

HOW DO WE MEASURE THE IMPACT OF AN INVESTIGATIVE STORY?
IMPACT MEASUREMENT AT WFAA-TV IN DALLAS

A Project
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the Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri School of Journalism

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Master of Arts

by
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Randy Reeves, Project Supervisor
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I would like to dedicate the following project to my parents and stepfather. Dad, thank you for providing a roof over my head to make this project possible. Momma, thank you for the countless stressful phone calls and FaceTime sessions. Cornel, thank you for believing in me and reaffirming my intrinsic motivation and passion for journalism. I love you all.

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There are so many people who have helped me craft this project and help make it not only possible, but also enjoyable.

First, I'd like to thank my committee chair, Randy Reeves. You have been there for every step of my Mizzou education – from my first live shot to my first producing shift and from blonde to brunette (both versions). You never once doubted me on any portion of my journalistic career and I cannot thank you enough for serving as the chair for this project.

Secondly, I'd like to thank Mark Horvit, another committee member. Mark, you are the reason I chose to follow through with investigative journalism. I will never forget at 17-years-old sitting in on a J-1100 lecture with your wife and you coming in to speak about IRE and investigative reporting. Six years later, that lecture stuck with me. Both your passion for serving the public and upholding journalistic ethics are contagious and inspiring. Thank you for answering all of my questions – which I know is a lot at times – and taking the time to do an independent study project with me.

Kent Collins, my third committee member, is another person who has helped me tremendously. Kent, you showed so much confidence in me during the course of graduate school. I know you had no idea who I was for the longest time, thanks to my KOMU alter-ego. Thank you for all of the advice along the way and understanding me coming to your class sweaty post-cycling class was just a norm, not an insult.

I would also like to thank Brett Shipp for agreeing to house me at WFAA-TV. In April 2015, I sent an email asking if I could basically hang out at the station – no strings attached – and you took it seriously when other newsrooms did not. Working with you these past few months has been an absolute honor and pleasure. I have learned a multitude from shadowing you. Thank you for the tremendous amount of hospitality and mentorship. I look forward to working with you in the future.

To the rest of the investigative team, Jason Trahan, Charlotte Huffman and Mark Muller, and the news director, Carolyn Mungo, thank you all for being so welcoming. You are all amazing.

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Chapter One: An Introduction

I still remember sitting in my sixth grade classroom at 11-years-old taking the infamous career test. Whatever results you get supposedly determine what you should be when you grow up. After racing through my test without any second thought other than being ready for lunch, I remember reading “news reporter” as my result. At 23-years-old, I still have not looked back.

Every story I worked on at the Missouri School of Journalism, from the general assignments to the enterprises, I always found myself seeking out documents, data and just something more – more substance to the story. Investigative reporting became my niche.

After declaring my major in grad school as investigative journalism, I was constantly seeking out investigative stories for inspiration in my reporting. One thing I came across was the big question of impact. What is it? How do we measure it? Can we measure it? Should we seek impact? Is that advocacy? I found countless articles on this very topic, but still no cohesive framework. With a passion for investigative journalism and journalistic ethics, I devoted my project to answering just that: *How do we measure the impact of an investigative story?*

Chapter Two: The daily grind at WFAA-TV

The following is a day-to-day look into my role at WFAA-TV, the ABC affiliate in Dallas.

Week One

January 19

Today was my first day at WFAA. Upon arrival, I received my badge and a tour of the building, met various key reporters and producers and settled into my desk. I sat in on a meeting with the investigative team consisting of Brett Shipp, Jason Trahan and Charlotte Huffman, a new reporter who started in December.

Sweeps start the first week of February, so we outlined eleven ideas and decided on five, two of which I will be working on. The first deals with fracking in the Barnett Shale – a series Shipp has been working on since 2013. The second deals with campus sexual assaults. TEGNA is mandating stations across the country do group projects with other stations in their state, and WFAA was assigned the topic of sexual assaults in Texas. It's up to me to figure out the angle.

I met Nick Blackhall, a social media analytics guy who was highly interested in my project. He told me if I needed any social media numbers, he would have no problem helping me get them.

January 20

I sat in on a meeting with the three-person marketing team to discuss a story dealing with conceal and carry that aired a week ago. WFAA decided to use a hashtag to promote the story, so we went over the analytics and looked at viewership minute by minute to see how well social media promotions may have helped, in addition to coming up with a strategy that they want me help with.

After the meeting, I narrowed my research to seven stories. One is from Byron Harris, because I thought it was only appropriate to analyze one of his investigations for measuring impact. All stories are from the past year. Social media analytics do not go back any farther

That afternoon, crime reporter Rebecca Lopez took me to an interview with Glenn Beck. It dealt with sexual assault, and his mother was severely abused to the point of suicide. I helped with videography. While this did not fall under the investigative unit, I went along due to the status of the interview subject as well as to learn how to work with a Go Pro.

January 21

I took a tip that came from an email saying the DART transit online system was hacked. I made a phone call immediately. The woman told me six counties and their respective police departments are affected. DART paid a ransom to have the problem solved, but police reports are gone for a three-week period in December. The FBI is still involved and apparently police officer's private information was compromised. Brett and I left immediately and confronted DART.

This led the 6 o'clock news.

Week Two

January 25

Not a lot was going on today, so I worked on my project and found more peer-reviewed journals dealing with impact.

January 26

Brett had an interview with the Texas Railroad Commission. After trying to get in contact with them for three weeks, they finally spoke over the phone. I sat in on the interview.

Afterwards, I started working on a slumlord story that involved using Nexus to search property records.

January 27

In continuation with the sexual assault TEGNA story, I had a phone interview with the spokesperson from the *Who's Driving You?* campaign out of D.C. This campaign focuses on making Uber and Lyft services look bad in comparison to traditional taxis. They compile media reports of those who have been sexually assaulted, however, they don't compile stats themselves, nor did they have any.

After the interview, I logged Brett's interview from Tuesday. He was busy logging himself, and I wanted to listen to the 35-minute interview anyway.

Later that day, we got a tip about a plant called sago palm having deadly effects on dogs. Apparently, a woman's dog ate a portion of this plant and within hours, the dog began to vomit. After immediate care with a veterinarian, the dog passed. These sago palms are easily accessible for purchase at Walmart and Lowes without any warning label. I made phone calls to the FDA, CPSC, ASPCA, Poison Control Center and various vet clinics around the country.

January 28

I continued research and calls with the sago palm story. Brett was in Waco covering a story for the 6 o'clock newscast related to the Waco explosion from ammonium nitrate awhile back.

January 29

I'm not assigned to come in the newsroom on Friday's; however, there was a court case dealing with the Barnett Shale fracking saga.

Week Three

February 1

Not much was going on in the newsroom, so I continued research on sago palm.

February 2

Bryce Payne, one of the nation's leading experts on ground water contamination and fracking, flew in from Pennsylvania for an interview. We spent the day with him going over documents.

February 3

Brett, Mark and I went to Austin for the day to confront the railroad commission about not following statewide rule 13. We also stopped by the local Sierra Club for an interview for the fracking story.

February 4

I started piecing together elements for my own fracking package. I also took over the sago palm story and will be doing both stories for sweeps this month.

Week Four

February 8, 2016

I received the minute-by-minute viewership data for the stories I narrowed down in regards to my project. Lauren Phillips is the research and marketing manager. She was able to pull the data I needed, and the Excel charts were quite extensive. It shows viewership by demographic, retention, loss and even where viewers came from in regards to channels, such as Comedy Central or CNN.

February 9, 2016

Brett's big fracking piece aired on the 10 o'clock news this evening and he wants me to put together my own fracking package as well, including the editing. WFAA uses Sony for editing. I shadowed Mark, chief photographer, while he edited so I could learn the commands and functionality of the software.

Later in the afternoon, I met with Lauren to go over some of the analytics to make sure I understood everything clearly. From here, I am going to analyze viewership at the time Brett and Byron's stories aired and compare the viewership for each day of the week, weekly average and monthly average. I will also see if promotions helped, including any promoted hashtags or social media posts.

February 10, 2016

We had a story meeting and I was officially handed the sago palm plant story as my own, so I will be putting together a package for the station. I continued research, phone calls and interview scheduling. Next week, I will go out and shoot video.

February 11, 2016

Today we were originally going to go out shooting for the sago palm story, but news happens, so I continued researching for my project and narrowed down the stories I will analyze for impact. One is from Byron, which I thought was only fair to include one of his after his legacy and three are from Brett.

Week Five

February 15, 2016

I traveled to Houston with Brett for an Atmos story he is working on. Atmos is a gas company in Texas. Recently there was a home explosion in Dallas due to faulty pipe lines underground (luckily nobody was hurt this time). This is not the first time it has happened, and it occurs most frequently in older neighborhoods where the couplings are faulty and coming loose. One of the biggest oil and gas experts in the country, according to Brett, is Don Deaver who lives in Houston, so we went to get an on-camera interview.

February 16, 2016

I went with Charlotte and Mark to interview a woman for the sago palm story. This woman's dog died from eating the plant about a month ago, so she was perfect to have on camera.

Later that evening, the vet who treated the dog came to the station for an interview.

February 17, 2016

Before coming to the station, I went to various Lowe's, Home Depot's and Walmart's to try and find out what locations carried sago palm, because all companies have it online. I was able to find it at a Lowe's in Irving, and I grabbed some broll. I found no indication of the plant being dangerous to children or pets.

Later that day, I made phone calls to the EPA, CPSC and D-Con, a company that makes rat poison. I confirmed there is no government agency that regulates any warning labels on plants, because they are "not meant to be consumed," no matter how dangerous. However, I find it interesting that poison, fertilizers and insect killers all have warning labels on them, while they are also not meant for consumption.

Week 6

February 22, 2016

The sago palm story airs tomorrow at 10:00 p.m., so today I am writing the web story. After checking with TEGNA, WFAA concluded that I can have my own byline on web stories.

February 23, 2016

I started working on the Score a Goal in the Classroom – a non-profit charity that claims to be helping children with reading proficiency, but is actually using donations to build personal items. We started researching this story close to when I first came to the station, but sweeps took precedent on what we spent time on.

Later that day, we went to Ft. Worth to look at Ernie Horn's property. He is building what appears to be a western fort. We talked to his neighbors who had photos showing him using the SAG credit card to purchase lumber, paint and other goods going to building his house.

February 24, 2016

I went to Mesquite with Brett and Mark to shoot a few interviews on a story he is working on dealing with Pit Bull attacks. Two Pit Bulls attacked four people and killed a dog and a cat. The city is not doing anything about it.

February 25, 2016

I spent the day working on Score a Goal (SAG) research. I contacted every ISD the charity claims to be partnered with, only to find out money is not being used on school supplies like he claims. One ISD ended its partnership in 2011. After following up, I found out there was a sexual harassment allegation against Ernie Horn – the director of SAG.

Week 7

February 29, 2016

I cut a promo for Brett for his story airing in the 10 p.m. newscast.

March 1, 2016

I set up interviews for my project with Byron Harris and Chris Kraft, the CEO of ShareRocket, which is a media analytics company.

March 2, 2016

I interviewed Christ Kraft. ShareRocket works with media outlets and analyzes social media usage. For a market like Dallas, it costs roughly \$3,000 per month for analytics. For a market 150 station, the cost drops to around \$750 per month. Using this software, you can see how your station compares with others in the same market, even they are not using ShareRocket. It looks at each person as well, and breaks down the platform they use most and also what platform resonates best with his or her audience.

He gave me a study ShareRocket worked on with Rentrak to measure the impact of social media usage on local news. They found a strong relationship between social engagement and positive audience behaviors for broadcasters.

He gave me login credentials for the rest of my stay at WFAA so I can monitor WFAA's media.

March 3, 2016

I took the day to work on my project, including the addition of sources to my literature review and transcribing Chris Kraft's interview.

Week 8

March 7, 2016

I stopped by Byron Harris' home to interview him about impact, particularly related to his award-winning series – Denticaid.

Later that day, I went with Brett and Mark to Aledo – a city near Ft. Worth – to interview neighbors of Ernie Horn, the director of SAG.

March 8, 2016

I worked on my project for the majority of the day. I spent some time mapping out what my "book" will look like – outlining materials I have and what I still need. I looked at past projects to get an idea of what the final product can potentially look like. Afterwards, I transcribed Harris' interview.

March 9, 2016

I continued work on my project and fact-checked SAG donations. I found out Ernie Horn had a scheduled event for Thursday at Saginaw High School – a high school near Fort Worth. We let him know we would be there.

March 10, 2016

We attended the SAG event at Saginaw High School.

Later that afternoon, I met with Lauren Phillips for an interview on viewership data.

March 11, 2016

Ernie Horn finally agreed to meet with us and show us his books. We went to his house that afternoon and confirmed he is using SAG funds for his personal use. We made copies of records while we were out there.

Week 9

March 14, 2016

Project day. I worked on my literature review.

March 15, 2016

I finished up loose ends with SAG research.

March 16, 2016

I met with Mark Muller, our chief photographer, for an interview discussing impact.

Afterwards, I wrote the web story for the SAG story that is set to air Monday, Mar. 21 during the 10 p.m. The story will also be featured in the Fort Worth Star Telegram.

I scheduled an interview with Lindsay Green-Barber of CIR. She has conducted extensive research on impact – if not the most exhaustive as of today. Green-Barber has been great help off and on with my impact research, starting last fall.

March 17, 2016

Project day. I continued reworking my literature review.

For the professional analysis component, I scheduled interviews with Richard Tofel of ProPublica, Charles Lewis of CIR and American University and Lauren Fuhrmann of Wisconsin Watch. All have done extensive research on impact and would be great assets for my final product.

Week 10

March 21, 2016

Project day. I continued reworking my literature review.

I confirmed an interview with Richard Tofel at ProPublica to talk about impact and investigative reporting for my professional analysis.

March 22, 2016

I came into work to a woman being pre-interviewed by Brett and Jason. She came to us with several binders of documents detailing corruption within a Dallas County elderly program. The “Older Adult Services Program” is a program that gives free lunches to seniors, as well as affordable breakfast, exercise, games and a variety of other opportunities. There are nine centers in the county that seniors can go to. Each center has a manager – this woman talking to us was a former manager. At the “free” lunches, Dallas County is telling all workers to collect \$0.50 per meal, making the “optional donations” not so optional. If they do not collect money, they are written up. They are also given a quota of 50 meals per day to meet, equating to \$25 a day for collection per center. A woman who collected 49 meals was written up. It’s that ridiculous. This program is funded by federal grants and taxpayer dollars and nobody can figure out what is being done with the money collected.

Afterwards, I finalized the Score a Goal web story and we sent it off to get lawyered.

March 23, 2016

Afterwards, I continued reworking my literature review. I scheduled interviews with media strategist Jessica Clark and Dana Chinn from the Norman Lear Center to discuss audience engagement and how to measure metrics for my professional analysis.

March 24, 2016

The Score a Goal story airs tonight at 10. I cut a promo for the package.

I interviewed Jim Glass, WFAA's Director of Creative Services, about promotional dollars and impact and transcribed it.

Week 11

March 28, 2016

A new story came up this morning from our tip line email. An event called Rednecks with Paychecks in St. Jo, Texas is a weekend even with monster truck flipping, backwards running and all things involving mud. There have been two deaths consecutively in the past two years. In 2015, a 10-year-old boy and this year, a 30-year-old woman. Questions of safety arose.

I sent in an open records request for the incident reports, including a comprehensive incident report list for RWP for the past five years.

I also tracked down contact information – phone numbers and emails – for family members for both cases.

March 29, 2016

I interviewed Charles Lewis. He is the founder of the Center for Public Integrity and the executive editor of the Investigative Reporting Workshop at American University. He is also a former producer for *60 Minutes*.

March 30, 2016

I received the incident report for the little boy's death; however, the woman's case is still open since it is from mid-March. I requested photos as well.

A new story came up today dealing with the Takata airbags. A guy purchased a car in Dallas from a dealership, he then later found out it was under recall, so he is not driving it. Texas law states it is an option for the dealership to tell you if a car is under recall.

I've been running VIN numbers for cars around the metroplex trying to find cars being sold under recall. I also reached out to several dealerships.

Later that day, I transcribed Charles Lewis' interview.

March 31, 2016

I interviewed Lindsay Green-Barber. She is the CIR's director of strategic research and former CIR impact researcher. I transcribed her interview afterwards, then continued working on my project.

Week 12

April 4, 2016

I went out with Jason and Charlotte to various dealerships in Dallas. Prior to going out, I found a dozen cars with open recalls being sold. We visited those dealerships to see if the salesmen would tell us if the cars had recalls. Sure enough, they did not until we pressed them to check the VIN. This took all day.

April 5, 2016

I worked on my professional analysis and various housekeeping for my project.

April 6, 2016

When I got in, I saw my open records request came in for the Rednecks with Paychecks event. I sifted through the five years' worth of records, which ended up only being about 50 pages and took notes on the various incidents.

Later, I interviewed Lauren Fuhrmann and transcribed her interview.

April 7, 2016

I interviewed Dick Tofel, Dana Chinn and Jessica Clark. Afterwards, I transcribed them.

Week 13

April 11, 2016

I wrote the Takata airbag web story for the package airing tonight at 10.

Afterwards, I worked on my second draft of my professional analysis.

April 12, 2016

I filed an open records request for the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality for Brett.

Afterwards, I traveled to Granbury, Texas with Brett and Mark to shoot video for another fracking story. People in the city are complaining about brown water bubbling up in their yards and methane-infused tap water.

April 13, 2016

I interviewed Jason Trahan for my professional analysis and transcribed it.

Later that day, I made phone calls for the elderly program. We had a list of seniors who were willing to chat with us, so I called them up to make an appointment to visit.

April 14, 2016

I interviewed Carolyn Mungo and Brett for my professional analysis and transcribed them.

We went to one of the senior centers for their congregated lunch service and to chat with the seniors. The county has 11 centers. The lunches are advertised as free. However, there is a “suggested” donation of \$1 for those over 60 and \$6 for those under. The money goes into what it called a “black box.” Where that money goes, nobody knows, but the county is raking in more than \$50,000 a year from these donations.

The next step will be speaking to the center director – who expressed great interest in talking – but was weary of talking at the center because of cameras. After finding out more about the box, we will request records for bank statements.

Week 14

April 18, 2016

I helped Jason make a few phone calls regarding a story Charlotte is working on. She’s doing a story called “Passing the Trash,” where teachers who are charged for sexual assault and then getting re-hired in other districts in Texas. One teacher worked at a high school in my district as the soccer coach. I knew players on the soccer team during his one-year stay, so I contacted a few girls to try and figure out if he engaged in any sexual activity with any girls here before moving to another district, where he was charged for sexual relations.

Afterwards, I helped Brett pull a few numbers on Nexis, then worked on my project.

April 19, 2016

I spent most of the day working on my project and making sure everything was aligned.

April 20, 2016

I had camera training in the morning, looking at the new MMJ kits that came in. Later, I helped Charlotte with research for her teacher story.

April 21, 2016

Camera training part two kicked off the morning. We focused on lighting. Then, I logged an interview for Charlotte.

Chapter Three: Self-Evaluation

Over the course of 14-weeks, I attempted to come up with a universal framework to measure the impact of an investigative story. Rather than only creating rubrics like I intended, I crafted guidelines to follow – both qualitative and quantitative – to aid both non-profit and commercial newsrooms with impact tracking.

Using qualitative methods, I focused on five stories I could prove resulted in some kind of impact. By looking at stories with impact, I was able to backtrack the process of the reporting, and pre-reporting, to see why the story was so impactful. I studied the craft of each story – the videography, pacing, connectivity to audience, relevance and depth of reporting. I interviewed the reporters, photographer and producer for each of the stories to see how they would assess their work in terms of impact.

Using quantitative methods, I looked at the viewership during the airtime of the package during the 10:00 p.m. show, looking at the minute-by-minute data and comparing it to social media presence. By looking at social media promos, hypothetically, I would be able to see if it made any difference by looking at the viewership numbers. However, I quickly found out the correlation of web to viewership was nearly impossible as 1) the audiences are drastically different; 2) not every story had a promo airing on the web in a timely manner and 3) a spike in viewership being correlated with a social media promo cannot be proven.

I pulled the viewership reports for 2011-2015, both yearly and weekly, to compare the viewership on the evenings the five investigative pieces aired to an average newscast.

I constructed several rubrics used for pre and post reporting to assess oneself on the product – web story, package and social media presence. The formatting of the rubrics, with the exception of the package rubric, can be used for any news organization, both non-profit and commercial.

Overall, I am extremely pleased with the work presented. Impact measurement is highly subjective and difficult to assess, and it did not turn out how I originally intended. After talking with lead impact researchers across the country from places like the Center for Investigative Reporting, Norman Lear Center of Impact Research and ProPublica, and combining content analysis with my research from WFAA-TV, I created five universal guidelines for impact tracking.

Chapter Four: Impact Research at WFAA-TV

The following research delves into three parts. First, five major investigations that created impact on multiple platforms are outlined. I used these as examples to find patterns for what type of storytelling method creates the most impact. The second portion looks at the viewership ratings in correlation to the story. The third part presents rubrics created for reporters to use when tracking impact.

“Denticaid: Medicaid Abuse in Texas”
Byron Harris, Jason Trahan, Billy Bryant
August 3, 2013

SUMMARY

The Denticaid series, taking place over the course of roughly four years, exposed the Medicaid dental abuse in Texas. It all started with one Dallas dental clinic who lurked for children in poor neighborhoods, offering food and gift cards – only provided if the children would go to the dentist without parental consent. The series uncovered a corrupt system costing the taxpayers millions of dollars, all going to dentists who billed the government for questionable orthodontics and malpractice.

“This story had abuse on so many levels to so many stakeholders: children who were abused at the hands of dentists, taxpayers who paid for work that wasn’t needed, parents who were victimized double of their time and were unwitting accomplices for putting their kids in for unnecessary pain and stress,” CBS News photojournalist Les Rose said, who served as a judge for the Charles E. Green Awards. “It led to action by to make change.”

IMPACT

Several things that happened as the series evolved. More than two dozen clinics from a large chain went bankrupt. The Texas Medicaid commissioner and the dental director resigned. The House Oversight Committee held hearings in Congress. House and Senate committees in Austin had numerous hearings about the issue as well.

Harris was sued by the dentist who formerly owned it. It took three years before finally being dismissed. The dentist who sued WFAA was also sued by the hedge fund that bought his chain. Harris discovered his attorney gave a large donation to the Dallas County District Attorney about the time the DA was investigating the dentist.

The dentist was investigated years earlier and no action was ever taken. A few anti-WFAA websites were started.

Several other chains drastically reduced their operations, although part of this was due to changes in the way the state approved Medicaid dental treatment, which was scheduled to be changed any way, according to Harris.

The Texas Department of Health and Human Services launched several investigations through its inspector general's office. The dentist who oversaw orthodontic approvals for the state resigned. The head of the state Department of HHS retired early, along with the guy who ran the dental program for HHS. The company which ran the approval process as a partner of the state has been sued for more than a billion dollars.

There is virtually no orthodontic work being done now in Texas under Medicaid. The state spend \$800`m between 2004 and 2012.

The federal department of Health and Human services Office of Inspector General started an investigation on why Texas spent so much money on braces for kids. It faulted the state for not overseeing the program correctly.

Dental recruiting – offering kids and their parents incentives for Medicaid dental work – has been curtailed. Although it still goes on. Dentists still do unneeded work on Medicaid kids – pulpotomies and crowns.

“No one to my knowledge has been put in jail.” Harris said. “Several dentists accused of overbilling settled with the state.”

Dental offices still recruit unlicensed dental professionals in Mexico.

Harris won the Alfred I. duPont and the Charles E. Green Award for best investigative report in the television category.



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Introduction to supplemental material

The following are some materials designed to give context to our entry, "Denticaid: Medicaid Dental Abuse in Texas."

This PDF is indexed. If viewing in Adobe, click on the bookmark ribbon tab on the left to go to specific documents and items.

After two years and dozens of stories by WFAA senior investigative reporter Byron Harris detailing overbilling and patient abuse by dentists in Texas' Medicaid dental program, new laws based on our reporting are now on the books.

Texas State Sen. Jane Nelson, outraged at our stories on a dental clinic enticing Medicaid children off the streets and working on their teeth without their parents' permission, authored Senate Bill 8. Texas Gov. Rick Perry signed it into law in June 2013.

The new law provides resources for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to analyze Medicaid payouts and catch over-billers earlier. It also creates five new law enforcement positions within the HHSC's Office of Inspector General to help prosecute fraud. We've attached a reprint of one of our stories Sen. Nelson put on her website crediting us with prompting the new law, Sen. Nelson's news release on the passage of SB 8 and two Texas Tribune articles mentioning our role in spurring the legislation. We have also included the text of the new law.

We have attached a fiscal note created by the state forecasting the financial impact of SB 8 – approximately \$60 million in taxpayer savings over five years.

The legislation was heavily lobbied against by a coalition of dentists, [Texas Dentists for Medicaid Reform](#). Our reporting revealed that most of the members are under investigation by the state's HHSC OIG for billing irregularities first brought to light by WFAA.

Last year, one of the dentists featured in some of our stories, Richard Malouf, sued WFAA. He alleged, among other things, that Harris harassed him by photographing him in a public area of a Dallas courthouse. [Here's a link to some raw video from the courthouse.](#)

After the suit was filed, a website, www.richardmalouf.com, appeared. It consists of attacks against Harris, as well as Jack Stick, a top official with the Health and Human Services OIG – the same office investigating dentists for credible allegations of fraud.

We've included some of the content from the site.



It is believed to be the work of Target Public Marketing (recently renamed Target Public Business Marketing), which also runs the website of Texas Dentists for Medicaid Reform.

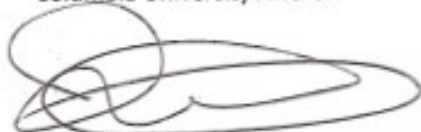
WFAA is actively defending itself against the Malouf lawsuit, which has expanded in recent weeks and now includes nearly two dozen defendants, mostly media outlets that have reported on Malouf and allegations of Medicaid fraud.

We also have attached the report by the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. The committee held hearings on Medicaid dental abuses, prompted by WFAA's reporting in Dallas that alleged fraud was rampant in the orthodontics program.

"No one at Texas's Medicaid agency or at CMS [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services] failed to prevent or even publicize that several Texas providers were fraudulently bilking taxpayers out of tens of millions of dollars until an investigative journalist at a Dallas news station uncovered the scheme," the report states.

Last, we have attached articles from the Columbia Journalism Review about our coverage.

We believe our investigation, which will end up saving Texas taxpayers untold millions of dollars and help ensure that precious Medicaid money is spent on needy families is deserving of an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award.



Jason Trahan
Investigative producer
WFAA-TV

WEB STORY

DALLAS - "Something needs to be done before one of these children dies," Brenda Flores said.

Flores is tough, smart, and protective of her grandson, Isaac. When he didn't come home until after dark one day last March, she was about to call for an Amber Alert.

It turns out, fifteen-year-old Isaac had been taken from his neighborhood to a southeast Dallas dental clinic without her permission.

Isaac, who has severe ADD and asthma, was approached on March 6 by a man in a van.

"I can give you \$10, and a \$50 dollar gift card later, and a pizza to take home," Isaac quoted the man as saying.

All Isaac had to do was go to the dentist. The man drove him to All About Dentistry on Scyene Road in Dallas. Billing records show All About Dentistry billed Medicaid for 25 procedures on Isaac Flores, totaling \$2,041.

Medicaid rules do not allow treatment of a minor without the parent or guardian's permission.

"I'm angry," Mrs. Flores said. "I'm very angry, because I'm here to protect my grandson. And he was taken off the streets without my permission. He was sedated. And he has a medical condition."

Devon Allen has a medical condition, too.

He was taken by a recruiter to All About Dentistry last month, without his mother's knowledge. Gale Allen, his mother, has now hired an attorney, Ajay Shah.

"It truly shocks the conscience," Shah said. "These children have been truly impacted by this individual's actions."

He now represents two parents and four children in the case, but the number may be growing.

Isaac Flores said there were other children in the van with him when he was taken to All About Dentistry last March.

Blanca Flores said she filed a police report the day of the incident, and complained to the Attorney General as well. She hasn't heard back.

State Senator Royce West, (D-Dallas), urges victims to contact his office.

"I won't get stonewalled by an agency, because we will make certain that those claims get investigated by the proper authorities," West said.

Dr. Hamid Farahani, who owns the clinic on Scyene Road and two other All About Dentistry clinics, denies he has done anything wrong. He said he has been audited by Medicaid five times and never found guilty of anything. He admits he owns a van and that he employs a patient recruiter.

So far, he has refused to give any of the parents involved any paperwork on their sons' treatment.

PACKAGE SCRIPT

{Harris: To treat a child under Medicaid a dentist must have a parent's permission. We've been reporting how dentists are giving gifts to parents.....to get their children in the dental chair.

Tonight, a dentist who's taking kids directly off the street without parents knowing about it.}

Four boys. Walking down a sidewalk in their neighborhood. They get approached by a man wanting to know about Medicaid.

Sound: Reginald .18: We were coming from the store. And he said are you on Medicaid. And we said yes. And he said we'll pay you all ten dollars. If you all let us clean you all's teeth.

Ten dollars. Just get in this van.

Go to this dentist's office. And get your teeth cleaned.

(shot of still)

But once there, the dentist proceeded to give them shots, drill their teeth, and put steel caps in their mouths.

sound: 26.26: And then they gave me four shots.

Devon Allen got four fillings.

His mouth swelled up.

Jonathan Henderson, two.

His brother Roderick Roberston got eight fillings.

Roderick: 6.14

Eight?

They gave me like four shots.

When I left I couldn't feel none of it.

sound: Reginald:

5.28: They gave me four fillings

bh: four fillings

Yes.

Did you need four fillings?

I don't know that was right because they're the dentist. I thought that was right. I let em give me four cavities.

Wow.

Whether they needed the work or not,

Medicaid rules say a parent must give consent before a dentist can work on a minor. Instead the boys were asked to sign for their mothers.

sound: 8.10: did you get any paperwork?

Regina: I didn't get nothing.

How do you feel about that?

8.21: I feel bad about that because they ain't old enough to put their agenda on anyone. Because all of em are minors.

27.32: They had no reason to approach Devon first of all. Second of all I'm his parent and for you to just pick up kids on the corner, that's wrong.

Devon's mom Gale went with us to the office, All About Dentistry
At first we were told there was no dentist present.

sound: 48.05: Harris on camera: Where's the dentist here?

Harris: He's in the back he's hiding.

Then Dr. Masood Shariati opened the door.

sound: 49.24: You're dr. Masood Shariati right.

And you're recruiting patients without their permission right?

I don't know what you're talking about.

44.33: Harris: You did five patients last Thursday without the parents' permission, you offered em ten dollars a head.

Dr. Hamid Farahani owns the clinic. That's him on the phone.

sound: 46:00 he hung up.

In a later phone conversation, Farahani admitted that he owns the van the boys say picked them up. He also admits he employs a marketer to bring in patients. He would not say how much the marketer gets paid per patient.

