and elites create a vise for institutions and power holders, forcing them to respond.[iii][92]

Finally, ICIJ stuck with the story long after initial publication, focusing its spotlight on the World Bank and the changes it had committed to making. This rolling thunder approach kept international attention on the World Bank, likely resulting in its continued efforts to address the problems and wrongdoing identified in "Evicted and Abandoned."

iii. This finding mirrors that in a 2015 study of the impact of the CIR's reporting on a disability claims backlog at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

V. Conclusion

In our experience, news organizations are often wary of putting impact at the center of their operations for fear of getting too close to the ethical line that supposedly separates unbiased journalism from advocacy work, or fear of the perception of straddling that line. However, the case of ICIJ demonstrates that an impact imperative need not cross this line, nor is impact only necessarily a requirement that funders demand of organizations. Instead, by having a clear mission that puts impact at the center of all it does, an organization can formulate its own theory of change (even if implicit) to guide strategy.

When an organization pays attention to the levers of change relevant to an investigation and incorporates these into its strategy for publishing a story, the project often becomes both wider and deeper in scope. Suddenly, editorial partnerships become logical pathways to reach broader audiences, informing more people about wrongdoing and helping to set agendas in geographic locations where structural change is possible.

The next step for media organizations, including ICIJ, is to take the expansive notion of impact that helps to govern internal strategy and communicate these changes with audiences. At a time when the American public's trust in both media[93] and government[94] hovers at a dismal twenty percent, an all-time low, it is more important than ever to show the positive change that often stems from crucially important investigative reporting. This includes not only the political and institutional responses, but also the more nuanced changes that happen at the level of individuals and communities. Communicating these impacts can potentially help improve public trust in media as an agent for positive change, while also providing models of citizen engagement in processes of social change.

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