Farahani owns three clinics and says another dentist did the work on the boys. He denies he did anything wrong.

Devon Allen's mom isn't buying that.

sound: 32.35: And these people are driving around and soliciting them and asking them do they want to make ten dollars. That's wrong.

{Harris on camera. Each of these boys already had a Medicaid dentist before they went to All About Dentistry. Each one says his mouth is now worse. Neither mother has been to find out exactly what was done to the boys by All About Dentistry. bhch8n}

Nielsen Local TV View

Report Type: Minute By Minute Flow
 Report Name: Dentical (271081)
 Report Period: 06/03/2012 - 06/03/2012 1 of 1 days

Date Range: 06/03/2012 - 06/03/2012 1 of 1 days

Geography: Dallas-Ft. Worth

Base Viewing Source: WRAA 8.1

Time Range: 10:00PM - 10:30PM

Characteristic: TV Households

Dem: P25-54

Date Stream: Live

Dates	Minute	Viewing Source	AFFL	Metrics	RTG % (X.X)	Gain RTG % (X.X)	Loss RTG % (X.X)	Intab	Kept RTG % (X.X)	AUD RET % (X.X)	IMP	Gain IMP	Loss IMP	Indicator	
Report Averages	10:00PM - 10:01PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC		0.8			307	0.5	62.0	24,906				
		KOAS-TV 5.1	NBC				0.3	307						9,465	
		XPLT	N/A				0.1	307					1,828		
			MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.1	0.3	307				1,828	9,465	
	10:01PM - 10:02PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC		0.6			307	0.6	100.0	19,279				
	10:02PM - 10:03PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC		0.6			307	0.6	100.0	19,279				
	10:03PM - 10:04PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC		0.6			307	0.6	100.0	19,279				
	10:04PM - 10:05PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC		0.6			307	0.6	100.0	19,279				
	10:05PM - 10:06PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC		0.6			307	0.6	100.0	19,279				
	10:06PM - 10:07PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC		0.6			307	0.6	100.0	19,279				
	10:07PM - 10:08PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC		0.6			307	0.6	100.0	19,279				
			KOAS-TV 5.1	NBC				0.3	307						9,465
			MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.3	307						9,465
	10:08PM - 10:09PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			1.0		307	1.0	100.0	28,734				
	10:09PM - 10:10PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			1.0		307	0.5	52.9	28,734				
			TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.1	307						4,086
			KOAS-TV 5.1	NBC				0.3	307						9,465
			MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.3	0.4	307					9,529
10:10PM - 10:11PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.8		307	0.8	100.0	24,722					
10:11PM - 10:12PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.8		307	0.8	100.0	24,722					
10:12PM - 10:13PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.8		307	0.8	100.0	24,722					
10:13PM - 10:14PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.8		307	0.8	100.0	24,722					
		KOAS-TV 5.1	NBC				0.3	307						8,540	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.3	307						8,540	
10:14PM - 10:15PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			1.1		307	1.1	100.0	33,282					
10:15PM - 10:16PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			1.1		307	0.8	74.3	33,282					
		KTVT 11.1	CBS				0.3	307						8,360	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.3	307						8,360	
10:16PM - 10:17PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.8		307	0.8	100.0	24,722					
		KOAS-TV 5.1	NBC				0.3	307						9,465	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.3	307						9,465	
10:17PM - 10:18PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			1.1		307	1.1	100.0	34,177					
10:18PM - 10:19PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			1.1		307	1.1	100.0	34,177					
10:19PM - 10:20PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			1.1		307	1.1	100.0	34,177					
		KOAS-TV 5.1	NBC				0.1	307						4,400	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1	307						4,400	
10:20PM - 10:21PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			1.3		307	0.9	71.3	38,577					
		TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.1	307						2,352	
		KDFW 4.1	FOX				0.1	307						4,400	
		KERA-TV 13.1	PBS				0.1	307						4,116	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.4	307						11,868	
10:21PM - 10:22PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.9		307	0.9	100.0	27,509					
10:22PM - 10:23PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.9		307	0.9	100.0	27,509					
10:23PM - 10:24PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.9		307	0.6	65.6	27,509					
		KTXA 21.1	DND				0.3	307						9,465	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.3	307						9,465	
10:24PM - 10:25PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.6		307	0.6	100.0	18,054					
10:25PM - 10:26PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.6		307	0.6	100.0	18,054					
10:26PM - 10:27PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.6		307	0.3	42.2	18,054					
		TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.3	307						9,529	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.3	307						9,529	
10:27PM - 10:28PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.3		307	0.1	44.9	8,525					
		TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.2	307						4,726	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.2	307						4,726	
10:28PM - 10:29PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.3		307	0.3	100.0	8,524					
10:29PM - 10:30PM	WRAA 8.1	ABC			0.3		307	0.3	100.0	8,524					
		KDFW 4.1	FOX				0.1	307						4,411	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1	307						4,411	
SUMMARY		WRAA 8.1	ABC		0.8			307	21.4	90.7	23,698				
		TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.7	307						20,864	
		KDFW 4.1	FOX				0.1	307						4,411	
		KERA-TV 13.1	PBS				0.1	307						4,116	
		KTVT 11.1	CBS				0.3	307						8,360	
		KTXA 21.1	DND				0.3	307						9,465	
		KOAS-TV 5.1	NBC				1.4	0.6	307					41,399	
		XPLT	N/A				0.1	307						1,828	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				1.8	2.2	307					54,364	

“What Lies Beneath”

Brett Shipp, Jason Trahan, Billy Bryant, Matt Goodman

October 30, 2013

“Initial reaction was for the state to order an overhaul of and a withdrawal of faulty gas couplings all across the state. That was a huge impact. That was a huge financial hit to the gas company that had to go in and make changes they should’ve made anyway. Make changes the federal government tried to make a decade ago and they never did. Finally they had to come in and make changes...That was my proudest accomplishment as a journalist was forcing change on a state wide basis that could save people’s lives, and we won the gold baton for that.”

- Brett Shipp, WFAA-TV Investigative Reporter

SUMMARY & IMPACT

In 2011, a house exploded in Dallas, leaving Domingo Mendez, his wife and 5-year-old boy with disfiguring scars.

The cause, investigators determined, was a 19-inch crack in a crumbling, 80-year-old cast iron natural gas pipe under a nearby alley that ignited and turned their home into a fireball. Four years ago, News 8 began chronicling the dangers of natural gas pipeline couplings that, the station's investigation revealed, had failed in shifting North Texas soils for years, endangering thousands of people. Now a new threat: Hundreds of miles of crumbling cast iron gas transmission lines that, despite decades of warnings from federal regulators, Atmos had ignored and left to rot underground. Our reporting also highlighted lax enforcement by the Texas Railroad Commission, which has become adept at avoiding institutional reform with help from oil and gas lobbyists. Atmos says its gas lines are safe. But, the energy giant would not release a map of all its cast iron pipelines still in use. WFAA, however, obtained a database of cast iron transmission pipe breaks through Atmos' northern Texas service area. Using Google Fusion Tables, the station's web desk created an interactive map of the 2,300 breaks and posted the information online. So far, it has generated more than 20,000 page views. Among them, Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins. He and other local leaders, including Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings, say they are disturbed by the thousands of breaks and apparent lack of a plan by Atmos to pull the faulty pipes out of the ground. They have demanded action from Atmos. After our stories ran, Atmos released a statement saying they would double the amount spent last year on cast iron replacement efforts in 2013.

Immediately after the story aired, Atmos workers found a 19-inch fracture in a cast iron gas main in an alley just outside of the Mendez's apartment.

Experts, including former Exxon employee Don Deaver, determined the 80-year-old pipes were corroded, stating, "the condition of it was filthy...it even had roots growing inside of it."

An interactive database was posted to WFAA's website for those in the Dallas area to type in their home address to check and see if faulty pipelines were in their neighborhoods.



WFAA-TV 606 Young Street Dallas, Texas 75202-4870 214.748.9631

A BELD CORP. SUBSIDIARY

Introduction to supplemental material

The following are some materials designed to give context to our entry, "What Lies Beneath."

This PDF is indexed. If viewing in Adobe, click on the bookmark ribbon tab on the left to go to specific documents and items.

After the 2011 explosion that critically injured – and permanently disfigured – the Mendez family in Dallas was blamed on a corroded and decaying 80-year-old cast iron gas main, WFAA's Brett Shipp began digging into the regulatory history of such pipes.

He uncovered decades of warnings from regulators that the pipes were unsafe after generations of use, and needed to be removed.

The day our story aired featuring local officials calling for the removal of cast iron gas mains from its North Texas system, Atmos Energy, one of the largest natural gas distributors in the U.S. serving three million customers in nine states, released a statement promising to double funding for its cast iron removal program. Still, our reporting showed, the company has no formal program for removal of all the iron pipe from its system.

Below, we have included excerpts from three sources all recommending removal of cast iron pipe, including National Transportation Safety Board reports from 1973 and 1985, and a 1992 pipeline safety alert notice from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

We also include a recent fact sheet from Dallas-based Atmos. It shows that, by the most recent estimates publicly available, the company has more than 800 miles of cast iron pipe in its North Texas system.

Atmos would not release the locations of the remaining cast iron pipe still in use. However, WFAA obtained a database of more than 2,300 cast iron line breaks throughout North Texas. We have uploaded the database separately. WFAA's Matthew Goodman was able to take that data and, using Google Fusion Tables, create an interactive map.

[Click here for a link to that map.](#)

Atmos, as is all oil and gas companies in the state, is regulated – despite its archaic and misleading name – by the Texas Railroad Commission. The commission has come under sustained criticism in recent years for being too lenient on energy companies, and for taking large sums of campaign money from those same companies it is charged with overseeing.

In 2012, the Railroad Commission cited Atmos for the Mendez family's explosion. In April, after we aired stories on the Mendez family explosion and Atmos' hundreds of miles of cast iron pipe still in use, the Railroad Commission reversed course. It absolved Atmos of responsibility for the explosion, saying it was caused by the family's faulty stove. The commission, led by Chairman Barry Smitherman, reached this conclusion without considering evidence to the contrary raised by experts paid by the family.

Weeks later, a major overhaul of the Railroad Commission died in the Texas Legislature.

Among the proposed reforms was to increase pipeline safety enforcement. Another was a prohibition against Railroad Commissioners (there are three, all elected at large statewide) being able to keep their seats – and thus their ability to raise campaign money from deep-pocketed oil and gas interests – while actively running for higher office. This has become a common practice in recent years, and, shortly after Texas Gov. Rick Perry vetoed this last ethics measure, Chairman Smitherman announced he was running for Texas Attorney General.

Records show that Atmos Energy Corporation PAC has given Smitherman's campaign \$15,000 since 2011. See below the attached campaign donation information from the Texas Ethics Commission.

Despite the attention and pressure WFAA has brought to the issue thus far, the station will continue to press for much-needed reform of the Texas Railroad Commission, as well as the complete removal of all cast iron gas main pipes to ensure the safety of those who could be harmed by what lies beneath their homes and businesses.

Thanks for considering our work for a duPont-Columbia Award.



Jason Trahan
Investigative producer
WFAA-TV

WEB STORY

Due to WFAA changing its website earlier this year, the web story is no longer on the website.

PACKAGE SCRIPT

You may remember this... a house explosion in Dallas in 2011 which critically injured three family members including a five year old boy.

While the cause has been discovered, and the gas company found at fault by the state, some say not enough is being done to correct a deadly problem discovered decades ago. News Eight's Brett Shipp joins us with more on the lethal dangers still lurking beneath the north Texas soil.

(shipp on cam)

Four years ago we exposed the deadly flaws of compression couplings in the Atmos gas distribution system.

Tonight a new warning about another old, potentially deadly problem in north Texas. Tonight News Eight Investigates.

(nats of family on porch)

At first glance, the Mendez family of Dallas appears happy and healthy. A closer look, however, reveals a horror they will never escape.

For Juliana and Domingo thick and painful scars on their torso and arms.

For young Pablo, a more obvious reminder of the night in September of 2011, a night they all want to forget.

39:35 "I just felt a ball of fire burning and then I guess a few seconds after that I just woke up on the floor."

The family had just entered their small apartment in southern Dallas, turned on a light when an explosion blew them to the floor.

All three were critically burned and hospitalized in intensive care for weeks.

Juliana and Pablo were close to death.

42:03 "I would just hear him crying. It was terrible."

Hours after the explosion, Atmos Energy workers unearthed a clue.

A 19-inch fracture in a cast iron gas main in the alley, three feet from the house.

An 80-year old pipe that experts hired by the family call corroded, brittle and destined to fail.

DEAVER tc :30 "My God, the age of this and the condition of it was filthy, it was pitted, it was dirty. It even had roots growing into the inside of it. What does that tell you. It's had holes in it for years and years and years and years..."

Don Deaver is a former pipeline safety expert for Exxon. He says this particular cast iron pipe had been leaking for some time. Leaks in the line were later found up and down the alley.

Deaver says Atmos should have known that the pipe would fail... just like thousands of other cast iron pipes in the Atmos Texas system have done for decades.

You are looking at a logs of cast-iron leaks in the Atmos system for the past four years.

More than 23-hundred leak repairs, mostly in older Dallas neighborhoods in south , east and uptown in Dallas, even in Highland and University Park.

Older sections of Fort Worth are also heavily impacted

What's more, Deaver says cast iron pipes have a lethal legacy of failure.

Deaver tc 12:48 "This is obsolete, inferior, degrading material that over time sees more and more things pulling and stressing on it causing it to fail. It's a collision course, it's the perfect storm."

In January of last year an Austin man was killed when a cast iron pipe corroded and cracked leaking natural gas into his home which later exploded.

2011, Allentown Pennsylvania.

A cast iron pipe, installed in 1928, was responsible for an explosion that killed five. It's a problem that Atmos and other gas companies have know about for decades.

In 1973, The National Transportation Safety Board, which regulates gas transmission lines, warned gas companies about corrosion of "cast-iron mains" and to take "necessary action".

In 1985, the NTSB took a bolder step warning gas companies of "cast-iron main failures" and recommended that all "cast-iron mains...should be phased out.."

In 1992, another NTSB advisory, recommending gas industry operators adopt "cast-iron piping replacement programs".

Entex, now called Center point, did exactly that... removing all of the cast-iron pipes from the city of Houston.

The city's entire natural gas distribution system has been cast-iron gas free since the early 90's.

Meanwhile Atmos still has 841 miles, more than 2-percent of its entire Texas system, is still cast iron.

The vast majority still under the alley's and streets in Dallas.

Atmos Energy has repeatedly declined to provide News 8 with a map of where the cast iron is located.

Clay Miller represents the Mendez family which sued and has settled with Atmos.

Clay tc 28:45 "I think the citizens of Dallas have an absolute right to know where this cast iron is because I think if more people knew that it was in their backyard, and under their streets the uproar after this type of incident would be so great that hopefully it would cause these cast iron pipes to get out of the ground."

Atmos Energy declined an on-camera interview to discuss the Mendez explosion and its aging cast-iron system.

In a statement to News 8, Atmos said its natural gas system is safe and reliable. ...that it "monitors and surveys its pipelines at a frequency that meets or exceeds government standards".

Atmos says it has a "pro-active pipe replacement program"..."developed in compliance with state and federal regulatory entities".

Yet last November, the Texas Railroad Commission issued Atmos a notice of violation in connection with the Mendez explosion.

The reason, Atmos had "no cast-iron replacement program in place."

In fact in a recent legal deposition an Atmos representative testified...

Deposition tc 9:19 "There is no proactive cast-iron replacement program in Mid-Tex."

Meanwhile, young Pablo Mendez is just days away from another surgery to help his face and hands heal.

What may never heal, however, is the fear his parent still feel not knowing if the gas main behind their new house is cast-iron and waiting to fail.

tc 45:47 "It makes me.... It makes us pretty scared still.

(tag)

Since Atmos will not release a map of its cast-iron system News 8 has made it possible for anyone to go on our website at WFAA.COM and click on to an interactive map of those 23-hundred repairs over the past four years.

You can either type in your city and street location or just click on the section of town where you live to pinpoint the cast iron repair work.

A cluster of repairs in your neighborhood is a good sign that there is a cast iron main eroding in the ground near you.

Nielsen Local TV View

Report Type: Minute By Minute Flow
 Report Name: Atmos Cat Den (173088)
 Report Period: 10/30/2013 - 10/30/2013 1 of 1 days

Date Range: 10/30/2013 - 10/30/2013 1 of 1 days
 Geography: Dallas-Ft. Worth
 Base Viewing Source: WFAA 8.1
 Time Range: 10:00PM - 10:30PM
 Characteristic: TV Households
 Demo: P25-54
 Data Stream: Live

Dates	Minute	Viewing Source	AWL	Metrics	RTG % (LX)	Gain RTG % (LX)	Loss RTG % (LX)	Intro	Net RTG % (LX)	AUD RET % (LX)	IMP	Gain IMP	Loss IMP	Indicator	
Report Averages	10:00PM - 10:05PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		1.8			0.0	0.0	1.5	83.6	54,622		4,513	
		KDFW 4.1	FOX				0.1	0.0					14,134		
		KCTX-TV 39.1	TEL					0.1	0.0					4,403	
		HGTV	CABLE						0.2					4,676	
		SYFY	CABLE						0.1					4,022	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.7	0.3						22,813	8,946
	10:05PM - 10:10PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.2			0.0	2.1	92.3	68,489			
		KTVT 11.1	CBS				0.1	0.2	0.0					4,434	5,254
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1	0.2						4,434	5,254
	10:10PM - 10:15PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.2			0.0	2.0	91.7	67,649			
		DISCOVERY	CABLE				0.4		0.0					10,727	
		ESPN	CABLE					0.2	0.0					5,598	
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.4	0.2						10,727	5,598	
	10:15PM - 10:20PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.4			0.0	2.4	100.0	72,778			
		TURN-ON/OFF	N/A						0.0					4,434	
		KDFW 4.1	FOX						0.0					19,189	
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.8						23,602		
	10:20PM - 10:25PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			3.0			0.0	3.0	100.0	91,967			
		KOPX 29.1	ETV						0.0					4,922	
MINUTE TOTAL		N/A					0.2						4,922		
10:25PM - 10:30PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			3.2			0.0	3.2	100.0	96,920				
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A						0.0					5,436		
	ADTC	N/A						0.0					4,533		
MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.3						9,969			
10:30PM - 10:35PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			3.5			0.0	3.4	96.7	306,889				
	XPLT	N/A				0.1	0.1	0.0					3,440	3,514	
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1	0.1						3,440	3,514	
10:35PM - 10:40PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			3.5			0.0	3.3	95.4	306,815				
	KCTX-TV 39.1	TEL						0.2	0.0				4,963		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.2						4,963		
10:40PM - 10:45PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			3.3			0.0	3.2	95.0	301,862				
	KOAS-TV 5.1	NBC						0.2	0.0				5,007		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.2						5,007		
10:45PM - 10:50PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			3.2			0.0	3.2	100.0	96,765				
	WFAA 8.1	ABC			3.2			0.0	2.9	92.5	96,765				
	KDFW 4.1	FOX						0.1	0.0				4,523		
OSN	CABLE						0.1	0.0				2,322			
MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.2						7,255			
10:50PM - 10:55PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.9			0.0	2.9	100.0	89,510				
	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.9			0.0	2.7	92.5	89,510				
	KDFW 4.1	FOX				0.1		0.0					3,686		
MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1	0.2						3,686	6,755		
10:55PM - 10:00PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.8			0.0	2.2	73.0	86,461				
	KDFW 4.1	FOX						0.4	0.0				30,727		
	KERA-TV 13.1	PBS						0.1	0.0				3,686		
TBS CABLE	CABLE						0.2	0.0				5,406			
MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.7						39,849			
10:00PM - 10:05PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.2			0.0	2.2	100.0	66,612				
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A						0.1	0.0				4,414		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.1						4,414		
10:05PM - 10:10PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.2			0.0	2.2	100.0	66,612				
	KDFW 4.1	FOX				0.4		0.0					10,727		
	XPLT	N/A				0.3		0.0					9,161		
MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.7							19,888			
10:10PM - 10:15PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.8			0.0	2.8	100.0	86,500				
	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.8			0.0	2.8	100.0	86,500				
	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.8			0.0	2.8	100.0	86,500				
TRU	CABLE					0.4	0.0					10,852			
MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.4						10,852			
10:15PM - 10:20PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			3.2			0.0	3.1	95.9	97,352				
	XPLT	N/A				0.3	0.1	0.0					8,830	4,023	
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.3	0.1						8,830	4,023	
10:20PM - 10:25PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			3.4			0.0	3.0	89.4	302,199				
	KOAS-TV 5.1	NBC						0.4	0.0				30,852		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.4						30,852		
10:25PM - 10:30PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			3.0			0.0	2.9	95.2	91,347				
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A						0.1	0.0				4,414		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.1						4,414		
10:30PM - 10:35PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.9			0.0	2.6	89.5	86,933				
	KDFW 4.1	FOX						0.3	0.0				9,361		

Nielsen Local TV View

Report Type: Minute By Minute Flow
 Report Name: Atmos Cat Den (173068)
 Report Period: 10/30/2013 - 10/30/2013 1 of 1 days

Date Range: 10/30/2013 - 10/30/2013 1 of 1 days
 Geography: Dallas-Ft. Worth
 Base Viewing Source: WFAA 8.1
 Time Range: 10:00PM - 10:30PM
 Characteristic: TV Households
 Demo: P25-54
 Data Stream: Live

Dates	Minute	Viewing Source	MTL	Metrics	RTG % (X.X)	Gain RTG % (X.X)	Loss RTG % (X.X)	Intab	Net RTG % (X.X)	AUD RET % (X.X)	ZMP	Gain ZMP	Loss ZMP	Indicator
		BRavo	CABLE			0.2		0.0				4.7%		
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.2	0.3					4.7%	9,361	
	10:25PM - 10:30PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.8			0.0	2.3	81.5		84,507		
		TURN-OFF	N/A				0.3	0.0					8,070	
		KDFW 4.1	FOX				0.2	0.0					6,735	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.5						25,605	
	10:30PM - 10:35PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.3			0.0	1.9	84.4		68,962		
		KDFW 4.1	FOX				0.4	0.0					30,737	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.4						30,737	
	10:35PM - 10:40PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		1.9			0.0	1.9	100.0		58,175		
	10:40PM - 10:45PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		1.9			0.0	1.9	100.0		58,175		
	10:45PM - 10:50PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		1.9			0.0	1.9	100.0		58,175		
	10:50PM - 10:55PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		1.9			0.0	1.9	100.0		58,175		
	10:55PM - 10:30PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		1.9			0.0	1.8	92.0		58,175		
		KOXT-TV 39.1	TEL			0.1		0.0					4,402	
		ESPN	CABLE			0.1		0.0					3,732	
		FOOD NETWORK	CABLE				0.2	0.0					4,676	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.3	0.2					6,13%	4,676	
	SUMMARY	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.7			0.0	75.9	94.8		81,395		
		TURN-OFF	N/A			0.3	0.6	0.0				9,830	17,668	
		KDFW 39.1	OW				0.1	0.0					4,543	
		KDFW 4.1	FOX			1.6	1.4	0.0				43,735	41,883	
		KERA-TV 13.1	PBS				0.1	0.0					3,686	
		KRFK-TV 9.1	ETV			0.2		0.0				4,950		
		KTVT 11.1	CBS			0.1	0.2	0.0				4,414	5,254	
		KOAS-TV 5.1	NBC				0.5	0.0					25,949	
		KOXT-TV 39.1	TEL			0.1	0.3	0.0				4,402	9,356	
		BRavo	CABLE			0.2	0.2	0.0				6,735	6,735	
		DISCOVERY	CABLE			0.4		0.0				10,727		
		ESPN	CABLE			0.1	0.2	0.0				3,732	5,398	
		FOOD NETWORK	CABLE				0.2	0.0					4,676	
		GSN	CABLE				0.1	0.0					2,732	
		HGTV	CABLE			0.2		0.0				4,676		
		SYFY	CABLE			0.1		0.0				4,023		
		TBS-CABLE	CABLE				0.2	0.0					5,486	
		TRU	CABLE			0.4		0.0				10,832		
		ADTC	N/A			0.1		0.0				4,533		
		XFL	N/A			0.7	0.2	0.0				21,475	7,537	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			4.5	4.3					138,085	131,071	

“Fire in the Hole”

Brett Shipp, Jason Trahan, Mark Muller

July 12, 2013

What started with the story of one home with flammable methane-contaminated water, turned into years of stories uncovering water contamination in the Barnett Shale in North Texas. It was not until Shipp began uncovering the environmental damage from poor well construction that the State of Texas acknowledged awareness of the problem. The fracking stories continue, which has shed light on the lack of due diligence from the state oil and gas regulators, the Texas Railroad Commission. In terms of impact, Shipp said it best:

“I think the cause and effect of our stories is to raise the awareness of a potential catastrophe – an environmental catastrophe – in the Barnett Shale. I think what we have done by doing those stories very deliberately is establish a building block for what we believe is going to be a much bigger story down the road and that is an environmental disaster. Steve Lipsky – his flaming water well – is the poster child, and I’ve called it the Ground Zero, for our fracking debate. I’ve been told by scientists that his well contamination is the most contaminated well they’ve ever seen in the country by measurement of methane concentration. Those stories are now starting to flesh out and manifest themselves in different areas of the Barnett Shale. By doing that story, I haven’t brought about a change yet, but I’m confident I will.”

- Brett Shipp, WFAA-TV Investigative Reporter



Feb. 10, 2014

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Dear judges,

Texas. For some, the name brings to mind oil derricks dotting a barren landscape.

The state gave birth to the fossil fuel industry 113 years ago when Spindletop gushed black gold in Beaumont on the Gulf Coast.

Today, a new boom is underway, again, led by Texas.

For millions of years, shale gas was locked away as engineers and money men pondered how to bring it to market. Not surprisingly, it was a Texas businessman who solved the problem with hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling. These technologies have brought a period of energy security to the United States not seen in generations.

But at what price?

In some parts of the country, including in the Barnett Shale in North Texas, gas wells bump up against schools, homes and businesses. For some, the consequences are dire.

Steve Lipsky lived in his dream house in rural Parker County just west of Dallas for years with no problems. Suddenly something happened to his water well.

Explosive levels of methane bubbled up. He found he could light the stream of water coming out of his well on fire. Nearby, a new gas well had just been dug.

He complained to the state's oil and gas regulator, the Texas Railroad Commission. Its three commissioners are elected at-large statewide, and nearly all their campaign contributions come from oil and gas companies.



The commission found no connection between the activities of Range Resources, the well operator, and Lipsky's polluted water well. Other water wells in the area had methane intrusion for years before Range dug its hole, the state commission said.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency stepped in, but inexplicably shut down its inquiry after Range promised to contribute data to an environmental study.

Other states have acknowledged the connection between gas drilling and methane seeping into aquifers. But not Texas. Railroad Commissioners David Porter and Barry Smitherman both have said publicly that there has never been a documented instance of gas drilling contaminating ground water in his state.

WFAA's Brett Shipp began investigating last year. He filed a flurry of open records requests, which yielded reams of paperwork documenting the history of Range's wells near Lipsky's home.

In three stories aired over seven months (Feb. 13, July 11, and Sept. 24), Shipp and photographer/editor Billy Bryant got exclusive interviews with Lipsky and his neighbors. WFAA's investigation uncovered several problems with the state's conclusion that Range was not to blame for their explosive water.

Digging into the regulatory paperwork in the case, Shipp and investigative producer Jason Trahan found Lipsky's water well contained not only methane, but the carcinogens benzene and toluene.

WFAA also discovered documentation showing that the Railroad Commission cited one of Range's gas wells near Lipsky's home in 2010 for having improper pressure readings at the wellhead, or at ground level. This meant gas was leaking from somewhere underground and migrating up the well.

Other documents offered more clues. Range had not lined its well with cement all the way up the hole. About 4,000 feet of the well – from just under the water table to approximately the top of the shale formation – was unprotected, documents showed.

The uncemented portion of the well was drilled through another gas-bearing formation, known as the Strawn, on the way to the lucrative shale formation about a mile underground.

State rules, WFAA found, mandate that gas wells be cemented not only through aquifers, but also intermediate gas-bearing rock formations. That is, only when they are deemed to have gas in "commercial quantities."

When Shipp asked the state who determined which underground formations have "commercial quantities," the Railroad Commission said the driller decides.

That, a Cornell professor who is a foremost expert on gas drilling, amounts to no regulation.

Range says its wells are sound and in compliance with the law.

Meanwhile, levels of gas in the water under Lipsky's and his neighbors' homes had reached explosive levels, new testing showed.

Our stories generated results. In December, the EPA's Office of Inspector General determined that the agency should not have dropped its inquiry into Lipsky's complaints about gas pollution in his water.

In addition, the Railroad Commission has re-opened its investigation into what polluted the groundwater of Lipsky and that of his neighbors.

If regulators acknowledge a link between the driller and the pollution, it would set an important precedent that could open the door to new environmental reforms in Texas.

Already, prompted by our stories, the Railroad Commission changed its rules on cementing gas wells. New regulations effective in January 2014 appear to require more cementing through more underground zones. But, it is debatable how companies will interpret the new rules and what, if any, effect they will have to further protect groundwater.

Our series, called "Fire in the Hole," asks technical, but critical, questions at a crucial time. Shale gas revenues in Texas, and throughout the United States, are at unprecedented levels. Shale plays have pumped billions of dollars into local economies. Jobs have been created. But the environmental risks are substantial.

We believe it is important to dissect the decisions of Texas' energy regulators, particularly given the cozy relationship between them and those they purport to oversee.

It is for this reason we believe our work is worthy of the Texas Associated Press Broadcasters Award.

Sincerely,



Jason Trahan
Investigative producer

WEB STORY

Records show drilling operation violated law while water wells contaminated

An old debate is being rekindled over whether gas drilling in the Barnett Shale is to blame for flames shooting out of water wells in Parker County.

News 8 has obtained records showing a drilling operation was in violation of state law at the same time area land owners say their water wells were suddenly contaminated with natural gas.

Parker County resident Steve Lipsky first ignited a debate over whether gas well drilling company Range Resources was responsible for his water well filled with enough natural gas to vent flames.

Now his neighbor, Shelly Perdue, is telling a similar story.

I could heat my home with this, Perdue said as she showed News 8 how she can light her well water on fire.

But Perdue doesn't want to heat her home. She just wants to know why in 2009 her well water bubbled up and went bad just weeks after Range Resources drilled a gas well just a few hundred feet from her home.

Lipsky, who lives a half mile away, says his water well went bad in December 2009. He complained to the state alleging that a newly drilled gas well was to blame.

The Texas Railroad Commission investigated and discovered a problem. Gas pressure was forming on the wellhead, indicating gas was escaping down well.

The state issued Range Resources a notice of violation.

So where could that escaped gas be coming from? In order to prevent fracked gas from migrating out of the Barnett Shale, Range Resources circulated a protective layer of cement on the outside of the production pipe from the bottom up to about 4,500 feet. They also cemented from the top of the well, down through the aquifer where Perdue and Lipsky and others get their water, to about 400 feet. That left a long stretch of open well from about 400 feet to 4,500 feet uncemented and unprotected.

Of particular concern is a shallow gas formation just beneath the aquifer called the Strawn, which was left uncemented. Is this the gas migrating up the wellhead, or worse, into the aquifer?

According to the Railroad Commission's rule 3.7, whenever gas is encountered while drilling, it shall be confined in its original stratum to keep it from moving up the well and contaminating an aquifer.

Another rule, 3.13, says if any productive horizon is open to the wellbore ... the casing shall be cemented, again, to keep any gas from infiltrating the water supply.

That's called zonal isolation, said Tony Ingraffea, Cornell University engineering professor.

This is why, by regulation, zonal isolation has to be maintained and if it is not maintained initially the well has to be worked over to achieve zonal isolation and if the well cannot be repaired to achieve zonal isolation, then the well has to be abandoned, taken out of production and plugged, he said.

Another expert, Texas A&M engineering professor Jerome Schubert, agrees that all gas zones down well must be protected.

"It should be done by the operator, he said. It's just good operating practices".

In a review of Railroad Commission records, News 8 discovered correspondence between Range Resources and state regulators in which the driller agreed it had a problem. In response to that 2010 violation, Range proposed to fix its wellhead pressure problem by "circulating the cement to the surface."

Range added, "this work is to eliminate any chance that gas could be migrating from any zone" down below.

It tells me that they waited over a year to actually realize they should have cemented to surface and realize that apparently they knew they had a problem, Lipsky said.

But Range Resources never added the cement down well. No repairs were ever made, and the violation for gas pressure on the wellhead was later dropped by the Railroad Commission, which went on to rule that Range was not responsible for the flames coming out of the Lipsky water well.

The state also says the well is in full compliance with the law.

Range Resources declined our interview request but issued this statement:

Natural gas, predominantly methane, is naturally present in the Trinity Aquifer in the area. Numerous state agencies, landowners and businesses have records of naturally occurring methane in the water prior to Range's activity.

Range produced volumes pages of documents supporting its position, including pictures of signs at a nearby water supply warning of gas in the water table. As for that wellhead pressure, Range says it's not uncommon and "does not, by itself, indicate that the mechanical integrity of a well is compromised."

As for those state rules that require hydrocarbon or gas formations be protected by cement, Range says that only applies to "commercially productive" formations, not the Strawn.

And who decides what is "commercially productive?" According to the Texas Railroad Commission, the drilling company decides.

Ingraffea says that amounts to no regulation at all.

"If that were the case, then... every well that has ever been drilled through any hydrocarbon bearing formations that are not a target of production would not have to be zonally isolated. That's absurd."

While experts debate well mechanics, some landowners remain in the dark over why their wells are still polluted and whether man or Mother Nature is to blame.

PACKAGE SCRIPT

An old debate is being rekindled tonight over whether gas drilling in the Barnett Shale is to blame for flames shooting out of water wells in Parker County.

A news Eight Investigation has obtained records showing a drilling operation was in violation of state law at the same time area land owners say their water wells were suddenly contaminated with natural gas.

Brett Shipp has more as News Eight Investigates.

Lipsky 1st story tc 14:47 "Ohhhhhh, there we go."

First it was Parker County resident Steve Lipsky.

Igniting a debate over whether gas well drilling company, Range Resources was responsible for his water well filled with enough natural gas to vent flames.

Now meet his neighbor Shelly Perdue.

45:45 "It will go like that just as long as I leave it on. That much methane is burning off your water well? Yes, I could heat my home with this.

But Perdue doesn't want to heat her home.

She just wants to know why in 2009, her well water bubbled up and went bad just weeks after Range Resources drilled a gas well just a few hundred feet from her home.

46:44 "Now, does that look like it's safe to drink to you."

Lipski, who lives a half mile away, says his water well went bad in December of 2009.

Lipski complained to the state alleging that a newly drilled gas well was to blame.

The Railroad Commission investigated and discovered a problem.... gas pressure was forming on the wellhead, indicating gas was escaping down well.

The State issued Range Resources a notice of violation.

Stand up at Magic Monitor: So where could that escaped gas be coming from? In order to prevent fracked gas from migrating out of the Barnett Shale, Range Resources circulated a protective layer of cement the outside of the production pipe from the bottom up to about 4500 feet. They also cemented from the top of the well down through the aquifer where Perdue and Lipsky and others get their water, down to about 400 feet. But here... this long stretch of open well from about 400 feet to 4500 feet was left un-cemented, unprotected. Of particular concern, this shallow gas formation just beneath the aquifer called the Strawn.... it was left uncemented, unprotected. The question, is this the gas migrating up to the wellhead, or worse, into the aquifer?

According to the Railroad Commission's rule, 3-point-7, "WHENEVER gas is encountered while drilling...it SHALL be cemented or confined in it's original stratum...." to keep it from moving up the well and contaminating an aquifer.

Another rule, 3-13, says "if ANY productive horizon or gas formation is open to the wellbore... the casing SHALL be cemented."... again to keep any gas from infiltrating a water supply.

It's called "zonal isolation".

Tony Ingraffea is an engineering professor at Cornell University.

Ingrate tc 6:54 "This is why, by regulation, zonal isolation has to be maintained and if it is not maintained initially the well has to be worked over to achieve zonal isolation and if the well cannot be repaired to achieve zonal isolation the well has to be abandoned, taken out of production and plugged."

Another expert, Texas A&M engineering professor Jerome Schubert, agrees that all gas zones down well must be protected.

Quote: "It should be done by the operator. It's just good operating practices".

And in a review of Railroad Commission records, News 8 discovered this....

correspondence between Range Resources and state regulators in which the driller agreed it had a problem.

In response to that 2010 violation, Range proposed to fix its wellhead pressure problem by "circulating the cement to the surface."

Range added..."this work is to eliminate any chance that gas could be migrating from any zone" down below.

1 LipskyFolo 11:53 "What does that tell you? It tells me that they waited over a year to actually realize they should have cemented to surface and realize that apparently they knew they had a problem."

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No repairs were ever made... and the violation for gas pressure on the wellhead, it was later dropped by the Railroad Commission which went on to rule that Range was not responsible for the flames coming out of the Lipsky water well.

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And who decides what what is "commercially productive?"

According to the Texas Railroad Commission, the drilling company decides.

Ingraffea says that amounts to no regulation at all.

tc 9:24 "If that were the case then every single well that's been drilled, strictly speaking, every well that's been drilled through hydrocarbon bearing formations that are not a target of production would not have to be zonally isolated. That's absurd."

While experts debate well mechanics, some landowners remain in the dark over why their wells are still polluted and whether man or Mother Nature is to blame.

Brett Shipp, Channel Eight News.

Nielsen Local TV View

Report Type: Minute By Minute Flow
 Report Name: Fracking (1730883)
 Report Period: 07/12/2013 - 07/12/2013 1 of 1 days

Date Range: 07/12/2013 - 07/12/2013 1 of 1 days
 Geography: Dallas-Ft. Worth
 Base Viewing Source: WYAA 8.1
 Time Range: 10:00PM - 10:30PM
 Characteristic: TV Households
 Demo: P25-54
 Data Stream: Live

Date	Minute	Viewing Source	MTL	Metrics	RTG % (LX)	Gain RTG % (LX)	Loss RTG % (LX)	Intro	Next RTG % (LX)	AUD RET % (LX)	IMP	Gain IMP	Loss IMP	Indicator
Report Averages	10:00PM - 10:05PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		0.9			0.0	0.9	100.0	26,675			
	10:05PM - 10:10PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		0.9			0.0	0.9	100.0	26,675			
		TURN-OFF	N/A			0.1		0.0				3,268		
		CNN	CABLE			0.3		0.0				7,901		
		HIS	CABLE			0.1		0.0				4,202		
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.5		0.0				15,488		
	10:10PM - 10:15PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.4			0.0	1.4	100.0	42,143			
	10:15PM - 10:20PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.4			0.0	1.3	90.0	42,143			
		TURN-OFF	N/A			0.1		0.0				3,625		
		HIS	CABLE				0.1	0.0					4,203	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.1	0.1	0.0				3,625	4,203	
	10:20PM - 10:25PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.4			0.0	1.4	100.0	41,555			
		HIS	CABLE				0.1	0.0					4,202	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.1		0.0				4,202		
	10:25PM - 10:30PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.5			0.0	1.5	100.0	45,758			
		TURN-OFF	N/A			0.1		0.0				3,849		
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.1		0.0				3,849		
	10:30PM - 10:35PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.5			0.0	1.5	100.0	45,758			
	10:35PM - 10:40PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.5			0.0	1.5	100.0	45,758			
	10:40PM - 10:45PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.5			0.0	1.3	82.7	45,758			
		KOPW 4.1	FOX					0.3	0.0				7,901	
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.3	0.0				7,901			
10:45PM - 10:50PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.3			0.0	1.3	100.0	37,857				
10:50PM - 10:55PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.3			0.0	1.1	88.9	37,857				
	TURN-OFF	N/A				0.3	0.0					8,052		
	KOPW 4.1	FOX				0.3	0.0					7,901		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.3	0.3	0.0				7,901	8,052		
10:55PM - 11:00PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.4			0.0	1.0	69.8	41,555				
	KTYT 11.1	CBS					0.4	0.0				12,542		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.4	0.0				12,542			
11:00PM - 11:05PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.0			0.0	1.0	100.0	29,013				
11:05PM - 11:10PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.0			0.0	1.0	100.0	29,013				
11:10PM - 11:15PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.0			0.0	1.0	100.0	29,013				
11:15PM - 11:20PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.0			0.0	0.8	85.5	29,013				
	TURN-OFF	N/A				0.1	0.0					4,203		
	KOPW-TV 68.1	DOX				0.2	0.0					6,986		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.2	0.1	0.0				6,986	4,203		
11:20PM - 11:25PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.1			0.0	1.1	100.0	31,796				
	TURN-OFF	N/A			0.1		0.0					4,202		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.1		0.0				4,202			
11:25PM - 11:30PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.2			0.0	1.2	100.0	35,999				
	XPT	N/A				0.2	0.0					5,746		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.2		0.0				5,746			
11:30PM - 11:35PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.4			0.0	1.4	100.0	41,745				
11:35PM - 11:40PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.4			0.0	1.4	100.0	41,745				
11:40PM - 11:45PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.4			0.0	1.1	72.6	41,745				
	TURN-OFF	N/A				0.1	0.0					3,625		
	ESPN	CABLE				0.2	0.0					5,746		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.3		0.0				5,746	3,625		
11:45PM - 11:50PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.1			0.0	1.1	100.0	32,384				
11:50PM - 11:55PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.1			0.0	1.1	100.0	32,384				
11:55PM - 12:00PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.1			0.0	1.1	100.0	32,384				
12:00PM - 12:05PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.1			0.0	1.1	100.0	32,384				
12:05PM - 12:10PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.1			0.0	1.1	100.0	32,384				
	TURN-OFF	N/A				0.1	0.0					3,625		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.1		0.0				3,625			
12:10PM - 12:15PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.2			0.0	1.2	100.0	35,999				
12:15PM - 12:20PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.2			0.0	1.2	100.0	35,999				
12:20PM - 12:25PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.2			0.0	1.2	100.0	35,999				
12:25PM - 12:30PM	WYAA 8.1	ABC		1.2			0.0	1.2	100.0	35,999				
	KOFT 27.1	DND				0.2	0.0					6,400		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.2		0.0				6,400			
SUMMARY	WYAA 8.1	ABC			1.2			0.0	1.2	96.1	36,483			
	TURN-OFF	N/A				0.6	0.5	0.0				18,646	25,870	
	KOFT 27.1	DND				0.2		0.0				6,400		
	KOPW 4.1	FOX				0.3	0.3	0.0				7,901	7,901	
	KOPW-TV 68.1	DOX				0.2		0.0				6,986		
	KTYT 11.1	CBS					0.4	0.0				12,542		
	CNN	CABLE				0.3		0.0				7,901		
	ESPN	CABLE					0.2	0.0				5,746		
	HIS	CABLE				0.3	0.1	0.0				6,400	4,203	
	XPT	N/A				0.2		0.0				5,746		

Nielsen Local TV View

Report Type: Minute By Minute Flow
 Report Name: Fracking (173060)
 Report Period: 07/12/2013 - 07/12/2013 1 of 1 days

Date Range: 07/12/2013 - 07/12/2013 1 of 1 days
 Geography: Dallas-Ft. Worth
 Base Viewing Source: WTAA 6.1
 Time Range: 10:00PM - 10:30PM
 Characteristic: TV Households
 Demo: P25-54
 Data Stream: Live

Date	Minute	Viewing Source	MTL	Metrics	RTG % (X.X)	Gain RTG % (X.X)	Loss RTG % (X.X)	Instab	Kept RTG % (X.X)	AUD RET % (X.X)	IMP	Gain IMP	Loss IMP	Indicator
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			2.1	1.6					62,046	46,362	

“Budget director leaves amid questions of misspent DISD ‘at risk’ funds”

Brett Shipp, Jason Trahan, Mark Muller

June 3, 2015

“That has yet to really manifest itself into terms of any meaningful changes, other than, I think, our pursuit of that story ultimately played a role in the resignation of the superintendent. We had done other stories that played into that, but we were able to expose a system of inequity within the financing and funding of poor schools. When we caught them doing that, they put the money back. The budget director resigned. They don’t do that anymore. In fact, I checked the funding balances last week. They’re out. They have put money back into the poor schools. They quite stealing from the poor schools because we caught them. I feel good about that. That is a big deal. I’m a little disappointed that the federal government didn’t put anyone in jail for that. The federal government received a complaint, what is basically stealing money from poor kids, and they failed to do anything with it. I’m disappointed in that. I’m happy knowing that kids have more money today because we exposed that scheme.”

-Brett Shipp, WFAA-TV Investigative Reporter

SUMMARY & IMPACT

Critics of Dallas Independent School District accused Superintendent Mike Miles for misusing funding intended for “at-risk” students, coming all from tax payer money. Once Channel 8 began investigating, the DISD budget director resigned and officials admitted to misappropriation of funding. Instead of giving the money to the “at-risk” students, they money was used for elite schools and financial savings.

As Channel 8 pointed out, “at-risk” students qualify for more supplemental money, and all students should receive the same amount of “regular” classroom education dollars.

WEB STORY

DALLAS – Dallas ISD critics are accusing Superintendent Mike Miles of playing a financial shell game with tax dollars.

In March, a group of DISD parents and taxpayers alleged DISD officials were taking money from "at-risk" students and using it to pay for elite and magnet schools and building-up of financial reserves.

At the time, Superintendent Miles blasted critics and WFAA for suggesting money intended for "at-risk" students was being misused.

But in the past few weeks, after News 8 started asking new questions, DISD's budget director has resigned and DISD officials now admit mistakes have been made and "necessary corrections" are being made to the budget.

By law, "at-risk" students qualify to receive more in supplemental money. But all students should receive roughly the same amount of what's called "regular" classroom education dollars.

At Lakewood Elementary School, where only 14 percent of students are economically-disadvantaged, the school gets almost \$4,700 in "regular" education dollars per child. But at Russell Elementary, where 97-percent of students are economically-disadvantaged, the school gets only \$2,300 per child.

DISD officials make up for that by giving Russell an extra \$1,600 per child in what's called "State Compensatory Education" funds. Those are state dollars dedicated to "at risk" kids.

Again, by law, that Compensatory Education money is supplemental. It's supposed to be added to the regular classroom education dollars.

So in theory, disadvantaged Russell Elementary kids should be getting their \$1,600 supplemental dollars on top of those regular dollars.

If Russell Elementary students were getting that \$4,700 regular dollars that the Lakewood kids get, the supplemental would kick them up to \$6,300 per pupil. But since DISD only gives Russell \$2,300 per student and makes up the difference with supplemental funds, critics are blowing the whistle.

"They are supplanting regular funds - which should be supplemental - and instead, you are supplanting," said DISD watchdog Bill Betzen. "That is illegal."

Betzen filed a federal complaint in March accusing DISD of short-changing disadvantaged students, like those at Russell. Betzen has now filed an amended complaint based largely on discoveries made by News 8.

Stevens Park Elementary is another school allegedly being unfairly funded. The school receives \$2,700 per child in regular classroom education money and nearly \$1,400 in supplemental money. We found similar funding disparities at other "at risk" schools.

We showed the records to DISD Trustee Bernadette Nutall, a critic of Superintendent Miles.

"I wonder if we are supplanting," Nutall said. "That's a bad word. You cannot supplant."

We also found funding disparities at DISD high schools. One example is the Talented and Gifted High School at Townview Magnet Center, which is rated the "best high school in America," according to US News and World Report.

According to state financial records the school receives \$4,100 per student in "regular" classroom education dollars, plus \$3,000 per student from another supplemental fund called "High School Allotment."

High School Allotment money is designed to help "prepare underachieving students to enter college," according to state records. Yet, the academically-challenged Sunset High School receives only \$2,800 regular education dollars per student and only \$93 in High School Allotment money.

In our interview two months ago, DISD Budget Director Gilbert Prado had difficulty explaining the disparities.

"There have been some areas that we needed to look into a little deeper and try to see where [the discrepancies] were surfacing from," Prado said.

News 8 has now learned DISD budget officials have re-coded and returned money back to the budgets of schools allegedly being shorted "regular" education dollars.

At Stevens Park, that \$2,700 per student is suddenly budgeted to nearly \$4,000. At Russell Elementary, that \$2,300 per student in "regular" funds is now budgeted for \$3,600 per child.

Betzen says it appears DISD officials have been caught short changing "at-risk" kids, which is what his original complaint alleged in March.

"They obviously knew what they were doing was wrong, and so they had to correct it when they found that somebody was looking at it," Betzen said.

Just days after our interview, DISD budget director Gilbert Prado quit to take a similar job in Garland, even though he says DISD offered him more money to stay. He claims he leaving has nothing to do with funding questions at DISD.

It's important to note his boss, DISD Finance Director Jim Terry, has declined repeated requests for an interview on this topic, as has Superintendent Mike Miles.

The Title VI complaint filed by Betzen is now in the hands of investigators with the Department of Education.

PACKAGE SCRIPT

may 28th disd meeting joyce foreman

1:50 "I know that but what I still don't understand is why we have a 43 million dollar deficit...."

It came out at the board meeting last Thursday night.

DISD financial reports show the district to be 43-million dollars in the red.

17:18 Lew Blackburn "Just make a note I'm getting real nervous about our finances."

Those same finances show the year before, DISD had accrued a 61-million dollar surplus.

That's a 100-million dollar swing that administration officials have not been able to explain.

37:24 "Attributable to what? I still don't have the answer to that. I've asked about the budget."

+

37:52 "And no one will explain? No real explanation of where the over-spending took place."

DISD Finance Director Jim Terry told Board members he believes the deficit will be closer to 20 million dollars by the end of the budget year.

DISD will still have 300-million dollars in reserves.

But what Terry did not tell Trustees is that the district had overspent it's federal funds this year by 10-million dollars and was just hours away from laying off 85-workers.

37:01 "If the administration knew this was going to happen that would have been an opportune time to at least brief the Board so the Board would have some idea of what was actually going on."

Instead, Foreman says the first she heard of the layoffs was when we contacted her Friday night.

Miles salesmanship Club tc 53:58 "Superintendent can we talk to you real quick, Superintendent can we not talk to you?"

DISD Superintendent Mike Miles today declined to answer our questions about the layoffs or the deficit.

YouTubetc1:46 "You cannot bring a budget without knowing what your final revenue

dollars are.

Miles did record remarks regarding the layoffs and posted them on YouTube. While he did say the district will be short 10-million federal dollars next year, he says those losing their jobs will likely get them back.

YouTube 1:50 "It happens every year so know one needs to panic, we're not panicked, we are going to know more clearly this week what those revenue dollars are."

In the interview Miles also touched on allegations that DISD has also miscoded millions of dollars designed to provide a supplemental education for DISD's "at risk" students.

3:02 "TEA changed their coding so you know and they, you know, they've said yes they've miscoded. So you gotta really be careful about just throwing things out there."

(shipp on cam)

But I talked to the TEA today it denies miscoding or admitting to miscoding supplemental dollars at DISD.

But also talked to DISD Board President Eric Cowan who says he too is concerned about the issues we've been raising and that he expects answers from administration in the coming days.

Nielsen Local TV View

Report Type: Minute By Minute Flow
 Report Name: DISD Budget (1710898)
 Report Period: 06/02/2015 - 06/02/2015 1 of 1 days

Date Range: 06/02/2015 - 06/02/2015 1 of 1 days
 Geography: Dallas-Ft. Worth
 Base Viewing Source: WFAA 8.1
 Time Range: 10:00PM - 10:30PM
 Characteristic: TV Households
 Demo: P25-54
 Data Stream: Live

Dates	Minute	Viewing Source	Affil.	Metrics	RTG % (X.X)	Gain RTG % (X.X)	Loss RTG % (X.X)	Intab	Kept RTG % (X.X)	AUD RET % (X.X)	IMP	Gain IMP	Loss IMP	Indicator	
Report Averages	10:00PM - 10:01PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		1.1				827	1.0	88.9	33,926			
		DAM	CABLE			0.1			827				2,792		
		FOOD NETWORK	CABLE					0.1		827				3,760	
		RLZC	CABLE						827					3,687	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.1						6,479	3,760
	10:01PM - 10:02PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			1.2			827	1.2	100.0	36,645			
		KDFW 4.1	FOX				0.1		827					2,604	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											2,604	
	10:02PM - 10:03PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			1.3			827	1.3	100.0	39,249			
		TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.1		827					2,776	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											2,776	
	10:03PM - 10:04PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			1.4			827	1.4	100.0	42,025			
		TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.1		827					3,686	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A						827					3,424	
	10:04PM - 10:05PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			1.7			827	1.7	100.0	49,135			
KXAS-TV 5.1		NBC				0.1		827					3,284		
MINUTE TOTAL		N/A											3,284		
10:05PM - 10:06PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			1.8			827	1.8	100.0	52,419				
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.1		827					2,990		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											2,990		
10:06PM - 10:07PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			1.9			827	1.9	100.0	55,409				
	WFAA 8.1	ABC			1.9			827	1.9	100.0	55,409				
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A						827					2,771		
10:07PM - 10:08PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.0			827	2.0	100.0	58,180				
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.1		827					4,323		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											4,323		
10:08PM - 10:09PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.0			827	2.0	100.0	58,180				
	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.0			827	2.0	100.0	58,180				
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A						827					4,323		
10:09PM - 10:10PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.0			827	2.0	100.0	58,180				
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.1		827					4,323		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											4,323		
10:10PM - 10:11PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.1			827	2.1	100.0	62,503				
	LIFETIME	CABLE				0.1		827					2,818		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											2,818		
10:11PM - 10:12PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.1			827	2.1	100.0	62,503				
	LIFETIME	CABLE				0.1		827					2,818		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											2,818		
10:12PM - 10:13PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC			2.2			827	2.2	100.0	65,321				
	LIFETIME	CABLE				0.1		827					2,818		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											2,818		

Minute	Viewing Source	Affil.	Metrics	RTG % (X.X)	Gain RTG % (X.X)	Loss RTG % (X.X)	Intab	Kept RTG % (X.X)	AUD RET % (X.X)	IMP	Gain IMP	Loss IMP	Indicator
10:11PM - 10:12PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.1			827	2.1	100.0	62,503			
	LIFETIME	CABLE				0.1		827					2,818
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1							2,818
10:12PM - 10:13PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.2			827	2.2	100.0	65,321			
	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.2			827	2.0	91.4	65,321			
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											18,741
10:13PM - 10:14PM	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A			0.4		827						11,461
	A&E NETWORK	CABLE				0.1	827						2,818
	LMN	CABLE			0.1		827						3,791
	SMTH	CABLE				0.1	827						2,771
	XPLT	N/A			0.1		827						3,489
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.6	0.2						7,661
10:14PM - 10:15PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.6			827	2.4	90.3	78,473			
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.1	827						2,604
	KPKD-TV 68.1	ION				0.2	827						4,999
	BET	CABLE			0.3		827						7,661
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.3							7,661
10:15PM - 10:16PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.6			827	2.6	100.0	78,531			
	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.6			827	2.6	100.0	78,531			
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											9,893
10:16PM - 10:17PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.6			827	2.3	87.8	78,531			
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.2	827						5,817
	ESPN	CABLE				0.1	827						3,791
10:17PM - 10:18PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.3			827	2.3	100.0	68,923			
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.3							9,608
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											9,608
10:18PM - 10:19PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.3			827	2.3	100.0	68,923			
	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.3			827	2.3	100.0	68,923			
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											9,893
10:19PM - 10:20PM	KMPX 29.1	ETV			0.2		827						6,994
	XPLT	N/A			0.1		827						2,899
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.3							9,893
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											9,893
10:20PM - 10:21PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.7			827	2.4	91.1	78,816			
	KXAS-TV 5.1	NBC			0.1		827						2,693
	DISCOVERY	CABLE				0.2	827						6,994
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1	0.2						2,693
10:21PM - 10:22PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.5			827	2.3	89.7	74,515			
	XPLT	N/A				0.3	827						7,661
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A											7,661

Minute	Viewing Source	Affil.	Metrics	RTG % (X.X)	Gain RTG % (X.X)	Loss RTG % (X.X)	Intab	Kept RTG % (X.X)	AUD RET % (X.X)	IMP	Gain IMP	Loss IMP	Indicator
10:22PM - 10:23PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.3			827	2.3	100.0	66,854			
	KDFW 4.1	FOX			0.1		827				2,841		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.1						2,841		
10:23PM - 10:24PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.4			827	2.3	95.9	69,695			
	KTVT 11.1	CBS				0.1	827					2,841	
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1						2,841	
10:24PM - 10:25PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.3			827	2.3	100.0	66,854			
10:25PM - 10:26PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.3			827	2.3	100.0	66,854			
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A			0.1		827				4,398		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.1						4,398		
10:26PM - 10:27PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.4			827	2.4	100.0	71,252			
	DAM	CABLE			0.1		827				2,628		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.1						2,628		
10:27PM - 10:28PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.5			827	2.3	91.3	73,880			
	KTVT 11.1	CBS			0.1		827				2,841		
	KXAS-TV 5.1	NBC			0.1		827				2,900		
	HLN	CABLE				0.2	827					6,462	
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.2	0.2					5,741	6,462	
10:28PM - 10:29PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.5			827	2.1	86.7	73,159			
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.2	827				6,869		
	KXAS-TV 5.1	NBC			0.1		827				2,841		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.3						9,710		
10:29PM - 10:30PM	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.1			827	2.0	95.4	63,449			
	ESPNEWS	CABLE			0.1		827				2,900		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A			0.1						2,900		
SUMMARY	WFAA 8.1	ABC		2.1			827	61.6	96.7	62,971			
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A			1.0	0.5	827				29,634	15,290	

“Unfair Game: Breaking the rules in high school sports”

Brett Shipp, Jason Trahan, Mark Muller

September 29, 2015

“I think we were pushing that story because of multiple examples of cheating in high school basketball resulting in guys unfairly winning state championships getting accolades because they were cheating and to expose that network of cheating – it took a guy to die before that had an impact. One of these kids that had been shuffled around from school to school and brokered and bartered and treated like a piece of meat from his handlers finally got killed - basically as a result of this whole game of horse-trading players to try to win championships, and it turned deadly. Once it did, then we brought about change by dismantling that system of coaches and the athletic director that was the purveyor of this atrocity.”

- Brett Shipp, WFAA-TV Investigative Reporter

SUMMARY & IMPACT

The story received an IRE award in the broadcast/video medium category.

An unknown judge for IRE commented on the story, stating, “‘Unfair Game’ showed how Texas high school coaches and administrators openly flouted the rules and helped students transfer school districts to assemble state championship-caliber athletic teams. The stories graphically showed how improper recruiting helped Dallas' Kimball Knights build back-to-back state championship basketball teams, and how former Dallas Cowboy Deion Sanders' new school, Prime Prep Academy, drew in blue-chip players against the rules. Because public records were sparse, reporter Brett Shipp used an inventive combination of social media and dogged reporting to show how high school athletics had been transformed into a business in which the best players were lured away from their neighborhood schools and sometimes across state lines. Results included the firing of one coach and an internal investigation that concluded the Dallas district had violated state rules.”



WFAA-TV
 606 Young St.
 Dallas, TX 75202
 Feb. 4, 2015

TAPB Contest
 Associated Press
 4851 LBJ Freeway, Suite 300
 Dallas, TX 75244

Dear Judges,

They were two of the state's top high school basketball players, stars at their respective Dallas-area schools – Troy Causey at Wilmer Hutchins, and Johnathan Turner at Madison High. One is now in jail for killing the other after a March 23, 2014 fight at the house they were sharing. Why were they living together? Where were their parents? News 8 began digging, and what we uncovered led to a day of reckoning for Dallas Independent School District's athletics office.

For years, WFAA reporter Brett Shipp has exposed grade changing and improper recruiting by top Dallas high school sports programs. In 2008, his stories on a grade-changing scandal at Dallas' South Cliff High School cost the basketball team two state championships.

In 2012, Shipp showed how Dallas' Kimball Knights, led by celebrated head coach Royce "Snoop" Johnson, recruited almost an entire basketball team – including at least one student from New York – enabling them to win back-to-back titles.

Nothing changed. Coach Johnson's father, Goree Johnson, remained a top athletics director for the Dallas Independent School District.

Then Causey was killed. His mother reached out to Shipp, telling him how coaches at Wilmer Hutchins had recruited her son to play ball for their school. She said they promised to help look after him while he lived in a home with another family on the other side of town.

Living in the same house was Turner. Coaches for rival Madison High School had convinced his mother to move him from Atlanta to Dallas. Madison's coach? Roderick Johnson, Snoop Johnson's brother and the other son of DISD's assistant athletic director Goree Johnson.

March 2014 was a banner month for the Johnson's. Both Roderick and Snoop won state in their respective divisions, as their father, DISD's head of basketball, looked on.



For years, Texas high school athletics rules have outlawed recruiting of players. Also, players cannot transfer from one school to another for athletics purposes. These rules are designed to keep education as a priority over athletics, and to prevent ambitious coaches from unfairly stacking their rosters with talent – which is how the Johnson family was able to keep piling up the championships.

Through his own investigation, Shipp found that coaches at both Wilmer Hutchins and Madison forged Turner and Causey's eligibility and residence forms. After our report aired, an internal DISD investigation commenced, and it ultimately confirmed our findings.

On June 6, Superintendent Mike Miles cleaned house. He fired Goree Johnson and Roderick Johnson, along with 13 other coaches and administrators. That night, Snoop Johnson, who was not fired, threatened Shipp on social media.

"You went at me which is cool, but when you go after my family [sic] lights out! Now I'm coming for you. I fear none of you #WFAAShipp....," Snoop Johnson posted on Twitter.

The next week, Miles fired Snoop Johnson as well. In August 2014, the University Interscholastic League, which oversees high school athletics in Texas, stripped Madison of two of its state basketball titles.

We believe that our perseverance and tenacity in reporting, promulgating fairness in high school athletics, deserves recognition. Thanks to the Associated Press for considering our work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Trahan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jason Trahan
Investigative producer

WEB STORY

A Dallas Independent School District spokesman said Monday that former Kimball High School basketball star Keith Frazier now a student at SMU rightfully earned his high school diploma, but added that the district is still reviewing how a Kimball coach was able to change one of the student's grades against district rules.

'We are talking about the integrity of the district and our processes,' DISD spokesman Jon Dahlander said in an interview Monday. 'This has been a lengthy investigation, and we want to take some time to review this report and make sure we act appropriately.'

Also under review is a system that lets students who have excessive absences 'buy back' what is known as 'seat time' by making up days, according to an internal DISD investigation of whether Frazier properly graduated.

Documents related to Frazier's efforts to make up missed days have apparently vanished from Kimball, the DISD report states.

Despite the district's current assurances that Frazier earned his diploma, Dallas ISD's own internal audit report, completed last month, says Kimball Principal Earl Jones told an investigator that it was 'highly probable' that Frazier 'should not have been certified for graduation.'

Assistant Principal Llewellyn Smith also told investigators that Frazier 'should not have been cleared' because of his absences, and that his graduation 'credits would be jeopardized due to his lack of attendance.'

On Monday, Principal Jones defended his school's handling of the Frazier matter.

'It should be noted that this investigation started because our process uncovered an inappropriate and ultimately unsuccessful effort to change a student's grade,' he said in a written statement.

'While I cannot address all of the issues within the investigative report at this time, I have always relied upon our staff to regularly monitor the work of our students to make certain that they are fulfilling all requirements for graduation,' Jones added. 'Additional steps have been taken this year to tighten up our procedures and make certain that there is one single location where all attendance records are kept. The assistant principal will also continually verify and cross-reference documentation submitted by students to comply with state compulsory attendance laws.'

On Sunday, WFAA reported that an assistant coach at Kimball changed Frazier's physics grade in an attempt to help him maintain NCAA eligibility. The changed grade was detected and the assistant coach resigned.

Frazier now plays for SMU.

In a statement Monday, SMU denied wrongdoing.

'As with all information related to student admissions, we are careful to make decisions based on official records of academic performance,' the statement reads. 'Using our typical procedures, we granted admission to the student in question based on information on the official DISD transcript and certification of his graduation by DISD.'

According to DISD's audit report, Frazier 'was not current on his attendance requirements and not passing core subjects per teacher testimony.'

On May 29, one week after classes for seniors had ended, according to the audit, SMU assistant basketball coach Ulric Maligi contacted Kimball counselor Hanan Ali, concerned about Frazier's grade point average not being high enough for NCAA eligibility. Ali said she could not help him, the report states.

According to the audit, 'soon after her conversation with Coach Maligi, Kimball soccer coach Demarco King came to her office with a report card for Frazier.'

Frazier's physics grade had been raised.

Once word got out, King later admitted to improperly changing the grade. DISD auditors began their investigation.

In its statement, SMU defended Maligi's actions.

'Because we care about the potential of our student athletes to be academically successful at SMU, it is not unusual for a coach to inquire about the academic progress of a prospective student athlete.

'Assistant Coach Ulric Maligi asked for an update on the student's grades, about whether the student needed to do extra credit assignments or take an extra course during the summer. He spoke with a higher education adviser who represented herself as the point of contact for the student's academic performance. Previous grade reports indicated a passing grade in physics and other subjects.

'Subsequently, Coach Maligi conferred with the student's high school counselor, a DISD employee, who instructed him to disregard the interim grade report he had just received. She indicated that DISD had experienced a problem regarding alleged grade changes at Kimball High School. This conversation led Coach Maligi to believe that DISD had addressed the issue and that forthcoming information on student grades would be accurate, as DISD has affirmed.

'SMU received the final transcript on July 1, confirming the student's graduation, with grades and credits indicating the student could qualify for SMU admission and NCAA eligibility. The alleged grade change on an earlier interim report was not reflected on the

official transcript and thus did not have an impact on admission to SMU or NCAA eligibility.'

On Monday, NCAA spokesman Christopher Radford declined to discuss Frazier.

'The NCAA typically does not comment on individual student-athlete academic records,' he said. 'At this point, your questions are better directed towards SMU and the high school in question.'

PACKAGE SCRIPT

The player is Keith Frazier.

He was the subject of a News 8 investigation back in 2012.

When evidence suggested he violated rules by switching schools in the middle of the year to help Dallas' Kimball High School win back-to-back state championships.

Last year, News 8 reported on allegations that an SMU coach played a role in an alleged scheme to change Frazier's failing grades to passing so he could graduate and go play for SMU.

Now the NCAA is accusing an SMU administrative assistant of helping Frazier pass an on-line summer course that he needed to be eligible at SMU.

Head SMU Basketball Coach Larry Brown today responded to the allegations.

36:02 "Did the administrative assistant act alone? In doing the course? I believe she did."

NCAA investigators say when they initially questioned Brown about his knowledge of the violation, he lied.

According to the report Brown later told investigators..."I don't know why I lied. You know, dealing with people that I really care about, and I used terrible judgment."

35:00 "Coach can you walk us through the sequence of events which you admittedly lied to investigators? I didn't lie to the investigators."

According to the investigation Keith Frazier admitted to investigators that he provided the administrative assistant with false information.

Coach Brown today said Frazier did nothing wrong.
Frazier's status on this year's team?

47:22 "Keith Frazier is eligible to play."

Brown told news eight that he is willing to accept responsibility for the violation but only because NCAA rules say coaches are responsible for their employees actions.

And SMU President Gerald Turner says he stands behind his coach.

06:24 "Coach Brown has my full support going forward. As you can see in the report there are adjustments we are going to have to make, there are adjustments we've made."

Turner says they haven't decided whether to appeal the sanctions.

They have 15 days to do that.

One of their arguments is it was a course Frazier didn't really need to get into SMU. It appears the NC-AA disagrees.

NIELSEN LOCALITY VIEW

Report Type: Minute By Minute Flow
 Report Name: 12.19.15 Minute By Minute Flow Report (1669613)
 Report Period: 09/29/2015 - 09/29/2015 1 of 1 days

Date Range: 09/29/2015 - 09/29/2015 1 of 1 days
 Geography: Dallas-Ft. Worth
 Base Viewing Source: WTRA B.1
 Time Range: 09:45PM - 10:15PM
 Characteristic: TV Households
 Demo: P25-54
 Data Stream: Live

Date(s)	Minute	Viewing Source	Affil	Metrics	RTG % (X.X)	Gain RTG % (X.X)	Loss RTG % (X.X)	Intro	Next RTG % (X.X)	AUD RET % (X.X)	IMP	Gain IMP	Loss IMP	Indicator	
Report Averages	09:45PM - 09:46PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.2				0.2	1.2	100.0	34,901			
	09:46PM - 09:47PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.2				0.2	1.2	100.0	34,901			
	09:47PM - 09:48PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.2				0.2	1.2	100.0	34,901			
	09:48PM - 09:49PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.2				0.2	1.2	100.0	34,901			
	09:49PM - 09:50PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.2				0.2	1.2	100.0	34,901			
		XFLT	N/A				0.2							4,498	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.2							4,498	
	09:50PM - 09:51PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.3				0.2	1.3	100.0	39,396			
	09:51PM - 09:52PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.3				0.2	1.3	100.0	39,396			
	09:52PM - 09:53PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.3				0.2	1.3	100.0	39,396			
	09:53PM - 09:54PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.3				0.2	1.3	100.0	39,396			
	09:54PM - 09:55PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.3				0.2	1.3	100.0	39,396			
	09:55PM - 09:56PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.3				0.2	1.3	100.0	39,396			
	09:56PM - 09:57PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.3				0.2	1.3	100.0	39,396			
	09:57PM - 09:58PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.3				0.2	1.3	100.0	39,396			
		TURN-ON/OFF	N/A				0.1							4,280	
		CTZD	N/A				0.1							2,725	
		MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.2							7,005	
	09:58PM - 09:59PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.6				0.1	1.4	90.8	46,431		4,280	
		KPKD-TV 68.1	ION					0.1						4,280	
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.1						4,280		
09:59PM - 10:00PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.4				0.1	1.4	100.0	42,151				
	KOAS-TV 5.1	NBC				0.1							2,368		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1							2,368		
10:00PM - 10:01PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.5				0.1	1.4	94.7	44,516				
	KOAS-TV 5.1	NBC				0.1							2,368		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1							2,368		
10:01PM - 10:02PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.4				0.1	1.4	100.0	42,151				
10:02PM - 10:03PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.4				0.1	1.3	90.7	42,151				
	CTZD	N/A					0.1						1,925		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A					0.1						1,925		
10:03PM - 10:04PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.3				0.1	1.3	100.0	38,226				
	KTYT 11.1	CBS				0.1							2,368		
	ESPN2	CABLE				0.2							7,036		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.3							9,394		
10:04PM - 10:05PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.6				0.2	1.4	90.6	47,617		4,498		
	AMC	CABLE					0.2						3,269		
	FSNSWest	CABLE				0.1							2,269		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1	0.2						4,498		
10:05PM - 10:06PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.6				0.1	1.6	100.0	46,391				
	XFLT	N/A				0.1							2,627		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1							2,627		
10:06PM - 10:07PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.6				0.1	1.6	100.0	49,018				
	KOPW 4.1	FOX				0.1							3,136		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1							3,136		
10:07PM - 10:08PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.8				0.2	1.4	79.7	52,154				
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A					0.2						7,312		
	FSNSWest	CABLE				0.1							1,269		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.4							8,581		
10:08PM - 10:09PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.4				0.2	1.2	83.1	41,573				
	FSNSWest	CABLE				0.2							7,026		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.2							7,026		
10:09PM - 10:10PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.2				0.2	1.2	100.0	34,547				
10:10PM - 10:11PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.2				0.2	1.2	100.0	34,547				
	FSNSWest	CABLE				0.1							1,269		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1							1,269		
10:11PM - 10:12PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.3				0.1	1.3	100.0	37,816				
	HGTV	CABLE				0.1							3,391		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.1							3,391		
10:12PM - 10:13PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.4				0.2	1.2	83.8	41,207				
	FSNSWest	CABLE				0.1							1,269		
	HGTV	CABLE				0.1							3,391		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.2							6,660		
10:13PM - 10:14PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.2				0.2	1.2	100.0	34,547				
10:14PM - 10:15PM	WTRA B.1	ABC		1.2				0.1	1.1	92.4	34,547				
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A					0.1						2,627		
	FSNSWest	CABLE				0.1							1,269		
	XFLT	N/A				0.1							1,721		
	MINUTE TOTAL	N/A				0.2	0.1						6,990	2,627	
SUMMARY	WTRA B.1	ABC			1.3			0.2	1.3	96.5	39,975		4,280	9,929	
	TURN-ON/OFF	N/A					0.1						2,725	3,925	
	CTZD	N/A					0.1						2,725	3,925	

Nielsen Viewership Reports

The following reports look at the yearly averages for viewership during the 10:00 p.m. newscast for 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Nielsen Local TV View

Report Type: Program - Custom Analysis
 Report Name: 10P - Custom Analysis Report (1751498)
 Report Period: 01/06/2011 - 01/01/2014 1008 of 1092 days

Geography: Dallas-Ft. Worth
 Data Stream: Live+Same Day
 Custom Range: 2011
 Avg Level: Average

Viewing Source	Program	Daypart	Dates	Characteristic		TV Households					
				Demo	Metrics	P25-54					
						RTG % (X.X)	SHR %	HUT/PUT % (X.X)	Intab	IMP	Indicator
WFAA 8.1	NWS 8-UPDATE	M-F 3a-3a	01/06/2011 - 12/28/2011			2.4	7	37.2	685	75,251	

Nielsen Local TV View

Report Type: Program - Custom Analysis
 Report Name: 10P - Custom Analysis Report (1751498)
 Report Period: 01/06/2011 - 01/01/2014 1008 of 1092 days

Geography: Dallas-Ft. Worth
 Data Stream: Live+Same Day
 Custom Range: 2012
 Avg Level: Average

Viewing Source	Program	Daypart	Dates	Characteristic		TV Households					
				Demo	Metrics	P25-54					
						RTG % (X.X)	SHR %	HUT/PUT % (X.X)	Intab	IMP	Indicator
WFAA 8.1	NWS 8-UPDATE	M-F 3a-3a	01/05/2012 - 12/26/2012			2.4	7	34.2	691	72,500	

Nielsen Local TV View

Report Type: Program - Custom Analysis
 Report Name: 10P - Custom Analysis Report (1751498)
 Report Period: 01/06/2011 - 01/01/2014 1008 of 1092 days

Geography: Dallas-Ft. Worth
 Data Stream: Live+Same Day
 Custom Range: 2013
 Avg Level: Average

Viewing Source	Program	Daypart	Dates	Characteristic		TV Households					
				Demo	Metrics	P25-54					
						RTG % (X.X)	SHR %	HUT/PUT % (X.X)	Intab	IMP	Indicator
WFAA 8.1	NWS 8-UPDATE	M-F 3a-3a	01/03/2013 - 01/01/2014			2.8	8	34.1	675	82,467	

Nielsen Local TV View

Report Type: Program - Custom Analysis
 Report Name: 10P - Custom Analysis Report (1751782)
 Report Period: 01/02/2014 - 12/30/2015 672 of 728 days

Geography: Dallas-Ft. Worth
 Data Stream: Live+Same Day
 Custom Range: Custom Range 1
 Avg Level: Average

Viewing Source	Program	Daypart	Dates	Characteristic		TV Households					
				Demo	Metrics	P25-54					
						RTG % (X.X)	SHR %	HUT/PUT % (X.X)	Intab	IMP	Indicator
WFAA 8.1	NWS 8-UPDATE	M-F 3a-3a	01/02/2014 - 12/31/2014			2.5	6	38.4	676	75,173	

Nielsen Local TV View

Report Type: Program - Custom Analysis
 Report Name: 10P - Custom Analysis Report (1751782)
 Report Period: 01/02/2014 - 12/30/2015 672 of 728 days

Geography: Dallas-Ft. Worth
 Data Stream: Live+Same Day
 Custom Range: Custom Range 2
 Avg Level: Average

Viewing Source	Program	Daypart	Dates	Characteristic		TV Households					
				Demo	Metrics	RTG % (X.X)	SHR %	HUT/PUT % (X.X)	Intab	IMP	Indicator
WFAA 8.1	NWS 8-UPDATE	M-F 3a-3a	01/01/2015 - 12/30/2015			2.3	6	37.9	837	68,264	

IMPACT RUBRICS

The following rubrics are designed for pre and post reporting. All are crafted to be universal, with the exception of the “package” rubric, designed for television news, or any multimedia news service that produces a package-like video.

The Purpose <i>Why are you doing this story?</i> <i>What does the public need to know?</i>	The Process <i>How are you going to execute your story?</i>	Impact <i>What changes do you expect to see?</i>
	Sources	Short-term Outcome: <i>What changes do you expect to see quickly after publishing?</i>
	Plan of Execution	Intermediate Outcome: <i>What changes do you want to see?</i>
		Long-term Outcome: <i>What changes do you hope to see over time?</i>
Target Audience: <i>Who is this story targeted to? How can you relate this to others not in your "target"?</i>		
Foreseeable Challenges: <i>What may prevent you or hold you back from executing your story in the most effective and efficient manner? How will you get around those issues?</i>		

TRACKING A STORY

The following chart, which can be easily documented on a Google or Excel spreadsheet, and can help you keep track of stories over time while in progress and after completion.

Slug	Status	Air Date	Headline	Reporter	Producer	Subject	Awards
Fracking	Published	1/4/16	Water well lights on fire from contamination	Shipp	Trahan	Environment	Emmy
Theft	In Progress	5/1/16	Predators in the Classroom	Huffman	Trahan	Education	

WEB STORY RUBRIC

To assess your web story, score your work and add up the points. The higher the score, the more potential impact your story created.

Local Ties

- 0 – no local tie
- 1 – Slightly local (several counties)
- 2 – Somewhat local (counties and cities)
- 3 – Very local (address, neighborhood, street)

Regional Ties

- 0 – no regional tie
- 1 – Slightly regional (cities in viewing area, not quite state-wide)
- 2 – Somewhat regional (state only)
- 3 – Very regional (state based, possibly surrounding states)

National Ties

- 0 – No national tie
- 1 – Slightly national
- 2 – Somewhat national
- 3 – Very national

Broad Interest

- 0 – Not of interest to the majority of the target audience
- 1 – Some interest to the majority of the target audience
- 2 – Decent interest to the majority of the target audience
- 3 – High interest to the majority of the target audience

Data Usage

- 0 – No
- 1 – Yes

Infographics

- 0 – No
- 1 – Yes

Degree of Interactivity

- 0 – Not interactive
- 1 – Low degree of interactivity, one option for interacting
- 2 – Somewhat interactive, multiple options for interacting
- 3 – Very interactive, multiple options for interacting and multiple layers

One sided

0 – Yes

1 – No

Different angle from PKG

0 – No

1 – Yes

Technicalities

Load Time

0 – Does not load

1 – Slow loading time

2 – Small wait time, reasonably quick

3 – Instantaneous load time

Aesthetics

0 – Not appealing to look at

1 – Little design

2 – Moderate design

3 – Extremely well-designed

Navigation

0 – Hard to navigate

1 – Somewhat difficult to navigate

2 – Not very difficult to navigate, relatively easy

3 – Very easy to navigate. All links work.

Placement on website

0 – Could not find

1 – Took some effort to find

2 – Very easy to find

Grammatical Errors

0 – Yes

1 – No

Fact Errors

0 – Yes

1 – No

Headline

0 – No headline

- 1 – Unclear headline
- 2 – Clear but unengaging headline
- 3 – Clear and engaging headline

PACKAGE RUBRIC

To assess your package, score your work and add up the points. The higher the score, the more potential impact your package created.

Purpose

- 0 – No purpose
- 1 – Difficult understanding purpose
- 2 – Some purpose
- 3 – Clear purpose

Story telling

- 0 – No flow, not compelling
- 1 – Slight flow, minimal effort
- 2 – Good flow, including a beginning, middle and end
- 3 – Extremely moving with a plot, beginning, middle and end

Humanized

- 0 – No humanization
- 1 – Slightly humanized
- 2 – Somewhat humanized
- 3 – Very humanized

Emotional Appeal

- 0 – No
- 1 – Yes

Videography

- 0 – Not aesthetically pleasing
- 1 – Slightly aesthetic, mediocre photography and editing skills used
- 2 – Somewhat aesthetic, good photography and editing skills used
- 3 – Very aesthetic, advanced photography and skills used

Context

- 0 – No context
- 1 – Little context
- 2 – Some context
- 3 – Clear context

Local Ties

- 0 – no local tie
- 1 – Slightly local (several counties)
- 2 – Somewhat local (counties and cities)

3 – Very local (address, neighborhood, street)

Regional Ties

0 – no regional tie

1 – Slightly regional (cities in viewing area, not quite state-wide)

2 – Somewhat regional (state only)

3 – Very regional (state based, possibly surrounding states)

National Ties

0 – No national tie

1 – Slightly national

2 – Somewhat national

3 – Very national

Target Audience Reached

0 – No

1 – Yes

Originality in content and deliverance

0 – Not original

1 – Somewhat original

2 – Unique content

Technicalities

Sequences

0 – No sequences

1 – Few sequences used

2 – Multiple sequences, with purpose, used

3 – A variety of advanced sequences, with purpose, used

Audio

0 – Poor audio, distracting from piece

1 – Decent audio, not very distracting

2 – Good audio

3 – Excellent audio for all tracks

SOTs (sound bites)

0 – No sound bites, VO or reader only

1 – Only one sound bite

2 – Multiple sound bites with contrasting viewpoints

NAT Pops

0 – No

1 – Yes

Pacing

0 – No pacing

1 – Some pacing

2 – Good pacing, not difficult to follow

3 – Very well paced, easy to follow, excellent flow

Tone

0 – Minimal inflection, does not match story

2 – Good tone, some inflection

3 – Excellent voice, inflection and tone, all matches the story

Conversational

0 – No

1 – Yes

Video matched script

0 – Video did not match

1 – Some video matched

2 – Video matched the script

Demonstrative Live Shot (if applicable)

0 – No

1 – Yes

SOCIAL MEDIA RUBRIC

To assess your social media usage, score your work and add up the points. The higher the score, the more potential impact your post(s) created.

Tweet

0 – No

1 – Yes

Tweet Engagement

0 – No engagement

1 – Favorites

2 – Retweets

3 – Favorites and retweets

Twitter Promo

0 – No

1 – Yes

Facebook Post

0 – No

1 – Yes

Facebook Promo

0 – No

1 – Yes

Facebook Post Engagement

0 – No engagement

1 – Like

2 – Likes and comments

3 – Likes, comments and shares

Instagram Post

0 – No

1 – Yes

Vine Post

0 – No

1 – Yes

Chapter Five: Professional Analysis

For over a decade, media makers have debated the issues surrounding impact measurement – the definition of impact, methodologies and the reality of it being possible to measure at all.

Journalists want to know if his or her reporting made a difference. Here are five guidelines to follow when tracking impact.

One: Identify your mission and define impact

Figure out what your organization’s mission is, and then identify what impact means to your organization. There is no single definition of impact. There is no consensus on what impact means for journalists, and that is half the battle.

Lindsay Green-Barber is the director of strategic research at CIR. She started working for CIR in 2013 as the media impact analyst where her first assignment was to define what “impact” meant to the organization.

“While there is no clear definition of impact, it is understood that impact is real world change,” she said.

The definition of impact could mean any number of things, depending on the organization and its mission.

President of ProPublica Dick Tofel wrote a paper focused on the experience of ProPublica and how its success is measured by the impact of journalism.

“For ProPublica, it means change. Reform,” Tofel said. “Changes in policies or practices or statutes or whatever, but actual change in the real world.”

He said the definition fits ProPublica’s mission: to spur change by journalistic means.

Reach versus Engagement

This is where the great divide comes into play: non-profit measurements versus commercial measurements.

“If you’re running a for-profit news organization, your mission is to make money,” said Dick Tofel. “You may care more about reach rather than engagement.”

A non-profit is more likely to invest time and resources into engagement measurement because its success is based on change. A commercial news room makes money through advertising and advertisers care about ratings – reach. The bigger the reach, the more revenue. Both reach and engagement are components of impact, and can be classified as impact on their own, but depending on what type of organization you work for will dictate what measurement type dominates impact tracking.

According to Jim Glass, the Creative Services Director at WFAA-TV in Dallas, standard metrics are vital for revenue.

“Every morning I probably get eight pieces of media analytics from Nielsen to Rentrak, those are both TV measurements, and ComScore for digital products. I get ShareRocket which is social analytics. We have a lot of different measurement systems.

The emphasis is put primarily on Nielsen and I think there's probably too much, but that's what our buyers are looking at."

Again, it all depends on what your organization's mission is.

"If your goal is reach, then [standard metrics] are the point," Tofel said. "If you're saying the idea is to inform the greatest number of people, then that's what you need to measure."

For commercial newsrooms, standard metrics measuring reach, such as Nielsen ratings, are critical for advertising and are held in higher regards than engagement. More eyeballs means more revenue, but that does not necessarily translate to the core mission of the station.

"The bottom line is defined by reach but the soul of the station is impact," said Jason Trahan, WFAA-TV investigative producer.

The purpose of investigative reporting in particular is creating impact, he said, and that mission carries through the newsroom.

"Serving the local public on issues that are relevant to their lives," said Carolyn Mungo, WFAA-TV news director. "This isn't written anywhere. Holding people accountable in our local communities. Being the watchdog."

With commercial newsrooms, legacy newsrooms in particular, there is a disconnect between reporters and marketers, but for good reason according to Mungo.

With commercial newsrooms, legacy newsrooms in particular, there is a disconnect between reporters and marketers, but for good reason according to Mungo.

Reporters at WFAA-TV have access to certain metrics, if they choose to be included on an email list serv. These numbers include Nielsen ratings and overnight social media reports from ShareRocket – a monthly subscription detailing engagement per post for Twitter and Facebook. The analytics are broken down by all stations in the market, specific brand, talent and reporters. Reporters at WFAA-TV have access to the overnight reports, which list various ratings reports, yet they do not have direct access to ShareRocket, a platform that could help aid in understanding audience more accurately and more personally that something like a Nielsen rating.

Only the marketing staff and digital teams have access to these detailed reports.

Mungo said looking at the drastic change seen in the overnight reports could be stressful and overwhelming for reporters to look at. Focusing on monthly trends – the bigger picture – is a more accurate portrayal of how the station is doing overall in terms of reach.

"We don't sit in on briefings where people talk about the numbers. We don't get briefed on ratings. We don't get orders to produce stories to hit a certain ratings point or to hit a certain demographic," Trahan said.

Regardless of what your mission is and how you are measuring, impact tracking is vital for long-term growth and success in both non-profit and commercial newsrooms.

Jessica Clark started developing impact-tracking methods in 2004. She serves as the Center for Social Media Research Director. She says the importance of measuring impact is simple. Just ask yourself why you became a journalist.

“If you became a journalist because you think you should comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, then impact is square in the middle of your mission,” Clark said. “You don’t know if you’re afflicting the comfortable if you don’t know how you’re doing.”

If you became a journalist to inform the public, you will never know if you are informing them without audience engagement and feedback. At the very least, journalists need to know who is reading, watching or listening to their work to understand their audience.

“You’re doing impact analysis to gather the systematic data you need to brag about yourself,” Clark said.

Brett Shipp, investigative reporter at WFAA-TV in Dallas, said impact is a reporter’s proof of performance.

“Making a difference and doing stories that change, make a difference and bring value to people’s lives, that’s the most important thing to me,” he said. “I am fully aware to win major awards, you have to bring about that change. You have to say, ‘Here’s the proof that what I’m doing matters.’”

Journalism vs. Advocacy

It can be a challenge for reporters to talk about the impact of his or her story because they do not want to be seen as advocates, Green-Barber said. Advocacy begins with answers and journalism begins with questions, according to Tofel. If there is a societal consensus on a problem, it is no longer advocacy.

He gives an example: “It’s literally like if the traffic signal at the corner broke and elderly people were being run over every day and you said you wanted change. Is that advocacy? No, not really. What’s the counter position.”

Investigative journalism seeks to reveal something, and therefore always involves change, Tofel said.

Journalists should feel comfortable presenting a problem and a solution available to the public.

“We’re really good at telling other people’s stories,” said Lauren Fuhrmann, Associate Director of the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Reporting. “We need to be better about showing how important the work that we do is. A lot of time, I hear complaints from the public. They hear about this horrible story in the paper but never know what happened. So, being able to show that is really important.”

Two: Track your story

Start tracking before the reporting begins by outlining a plan of execution and identifying possible outcomes you hope to achieve. Using your organization’s mission, focus on outcomes that matter most to all parties, and specify what methodologies you will use.

“Don’t be afraid to collaborate,” Green-Barber said.

There may be other organizations or newsrooms working on similar projects with more resources.

Green-Barber came up with an [impact tracker through the Center for Investigative Reporting \(CIR\)](#) that holds all offline qualitative impact for CIR. Rather than

staying accountable for keeping tabs of a story in a Google Doc or an Excel spreadsheet, reporters fill out a web form using their organizations custom URL. Anyone in the organization can login to access the database to view entries and see what stories are creating the most impact.

The offline impact tracker web form is broken up into three categories of impact. Macro outcomes are changes occurring at an institutional level, resulting in a concrete change like the passing of a law. Meso changes influence the public, which could mean increased coverage of a certain topic from other news organizations. Micro changes occur at the level of an individual, such as someone writing a letter to a congressman.

“If someone asks me, ‘what has our impact been on our criminal justice beat,’ I can go in and filter just by ‘criminal justice,’” Green-Barber said.

The web form is filled out when something happens in regard to a reporter’s story. Green-Barber will have the impact tracker available for other organizations to use this year.

Another way to track your story, literally, is through geo-coding.

When Fuhrman started at the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Reporting, one of her first tasks was to figure out where its stories were being published. The center releases investigative reports around the state and country.

She uses GIS mapping to showcase where the center’s work is shared. “It’s so easy,” Fuhrmann said. “I just copied and pasted everything into [BatchGeo](#) and within a few minutes, the map is done.”

BatchGeo is a free service that turns Excel spreadsheets into maps. The site geocodes the addresses and it only takes several minutes at most.

Gathering the data is fairly simple because the center uses a paid service. The center uses [Meltwater](#) – a clipping service. It pulls metrics to show where the center’s work is shown, including mentions of the work using key terms.

“We’re able to export a spreadsheet that has all the mentions of our work and that includes the URL, the headline and the news organization,” she said.

Aside from pickups, Meltwater creates two other spreadsheets. The second one gives information about the news outlet that shared the story – circulation size and how many visitors they have on a monthly basis. The third is the story sheet that includes information about how the story ran, when it was published, the headline and URL.

By tracking where your story is shared, you will better understand your audience.

Three: Use necessary data, no more and no less

Metrics should never be the starting point for impact tracking.

Create a measurement model that corresponds with your mission. Figure out your objectives and how you can measure them in a meaningful way, rather than blindly gathering metrics.

“Don’t count things just because you can,” Dana Chinn said. “I do not measure traffic. Why? Because it’s not going to affect any decisions I make about what goes on my site.”

Chinn is the director of the Norman Lear Center Media Impact Project at the University of Southern California.

Impact is hard to quantify, as it is subjective in nature.

“Everyone wants to come up with the impact number where you take all of this in to account and here is the impact score for the story and that’s just never going to happen,” Green-Barber said.

Standard metrics only tell part of the story. These metrics include page views, unique visitors and time on site, to name a few. While it is important to know how many people click on a story or like a post on Facebook, the numbers tell you little to nothing about the engagement or impact. Are people actually reading what they clicked on? Are they sharing or commenting? Was it an accident?

Many news outlets rely heavily on these standard metrics, because they are tangible. Flawed, but tangible. However, that does not mean they are not usable. Chinn said anything involving standard metrics could be summed up in two phrases: “so what” and “it depends.”

“If you don’t know what to do with the numbers, they’re useless,” she said. “That’s the issue that the news industry has had using these metrics. They are just so desperate to count something because they feel they should because all of the sexiness around big data and metrics.”

The phrase “it depends” stems from a lack of standards. For example, in television news, a Nielsen rating is a standard metric. It is a relative value, with that value being set by people using those metrics, she said.

“A Nielsen rating is simply a methodology that advertisers decided is correct. It’s a currency,” Chinn said.

Glass said Nielsen ratings are incredibly flawed. In Dallas, there are 800 Nielsen homes, which represent the demographics of the 6.3 million people in the market. When the system gets installed into a home, there are a series of buttons on your remote assigned to various members of the household.

“Every fifteen minutes, I’m required to press who’s in the room watching television,” Glass said. “If you walk out of the room, I have to punch you out. After 45 minutes of non-reporting, you’re supposed to be tossed out of the sample. It is so labor intensive.”

For a Nielsen family to get tossed out of the sample, it can take months or even years. By that time, the previous ratings already came out with the faulty metrics. Another unreliable metric is time spent on page.

“The total is counted based on the pages that are sent from the server, so it doesn’t count the time if someone only [visits] one page, and it doesn’t count the time spent on the last page,” Chinn said. “You have to customize your tracking code.”

Chinn customized a tracking code to look at scroll rate. Time spent on a page is based on user behavior, rather than the server.

“We can tell if they’re reading something about the principal of the story at the top, or if they’re actually scrolling all the way to the bottom. That is useful and more accurate,” she said.

No longer can journalists rely on third-party vendors for data collecting, making it imperative to create and own their own analytics service.

In the end, consistency is what matters most.

“If you’re using the same platform all of the time, you’re probably roughly over or under counting by the same proportion every time, so you still understand magnitude,” Green-Barber said.

Aside from web metrics, media organizations are eager to correlate social media metrics with viewership and readership.

Chinn said there is no such thing as social media analytics because frankly, all media is social.

“The overemphasis of social media over audience pisses me off,” she said. “There is no such audience called ‘millennials.’ There is no such audience called ‘baby boomers.’ Demographics are dead. It’s all based on behavior and attitude.”

Despite the faulty metrics and an overwhelming amount of them, Chinn proposes three numbers to keep in mind when tracking impact: 1, 2 and 15.

No. 1 represents the power of the individual. Find the person behind each click. Think about the key people your story may have affected. It doesn’t matter how many page views you get, it matters who the person is, she said. No. 2 is the second response after seeing a story. It is the measure of “bounce rate,” meaning the second or third click after the initial.

“Don’t focus on the first click-type metric. Focus on the second,” Chinn said. “Did your content actually lead to a second click or a third click? It’s that action that indicates engagement.”

Lastly, Chinn recommends spending fifteen minutes per day learning about metrics. Using these three numbers as a guideline for tracking impact can help refine the metrics that are important to your organization.

Four: Expect to spend a little extra time (and money)

While the numbers are important, audience engagement is oftentimes more telling.

Fuhrmann manually keeps track of web comments and Facebook comments in an Excel spreadsheet that takes roughly two or three hours per story.

“Truthfully, I think some of the anecdotal stuff is much more important than just looking at the number of Facebook shares,” she said. “I think what’s even more important is who are the people that are sharing it. Who are the people who are Tweeting about it? Who are the people that are sharing it?”

She pulls out exceptional cases and that is all information that goes into putting together a grant report.

Aside from time, tracking can cost a pretty penny, depending on how extensively you are tracking.

“It’s very time consuming. We are paying for Melt Water, but there are a lot of smaller non-profits that can’t,” Fuhrmann said. “When I was manually compiling, it took me a couple of days a months to manually type in the information in how the stories

were being used. By the time I had compiled all the information, there was no time to analyze it.”

The time and resources gets even more extensive depending on publishing frequency. Fuhrmann suggests paying for a clipping service if your organization puts out frequent content, which is especially true for commercial news organizations.

Either way, there will be a cost.

“You’re either going to pay for someone to do it automated, or you’re going to pay with the amount of time it takes to pull it all together,” she said.

Five: One size does not fit all

There is no single way to measure impact. There is no master metric or algorithm for measuring impact. Using a mix of both qualitative and quantitative measures are necessary.

“Straightforwardness and simplicity are good qualities when looking at impact,” said Charles Lewis, founding and executive editor of the Investigative Reporting Workshop at the American University School of Communications.

There must be some sort of logic and purity to whatever metric and formula an organization uses, otherwise, questions may arise surrounding the complexity.

“If it’s too convoluted, people become suspicious of why it’s so convoluted. For an investigative reporter, if it’s too convoluted, someone tried to do it a certain way that would fit their own situation and agenda,” Lewis said.

As individuals from non-profits and commercial newsrooms have stated, impact tracking – regardless of the mission and method – is imperative in fostering growth and preserving the mission of journalism itself. Knowing how an audience reacts and engages with a story helps to better understand how to adequately and effectively serve the community. By tracking impact in a more formal and cohesive method using both qualitative and quantitative methods, it will be much simpler to keep track of proof of performance at a reporter’s level and a newsroom at large.

APPENDIX

UPDATED LITERATURE REVIEW

The following is an updated literature review. After conducting a more than a dozen interviews and continuing to do scholarly research on impact tracking, it was necessary to rewrite my original literature review, as it did not accurately reflect the current state of impact research.

Literature Review

Introduction

My research question will attempt to answer the following question: “How do we measure the impact of an investigative story?” What drew me in to investigative journalism in particular is the lasting impact these stories left. The motivating factor for journalists is change, without crossing the boundary of advocacy. Oftentimes, stories result in policy change or resolving a scam. Nearly every journalist has used the word “impact” when discussing the results of a story, or some form closely related, like “high impact,” “impactful” or “impacting.” For investigative journalism in particular, defining this six-letter word is a highly discussed topic. But, here’s the problem. How do you define impact?

In 2014, three journalists posed this very question at the IRE conference in San Francisco. Executive director of inewssource Lorie Hearn, post-doc ACLS Public Fellow at The Center for Investigative Reporting Lindsay Green-Barber and chief operating officer of the Solutions Journalism Network Keith Hammonds discussed how to gauge the importance of investigations and tools to argue stories actually matter. Other media organizations such as the Norman Lear Center, the Knight Foundation, ProPublica and the Investigative News Network, to name a few, have dedicated time and resources to crafting various methods and rubrics for measuring impact.

The need to measure impact is not the question, but rather how can it be done in a cohesive and exhaustive method with the overwhelming amount of digital statistics and analytics available for dissection? Jonathan Stray (2012) of Nieman Lab states, “While most news organizations already watch the numbers that translate into money, the profession is just beginning to consider metrics for the real value of its work (1).” How do we measure the impact of our work? How do we measure the democratic value? There are endless elements and an endless amount of statistics to digest before answering that question. The Guardian’s Aron Pilhofer states: “We are in awash in metrics, and we have the ability to engage with readers at scale in ways that would have been impossible in an analog world. The problem now is figuring out which data to pay attention to and which to ignore (Stray, 1).”

By conducting research to answer this research question, I will use agenda setting theory to analyze the justification and reason for pursuing and telling a story, as many would argue, investigative journalists publish stories to create a change – to make an impact. While journalism does not tell the public what to think, journalists do give the public information to think about. Every investigative journalist wants to know what kind of impact his or her story has on the public; however, measuring results beyond audience engagement and web traffic in a viable and quantifiable method is the challenge as impact itself is highly subjective in nature.

Impact: What is it?

Lindsay Barber-Green (2014) acknowledges the debate of how to define impact and yet, creating impact is the number one goal of an investigative piece. She states, “Impact just might be the holy grail of today’s media,” and yet “we’ll know it when we see it” continues to be the easy-way-out definition (1).

The widely adopted definition of impact includes large-scale changes; however, different formally recognized definitions exist. The Center for Investigative Reporters definition for impact is “a change in the status quo as a result of direct intervention, be it a text article, documentary or live event (1).”

Clark and Schardt (2010) conducted quantitative research evaluating public media projects. Impact, as defined by the authors, is composed on engagement, influence, inclusion, reach and “zing”. Reach is how many people a story encountered across various platforms – social media, radio, TV and even mobile applications like iTunes. Inclusion asks how many consumers the story pertained to. Engagement asks how many consumers interacted, both online and off. Influence asks if the story focused on important issues, targeting the “influential” (11).

“Zing” combines movement and craft. Movement is in the context of participatory journalism and is “the capacity to provide users with the option to do something in their roles as citizens,” which could be voting or even responding to the media makers. Craft is what creates the movement - “structure, quality and creativity or the project itself” – which facilitates a response (11).

Putting all of the elements mentioned by Clark and Schardt create a complete and “cohesive” picture of impact (12).

Charles Lewis and Hilary Niles (2013) analyze the difficulty of defining impact in a content analysis. Reviewing literature and speaking with experts in the field, “growing ambitions toward the goal of developing a common framework” for impact remains constant, yet no conclusions have been made (3). This is further emphasized “when journalism’s ‘impact’ is defined by its ultimate social outcomes, not merely the familiar metrics of web traffic (7).”

Lewis and Niles focus on three components to define impact: reach, engagement and impact itself. Coming up with a measurement for impact relies heavily on reach (7). In terms of digital analysis, “traditional media outlets are only just beginning to learn how to measure reach, much less analyze it (7).”

Engagement focuses on the relationship between audiences and “the way users move beyond media consumption to interact with a project or outlet, both online or off (7).” It occurs on an interpersonal level, deepening the level of impact.

The value of journalism is changing with time, making impact more vital to understand and analyze. A challenge, according to Lewis and Niles, is creating value for citizens through journalism. Values for news consumption must be reemphasized (8). If there is no change to the way journalism is conducted today, “the news industry will wither,” further arguing the importance of “[measuring] social value, otherwise known as ‘impact’ (8).”

Challenges of measuring impact

Coming up with a method to measure impact, let alone define it, continues to stump media makers.

Rick Edmonds (2013) explains the necessity for measuring impact, specifically for investigative journalism, yet acknowledges the challenge of doing just that. “If impact and outcomes are the true markers of an effective investigation, quantitative indicators of quality are likely to miss the mark (1).”

Lewis and Niles identify five ways to measure impact - interviews, surveys, content analysis, engagement data and media monitoring – however, because of several assumptions, coming up with an appropriate means of measuring is a challenge.

The broad assumptions outlined by the authors are statistical meaning and digital connectivity, broken down into three specific assumptions (8). The first major assumption made about measuring impact is that it’s even possible (9). Analytic tools “remain far from standards of reliability or consistency” and can “tempt us into believe this fantasy is not fiction (9).” The authors use the example of “simple statistics” like website traffic, noting it can vary more than 100 percent (9). Looking at assumption can delve into

Clark and Schardt (2010) discuss the constant evolving digital landscape making it challenging to create a clear, timeless rubric. Pew’s State of the News Media 2012 points out growing privacy concerns from news consumers. Increased privacy limits the amount of statistical analysis producers can obtain, thus “audience tracking...may become increasingly difficult, expensive and ethically questionable for journalism organizations (9).”

Digital connectivity is the second assumption mentioned by Lewis and Niles, because it implies everyone in the audience is connected to social media and are online (9). Rarely is

there a mention to measure impact for media consumers offline due to the high costs of qualitative research methods such as interviews and surveys. While it is costly, “such qualitative methods may be worthwhile” when used for measuring “not just the reach but also the offline, or social, impact of information (9).”

The third assumption outlined by Lewis and Niles states any content reviewed for impact is most likely a multimedia piece (10). Pressure towards publishing work across multiple platforms – online, TV, print and radio – forces “journalists to tell stories in many different ways (10).” Measuring impact under these assumptions can skew research.

Coming up with a way to quantify quality – “an essential ingredient of impact” – is another challenge mentioned by Charles and Lewis (11). The authors cite a study by Rainie, Purcell, Siesfeld and Patel (2011) titled “How the Public Perceives Community Information Systems.” They found those who consume more media are more likely to be involved in their community; therefore, they feel they have an impact. However, “several indicators are difficult to measure and assess independent without complicated and expensive methodologies – notably, the quality of a community’s journalism (12).”

Measuring impact

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to measuring impact; however, there are trends within suggested methods and approaches that appear consistent.

The Urban Institute’s Taxonomy of Outcomes (2006) identifies six basic criteria for indicators of impact. It must be specific, observable, understandable, relevant, time-bound and reliable (2).

Jessica Clark and Tracy Van Slyke (2010) from the Center for Social Media at American University in an academic paper outlined major arguments for assessing impact, identifying the top five impact evaluation needs and the top five tools for media assessment. As mentioned previously, “there is no consensus around what constitutes impact for public interest media (2).” The authors discuss legitimate concerns for understanding impact. “Assessment can help to demonstrate the value of such projects to policymakers, support funders in making reasoned investments, allow media makers to communicate with users about what they’re accomplishing, and force them to revisit and tweak their strategic plans to make their projects work better (2).”

The authors explain the top five needs for evaluating impact. First, getting on the same page. To make meaningful comparisons and gather the most beneficial data, newsrooms “need common rubrics to structure evaluation (3).” There must be a basis of shared categories.

The second involves tracking the trajectory of the story – understanding where it has been shared, used, published and viewed, over time. Rather than relying on aimless gathering of web analytics, the authors suggest using “in-depth context analysis that traces the way that the context of coverage shifts,” because “simply adding up the

estimated number of readers, listeners and viewers who might have encountered a story or project doesn't provide any real insight into how that moment might have moved them (3)."

Contextualizing is the third need. Every newsroom is desperately trying to equate web and social media analytics to viewership and audience, the authors note, however, "few have the funds to conduct surveys or focus groups" pre and post story publication due to the hours and cost of that kind of devotion (4). Rather than focus on blanket data gathering, the authors suggest "systematically collecting and interpreting qualitative responses over time" which will allow ongoing user engagement data (4). Fourth, closely related to the third need, is understanding the audience and users by creating a more extensive look at demographics.

Lastly, move beyond any market assumptions. Clark and Van Slyke explained:

"At the Washington D.C. summit, we discussed how commercial services such as Arbitron and Nielsen are not only prohibitively expensive, but provide limited and conflicting demographic information about users. However, public interest media outlets are not ready to talk on the task of building standalone audience tracking systems, both because the challenge is too steep and because they want to be able to compare themselves to external commercial outlets (5)."

Faulty Metrics

In today's world, it is fairly simple to measure audience engagement, social media analytics and viewership; however, with endless variables, measurements are often not reliable.

Lucan Graves, John Kelly and Marissa Gluck (2010) provide content analysis about the industry of Internet measurement and the impact it has on news media, including input from journalists, advertising agencies and measurement companies. The authors argue many news outlets subscribe to multiple sources of audience measurements, and then selectively choose what to tell advertisers (4). Uncertainty with audience measurement makes the editorial process difficult by not understanding the target audience (4). Plus, major news outlets subscribe to a plethora of expensive sources of audience measurement, making it difficult to decipher which is the most accurate (4).

"As a result, despite widespread calls for common currency, the online ad industry does not depend on having a single measurement standard like Nielsen's TV ratings. In contrast to the world of television or magazines, space for advertising is not a scarce resource on the Internet, and online marketers don't rely on ratings in the same way to purchase media or to evaluate their campaigns. Thus the chaos of competing metrics online does not represent the failure of the Internet's promise as the most 'accountable' medium, but, in some ways, its realization (5)."

One example the authors give is the faultiness in "unique visitors" to a website, meaning the viewers has never previously visited the site. A single visitor using several computers would inflate the total count, because this is a technology-based, rather than people-

based standard (21). On the flip side, multiple users sharing one computer with decrease the count.

Lewis and Niles explain social media and digital analytics can be helpful when analyzed properly and consistently, yet error and confusion often arise. Lewis and Niles use the example of page views. A planning and zoning meeting versus a popular athlete's personal page should not be compared side by side (7). Other numbers to factor in are time spent on a web page, but still, variables arise to throw off accurate numbers. Analyzing these numbers is not an easy task and will take time, "but even assuming they are measured accurately and are reasonably understood, reach reveals virtually nothing about the quality of the contact it measures, nor its impact on the audience member (7)."

Jan Schaffer and Erin Polgreen (2012) use quantitative methods to assess how web analytics are used to decipher audience engagement. Audience engagement is a fairly new assessment, and "news sites that can track their various strategies for engaging audiences are in the best position not only to tell the story of their community, but also to chart the role their own organization plays within that community (37)."

In contrast to the confusion and overabundance of data, there is still little understanding to how these numbers translate to impact.

Agenda setting and impact

A major purpose of journalism is to inform citizens so they can make educated decisions in terms of who is elected to represent them in a democratic society.

Lewis and Niles point out if journalists focus solely on the impact or change that can occur from a story, "they are criticized and professionally labeled as a shill for a cause, an 'advocate,' still perceived inside traditional newsrooms as unprofessional (5)." The implications increase during long-form reporting. Lewis and Niles note advocacy and journalism often cross paths, particularly with investigative journalists. They state:

"It should be noted that veteran reporters and editors, particularly of the investigative ilk, have an inherent, almost visceral dislike of audience measurement and engagement strategies and other metrics-producing data. They perceive themselves, first and foremost, as intrepid hunter-gatherers of information, hearty truth-tellers treading through the often extremely difficult, well-nigh impossible terrain of disingenuous politicians, opaque institutions, potentially litigious, public relations-larded corporations, trying to do original reporting that cannot be reduced to mere data, an inhospitable milieu."

Agenda setting is the process in which the media determines what the public should think about, defined in "Mass Media, Mass Culture" by James and Roy Wilson. This theory assumes the press and media do not reflect reality, but filter and shape it. By concentrating on several key subjects and issues, the public perceives those issues as more important than others. The idea of agenda setting dates back to the early 1900's. Referencing Walter Lippman in the book *Public Opinion*, he wrote, "All the reporters in the world working all the hours of the day could not witness all the happenings in the

world” (Lippman, 1922 p.238). It is no surprise that reporters are incapable of covering everything, but how do they decide what to cover and how much? Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw formally recognized the theory of agenda setting in their 1972 study called “The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media.” They explained that while news is factual in nature, including the way it is presented, it sets the tone of importance for various events and subjects (McCombs & Shaw, 1972 p.176). The authors explain how the media has the ability to influence the visibility of events in the public mind.

“This impact of the mass media- the ability to affect cognitive change among individuals, to structure their thinking- has been labeled the agenda-setting function of mass communication. Here may lay the most important effect of mass communication, its ability to mentally order and organize our world for us. In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about (5).”

There are two levels to agenda setting. The first level identifies the common subjects that are most important, and the second level decides what parts of the subject are important. This concept is further divided into three parts identified by Rogers and Dearing in *Agenda Setting Research*. First is public agenda setting, which makes the public’s agenda the dependent variable in the equation, also known as the traditional hypothesis. Next is media agenda setting, known as agenda building. Finally, there is policy agenda setting where the agenda of elite policy makers are treated as the depended variable, known as political agenda setting. Essentially, “the media agenda affects the public agenda, and the public agenda affects the policy agenda.” (Littlejohn, 320)

Measuring Agenda Setting

Agenda setting is by definition unintentional, yet unavoidable, and oftentimes makes an enormous impact on public opinion. Researchers invest time in figuring out what types of stories and topics receive the most media coverage, and then attempt to measure the impact.

Atkinson, Lovett and Baumgartner conducted an empirical assessment to provide guidance to others looking at the quality of time series data on media coverage of issues. The more attention certain hot topics receive, “the more likely members of the public are to be knowledgeable, concerned, and opinionated about them. Reciprocally, the more attention political actors pay to such issues and the more concerned members of the public are about specific issues, the more likely the news media are to cover them” (355). Thus, the authors point out agenda setting is an important factor in the political system because what the media covers signals priorities of politicians and lawmakers to the public.

They created 90 keyword searches looking at an array of topics, gathering stories each month from 12 national and local media sources of all types. Research went back to 1980 (354). Gathering a great deal of data, the authors analyzed time coverage, media sources and policy topics (360). For media, they analyzed the five major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC,

Fox and CNN), four national newspapers (the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post and USA Today) and three regional newspapers – the Houston Chronicle, the Philadelphia Inquirer and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. They found the presence or absence of a single national media agenda can be explained by how much a topic is covered by the media and whether an event producing a spoke in attention occurs (374).

Ashley Muddiman, Natalie Stroud and Maxwell McCombs (2014) used content analysis of cable news network coverage of Iraq and compared it to a national survey of opinions on the war to answer the following research questions: “Will measures of cable news network exposure or a measure incorporating both exposure and content better explain opinions held about Iraq” and “do political leanings moderate relationships between cable news network use and opinions about Iraq” (215, 218, 220). Using agenda setting, the authors propose issues covered more frequently by the media become most important, including the influence of how the public should think about those issues, too. Attribute agenda setting is analyzed due to heightened importance, “because the media environment has fragmented in the past few decades. Whereas citizens once had a choice between three broadcast news programs, they now can watch partisan cable programming, go online, or avoid politics all together. These choices have consequences” (216).

Issues analyzed in attribute agenda setting varies drastically and has evolved over the past 45 years. Now included are the “consequences of covering attributes on the public’s attitudes and opinions” (216). However, how agenda setting is used is still uncertain. The authors chose to focus on the Iraq War during the 2008 presidential election for several reasons: the issue of the war in general, Iraq being in the top three topics of discussion and previous research showing news focused on international affairs has “substantial power over the public agenda” (217).

To measure attribute agenda setting, the authors looked at how opinions differ based on exposure to different media sources. Another approach looked at used content analysis measures to understand how the actual content someone is exposed to related to his or her opinion (p.218). Their method focused on two parts. First, they analyzed media content to determine what the agenda was of the media. Second, they used survey data to determine the extent the media influences the public. They found “attribute agenda setting remains powerful in a fragmented media environment. The findings presented here do not challenge attribute agenda setting” (229).

Keeping the public trust

The public will generally focus more time and thought on issues brought to light in the media, and sometimes those actions can lead to distrust, protest and misperception.

Lindita Camaj (2015) examines the consequences of media use for political trust in Kosovo. The author notes there is only a small portion of research examining the outcome of agenda setting, specifically the behavioral outcome, and this study looks

specifically at media effects on non-violent forms of collected action (p.635). Priming theory is used as a reference as it explains the consequences of agenda setting effects by offering an explanation on how citizens formulate their political attitudes as a consequence of media content they consume. Typically, “people rely on intuitive shortcuts when faced with a judgment, rather than carefully examine and weight all the information available” (637).

Camaj uses content analysis with the intent of finding a significant correlation between media use and attribute agenda setting effects on institutional competence, integrity and institutional performance on issues and political participation. For the sake of the study, political trust is defined as a belief or disposition towards authority (639). Media organizations looked at were Kosovo Public Television, Koha Television, Television 21, Radio Kosova, Radio Dukagjini and Koha Ditore for a mix of TV, radio and print.

Contextual analysis provided context in understanding how agenda setting effects mediate political trust and participation. McCombs suggests, “it provides evidence that the media agenda-setting influence on “broad civic attitudes is far more important than any agenda-setting effects on specific issues and opinion” and “confirming previous research on attribute priming, the results also imply that the valence of issues and institutional attributes emphasized in the media content become important dimensions when people judge political institutions” (650).

Advocacy journalism and investigative reporting

While journalists do not dictate the public discussion, investigative stories often play a role.

Richard Tofel (2013) describes the goal of journalism – investigative journalism in particular – as embracing impact. Deciphering between advocacy and journalism, he writes, “may begin with process, but culminate in much more: Journalism begins with questions and progresses, as facts are determined, to answers. Advocacy begins with answers, with the facts already assumed to be established (13).” There must be a clear line between crusading and journalistic ethics. ProPublica embraces impact as a goal, yet ensures reporters abide by journalistic means.

“Thus, when a problem is identified by reporting, and when a solution is revealed as well—e.g., nurses with criminal records are not having their nursing licenses revoked but could be, or presidential pardons are being issued and withheld on a racially discriminatory basis due to Justice Department internal guidelines that could be changed at the stroke of a pen—it is appropriate for journalists to call attention to the problem and the remedy until the remedy is put in place. In such cases, the press should feel perfectly comfortable reminding readers (including public officials and others in a position to effect change) that a problem exists and that a solution is available. Squeamishness about staying with such a story until reform is undertaken has been a weakness of the traditional press in recent decades, not a sign of virtuous neutrality (13).”

Clark and Scharlts' research question is: how do you know when a public is formed? To assess and evaluate public media projects, they worked under four assumptions.

First, assessment needs to start with the "'desired outcome' as envisioned by the producer" which "[shapes] the strategy and execution of the project (9)." Second, assessment should be closely aligned so necessary tools for execution are laid out at the onset of a project. Third, there is no "master metric" for measuring impact. Qualitative and quantitative methods are needed, while "priorities may differ from project to project (9)." Lastly, "media projects and makers don't exist in a vacuum" and help from organizations and institutions is necessary (9).

The authors reiterate a desired outcome is necessary – rather than blindly publishing an investigative piece – which can be misconstrued as advocacy. Their qualitative study is based largely on a December 2008 report from the Fledgling Fund framework, which, in summary, laid out a method for assessing social issue documentary film projects meant to engage and mobilize viewers. They focus on four factors: increased public awareness, increased public engagement, stronger social movement and social change. In summary:

"While many public media makers might find the final two dimensions in this model—stronger social movement and social change—too pointedly political for their liking, Fledgling's framework still represents a sophisticated and useful approach for assessing public media 2.0 impact. These dimensions work for the Fledgling Fund because their mission is explicitly about social change. However, other mission-driven media and funding projects could easily substitute their own mission-driven goals when applying a model like this to their work—for example, community cohesion, civic engagement, or self-directed learning. In CSM's construction, as noted above, the core mission for public media is public engagement around issues (9)."

Using quantitative research methods, David Protess, Fay Cook and Peter Miller (1987) examine investigative reporting, looking at the link between media messages and what problems are revealed through those messages and the opinion and policy response (p.184). They asked the question: Do investigative reports always result in some form of policy response?

They looked at three studies. The first found that a nationally televised investigative news report on fraud and abuse in the federally funded home health care program had "significant effects on the agendas of both the public and the policy makers" (p.167). Issues like health care were much more important to citizens, therefore policy makers discussed it more often. The second study measured impact of a Chicago *Sun-Times* investigative series discussing rape in the Chicago area. There was a sharp increase in the number, length and prominence of stories about rape, leading to political discussion of rape (p.167). Lastly, they reviewed a five-part local television series about Chicago police brutality. The series had "significant effects on viewer attitudes about police brutality but

not on their assessment of the priority or salience of the problem in comparison with other social concerns” (p.167).

Understanding and identifying the legitimacy of evaluating stories “cannot advance” without understand what impact is and how to measure it – while different at each station – and understanding “effectiveness is not synonymous with advocacy (Clark and Van Slyke, 2).”

The Cost of Investigative Reporting

With declining circulation, budget cuts and competition from digital native sites, maintaining an investigative team is becoming too expensive for some news outlets to maintain. Coming up with a viable and reliable way to measure the impact of investigative pieces could keep investigative teams better funded by showing the results of the investigations.

Brant Houston (2010) addressed an issue that he was asked to discuss countless times in his tenure as executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors: the impending death of investigative journalism. While positions in legacy media for “investigative reporters” were diminishing at a rapid rate, positions for “watchdog journalists” are increasing and are seen as the future of investigative journalism.

Watchdog journalism and investigative journalism go hand-in-hand. Media outlets hire journalists to do quick-hit and daily news, while simultaneously keeping an eye on policy makers, elected officials and figures of authority. Thus, legacy media has maintained a level of investigative reporting without much investment into hiring journalists to spend months working on a story that has no guarantee to finalize. Being able to quantify and exemplify the impact of investigations would legitimize the need for funding investigative journalism.

Clark and Van Slyke acknowledge funding is an issue, especially in terms of tracking impact to an extensive level. More funds must be dedicated to evaluating impact – including training, commercial tracking services and evaluators (5). The FSG report affirms the need for the field as a whole to work together. It states:

“The barriers to developing these systems, however, are formidable. They require a far-reaching vision, millions of dollars in investment, and years of effort by large coalitions of independent organizations. Once established, ongoing staffing is essential to provide technical assistance to participants and to validate the data they submit. Strong leadership is essential to overcome the initial reluctance of nonprofits and funders alike: Nonprofits frequently fear the complexity, disclosure, management time, and potential for funding biases that these systems may produce, while funders often hesitate to invest time and money in a reporting system that does not directly advance their immediate program goals (7)”

The investment of time and money put towards impact research will help clarify the relationship between the media source and its audience, thus aiding in more focused content

Conclusion

In conclusion, literature exemplifies investigative reporting does have an effect on the public – to what extent depends on the investigation and the journalist.

While research examines the definition of impact, including ways to quantitatively and qualitatively measure it, few newsrooms are implementing them. One reason, explained by the authors in “Zing” state there is no perfect or “master method” for evaluating impact, and for best results, both qualitative and quantitative methods must be used.

Tofel points out three basic points of observation when looking at impact from investigative journalism. (7). The more people reached, the better. More is simply better. Second, reach and impact are not synonymous. A larger audience does not equate to people learning something, therefore, no greater impact is achieved. Third, engagement and impact are not interchangeable, either, although they are closely related.

As various authors and studies mention, measuring impact is the only way to see how a story resonated with the viewers – and said measuring can and should go beyond web traffic numbers and viewership while remaining applicable across news platforms.

ORIGINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

The following is my original project proposal, including my original literature review, submitted December 2015.

Professional Project Proposal

I will fulfill my master's project at ABC's WFAA in Dallas, working a minimum of 30 hours a week for fourteen weeks between January 18 and April 22. I will work with the investigative unit Monday through Thursday for a designated 8-hour shift and will come in other times as needed.

I will assist the investigative team, helping with story ideas, data requests, data analytics, videography, writing and anything else needed to produce thorough investigations. I will produce or co-produce at least one investigation during my internship, as well as take field notes, conduct interviews, write copy for broadcast, web and interact on social media.

As the Larry J. Waller fellow, I will investigate water well contamination. Brett Shipp at WFAA started reporting on the link between fracking and groundwater contamination along the Barnett Shale, the epicenter of the national debate over fracking. Shipp has been studying the topic since 2012, but still has angles left to investigate. In September, a well was so full of natural gas it exploded, almost killing a family. Similar episodes in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area bring up a lack of regulation. No one is taking the blame for the explosions.

I will lead research about the rules and regulations between the State of Texas and the Texas Railroad Commission to look at a lack of regulation. The current rules that are in place are being ignored.

While my name may not appear on the entirety of the work I help produce, millions could potentially see my work. I will keep documents of everything I research all notes will be included in my final master's project report in addition to the summary emails I send each week detailing my work. I will include any scripts, web stories, data, photos, social media posts and videography I produce or co-produce for the station. All interviews will be documented on a USB and will be included in my master's project report. I will send email reports to my committee members updating them on investigations I am working on, including difficulties and lessons learned.

My committee is composed of two Radio-TV faculty members and one faculty member from Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE). KOMU News Director Randy Reeves will serve as the chair of my committee. Chair of the Radio-TV program, Kent Collins, will serve as another member. Lastly, IRE Executive Director Mark Horvit will serve as the final member of my committee. I believe that my work in Dallas at a network affiliate – and top five market at that – will enhance my abilities as an investigative reporter.

Scholarly Research Proposal

My research question will attempt to answer the following: “How do we measure impact?” What drew me in to investigative journalism in particular is the lasting impact

these stories left – both positive and negative. Oftentimes, stories result in law changes or resolving a scam. However, these same stories can also lead to the public’s distrust of a certain business type, for example, or local government. But, here’s the problem. How do you define impact? Nearly every journalist has used the word “impact” in a story, or some form closely related, like “high impact,” “impactful” or “impacting.” For investigative journalism in particular, defining this six-letter word is a highly discussed topic. Just last year, three journalists posed this very question at the IRE conference in San Francisco. Executive director of inewssource Lorie Hearn, post-doc ACLS Public Fellow at The Center for Investigative Reporting Lindsay Green-Barber and chief operating officer of the Solutions Journalism Network Keith Hammonds discussed how to gauge the importance of investigations and tools to prove stories actually matter.

By conducting research to answer how impact is measured, I will use agenda setting theory to analyze the justification and reason for pursuing and telling the story. While journalism does not tell the public what to think, journalists do give the public information to think about. Every investigative journalist wants to know what kind of importance his or her story had on the public; however, measuring results is the challenging part.

Agenda setting is the process in which the media determines what the public should think about, defined in “Mass Media, Mass Culture” by James and Roy Wilson. This theory assumes the press and media do not reflect reality, but filter and shape it. By concentrating on several key subjects and issues, the public perceives those issues as

more important than others. The idea of agenda setting dates back to the early 1900's. Referencing Walter Lippman in the book *Public Opinion*, he wrote, "All the reporters in the world working all the hours of the day could not witness all the happenings in the world" (Lippman, 1922 p.238). It is no surprise that reporters are incapable of covering everything, but how do they decide what to cover and how much? The theory of agenda setting was formally recognized by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in their 1972 study called "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media." They explained that while news is factual in nature, including the way it is presented, it sets the tone of importance for various events and subjects (McCombs & Shaw, 1972 p.176). The authors explain how the media has the ability to influence the visibility of events in the public mind.

"This impact of the mass media- the ability to affect cognitive change among individuals, to structure their thinking- has been labeled the agenda-setting function of mass communication. Here may lay the most important effect of mass communication, its ability to mentally order and organize our world for us. In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about." (McCombs and Shaw, 5)

There are two levels to agenda setting. The first level identifies the common subjects that are most important, and the second level decides what parts of the subject are important. This concept is further divided into three parts identified by Rogers and Dearing in *Agenda Setting Research*. First is public agenda setting, which makes the public's agenda the dependent variable in the equation, also known as the traditional hypothesis. Next is media agenda setting, known as agenda building. Finally, there is policy agenda setting where the agenda of elite policy makers are treated as the

depended variable, known as political agenda setting. Essentially, “the media agenda affects the public agenda, and the public agenda affects the policy agenda.” (Littlejohn, 320)

Through this research question, my goal is to come up with a rubric for measuring impact. Through the use of interviewing, I will come up with a way to define impact based on three points of view: reporter, audience and the station itself. Impact will be different to each category. Impact to a reporter may be defined based on how many teasers aired prior to the full version, the severity of the story and the status of interviewees, such as his or her job title. The audience may define impact based on change. The station may use revenue and viewership to define impact. Each section will define impact differently.

To come up with a way to measure how impactful a story is, I will analyze several past investigations from sweeps in November and look at what happened since the stories aired. I plan on looking at a minimum of three stories. I will divide my research into qualitative and quantitative research. For the quantitative portion, I will analyze the station’s viewership minute by minute during the newscast, focusing on when the investigation aired. I will also look at viewership during teasers and any promotional information leading up to the airtime of the investigation.

For the qualitative portion, I will speak to those involved in the story, directly and indirectly. First, I will interview the reporters and producers involved in the story and ask them how they would define and measure an “impactful story.” I will talk to various

higher up individuals at WFAA – manager, news director and executive producer – and assess how they define an impactful reporter and story. I will speak with those involved in the story and interview those who appeared in the reporting to see how, if any, their lives changed since the story aired. If the story deals with a company or bigger establishment, I will analyze what changes have been made. If the story deals with laws or political initiatives, I will speak with lawmakers and check in on the status of any altercations being made to laws. Measuring impact will be broken down into parts of the story: web story, info graphics, package and any social media presence. A rubric to measure impact and success will be crafted for each. An example for a successful info graphic may look like this:

	Degree of interactivity (how deep can a user go)	National in scope	Local in scope	Traffic / Page Views
Web Story Checklist				

I will include similar rubrics for info graphics and packages as well as a rubric to assess how impacted those involved in the story – reporter and interviewees – feel.

Since these findings will be valuable to journalism students, journalists and professors, I will publish my findings as an article in the IRE Journal so journalists may apply the knowledge in their story telling.

Literature Review

Introduction

My research question will attempt to answer the following question: “How do we measure the impact of an investigative story?” What drew me in to investigative journalism in particular is the lasting impact these stories left – both positive and negative. Oftentimes, stories result in law changes or resolving a scam. However, these same stories can also lead to the public’s distrust of a certain business type, for example, or local government. But, here’s the problem. How do you define impact? Nearly every journalist has used the word “impact” in a story, or some form closely related, like “high impact,” “impactful” or “impacting.” For investigative journalism in particular, defining this six-letter word is a highly discussed topic. Just last year, three journalists posed this very question at the IRE conference in San Francisco. Executive director of inewssource Lorie Hearn, post-doc ACLS Public Fellow at The Center for Investigative Reporting Lindsay Green-Barber and chief operating officer of the Solutions Journalism Network Keith Hammonds discussed how to gauge the importance of investigations and tools to prove stories actually matter.

By conducting research to answer this research question, I will use agenda setting theory to analyze the justification and reason for pursuing and telling the story. While journalism does not tell the public what to think, journalists do give the public information to think about. Every investigative journalist wants to know what kind of importance his or her story had on the public; however, measuring results is the challenging part.

Setting the Agenda

A major purpose of journalism is to inform citizens so they can make educated decisions in terms of whom they elect to office to represent them in democratic society.

Agenda setting is the process in which the media determines what the public should think about, defined in “Mass Media, Mass Culture” by James and Roy Wilson. This theory assumes the press and media do not reflect reality, but filter and shape it. By concentrating on several key subjects and issues, the public perceives those issues as more important than others. The idea of agenda setting dates back to the early 1900’s. Referencing Walter Lippman in the book *Public Opinion*, he wrote, “All the reporters in the world working all the hours of the day could not witness all the happenings in the world” (Lippman, 1922 p.238). It is no surprise that reporters are incapable of covering everything, but how do they decide what to cover and how much? The theory of agenda setting was formally recognized by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in their 1972 study called “The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media.” They explained that while news is factual in nature, including the way it is presented, it sets the tone of importance for various events and subjects (McCombs & Shaw, 1972 p.176). The authors explain how the media has the ability to influence the visibility of events in the public mind.

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function of mass communication. Here may lay the most important effect of mass communication, its ability to mentally order and organize our world for us. In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about.” (McCombs and Shaw, 5)

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Measuring Agenda Setting

Agenda setting is by definition unintentional, yet unavoidable, and oftentimes makes an enormous impact on public opinion. Researchers invest time in figuring out what types of stories and topics receive the most media coverage, and then attempt to measure the impact.

Atkinson, Lovett and Baumgartner conducted an empirical assessment to provide guidance to others looking at the quality of time series data on media coverage of issues. The more attention certain hot topics receive, “the more likely members of the public are to be knowledgeable, concerned, and opinionated about them. Reciprocally, the more attention political actors pay to such issues and the more concerned members of the public are about specific issues, the more likely the news media are to cover them” (p.355). Thus, the authors point out agenda setting is an important factor in the political system because what the media covers signals priorities of politicians and lawmakers to the public.

They created 90 keyword searches looking at an array of topics, gathering stories each month from 12 national and local media sources of all types. Research went back to 1980 (p.354). Gathering a great deal of data, the authors analyzed time coverage, media sources and policy topics (p.360). For media, they analyzed the five major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, CNN), four national newspapers (the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post and USA Today), three regional newspapers (the Houston Chronicle, the Philadelphia Inquirer and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch). They found the presence or absence of a single national media agenda can be explained by how much a topic is covered by the media and whether an event producing a spoke in attention occurs (p.374).

Ashley Muddiman, Natalie Stroud and Maxwell McCombs (2014) used content analysis of cable news network coverage of Iraq and compared it to a national survey of opinions on the war to answer the following research questions: “Will measures of cable news network exposure or a measure incorporating both exposure and content better explain opinions held about Iraq” and “do political leanings moderate relationships between cable news network use and opinions about Iraq” (p.215, 218, 220). Using agenda setting, the authors propose issues covered more frequently by the media become most important, including the influence of how the public should think about those issues, too. Attribute agenda setting is analyzed due to heightened importance, “because the media environment has fragmented in the past few decades. Whereas citizens once had a choice between three broadcast news programs, they now can watch partisan cable programming, go online, or avoid politics all together. These choices have consequences” (p. 216).

Issues analyzed in attribute agenda setting varies drastically and has evolved over the past 45 years. Now included are the “consequences of covering attributes on the public’s attitudes and opinions” (p.216). However, how agenda setting is used is still uncertain. The authors chose to focus on the Iraq War during the 2008 presidential election for several reasons: the issue of the war in general, Iraq being in the top three topics of discussion and previous research showing news focused on international affairs has “substantial power over the public agenda” (p.217).

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Consequences of Attribute Agenda Setting & Political Trust

The public will generally focus more time and thought on issues brought to light in the media, and sometimes those actions can lead to distrust, protest and misperception.

Lindita Camaj (2015) examines the consequences of media use for political trust in Kosovo. The author notes there is only a small portion of research examining the outcome of agenda setting, specifically the behavioral outcome, and this study looks specifically at media effects on non-violent forms of collected action (p.635). Priming theory is used as a reference as it explains the consequences of agenda setting effects by offering an explanation on how citizens formulate their political attitudes as a consequence of media content they consume. Typically, “people rely on intuitive shortcuts when faced with a judgment, rather than carefully examine and weight all the information available” (p.637).

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Contextual analysis provided context in understanding how agenda setting effects mediate political trust and participation. McCombs suggests, “it provides evidence that the media agenda-setting influence on “broad civic attitudes is far more important than any agenda-setting effects on specific issues and opinion” and “confirming previous research on attribute priming (Kim et al., 2002), the results also imply that the valence of issues and institutional attributes emphasized in the media content become important dimensions when people judge political institutions” (p.650).

Agenda Setting and Investigative Reporting

While journalists do not dictate what politicians discuss, investigative stories often play a role.

Using quantitative research methods, David Protess, Fay Cook and Peter Miller (1987) examine investigative reporting, looking at the link between media messages and what problems are revealed through those messages and the opinion and policy response (p.184). They asked the question: Do investigative reports always result in some form of policy response?

They looked at three studies. The first found that a nationally televised investigative news report on fraud and abuse in the federally funded home health care program had “significant effects on the agendas of both the public and the policy makers” (p.167). Issues like health care were much more important to citizens, therefore policy makers discussed it more often. The second study measured impact of a Chicago *Sun-Times* investigative series discussing rape in the Chicago area. There was a sharp increase in the number, length and prominence of stories about rape, leading to political discussion of rape (p.167). Lastly, they reviewed a five-part local television series about Chicago police brutality. The series had “significant effects on viewer attitudes about police brutality but not on their assessment of the priority or salience of the problem in comparison with other social concerns” (p.167).

The Cost of Investigative Reporting

With declining circulation, budget cuts and competition from digital native sites, maintaining an investigative team is becoming too expensive for news outlets to maintain.

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death of investigative journalism. While positions in legacy media for “investigative reporters” were diminishing at a rapid rate, positions for “watchdog journalists” are increasing and are seen as the future of investigative journalism.

Watchdog journalism and investigative journalism go hand-in-hand. Media outlets hire journalists to do quick-hit and daily news, while simultaneously keeping an eye on policy makers, elected officials and figures of authority. Thus, legacy media has maintained a level of investigative reporting without must investment, both time and money, into hiring journalists to spend months working on a story that has no guarantee to finalize.

Conclusion

In conclusion, literature exemplifies investigative reporting does have an effect on the public, including policy makers and decisions. However, no research has been published examining the definition of impact, how to measure it or just how big of an effect the media has on the public.

Through my research question, my goal is to develop strategies to measure and define impact so journalists are able to measure results of their work. Since these findings will be valuable to journalism students, journalists and professors, I will publish my findings as an article in the IRE Journal so they may apply the knowledge in their story telling.

INTERVIEWS

The following interviews were conducted for impact research and the professional analysis component.

Name: Brett Shipp
Date: April 14, 2016
Title: WFAA Investigative Reporter

For consistency of this project, impact is defined as change. What emphasis is placed on impact in this newsroom?

“Impact effect and difference making is implied by the very nature of the job. You don’t get into journalism or reporting unless you have an interest to educate the public, inform the public and help affect change in your community either through edification or through action.

Is too much emphasis placed on reach rather than engagement? I’m talking about web metrics, new Twitter followers and Nielsen ratings.

“I don’t know. I know that this news room is hyper aware of the modes and the means of communication. They’re changing rapidly. You have to take advantage of all those tools in order to effectively broadcast your message. Young people don’t watch TV. They watch their iPads, their laptops and their cellphones. They not watching news. They do get news. They are aware of what’s going on in the world because what’s on their feeds goes viral and is transmitted through a variety of methods. Social media is really important. I don’t think that there is too much recognition or exploration going on.”

Does anyone ever talk to you about the importance of pushing social media out? How much pressure is there to use social media?

“There’s a constant reminder to talk to your audience through Twitter and Facebook. We’re told it makes a difference.”

Do you think Nielsen ratings are still a good measure of viewership.

“No. I don’t. It’s the gold standard. It’s a random sampling.”

“I just think today’s viewing habits are so skewed with the advent of DVRs and people getting their news on Facebook. I think you get more off the internet. I think it’s difficult to know what your true audience is off Nielsen.”

“I think between knowing the hits on our web page and knowing our Nielsen ratings, I think you have a reasonable idea of where you stand in the market in terms of visibility.”

Is there disconnect between reporters and marketers in terms of goals? Explain.

“In this building, there is no communication. Marketing doesn’t know what I’m doing. I don’t know what marketing is doing, and I damn sure don’t see anything out of marketing that leads me to believe that anything out of marketing our product is important. In fact, I’ve absolutely been told that our marketing department doesn’t believe that advertising your product works.”

Why is impact so critical for reporters, rather than viewership and ratings? Isn’t impact a measure of a reporters’ success?

“Making change, forcing change, getting results, is our proof of performance. If I did stories that nobody responded to in any capacity, then I wouldn’t have a job. Now, if I was just a city hall reporter and reported on things that happened at city hall every day, that’s not necessarily the brand of journalism that I enjoy. I’ve done it before. I am fully aware to win major awards, you have to bring about that change. You have to say here’s the proof that what I’m doing matters.”

Describe the impact for “Fire in the Hole.”

“I think the cause and effect of our stories is to raise the awareness of a potential catastrophe – an environmental catastrophe – in the Barnett Shale. I think what we have done by doing those stories very deliberately is establish a building block for what we believe is going to be a much bigger story down the road and that is an environmental disaster. Steve Lipsky – his flaming water well – is the poster child, and I’ve called it the Ground Zero, for our fracking debate. I’ve been told by scientists that his well contamination is the most contaminated well they’ve ever seen in the country by measurement of methane concentration. Those stores are now starting to flesh out and manifest themselves in different areas of the Barnett Shale. By doing that story, I haven’t brought about a change yet, but I’m confident I will.”

Describe the impact for “What Lies Beneath.”

“Initial reaction was for the state to order an overhaul of and a withdrawal of faulty gas couplings all across the state. That was a huge impact. That was a huge financial hit to the gas company that had to go in and make changes they should’ve made anyway. Make changes the federal government tried to make a decade ago and they never did. Finally they had to come in and make changes....That was my proudest accomplishment as a journalist was forcing change on a state wide basis that could save people’s lives, and we won the gold baton for that.”

Describe the impact for “Unfair Game.”

“I think we were pushing that story because multiple examples of cheating in high school basketball resulting in guys unfairly winning state championships getting accolades because they were cheating and to expose that network of cheating – it took a guy to die before that had an impact. One of these kids that had been shuffled around from school to school and brokered and bartered and treated like a piece of meat from his handlers finally got killed. Basically as a result of this whole game of horse trading players to try to win championships and it turned deadly. Once it did, then we brought about change by dismantling that system of coaches and the athletic director that was the purveyor of this atrocity.”

Describe the impact for the DISD budget story.

“That has yet to really manifest itself into terms of any meaningful changes, other than, I think, our pursuit of that story ultimately played a role in the resignation of the superintendent.

We had done other stories that played into that, but we were able to expose a system of inequity within the financing and funding of poor schools. When we caught them doing that, they put the money back. The budget director resigned. They don’t do that anymore. In fact, I checked the funding balances last week. They’re out. They have put money back into the poor schools. They quite stealing from the poor schools because we caught them. I feel good about that. That is a big deal. I’m a little disappointed that the federal government didn’t put anyone in jail for that. The federal government received a complaint, what is basically stealing money from poor kids, and they failed to do anything with it. I’m disappointed in that. I’m happy knowing that kids have more money today because we exposed that scheme.

Name: Byron Harris

Date: March 7, 2015

Title: Former WFAA Investigative Reporter

Why is the Denticaid series an example of impact? Do you attribute any help to social media?

“The reason TV stations get people to use social media is to watch. It doesn’t really change the impact of the story, in my view. The thing about investigative reporting is, the more channels of information you put out, the greater your vulnerability and liability is, because people are going to sue you. At Channel 8, I’ve been sued a lot in my life. The more you put out about a story in uncontrolled ways, the more libel you are. With Denticaid, I got sued in that story. It took two years of my life. I did other stuff, but that was at the back of my mind the entire time. TV stations perceive Facebook and Twitter as ways to put more eyeballs on the story. Now, does that change the impact? It’s really what’s in the story that changes the impact.”

“With Denticaid, the impact really came from \$800,000,000 of misspent money and the legislature and the dental industry were profoundly aware of that and they stopped it. They just stopped. Now, there were some structural things that happened at the state level shortly afterward. The big thing about Denticaid was that we found the State of Texas was paying for braces for kids. Expenditures went from about \$50,000,000 in 2003 to \$214,000,000 a year at the peak, which was in about 2011. Over a span of 10 years, they spent \$800,000,000. It’s not even a health threat. There’s no health threat from having crooked teeth in 99.9% of cases.”

“They were putting cosmetic braces on kids. That was so egregious. That’s why it changed. It would’ve gone on for years if we hadn’t of done what we did.”

“[Impact] really depends on the guts of the story in my view.”

“I can drive around this city and point out dental clinics that are no longer in business because of that story.”

What was the time frame?

“It took three years. It took from 2011 to 2013. I was even doing some in 2015.”

Can you tell me the timeline of change, or what you would consider impact? When did you start to notice offices closing?

“Within a year, we saw some substantial change. That’s about as good as it gets in a big story. It’s hard to change that old ship. That ship is big and it’s like an aircraft carrier. It takes four miles to stop it and then to get it started again.”

How would you define impact?

“Impact is change in investigative reporting. What changed? Did the guy get sent to jail? Are people more aware of a problem?”

How would you measure awareness?

“Is the city council more aware? For example, I started working on this slumlord story about a year ago that actually Brett did about a month ago, or a few weeks ago. You know how hard it is to get something on TV in the investigative realm. It can take weeks and lots of documents and going to meet people and chasing people around, staking people out. Now, it looks like the city code 27, they’re actually rewriting the code. Slumlords have more vulnerability when they break the law. That’s impact. Investigative reporting is really like a big civics lesson. You learn about things people have no idea about, but you care so much because it’s your story.”

Thinking about storytelling, how do you give the audience the most concise and potentially impactful version?

“You’ve probably heard of the three word slug. It sounds really elementary and it sounds really stupid, but if you can reduce your story to three words and keep that in mind. Investigative reporters – all of us – you get caught up in the chase. You get caught up in the minutia. The audience doesn’t really care about that, unless it’s really egregious. They care about a compelling story that has a point, and you have to focus on what is the point. We all do it, especially in television, because you have so many slaves to serve. You have to serve visuals. You have to serve audio. You have to serve time. You have to serve rhythm. You probably want it to have a sin curve of emotions where the emotions rise and settle. All those elements are important to the metronome of what you have to acquire and have to achieve. Lots of times, TV reporters become slaves to what they have in the camera rather than to what they want to say. Especially investigative reporters, because we have documents. We always have documents. Well, the document doesn’t do anything to the audience. So how are you going to achieve that? What is the story? So many times you get to the end of your story and you look at it and you’ve really been a slave to all these things without really saying what the three word slug is.”

“That’s what gets impact. Having a clear idea of what you’re trying to say. Now, we’re really like prosecutors in this business. A prosecutor takes the case to court that he can prove. The question is, is that case going to make an impact with the audience, because we’re a lot like district attorneys. There’s a pile of stuff going wrong in our society every day and we can pick up any one of these items and decide that it’s a story, but our responsibility is larger than that. We have to pick the story that has the most impact. In that case, we’re like DA’s because not only do we pick the case that we know we can win, but we pick the case with the most impact, that has an influence on a course of events that will change things. That’s where we fall short. It’s so elementary, but so many times

we start out without knowing what the story is. We know somebody has done something wrong. Okay, fine. The whole world is wrong. What are we going to tell the audience that they can take home that will have some impact on their lives.”

“Any night you can look at a newscast and see that 30% of stories coast along on visuals and the sound bite, without ever coming to a conclusion that the audience cares about.”

What was it about Denticaid that was so captivating? Why did people keep watching?

“I think it was the money, and we kept finding bizarre angles. First, we found the money. Then, we found the mansions these guys were building. One was up in McKinney. This dentist had a water slide and a huge mansion. Then we found the second one, which was even fancier. It was that lifestyle breakthrough. Then I discovered one mile of Bucker Boulevard that had 8 or 9 dental offices that were putting on braces in a questionable way.”

“I called it the Medicaid Mile.”

Why do so many reporters just regurgitate their package scripts when there is so much potential for a web story? It lives forever on the internet.

“It’s simple. It’s the workload. You’re shot like a ragdoll everyday out of a cannon – a daily reporter. We tell them to go this then, then they change their mind. It’s 12:30, they go do this, they throw together a package for the 6:00 p.m. and do a live shot for the 4:00 p.m. Then, they want to go home. IN theory, a reporter’s day should start at 5:00 a.m. like mine did. I would read three newspapers: the Wall Street Journal, New York Times and Dallas Morning News. You have to know that stuff.”

“By the time it gets to 6 o’clock, they had their package on. They have to sit down, write a new package for the web and then figure out whatever links there are. They’re tired. They want to go home and just take a breath.”

“Investigative reporters. The web stories are incredibly important. In fact, I may go back to Channel 8 and just start doing web stuff.”

“Web stories live forever.”

Name: Carolyn Mungo

Date: April 14, 2016

Title: WFAA News Director

Does WFAA have a mission statement?

“That’s an interesting question because I think back in the day, we’re the news cast of record. We’ve been this legacy station for along long time. I don’t think people worried too much about a mission statement. Overtime it’s been really more and more importantly, particularly with the vast landscape of competition – any way we went with hyper local content, we have to serve our local community. This isn’t written anywhere. Holding people accountable in our local communities. Being the watchdog.”

“Holding people accountable and serving the local public on issues that are relevant to their lives.”

In terms of impact, I know there’s a million definitions, how would you say the station defines impact?

“It’s a challenge these days because so many people are moving away from the big television and it’s easy for us to look at the same days ratings and say, “Did we fail?” Well, there’s time shifting, they’re watching DVRs, they’re not watching us, but tomorrow, they’ll catch us on Facebook. It’s hard to say what impact is today because there are multiple platforms. It’s easy to say, ‘Did we gain the attention?’ ‘Did people watch and want to know?’ That’s a harder question to ask.”

“Anecdotally, you can see the reaction on social – how people feel. At the end of the day, yes, we can move mountains, but it’s really, how did we make you feel? Impact to me is, we may change a law, but did we move you to act?”

Do we have some kind of cohesive document that keeps track of impact that holds all the awards from reporters?

“We actually don’t.”

Do reporters look at the ratings – Nielsen, social media, web?

“All my reporters who want access get the overnights, but I’ll tell you, you could kills yourself. You’re winning one day and dead the next.”

“You want to look at trends and rolling averages for the month. I don’t want to give too many people, ‘Oh my god, we were horrible the other day.’ Well, there are reasons for that. There’s 800 households. There’s lead-ins. For those that want them, they do. I don’t want them all out because that’s pressure that I need to have not the world. They need to do what they need to do which is content.”

Name: Charles Lewis

Date: March 29, 2016

Title: American University School of Communications, Investigative Reporting Workshop
Executive Editor

There's a million ways to define it, but you specify impact is more than just social media engagement and website traffic. Aside from non-profit journalism, why is it clear to understand the difference between social outcome and website engagement?

"Local television has an aging audience of 50 and 60 and up. Young people for the most part don't watch local news. If you look at the audience numbers, they have consistently gone down for decades and their audience is a) getting older and b) dying. I'm not trying to be harsh, but I'm not wrong. The digital approach and the digital audience and certain words being used for clicks doesn't really apply to folks over 40 because they generally aren't as active on the web. Data shows what I just said."

Why should we measure it? I mean, really invest the time and money newsroom to newsroom to measure impact?

"For a news director, there was a time in the US back in the 1950's where viewership was substantial. They would show their public service journalism they were doing for the public whether it was a newspaper or a series on local TV. Lately, increasingly, that is not the case. The reason impact matters is the station that's always breaking stories and the station that's always getting advertisers."

"If it bleeds it leads,' and all of those clichés are true. The teenage prostitution stories that occur during sweeps is true universally. The impact is not that they only like to do them two or three times a year, it's that their advertising is getting fed. They are increasing their revenue markers. Their content, in their own minds, is tethered to their bottom line. For commercial, like local TV stations, the content on certain times of the year does matter to them. The stuff that's catchy, creates buzz - whatever word you want to use - if they have more buzz than everyone else...then they're going to do better than other TV stations."

Aside from revenue, why does impact matter?

"All local TV stations care about is revenue. I hate to be so crass. Most local TV stations are not there for a whole lot more. They're cash cows."

Explain this statement: "The bulk of what already exists for measuring the 'impact' of nonprofit journalism stops short of assessing civic impact or societal change."

"You can do a magnificent investigation amount any number of subjects, as I've done in my organization or any news organizations have done, and it's like dropping a stone in the abyss. You don't hear it. You don't see it. Nothing happens. It doesn't mean it wasn't a first rate piece of journalism. It means that the civic infrastructure of that town, region, county, state, country that the dysfunction in the political realm is so substantial that nothing anyone brings to light will resonate because the battle lines are set. Nothing's

going to change. People don't want anything to change. You have a static state. Nothing will change, no matter what the quality of the work was. There are cases where you expose things, but what's going to change exactly? You know, it's more of a cynical, but it's an acknowledgement of reality. You do phenomenal reporting, and no politician speaks up."

"That observation was made because frequently there is high quality work and it's not always a one to one...You have to allow for those strange situations where the journalism is profound and it has resonance and clarity."

Explain this statement: "...veteran reporters and editors, particularly of the investigative ilk, have an inherent, almost visceral dislike of audience measurement and engagement strategies and other metrics-producing data."

"They don't want to because if it's too closely tethered to results, then they're going to become an advocacy journalist where they're urging this to happen...you're going to start to resemble the advocates because if you're making it a one to one."

"You're no longer a journalist. We can't guarantee results. It's not part of your job. Occasionally, you're going to have great reporting that has a zero reaction. It certainly happens a lot. I would say most investigative reporting falls under that category."

Discuss the challenges of measuring impact. You mention statistical meaning, digital connectivity, categorization and quantifying "quality". Can you break those down?

"Quality is an eyes of the beholder kind of thing. Quality of what? Every story is different. Stories can have one interview or thirty seven. How was it written? What did it look like? All those components factor into quality. It's hard to generalize. It's not a quantitative thing. It's by definition a qualitative thing, which means the inherent nature of what you're reporting about and how do you measure that? Every story is different. Every manifestation of the reporting is different - the writing, the platform. How do you measure the quality? It is like the definition of pornography. The supreme court justice said, 'I know it when I see it.'"

"Those who don't like the story will think it's terrible quality."

"Statistics still come down to human bias. How do you contour your statistics? What you're gathering, what you're not gathering and the basis for how far back you went. It's still fundamentally human and it's still fundamentally subjective. You can be as highly qualitative and statistically precise and even pristine, but you're still deciding what your methodology is. Just like you decide what the aperture of your camera is and the tightness of your shot."

“How do we give journalism awards? We give awards that a group of judges sitting around a table decide seems like the highest quality, the most work, the most important subject....It still comes down to humans deciding.”

Advocacy vs. Journalism – Where is the line? Is there a line? Is it really advocacy to want change from a story, or is that just journalism?

“The line is when you tell them what to do. Journalists can present the possible solutions and give an array of viewpoints out of it. That’s one way to do it in a more objective way by identifying there are problems and solutions, but people don’t agree with them. The fact is, you can expose there is a problem and you are acknowledging there is a problem and I don’t dispute that, but you’re not telling people, “therefore it should be this.” You’re implying it.”

“You’re showing a problem is profound. You’re not telling them to go out and vote, but you’re saying everything but that. The line is when you tell people what they should do.”

Why is it so difficult to correlate social media engagement with viewership or readership? How can we use social media analytics usefully when there are so many factors and errors in terms of numbers? Quality rather than quantity.

“That’s not something I’ve spent a lot of time on. I left TV awhile back. Social media is accessed primarily by younger folks. Local TV is watched primarily by older folks. Right there, we have a correlation problem. Young folks will access it via social media, but not hardly ever watch local TV...older folks may not know what ‘social media’ means, let alone access it. Again, a gross generalization. My point, how does one even assess that because one population is much more ingrained in the social media context and the here and now, the online 24/7 and basically their phone is a part of their arm, and the others come home every night to watch the news at the [same time].”

“I would just say, any analysis of statistics comes down like everything else, to the analysis itself. The methodology. What you’re looking at. What you’re not looking at. How far back you’re looking. If it’s usage. Who are you looking at? How extensive is it? Everything that’s getting done is going to have a subjective and interpretive nature to it. That’s why it’s hard to do the definitive look at anything.”

“What they can easily measure is social media usage - clicking, not clicking and viewership - who watches and who doesn’t.”

In “Zing” by Jessica Clark, she states there is no “master metric” to measuring impact. So, how can we set some kind of framework that is consistent and reliable across various platform? Why is measuring impact not a “one size fits all” in terms of audience? What guidelines can you give to journalists looking to measure impact?

“If it’s too convoluted, people become suspicious of why it’s so convoluted. Usually, for an investigative reporter, if it’s too convoluted, someone tried to do it a certain way that would fit their own situation and agenda. If it’s not simple, why is it not simple? Simple has a certain purity to it. You’re trying to just look at the basic points. Was there heavy traffic or not? Does this type of thing resonate versus that kind of thing? These things are reasonable. They’re things you can assess using your data and various metrics.”

“If it doesn’t have a wide universality in terms of application and it is also therefore rarified unusual, and therefore perhaps not credible. That’s why basic clicking and audience usage - keeping things at the base level - is best.”

“Any system that’s going to be used by a lot of people has to have some fundamentals to it that everyone therefore uses that are obvious and logical and the less complex it is, the greater the chance more people will utilize the same method. It will have some degree of applicability across the board and that becomes useful and constructive.”

“Straightforwardness and simplicity are good qualities when looking at impact.”

What advice can you give to news directors and journalists who want to start tracking impact? What are several key principles to follow when measuring impact?

“The way journalists view impact, especially investigative journalists, view impact is law changes, award winning...change occurs within minutes or days.”

“I think it would fall under relevance to the community and knowing your audience and doing projects that are not too wooly. They actually have a palpable element to them and a definable issue and a so called definable problem in the community and it gives clarity to what the problem is and it actually presents it in a way that gives a possible solution. They don’t have to say what the solution is...It has a palatable quality to it.”

Name: Chris Kraft

Date: March 2, 2016

Title: ShareRocket CEO

How long has ShareRocket been around?

“I started the company at the end of 2013. We are Dallas based, but we have national clients. For instance, we’re working with all the ABC O&O TV stations, FOX, all the Tribune stations and all the Hearst stations.”

Where’d the idea come from?

“We were the agency that was helping Belo, which owned WFAA at the time, with a lot of social media projects. I had an opportunity to get some insights that showed a connection between social media rating and TV rating and all the tools that were available to help us get that data were so expensive at the time. They were clumsy, fine-tuned and not really good for local media at the time. I thought there was an opportunity to build a better audience measurement system.”

What’s your goal?

“My goal is to create a measurement of the social audience, to become a currency for social. Much like Neilson has and Rentrak has to measure audience, we’ve got a goal to create a social media measurement currency. Everything you talked about for your thesis – measuring impact – these are things we are working on. Right now, we’re measuring census data and social. We’re moving into demographic granularity, geographic granularity, and then eventually we’ll be able to tell you not only which reporters are having the most impact on social and the content that is kind of driving that, but we are actually going to have content ratings. Every post will actually have a ratings point in the context of the overall market. What we did, that is different from anyone else, is we created a context around social that didn’t exist prior. People were really good at measuring brand against brand, and there’s a lot of competitive data. What we decided is, let’s set up a TV market like Neilson does. Let’s get all of the constituents, put them in the same market place, measure them and then create a methodology that would say, “This is WFAA’s share of social today.” That’s what we’ve done – create a framework for measuring and putting it in a much better context than looking at thousands of pieces of social analytics coming at you.”

How can journalists create impactful and purposeful social media posts?

“Philosophically, people have moved from social and Facebook in particular from a way to keep up with your friends and family to an entertainment destination piece. People spend their idle cycles looking for something interesting. Facebook has gotten very good at fine tuning that feature to things that you really engage with and care about. Be careful what you like and click on, share and even expand, because that targets you to get more of that type of content. The challenge is because it is an entertainment venue now more than anything, the content that does really well either has to strike some emotional chord like the dog stories.”

“It’s tougher to get an audience to engage with your content on more hard news subjects unless it’s got some emotional thread to it. If you’re taking down the Atmos CEO, or whatever, you’re probably not going to have an emotional connection to most of your audience and it’s just not going to do as well.”

“It’s like getting people to eat their vegetables. News cannot be all dogs and cats. There must be a way to promote news that is more hard-hitting and perform well, right?”

“If you use a dog story as the bar, it’s going to be tough. There’s artificial ways, which is not necessarily bad, which is putting promotional dollars behind some of those stories to get you more reach. We see topicals and things you would normally see on TV on a promo stuck on social. It’s some of the lowest performing out there. We just had a huge client - number 28 market - looked at their bottom 10 performing content types and topical promotions were not the last, but the second to last.”

“You have to turn the tables and look at what gets people to turn on the TV and watch an investigation. Typically, there’s setups.”

“People get pulled in within the first minute of a package, but in social you have to hook people immediately. Get to the hook quicker. What’s that thing that’s going to make people watch it? Is it Brett getting kicked, pushed out? We’ve seen all that. Those are the things we have to hit people with almost immediately.”

“So many journalists, specifically investigative, are “old school” in their methods. They may want promotions, but do they put much time into them? Not always. What about the old school journalists that don’t really engage much on social media? Why should they be?”

“You have to ask yourself, ‘What’s going to change the world or change the community or change people’s minds? You may be able to get in front of more eyeballs through WFAA’s social channel than with the tune-in audience.’”

“I think you have to connect the right dots. I don’t have the formula for you, but I do think you have to have an emotional connection that works really well on social.”

What about Twitter?

“Our view on Twitter is that their users are declining. The time spent on Twitter is declining. The amount of context is declining. Engagement for Twitter across the TV markets that we measure dropped in half. It went from 4 - 4.5% of all social media engagement to around 2%.”

You’re talking about Dallas?

“I’m talking about any local TV market. People will then say that’s not what Twitter is. It’s not a social media engagement platform. You put content out. It’s got a very short life expectancy. Then it’s gone. Twitter is too late to fix their feed, to make it relevant like

Facebook which has spent its last seven years making its feed better and better. Twitter has lost that.”

“They’re going to come out with another version of the “while you were away” tab to help you curate stuff that you missed when you weren’t on the platform, but I think it’s too little too late. Even journalists are starting to move away from the platform. Facebook came out with its mentions app. Are you familiar with that? They came out with an app specifically for public figures and journalists called Mentions. Instead of the blue app that we all use on our phones, they’ve got one that if you’re a verified page or public figure, you get access to this cool new app that makes it so all this Facebook live video that you’re seeing from journalists that you’re seeing - the only way they can do it is through that app. It’s won a lot of people away from Twitter.”

Do you have any advice or thoughts on how I should present impact and social media? I’m trying to give journalists a method for creating the most impact they can, as well as including social.

“The CEO of [TEGNA] came out with a statement, and I’m paraphrasing it, but she told all of the journalists at [TEGNA] that you are now the broadcaster. You are now responsible for creating the content that goes to your audience. You are an editor. You now are the journalist and you now are responsible for your broadcasts, and you are responsible for growing that audience. I’m pretty sure it fell on a lot of deaf ears, but that thinking is really true. You now are the manager of your own brand on social. It is now your responsibility as a journalist to create a two way conversation with you audience - create a real relationship with them. That’s the strength of social.”

Do you think it is - I hate to say it - generational? If we don’t tweet or post something on social in the field, we get docked in school. We do not even get a passing grade.

“Yeah, but I can give you a bunch of examples of people over 50, middle-aged white guys, that are kicking it. The number one guy on social is Frank Summerville out at KTVU. This guy pulls more share a day as an individual reporter than the CBS affiliate in that market. He literally could be a TV station and beat out the Spanish-speaking stations and CBS affiliate. He’s an older white guy.”

“There’s a guy named Curt Autry in Richmond, and he’s figured it out. He had some traditional researchers - broadcast researchers - come in and say, ‘Here’s our target audience - the 25 to 54-year-old female switchable,’ which means she is not so loyal to a newscast that she wouldn’t go to another if the content didn’t matter to her. He learned so much about his audience. On his own, he went out and decided, ‘I’m going to be relevant to 25 to 54-year-old women. WFAA has always been our laboratory.’”

“They have to just jump in and take to it. We’ve got a weather guy who’s pushing 70 in Chicago that is the legend. I mean, he’s like the legendary guy in Chicago, and he’s fought it the whole way. It’s taken his corporate people who own the TV station, the station itself and the general manager helping him - it’s been a full court press - but Tom is finally getting it. It’s like teaching a 70-year-old to ride a bike. It can happen and it really comes down to, ‘Is it important to management at the highest level? Is it important to the GM? Is it important to the news director?’ Then it becomes important for the talent. Until it becomes important to everybody’s boss, then it tends to just be something else they have to do every day.”

“Natively, when we show up and start measuring a market, it’s about 90-10. Only 10% of the on-air talent carry about 90% of the weight. The challenge with TV is how to get that a little bit more evenly distributed so everybody is doing their own part.”

I know Fox is doing the best here because they pay for quite a bit more advertising, correct?

“Yes. They have had a long standing paid and promoted post strategy, but i think a lot of what they do is just because they have so much organic reach on their own. Facebook is really weird. The more engagement you get, the more they give you. I don’t know how much you know about social, but let’s say you have a Facebook post that gets 1,000,000 likes. Typically, only 4% of that audience will see content. That’s what we call organic reach. Everybody that’s a follower or likes that brand doesn’t necessarily see content from the station. In order to get more followers to see your content, you can boost those posts with some advertising dollars. I would say it’s safe to say they’re doing that, but we’ve stations that aren’t doing that and are doing really well with good old fashioned blocking and tackling.”

Can you tell me a little bit about what you measure and how exactly through ShareRocket?

“Everything is typically measured through engagement. It’s a measurement of how engaging they are through a number of different metrics compared to peers in the market. When you drill down into it, you can see FOX today - 40 of those 46 points are from the brand itself. That’s about 84%. Just looking at this, I can tell they’ve had a handful of posts do really well. When you add all these share points up, you get the 46 points.”

“As you can see, now we’ve got a tool that tells you as a journalist, what kind of weight are you pulling? Getting back to a question you asked earlier in the discussion is, ‘What are all the things I have in my toolbox to make sure that my content is getting seen and is benefitting me and the station?’ This is one way to keep score. This didn’t exist until ShareRocket came around.”

On the side - those are just top posts? Define ‘top’ versus ‘trending.’

“The top posts are total engagement over the last 24 hours. When we have a trending, we’re looking at a two hour window of engagement per minute.”

And engagement means?

“Likes, comments and shares on Facebook. Retweet, favorite or a reply on Twitter. Or an “at” mention.”

“The other cool thing we can do is drill into the talent. Has Nick showed you this?”

I don’t think so.

“This is actually a social scorecard for everyone in the market.”

How much does WFAA pay to have ShareRocket?

“Under \$3,000 a month.”

What advice do you have for journalists trying to build themselves on social media?

“Learn what works for you. Learn what resonates. This is not going to be one thing. Learn what resonates with your followers. Really look at growing that audience. There’s seminars you can take to grow your following, but proper care and feeding of your existing audience is step one. Step two is bring them content that they care about. Don’t rely on the brand to put content you think your audience might find interesting. Go curate it yourself. It goes back to the CEO of TEGNA. You have a really cool opportunity to be your own broadcast station yourself. You’re your own publisher. Focus on that every day.”

Name: Dana Chinn

Date: April 7

Title: Norman Lear Center Media Impact Project Director

I want to rack your brain about numbers. Let’s talk metrics. You say, “Media is just a tool – it’s what people do with media that really counts.” Can you explain that?

“Anything in metrics can be summed up with two terms. One is, “so what”. That’s pretty much how most people experience data. They see a bunch of data and a bunch of numbers. They see they got 5,000 page views. If the initial reaction is “so what,” then that means they aren’t the right metrics. That means they’re meaningless.”

“If you don’t know what to do with the numbers, they’re useless. That’s the issue that the news industry has had using these metrics. They’re just so desperate to count something because they feel they should because all of the sexiness around big data and metrics.”

“The other is “it depends.” There are no standards anymore. There used to be circulation and Nielson ratings and a metric is a standard. It’s a relative value, with that value being set by people using those metrics. A Nielsen rating is simply a methodology that advertisers decided is correct. It’s a currency.”

First, standard metrics. I’m talking page views, unique users and duration of time spend on a single web page. What purpose do these serve? Why are they flawed?

“There’s no such metric called engagement.”

“There’s two types of metrics: behavioral and attitudinal. That’s why impact measurement is so difficult and complex. Impact is a change in the status quo based on a media intervention. What is the change that you want? Is it change in behavior? Is it the times that people come to the site? Or a change in what people eat? Or do you want a change in attitude? What people think? Why people think that? You have to define the impact that you want. You then parse out from the outcome that you want, what can be measured and what can’t. The change in the status quo means the people. Who are you talking to? Are you talking to people who want to know more, or are you talking to people who know nothing about the topic? Before you can measure impact, you have to declare and state what the impact is and what is the baseline? There’s a baseline. There’s a target. There’s a goal. Once you’ve established the outcome and the target audience and where they’re starting from, then it’s pretty easy to determine what media and what platform you need to use.”

How can we relate social media engagement to viewership? Should they be looked at as separate entities?

“Again, the answer is it depends. There’s no such thing as TV news. You have to break that up into what type. You have to break that up into the topic. Then to what end? What is the outcome that you want? Is it ratings? Frankly, Nielsen ratings are calculated using a black box algorithm that nobody knows how it’s done. To me, that’s where you just use hypothesis and judgment, but you don’t tie your success and correlate or having any causation measures for that. Not because it can’t be done but because the ultimate outcome everyone wants and needs for business reasons is a Nielsen rating and we have no idea. It’s what we call a complex metric.”

“It’s made up of all these different factors that we take and you don’t know which ones are making the number move.”

“When it comes to TV, it’s like well, the outcome TV stations want is higher Nielsen ratings, but we have no idea how they’re calculated. It’s not that you don’t measure

social media, it's just that you don't measure your success in Nielsen ratings. Even if they go up, you don't know if it's what you did in social media."

"Don't count things just because you can. You need to put resources into both formulating the measurement model – what are you counting and why? How is it connected to what you want? And actually counting the right data, not the stupid data, like the time on site that people are using from Google analytics. It's technically flawed."

Why is it flawed?

"It's counted based on the pages that are sent from the server, so it doesn't count the time if someone only went to one page and it doesn't count the time spent on the last page. You can count your time on site, if you have your own custom way. You have to customize your tracking code. This is what I mean by having a metrics code. What we're tracking is scroll rate. You go to a page, and we track how far down you scroll, and we're calculating time spent on a page based on user behavior, not based on the server but what users are actually doing."

"We can tell if they're reading something about the principal, or if they're scrolling all the way to the bottom like if there's a chart or something. That is useful and more accurate."

In an article published after your speech titled, "Add audience analytics to what is essential to journalism," you discuss No. 1, No. 2 and No. 15. Can you explain those numbers?

"I do not measure traffic. Why? Because it's not going to affect any decisions I make about what goes on the site. I know that what I'm trying to do as far as promoting good use in metrics is not based on the number of visits to the site."

"One is the power of the individual. It doesn't matter how many page views. It matters who is that person. Is it the district attorney? It's about what you're trying to accomplish. The fact that media impact is change over time. It's not entertainment. You might get 30 page views when it first comes out in the first two weeks, but overtime you have to measure your audience view across time."

"Did your content actually lead to a second click or a third time. You're measuring things like bounce rate or score rate. They got the page view and then they scrolled down. It's that action that indicates engagement. Don't focus on the first click-type metric. Focus on the second. The fifteen minutes is spend 15 minutes during the day to increase your knowledge on metrics."

"These numbers are meant for journalists who are tracking, but maybe in the wrong way. I wanted to empower the journalists to stand up in a meeting and say, 'I refuse to be judged by my page views.' You can't say that if you don't have something else to back that up, and that's where the fifteen minutes comes in."

Do we try too hard to make something out of nothing by trying to analyze too many metrics?

“It’s the opposite ends of the spectrum. Either they throw up their hands that they can’t be measured or they think they can measure everything. The hard work comes in developing the measurement model. What are your objectives? What are the activities you’re going to do? How can you measure them in a meaningful way that’s going to be a useful tool in your decision making?”

“The reason why those numbers perpetuate in news media is because of advertising business metrics. Absolutely you need to get those numbers. That’s just the way it is. That’s just the business model.”

Do newsrooms shy from tracking for fear of it being too costly? Time consuming?

“The number one reason people don’t want to measure is because it hurts. There’s a fallacy that when people have page views, they’re reading it. Just like if a newspaper has 20,000 circulation, all 20,000 are reading.”

“This type of data hurts. If you’re an analyst, you want to know what hurts so you can fix it.”

When you say it “hurts,” what do you mean?

“You don’t want to know how few people read your story. You don’t want to know that people didn’t click. Unique users is another flawed metric.”

“You try to get the biggest number so you can brag about it. You don’t necessarily want to know what’s not working. That’s the hardest part about metrics. If you’re in a business, you seek out what’s not working because you have a very common measure of success that everybody agrees on – money.”

“There is no such thing as social media analytics. All media is social.”

“A follow on Twitter does not mean the same thing as a friend on Facebook. The overemphasis of social media over audience pisses me off. There is no such audience called millennials. Demographics are dead. It’s all based on behavior and attitude.”

Name: Dick Tofel
Date: April 7, 2016
Title: President of ProPublica

What is your definition for impact and, why is there so much confusion with defining impact?

“I think impact can mean any number of things. It really depends on what you’re trying to do. For ProPublica, it means change. Reform. Changes in policies or practices or statutes or whatever, but actual change in real worlds. The reason that’s our definition is because that’s our mission, which is to spur change by journalistic means. It can also mean reach if that’s your goal. Or it can mean engagement if that’s your goal. I think those are all equally valid, I think you need to specify what your mission is and you can talk about whether or not you’re achieving it.”

Reach and engagement. What are these and why are they NOT impact, but components of impact?

“They can be impact if that’s your objective. That is not how we would define impact for ourselves. Although they are important considerations and they are good things to have.”

“Reach is just how many people are reading or viewing or looking at a piece.”

“Engagement is a tricky business, and I think there’s a lot of work that needs to be done on this, but it’s the extent to which people react to things. The amount of time they spent with it.”

Why is impact measurement important for investigative journalists, specifically?

“I don’t think it necessarily is. It could be just as important to measure any kind of reporting. It’s particularly important to us because our mission is to achieve that. We are not in business to make money. We are in business to make change.”

“In a for-profit newsroom, frankly they’re keeping score mostly in terms of money. I just think they’re not inclined to do that. Would it be interesting all things being equal? Sure. But it’s not actually the mission of the place. It’s not actually mission critical to know. It would just be nice to know.”

Is there a commercial newsroom that’s doing a good job at measuring or tracking impact?

“In our sense of it, or CIR’s much broader sense of it, I don’t think so. I think the reason is that’s not their mission.”

“If you’re running a for-profit news organization, your mission is to make money.”

“We are very proud of our Pulitzer Prizes and we love to change the world, but the mission of the company that owns the Wall Street Journal is to return money to its shareholders.”

Difficulty in measuring – “...whether impact actually results from any particular story or set of stories is not entirely within the control of the journalists who create the story...” – Why is this so true for investigative reports?

“That’s for sure true. You send something out in the world and it either makes change or it doesn’t. You wish that every story did. You can’t command it. I think the hardest thing about tracking impact is it turns out to be how you know that you’ve really caused something. The answer that I came to in the paper is that transparency is the key. If you’re going to claim it publicly, you would be crazy to do that unless you were right. The fact that you are going to do it publicly is a very good discipline on reminding the organization that it needs to generate this kind of work overtime and acting as a check that we have done it.”

What different ways do you track impact for a story? What’s the pre-reporting process?

“In story selection, our editors will often ask if there is potential to spur change. If there isn’t, it probably isn’t something we should be doing, given that’s our mission. But we don’t say we hope to generate a press release by this person...We say we hope to generate some change.”

But you don’t ever specify what that change is?

“First of all, you can’t specify what it’s going to be until you’ve done the reporting. Reporting makes it very clear as to what needs to be changed.”

Advocacy vs. Journalism – Where is the line? Is there a line? Is it really advocacy to want change from a story, or is that just journalism?

“For us, the big difference is that advocacy begins with answers and journalism begins with questions. It is also true, I think, and this is something that a lot of legacy news outlets are not quite as comfortable with, if you reported something out and there is no questions that there is a particular problem then I don’t think it constitutes advocacy to say there needs to be some solution. Advocacy is saying tax rates should be higher on rich people than poor people. That’s advocacy because reasonable people differ on that.”

“I may have very strong views on that, so may you, even the majority of Americans may have strong views on these questions, but they are the stuff of our politics. To take a position on them is advocacy. To take a stance on them is fine. It’s democracy. People should do it, but it is advocacy. To say that racial bias exists and shouldn’t, doesn’t strike me in modern America as advocacy.”

“It’s the societal consensus. If you have established though journalism facts that then would form a societal consensus that cries out for reform, then I don’t regard it as advocacy to say this is broken and needs to be fixed. It’s literally like if the traffic signal at the corner broke and elderly people were being run over every day, is that advocacy? No, not really? What’s the counter position?”

How can we use social media analytics usefully when there are so many factors and errors in terms of numbers? Example: Unique users, privacy browsers, multiple viewers on one screen.

“This is a great unresolved debate and I think it’s still very much an open debate. Here’s what I observe. Everybody thinks that page views and unique visitors are pretty rotten measurements with all sorts of shortcomings. That’s point one. Point two. Everyone uses them. Why? Because for all of their shortcomings, there has not formed any kind of consensus around alternatives. You know, maybe time spent is better but there are pretty significant methodological questions about calculating it. It has implicit value judgments that longer stories are better than shorter stories, which may be true, but frankly might be true but probably isn’t. I think in this sense, we’re only twenty years into the digital age of publishing and I think we are well short of having devolved the analytics that fifty years from now, people will regard as definitive.”

Something Lauren Fuhrmann will do is manually go and pull the comments from Facebook. You define engagement as “the intensity of reaction to a story”. How do you use web analytics when looking at impact of a story?

“With our mission which is spurring change, engagement really is not the point. Right? Engagement is important and we pay attention to it because it is critical to building and preserving audiences which it obviously does.”

“It doesn’t directly relate to our mission, but we do look at it and it’s complicated. WE look at various factors, but I would say the analytics on engagement at this point are somewhat unsatisfactory and still very much in flux.”

How can we correlate social media engagement to viewership? I think that’s almost impossible.

“You’re going to run very quickly into a fairly common error in social science, which is saliency versus reach. Social media is a great way to measure saliency – how many people care deeply about something, or pretty deeply. Reach is how many people are watching at all. Those are two very different things.”

And the audience is completely different.

“That’s true, too. The most important thing to remember is they are apples and oranges. They just are different things.”

“You have people watching, frankly, because their regular programming was preempted and they haven’t bothered to change the channel.”

As researchers have said, there is no “master metric” for tracking impact. You say, “There is no one reliable measure of journalism’s impact.” Why? How can we create a framework that is consistent and reliable across various platform?

“Again, it goes back to there is no single definition of impact. If you have a given definition of impact, then I think you can create a master metric. I think if you have organizations with the same mission, you can have common measurements. If you have different missions, then you wouldn’t.”

What are the big differences between non-profit and commercial journalism in terms of impact? Is there a framework that can be shared among the two?

“You may have a non-profit that focuses on awareness of certain issues. If that’s their goal, they are going to have very different measurements.”

“Impact is best defined in relation to mission and if you’re clear about your mission you should be able to be clear about your impact and you should be able to measure it. If you have different missions you’re going to have different ways to measure impact.”

What advice can you give to news organizations and journalists who want to start tracking impact?

“What do they mean by impact? What are they trying to achieve? I think this is the hardest thing for people. What are you trying to achieve? If you can answer that question, then measuring ends up being pretty easy. The hard question is, what are you trying to achieve? You can’t skip that and go to impact. That doesn’t make sense.”

I’ve come up with a list of guidelines for tracking impact. Would you change or add any? My guidelines are: define impact, make a plan, keep track of your story, don’t get fixated on data, expect to spend a little extra money and one size does *not* fit all.

“First, there’s a question before that. What is your organization trying to achieve? What is the goal of your organization? That’s the first question.”

“I basically agree with that. The only thing that I would disagree with is if your objective is reach, then the stuff about don’t get fixated on numbers is wrong. If your goal is reach, the numbers are the point. If you’re saying the idea is to inform the greatest number of people, then that’s what you need to measure.”

“In the for-profit people it may be quite a few people. I think it’s the principal goal of cable television news. Especially CNN.”

Name: Jason Trahan

Date: April 13, 2016

Title: WFAA Investigative Producer

How much emphasis is placed on impact in this newsroom?

“The main goal of what we do, and when I say “we,” I mean the investigative team, and really any reporter in the room, is going to want their story to have an impact because why else would you even take the phone call or agree to meet with somebody or go to a news conference.”

What about WFAA as a whole? There focus is more on reach, which is essentially viewership.

“The bottom line is defined by reach but the soul of the station is impact. Impact is not just laws changed. Impact is – for instance, if you do a crime story on a person’s loved one who was murdered – your reporting can spark a Go Fund Me page. That’s a way where you can parlay impact into reach and do both at the same time. Ideally you can do both at the same time. The initial story brings awareness to the problem. People react by giving money. We facilitate a place for them to give money. Then we do follow up stories on how it’s going. People love to see that. Viewers like to have buy in. When they feel like they can change something – when the viewers feel like they can change something and have it reflected on TV – they like that. Ideally you would want to have impact and reach because to do it any other way doesn’t make sense.”

The third component is engagement, which the I team does a lot of. How well do you think you know your audience?

“That’s a good question. I mean, we don’t sit in on briefings where people talk about the numbers. We don’t get briefed on ratings. We don’t get orders to produce stories to hit a certain ratings point or to hit a certain demographic. It’s just sort of implied that when we talk about stories with our managers, and when we pitch stories to our managers, that they better have a ‘sizzle.’ That could be the way you shoot an interview or finding a particular document that we can make a point with. Everybody doing this job knows that you have to make this story not only relevant and impactful but interesting. I’m not told to post Facebook messages at certain times during the day. Other people in the room are encouraged to do that and management is very open to that. But as far as us being burdened with that, we’re left out of that and thankfully so.”

Do you think there’s too much emphasis placed on social media and numbers and hashtags – things like that?

“I say yes, and the reason I say yes is because I haven’t seen that proof of more social media equals more revenue for the station. There may be some very intelligent people that can connect those dots.”

Especially when our revenue comes from on-air. I feel like we focus so much on the Facebook ads and things like that.

“There’s a certain amount of revenue that does come from social media, but one has to question if it actually helps guide people to the broadcast product. It’s often said that appointment TV is on its way out and on-demand news on any and all device is coming, but what we have to focus on the investigative team is if you find good stories, compelling interviews and if you tell stories about issues that people are interested in, the platform will find the story.”

Do you think they focus too heavily on the standard metrics – reach – instead of impact?

“Possibly. We have different departments that have different focuses. The social media guys, that’s all they look at is clicks and viewership and shares, things like that. The business side of it is looking at all things holistically. They’re looking at all the ways to put stuff out there and who’s looking at it. Advertising is the reason we’re here. We have a whole group of people here that sell advertisements so we can keep producing good stories.”

All these non-profits have somebody dedicated to impact. They don’t have advertising to worry about, so they don’t focus heavily on web metrics. Here, we’ve got both. Together as a whole, we’ve got that disconnect – whether it be good or bad, there’s disconnect. The reporters are worried purely about change. We’re doing these stories to get stuff done. Marketing team. They might not even be journalists. Do you think that disconnect is an issue, or is it just reality?

“A lot of reporters are very much concerned about those numbers. They want to know how many retweets they got and who retweeted.”

“The assumption is that when reporters have a brand and they get more followers and more reach and engagement through reach and social, somehow that is supposed to translate to the people they work for making more money. I don’t know if that’s a legitimate connection they make.”

Name: Jessica Clark

Date: April 7, 2016

Title: Center for Social Media Research Director

Why measure impact?

“It depends on why you became a journalist. If you became a journalist because you think you should comfort the afflicted and uplift the comfortable then impact is square in the middle of your mission. You don’t know if you’re afflicting the comfortable if you don’t know how you’re doing. If you became a journalist because you want to inform the public, you won’t know if you’re informing them if you don’t ask them. At the very least, you need to know who’s reading or watching. If you think the point of journalism is to keep tabs on people who are in power, then you need to be able to track the impact on their behavior.”

Why is *defining* impact so hard?

“Part of it’s ideological. If you have a theory of change around journalism and you think journalism is to be objective and give both sides of the story then it is pretty hard to find out if that accomplished anything. It’s much easier to measure if you’ve changed something than if you’ve changed someone’s thoughts on something.”

“Commercial journalism metrics surround advertising. That’s difficult enough. The platforms keep changing and people’s habits keep changing.”

“The incentives are not there. People who are packed with measuring the success of a product in the marketing division or the advertising division and the people on the editorial side are often not given the tools and access they need about how people are interacting with their stories in a way that makes it useful and interesting. Some reporters are allergic to the idea of caring what their audience thinks of them at all.”

In “Zing,” you list five components of impact – reach, engagement, inclusion, influence and zing. Can you walk me through those?

“Reach is just exactly what you would think. How many people are listening to this thing? Engagement can be defined in different ways. It’s kind of like weak tea and strong tea. Weak tea engagement is, did they listen to the whole piece? Strong tea is did the piece motivate them to do something. Whether that’s clicking on a link or sharing on Facebook, all the way up to vote or start of movement. Engagement is a multitude of steps.”

“Inclusion is about, does the piece have an impact on a certain group of people that you wouldn’t normally hear from. Therefore, part of its resonance is that it tells an untold story or it increases the diversity of the circle of listeners.”

“Influence is about does the piece generate actions in a public sphere. Do other reporters write about it? Do decision makers use it to prove a point? Does it become the lynch pin for a debate?”

“Zing is about trying to capture a particular aesthetic that it has been honed in the public media...does the piece move you? Do you have a physical reaction? Is it beautiful? That’s the piece that is least measurable and most impactful.”

Talking about your “five needs” impact analysis, can you explain your third need – contextualizing the anecdotal?

“If you were thinking about creating a framework for investigative reporters, you might go up a level and say we’re going to create a bucket for data collection that says every time we do an investigative report on a charity, we’re going to track what happens and invest in that thing.”

“Five tools” – Can you break these down for me? What’s ‘chasing the frame?’

“Let’s say your issue is pedophilia and you create a term. Predators. Whatever. Something that’s not a word but characterizes what your story is. Preducators. That’s a terrible word, but somebody might use it. You blast it out in a ton of stories and create wanted posters. Then you have a frame you can create.”

That’s almost like branding your story.

“Yes. That’s what it is.”

How do you propose we get to know our audience best? Simply looking at numbers? Facebook comments? I think TV stations focus too heavily on Nielsen ratings.

“Useless. The mechanisms at your disposal include creating some kind of on-air call for responses. “Send us your letters.” Creating some kind of online forum, not one where you’re just talking to your audience, but where your audience can talk to each other.”

How can we use social media analytics usefully when there are so many factors and errors in terms of numbers? How do you use web analytics when looking at impact of a story?

“You have to move beyond the initial measures that they give you. Tie it to your outcome goal. The stations outcome goals and your outcome goals may be different. You may want to create your own goals as an individual reporter. You may want to hear from ten engaged citizens after each report.”

How is impact research a lot like reporting?

“I think of impact reporting as reporting. It’s like 90% the same. What you need to do is go to the Pew State of the Media report and see how people are consuming the news for demographics and people who get it online versus on-air. You have to go find out what percentage are likely to respond to some online something and what percent is your actual audience.”

“The reason I suggested you track actual responses to actual stories is because those are the people who are going to give you the most data. A Facebook like is a little better now that you can have certain responses, but it’s still really stupid.

What advice can you give to news organizations and journalists who want to start tracking impact? How could we incorporate an impact tracker at a commercial newsroom?

“Focusing on the social impacts of reporting. It’s a branding question. It’s a way of distinguishing themselves from other news organizations. Make the case to advertisers that your audience is influential.”

“There’s two ways to think about impact analysis. One is that you’re doing it because it really matters. You’re doing calculations on what worked. Two is you want to find out what happened. That’s the reporting. Three is impact analysis is PR. You’re doing impact analysis to gather the systematic data you need to brag about yourself.”

I’ve come up with a list of guidelines for tracking impact. Would you change or add any?

“Don’t forget about the long tail. Impact is not always one month out or two months out. Sometimes it takes years. Set up a system to check back in on previous stories. Use that as an opportunity to re-report them.”

Name: Jim Glass
Date: March 24, 2016
Title: WFAA Creative Services Director

What exactly do you do here?

"I'm the brand manager. I manage all our brands. My scope is a little bit larger than that. We're also the creative department and design and promotion and event execution, external media, but our job is to generate interest in our programs or in our brands to generate ratings. Another function of our team is to generate revenue. On the other side, I'm also over all of our social media pages and accounts."

If you were to define impact, how would you go about doing it?

"Impact can be measured in two ways. From a content producer standpoint, impact is generally, 'Did it affect change? Did it inspire people to take a movement? Did it educate? Did it enlighten? Did it shed a light? And how did it positively or negatively affect the community?'"

"The business side of impact is the reality of it, really. In this room, it's measured by what action happens as a result of that story. In the rest of the building, it's measured by how did that story generate viewing or downloads or clicks or impressions."

How do you use website analytics to generate more insight to your audience? What exactly do you measure?

"Every morning I probably get eight pieces of media analytics from Nielsen to Rentrak - those are both TV measurements - ComScore for digital products. I get ShareRocket which is social analytics. We have a lot of different measurement systems. The emphasis is put primarily on Nielsen and I think there's probably too much, but that's what our buyers are looking at."

How exactly does Nielson work?

"You know you're a Nielsen family because you sign up for it. There's a box inside your home. It's hardwired into your electronic."

“It’s extraordinarily flawed. The sample of 800 is supposed to represent what the market is. If the market is 40% white, 30% Hispanic. Within each one of the segments is married, single, with kids or without. It’s supposed to be statistically reflected of the entire market - of the 6.3 million people in this market.”

“The problem with Nielsen is that it’s not necessarily reflective of the market because the process in order for them to get into the homes requires, first I said a hardwire, higher end social economic status homes - people with more money.”

“The compensation is \$50 to \$75 a month, which is not practical for more affluent homes to want to participate. You typically get lower income households looking to supplement income. Part of the problem we have going on, is the Nielsen numbers are comprised of lower income, lower educated and higher unemployment rates. Some networks like NBC and ABC tend to not do very well because they’re a younger skewing, more affluent type targeted programs.”

“Even when the system gets installed into your home, there are a series of buttons on your remote. They are assigned to people in the household. Every fifteen minutes, I’m required to press who’s in the room watching television. If you walk out of the room, I have to punch you out. After 45 minutes of non-reporting, you’re supposed to be tossed out of the sample. Well, it’s so labor intensive.”

Would there be any way for Nielsen to track without a remote?

“Absolutely, but they’re invested so much money in this.”

“I think technology will move to something like infrared, where it can track who is in the room, and I think it’s going to be a feature you can opt into. I think the technology on viewership behavior will change because advertisers are going to demand it.”

Moving to reach on your website - do you keep track of unique viewers?

“We do. Here are the problems with web analytics. Digital analytics for starters - my computer doesn’t have any personal information about me. There’s no data on any one of my browsers, whether it’s one of my devices, none of my information goes with me. I’m anonymous at my first entry point. If you’re a registered user on one of our products - our mobile web or our website - we plant a cookie and that’s how we track your behavior. Everybody uses cookies. That’s how Banana Republic knows you’ve visited their website.”

“Analytics were really strong when we were dealing with desktop because 70-80% of them were accessing the web off a PC. Most people don’t know privacy stuff - and turning things on and off.”

“At first, we were only using Internet Explorer. Is was the dominant browser. All this hardware tracking software was put on Internet Explorer. Too many people got hacked. Firefox came out. Google Chrome came out. Safari came out. You started to get more browsers....Each one of those have different levels of security...you can go into an anonymous mode, meaning websites cannot use cookies. When you get an anonymous user and they click on five things - that looks like five new users.”

“Still, we don’t have any demographic data. Registration is big issue because nobody likes to register for anything.”

“Eighty to 90% of our revenue comes from on-air broadcast. Ten to 15% comes from web. We may have twice as many people on our digital platforms every day, but we make 10:1.

With all these variable and discrepancies, what do you do with the data?

“Advertisers and media makers are asking that same question. ‘How do I get her? How do I get just her and not me at the same time? And how do I use data to get to just her?’ There is not a perfect magic bullet out there. What happens a lot of time - and everyone gets distracted with target audiences and niche audiences - and the reality is the people with more money are going back to mass....‘I’ll buy Netflix and American Idol and Pandora because they’re wider ranges and just forget about targeting the one person.’ I think we’d all like to be able to say, ‘I want to target the 24-year-old female who does X, Y and Z,’ but it just doesn’t work right now.”

“I don’t know what technology is out there that’s going to allow this. I don’t know anyone with all the security threats where people are going to be willing to give out more information about themselves. I see more privacy going forward in digital than I see it being more open. I think that is an advantage for broadcasters. I think that’s why you command 3 million dollars for an ad spot in the super bowl. That’s where everybody is. You want to go where your advertisers are.”

“We are a free service. We give people news and entertainment. We understand privacy. It’s a real delicate line and balance that we’re in.”

I spoke with Chris and ShareRocket. Has ShareRocket been pretty helpful?

“Chris used to be the owner and CEO of Splash Media....One day I told him I needed the Nielsen equivalent to social media. I need to know what is the measurement for

engagement. What is more engaging? What makes more of a differences? A comment? A like? A share? What generates more value in a social media experience? That's what I need to know. Are these people even real? Are they bots? Where do I rank? I have all the analytics on my Facebook pages. I have seen no analytics on anybody else. I have no idea how Fox 4 is doing."

"A year later he goes, 'I built that for you.'"

"We were the pilot for them. We gave them full admin access to our Facebook accounts. They needed that for their algorithms to work properly."

"We were not doing as well as we thought. We thought we were killing, we were not killing. We learned everything in six months. We thought we had evaluated everything we were doing from a social media standpoint and this overhauled all of that. The most useful thing about that is you're making assessments and judgments based on your own personal product, but once it goes out, you don't get any immediate Facebook. 'Did Brett Shipp's piece move me?' I don't know that. I don't know how many people cried. We don't have an emoticon on your TV set that lets you put a tear emoticon or a heart. People don't interact with our packages. They call us or they send us an email or they go on social media platforms and say something. Immediately what we started to realize was there were different reactions to our pieces that what we were having to our own pieces internally. Some of it was surprisingly good and some of it was against what our assumption was. The beauty of digital and the beauty of social media is the immediate feedback."

"Quantifying behavior and then being able to see that allows you to tweak your product."

What's WFAA's strategy with promos? What constitutes a Facebook promo? How early do you promo?

"The strategy changes all the time. I change it all the time because I think the environment is changing all the time. In the old days, I was reaching 40% of the market in one day because there was so much viewing - especially in prime time. Now with Netflix, Hulu, YouTube - these have all evolved and fragmented. My reach is not a great as it used to be. My reach is 15% on a good day."

"In the old days I was more dependent on my air. I could do a topical pretty quickly and run it over a two or three day period and we would see spikes for that particular period...I could get it done in probably a two day period. Today, I need a lot longer to get enough reach up. Advertising - generally you want to reach 70% of the market and on average, you want them to see it three times. For me to get a 70 and a 3, it may take me 5 days to get there. We have such high duplication on our air, meaning we have people that binge

watch from 2 o'clock all the way 'till 11 o'clock. That duplication drives your frequency up, which can work against you."

"My strategy right now is to really work with these news people to make them understand reach and frequency. I have to have enough time to not only get the advertising parts built, but I've also gotta do media buys. I can't get 70% with my own air, so I have to buy radio and digital. I'm buying three or four different platforms and each platform needs a different promo. A lot more pieces to put together. A lot more assets. A lot more strategic thinking."

"I have to know who our audience is on our Facebook and who our audience is on our dot coms. I have to know how many app downloads we have and where we are with iOS versus Android, what our sellout rates are."

How reliable is it?

"Well, I don't know. Apple doesn't know the answer to that. General Motors doesn't know the answers to that. The big difference is, a hard consumer good like GM is they know how many cars they sold. They have to make the assumption that advertising drove car sales. It's also the consumer experience with the car. What car did their friends buy?"

Is our viewership going up?

"It's funny. We've had a big debate about this. I have eight pieces of analytics I look at everyday from Nielsen to Rentrak to digital. It depends which one you look at. Nielsen is flat. Nielsen over time is going down. Rentrak is declining because it's split over a lot of different channels and a lot of different platforms."

"I worked here in the early 90's. Do you know what our rating is for the late night news? Generally, we are at a 4 point rating on average. Each one of those points represents 23,500 homes. A four would be about a 100,000 homes. You have to assume each home is about 2.5 people on average. Two adults and a kid. Some have eight. Some have one. So, that's about 250,000 watch our late night news every nights. When I started here in the early 90's, we were doing 20 ratings, but each one of those points didn't represent 23,000 at the time. It represented 13,000 because the population was smaller. I think people get hung up on 'is a 20 or is it a 4,' and I've watched this number go down from a 20 to a 4. You know my perspective on viewing. Criticism is people are spending less time watching TV. Okay, maybe. With the inclusion of desktop, mobile, and my apps, my Facebook pages, my Twitter accounts - I'm reaching more people than I've ever reached before. I have more people engaging with my brands, and my products and my people than in the history of time. It just happens to be on 8 different platforms, or maybe it's 130 when you could 35 Facebook pages and 85 Twitter accounts. I've got a YouTube

page. I've got a LinkedIn page. I've got 26 LinkedIn accounts for everyone downstairs. I've got a Pinterest page. It goes on and on and on and on and on."

"There are weeks when we reach more people on Facebook than on-air. It doesn't say anything about our on-air, that's not a disrespect, it doesn't mean we're any less impactful. They all have to work. We're just in impression based business."

Name: Mark Muller

Date: March 16, 2016

Title: WFAA Chief Photographer

How would you define impact?

"I would define it as making a difference. Making a change. Getting noticed, in general."

How should be measure impact?

"That's an interesting topic, because if you reach back to way back when, we'll go with television news, not journalism in general. When television news was invented, it was to fulfill the public service portion of the broadcaster's day. Then the information became sought out. It started to get more viewership that papers were getting readership or radio stations were getting listeners, and at that point, they decided to monetize it somehow, so they started commercializing – adding commercials to the news hour. For years and years and years, the only way they thought they could measure impact was with an external monitor – like Neilson – which I guess for a time was useful. It's become antiquated. We've moved into a time, the era of the computer and the internet and connectivity, and it seems it's much easier to judge or rate the impact as far as viewership, with that medium, because you know if someone's clicked on your website. You know how long someone's viewed your page. How that equates to television viewership – that's a whole other thing. Even that system's skewed because a click on your site, a click on your story – doesn't mean they've watched it. They're scrambling to do what they did to television news years ago. They're trying to find a way to monetize it. They're trying to find a way to get dollars from those viewers. To my knowledge, nobody has come up with a good way to do that yet. The stories we did during our last ratings period – I did enjoy looking at the social media engagement. You could look on Facebook and see how many clicks or how many views there were. You don't always get that immediate feedback with ratings systems. You find out at the end of your books. That shows you what your sum total was and therefore, that sets your rank and ability to charge your advertisers."

Do you think there's too much emphasis on social media impact?

"I don't think there's too much. I think it is the future, but like anything else that comes along, it kind of goes in waves. There are still people that watch television because that is how they've always done it and they will continue to do it, probably until the day they die. There's people that have never watched television and get all of their news from their cell phones or tablets or a computer screen. Right there, you get the age division – it's usually an age division. We're not supposed to skew our coverage. We're journalists. We tell the facts."

"That's not always the way it is anymore. We tend to pander on occasion. Especially in our promotion and in our advertising. At this station, I haven't seen it as much with storytelling, and I am a manager and am privy to that."

"At my old station, we would sometimes do stories that advertisers wanted, and I have a huge problem with that. That was part of having a GM that was from the sales side of news. He didn't see that sharp line. He thought it was real grey. I think anybody that tells you that the internet, social media is not the future of communications in general has their head in the sand."

How can we ensure that people get the same quality of what we put on TV on the web?

"We can't. The only positive about every fool walking around on the street with a smartphone is that they become better visual thinkers - better photographers. That goes hand in hand with them demanding a higher quality product, because they themselves can make one. People under forty have their own editing software. They know how to edit and a lot of this stuff is self-taught. It's not what was taught in a J School."

"Right off the bat when we saw citizen journalists covering a bunch of stuff, it was raw. It was ugly. Some of it worked because it was real. It was immediate."

"Once journalism broadens out to more citizen journalists - an army of people covering stuff because they're on the scene and it's immediate - there's really no control over the quality or the content. I'm more concerned about the content. What I mean by that is whether or not it's real. Whether or not it's accurate. One of my least favorite words to ever have been invented is the word "blog," because to me "blog" means opinion. That's happening online just like it happened on television years back when people like Geraldo Rivera crawled out of the nook. That line between journalism and entertainment got really fuzzy and it's gotten worse and worse and worse. You'll have people of your generation asking, "Did you see that story on the Daily News?" That's an entertainment show. It's not meant to be, and it should never be, what you consider your journalistic outlet."

“I don’t know what direction journalism is going to go. I see a blending of a lot of the mediums. We’re already competing with newspapers. They shoot video and post it online. Some of it is very good, because they’re not always under the same time constraints we are. A lot of people say, “Oh, they do stuff every day.” They do really one product every day. We do multiple. We have multiple time slots to fill. Multiple stories fill those time slots. Multiple versions of the same stories.”

“We may have an investigates piece that runs in the 10, but we have to have versions of that for the 6 and promos for the 4. That goes back to your impact question. By impact, I mean get as many eyeballs on our product as possible, how that impacts them, how that changes them, how that causes them to react, who know.”

You would say impact can simply be someone just seeing a piece.

“Yeah. Just the opinion they’ve formed from that story is impact. Whether it be positive or negative.”

“The story we did about sago plants. If somebody saw they had one in their backyard and dug it up, that’s very impactful. I might’ve just saved their dog’s life. That stuff happens. Really, the only true way you can measure impact is by word of mouth. Talking to somebody that has seen your product and reacted to it. It’s easier to see that now because you’ve got social media. You’ve got Facebook. You can see the comments and the reactions.”

“There’s different levels of impact. That’s what I would like to know. I’d like to know, when somebody views our product, how they feel about it. How they’re moved to act or not act.”

“Until there’s a way - and it’s very “Big Brother-ish” - to tap into what people are viewing without them knowing it, there’s no way they get a true reading on what viewership is.”

“It goes back to the old ratings system. Just because FOX has a viewership that likes to leave its TV on until 2:00 in the morning, they’re number one at 10:00 p.m. by a fraction because they have better lead-ins. People either are watching or sitting there watching for six or seven hours at a time, but I would bet they’re not. I bet they’re leaving their TV on because they’re a Nielsen family.”

Let’s talk about editing style. When you’re looking for shots, what are you watching out for to create the most impact and the biggest reaction?

“It depends on the story. When you’re attached to a reporter, even a reporter that you work with all the time like Brett, you’ve got a different viewpoint of direction of the story. When I’m out there shooting, I try and listen to what people are saying. For instance, i

was out there yesterday - it's a little easier when you're by yourself visually - because I was listening to the scientist and the homeowner who were both mic'd up. I could hear what they were talking about. He mentioned his trees had been dying, probably from water contamination from an oil rig. Had I not had a microphone on them, I would not have gone over to shoot these trees. I would've just thought they were old trees that fell over, but they were part of the story."

"I'm not one to think that every shot has to be literal. Here's a tree, here's a boy, here's a bike. Some people will edit that way and some reporters demand that, but I think they're underestimating the intelligence of their audience. I want something to be visually stimulating. I like shots that you don't always see. I see my world from 6 foot tall. Not everybody does. I try to shoot and edit that may take them some place visually that they've never been, but I don't want to be so distracting, like putting a Go Pro on the wheel of a wheelchair. I've seen that done. You're lost right there."

What resonates with the viewers here most? What kind of storytelling? What kind of visuals?

"Are you talking about viewers at this station or viewers in this market?"

Both, but I'm interested in this station, too.

"Eight's always been the station that did it smarter, did it bigger. That's why we've got people like Brett and like Jason Whitely. They'll do a whole newscast almost on one story. That's unheard of. That's a daring thing. They've always done stuff like that. The problem with that is that it attracts a certain kind of viewer - an intelligent, educated, engaged viewer - somebody who knows who the city council members are, knows what the topics of government and important things going on in their city. Truthfully, if we wanted to get viewers, we'd just put on cute pictures of kittens. I guarantee you, if I had a video of a cute kitten saying, "Momma," that would be the number one thing viewed. I like cute kittens, too, but that frightens the s--t out of me, that it would be viewed four million times more than the president coming to town. That's where we are now. Well, that's where we've always been, but now we can measure it by eyeballs."

Do you think we put too much emphasis on viewership versus news value?

"Since 1950, yes. Since the day they decided to put a soap commercial, or whatever the first commercials were attached to a newscast, that's been the downward slope we've been on. This station has been fighting it forever."

This may be a silly question, but I know ratings equates to money. What does a point different really mean in monetary value?

“The difference between saying you’re the number one station or number two - I don’t think the sales people can push that - but the people that are giving their money for advertising don’t give a s--t about the point or the micro point. They care about FOX is watched at 10:00 p.m. more than anyone else. We’re going to take our Cadillac ads to them. That’s the reality of it. Now, we’re going to get tons of commercials on this station and i think most advertisers are savvy enough - and I know most sales people are savvy enough to break it down for them - thinking, “I saw your high-priced Lincoln add. It should probably be on this station not that.” We have different viewership.”

“Some people paying add dollars only care about who is number one.”

How - for investigative specifically - how would we run promos? How often would they run? Where would they run?

“It’s not just about running promos, it gets back to advertising as well, because we have to fight that battle. I think our biggest competitor in this market is Channel 5. It’s not because of their product, it’s because they just blanket the area. They’ve got their entire team on the side of Dart busses, on billboards, they promote outside of their newscast. We don’t. Up until recently, we had to most decorated and awarded TV journalist in the planet working here. He was never on a billboard. He wasn’t promoted anywhere.”

“People will tell you billboards don’t work. I think in a city like this, they do. It goes back to what you’re advertising, too. If somebody thinks billboards don’t work in a city like Dallas where you’re in your car for long periods of time, stuck in traffic, they’re crazy.”

“We do on-air promotions, but we do promotions during the newscasts. Why would we promote something to people that are already watching? It makes no sense to me.”

How early should we start promoting and where should we go first? TV or web?

“I don’t think it’s a matter of first, I think it’s a matter of time. Everything now has to be hand in hand. I don’t think you promote things outside of the week.”

Let’s talk a little bit about the future of investigative journalism. What will packages look like in 10 or 20 years?

“Wow, 10 or 20 years. I mean, that depends on a lot. That depends on laws, access - whether access becomes more limited.”

“Investigative journalism could be somebody with a drone hovering over your home in 10 or 20 years. It could be not being able to say somebody’s name in a story because of becoming such a litigious society.”

But as far as the look goes, do you think we will ever move away from the traditional stand up package?

“I will quote this ‘till my dying day and I believe this. I learned this in school. A stand up has to take you somewhere and show you something. Otherwise, there is no need for the reporter to be involved.”

Do you think we’ll ever have a time with strictly NAT packages - getting rid of the voice tracks? Will that ever be TV?

“Yeah. That’s the interesting thing about the internet. You can combine all the mediums. You can have audio and include some written portions. Basically radio and newspaper there. You can have video and written portion. Then that’s TV and newspaper. You can have all three. I’m trying to get my photographers - that’s what I put as a goal for all of them - to do what you just described as a no-track package, and NAT package. We don’t need reporters. I always say without a photographer, it’s just radio. We don’t need them. They need us.”

“A track and a script can really pigeon hold you in one direction. That’s part of the difficulty of working in a team.”

I was told 30 years ago in college to learn to do everything. It’s finally coming to fruition, 30 years later. I’d like my guys to do more storytelling and put things on the web. I’ve got a few guys who are really scared about getting in front of the camera and voicing their own stuff, but I keep telling them, that’s why you do it on the internet. That’s a good way to test yourself.”

Photographers here have free reign to do a story themselves? They don’t need a reporter?

No.

They just don’t do it?

“A lot of people don’t do it because they’re set in their ways. They’re older. You know, it’s hard for you to grasp this because of your age, but any profession - including this one - at some point decide it’s just a job. It’s where they make money. It feeds their kids. They come in every day, put in their eight hours, maybe a couple more, then they go home. That’s okay I guess. It happens in every profession. I think this job is a calling. If you’re not up for it and you don’t feel like what you’re doing is making a difference, making an impact, then you probably ought to do something else. Journalism is not for everybody. Just because you went to school for it, doesn’t mean you should be doing it for the rest of your life. These guys own hundreds of thousands of dollars’ worth of gadgets that most of them keep with them at all times. I’m as guilty of it as anybody. I see stories all

the time that I wish I had time to do. I started doing stories on the weekend and I'm going to try and put stuff on the station's web. I think time is the big killer on that one. With the internet, you only need thirty seconds of video - and even less - with just a quick write up. You don't have to deal with the burden of the editorial process."

Name: Lauren Fuhrmann

Date: April 6, 2016

Title: Associate Director of the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Reporting

How did you get into impact research? Why did you see the need?

"I started at the center the day after my graduation in 2010, and one of my tasks was to find out where our stories were being published. The way that we operate is we release investigative reports to organizations around the world and around the county. We don't require that they let us know if they're using our work, so we have to know who is looking at our work. We can't just look at our Google analytics. Google analytics is just a fraction of our total analytics. I started going out and just doing manual tracking of where our stories were being picked up. That was using Google searches and Google alerts and it was all very basic and super time consuming. That was the first version of our tracker. From there, I started manually pulling in Google analytics and Twitter analytics and Facebook and things like that to try and get a full picture of where our content was being seen, how it was being broadcasted. That kind of stuff. I continued with that for a few years. Like I said, I've been involved in our tracking since December of 2010."

"Then we started using Melt Water, which is a clipping service. So, instead of using Google alerts which is being phased out, we started paying for Melt Water. This showed us where our work was shown and different mentions of our work."

What all components do you look at when you're measuring impact? Walk me through the pre-reporting, post-reporting, social media and web analytics.

"We talk with the reporter. I'm sure that a lot of stuff I've learned from Lindsay is the reporter is already tracking that stuff and making sure they're already engaged in the process. We are not separate from the reporter. We all work together and keeping track of everything. We talk about what the potential impacts are and what we should be keeping an eye on. My intern and myself, we're the ones that are in charge of social media for the center, so we're keeping a close eye on it. The reporter has to be keeping an eye out for it as well. A lot of it for us is where our stories are being used and who is using it. Before the story goes out, it's seeing if we have any partners or collaborators and then knowing that we will keep an eye on it after it's come out. That's not nearly everyone. If we have a collaborator, it's a paper or a group of papers, but our stories are being picked up by 15 to 20 news organizations on average."

When you keep track of the post reporting, what do you keep track of in terms of web analytics?

“We keep track of the conversations that’s going on. I have been doing all of that manually. Then we were using News Lynx.”

“This platform pulls together all of this information. It was pickups. It was Google analytics, Facebook, Twitter and everything. Then we could take a look at it. Then there was a timeline view so you could see what happened over time and what that was correlated with.”

You manually gather the comments, the likes and the shares?

“Yep. We have been using Podio, which is what Lindsay was using. Before that it was just manually in an Excel spreadsheet.”

Why is impact measurement important for investigative journalists, specifically?

“Investigative reporters, well, all reporters, all idealistic. They want to see the work they’re doing have an impact and make some change in the world. Being able to keep an eye on that is really important.”

“I think it’s also for telling our story to the public. Reporters are really bad at telling our own stories. We’re really good at telling other people’s stories. We need to be better about showing how important the work that we do is. A lot of time, I hear complaints from the public. They hear about this horrible story in the paper but never know what happened. So, being able to show that I think is really important.”

Advocacy vs. Journalism – Where is the line? Is there a line? Is it really advocacy to want change from a story, or is that just journalism? Explain this: “...Within the field itself, if reporters crow too much about the success of their stories in regard to “impact” and “change,” they are criticized and professionally labeled as a shill for a cause, an “advocate,” still perceived inside traditional newsrooms as unprofessional.”

“If you set out with a specific goal in mind, that’s advocacy. If you’re setting out to expose a problem and expose both sides of the issue and not advocating for it to turn out one way or another, that’s where I see the line.”

“What we do with our reporting is try and show all the different sides. One of our missions is to see solutions, but we aren’t advocating for one solution over another.”

Tell me about your GIS tracking map. How did you get the idea and how does it work? How easy is this to implement in any newsroom? I know it’s free, but what kind of resources do you need? Skills?

“It’s so easy.”

“It’s copy and paste and the map is done.”

“I just copied and pasted everything into Batchgeo and within a few minutes, the story is done.”

When you say copy and pasting, does this mean you have to go out and manually find where the story is mentioned?

“That goes back to our tracker system. We already have all the information where the story has been picked up and where the different impact has been.”

“Google alerts is the free option. We set it up for our website using different key words for the reporting – our reporters names, things like that. You can have Google alerts set up, but like I said, Google has been phasing out, so the results haven’t been very reliable or comprehensive the last few years. That’s why we started using Melt Water. They clip everything and tell you all of the different mentions.”

“Typically it costs like \$10,000 a year.”

“We’re able to export a spreadsheet that has all the mentions of our work and that includes the URL, the headline and the news organization.”

“It’s not perfect by any means.”

Why is it so difficult to correlate social media engagement with viewership or readership?

How do we quantify and analyze likes, comments and web engagement? Thinking about TV, the audience online versus the audience watching the 10 o’clock news is completely different.

“Completely different, yes. The audience that you’re reaching on Twitter is different than the audience you’re reaching on Facebook. The audience that you’re reaching on the news websites is different that the audience you’re reaching in print. It’s all completely different demographics and people.”

Do you think you can correlate viewership with social media engagement, or is it a lost cause?

“I don’t know. What I liked about the timeline view is you could see when the story was on our home page versus when you clicked likes and Twitter mentions and Facebooks shares. I don’t know. I think that’s hard.”

Do you think journalists focus too heavily on numbers when looking at impact? Are we trying to perhaps create a meaning out of nothing? There are so many faulty metrics.

“Truthfully, I think some of the anecdotal stuff is much more important than just looking at the number of Facebook shares. We keep track of all the numbers, certainly, to see if there are any trends that we can draw something from. I think what’s even more important is who are the people that are sharing it. Who are the people who are Tweeting about it? Who are the people that are sharing it? We try to pull out exceptional

cases and that's the stuff that we'll put together when we're putting together a grant report."

Impact is very hard to quantify.

"Quantify. Exactly. Everyone wants to come up with the impact number when you take all of this in to account and here is the impact score for the story and that's just never going to happen."

I don't think that you can really get at anything with these numbers. Yes, I think you should track how many unique viewers are on your website and X, Y, Z, but does that mean that you have more of an impact? Not necessarily.

"Maybe a lot of people saw the story, but no one that has any influence on the story, versus a really important audience saw the story, but the web traffic was way down."

You discuss goal setting, and you use some kind of spread sheet to keep track of the slug, headline, awards, etc. How helpful is that? Then there's direct distribution. Pulling numbers on a regular basis. How helpful is that? How many metrics do you propose looking at without compromising the whole picture?

"In our tracker spreadsheet, we have three different worksheets. The first one is just where the story was picked up. That shows the slug, the date, the news outlet, the headline, a link to it and then we also look at how the story was used, so if they used the long version or a condensed version. Sometimes they won't just pick up the story, but they'll do a follow-up or an editorial, so we keep track of all of that of the first spreadsheet. The second one is information about the news outlet. We want to know what the circulation is, how many visitors they have on a monthly basis. That helps with our mapping. The third one is the story sheet and that has information about how we ran the story, when it was published, what headline we used, URL. It includes information about where the story was based."

Everything I've read and seen on impact tracking seems so simple. Why is nobody doing it?

"It's very time consuming and I think it's a lack of resources. We are paying for Melt Water, but there are a lot of smaller non-profits that can't. When I was manually compiling, it took me a couple of days a month to manually type in the information in how the stories were being used. By the time I had compiled all the information, there was no time to analyze it."

What about commercial newsrooms? What would it take for a medium sized market to start tracking? What staff would you need? What resources?

"I think it also depends on publishing frequency. For us, we're only publishing a story once every month. We aren't following several stories every single day. If you're publishing stories frequently then you need to pay for a clipping service for someone to gather this information for you."

“You’re either going to pay for someone to do it automated or you’re going to pay with the amount of time it takes to pull it all together.”

Why is measuring impact not a “one size fits all?” How can we set some kind of framework that is consistent and reliable across various platform?

“I’ve talked about the resources it takes to do just one story. You look at the output of different news organizations. It varies wildly. It also is different things you’re looking at. With investigative pieces, a lot of things go into the project.”

“I think there can definitely be a framework, but it would have to be tailored.”

What advice can you give to news directors and journalists who want to start tracking impact?

“The most compelling evidence of a story really having an in the world is those anecdotal things. It’s not just how many times did our stories effect a law change, but what specifically changed. I think it’s great when we get an email from a reader saying they read our story and it changed my habits.”

“Start right now. What is very overwhelming to a lot of people is trying to go back and keep track of past stories. Start today and put a few minutes into putting something into a spreadsheet. I wouldn’t worry about the historical data. I think that was really overwhelming for me at the beginning. Just sit down on Monday morning for a few minutes and keep track of something. Get a Google analytics dashboard...Don’t overthink it.”

Name: Lauren Phillips

Date: March 9, 2016

Title: WFAA Research and Marketing Manager

Briefly tell me what your job description is here.

“I’m the research and marketing manager here and my job is to make sure the news team, the news director, the sales director and the general manager - I have to communicate with them our ratings to make sure everyone knows where we are in the market against other competitors, whether it be a station down the street or time shared viewing.

Your position was new, correct?

“Yes.”

Let’s talk about impact. When you think about impact and journalism, how would you define impact?

“My definition of impact would be the consumer, or the viewer, reacting to [the story] whether it be posting a story on Facebook, saying ‘Hey. This is what I saw on WFAA today. You need to look into this.’ Or whether it be calling their healthcare provider or insurance provider to see if everything is okay, because they were educated by Brett or by Charlotte and they wanted to go in and find out if everything is okay. My definition of impact would be taking action after being educated after being educated on some of these issues that a reporter mentions or talks about on air.”

Definitely action. No changes?

“Yes, that’s a good point, too. Changes, because if you take immediate action, you may not see change but you will have a change. I say reacting after a story has been presented to you and then going back and down the line, that health care or insurance provider took some action to make a change in your livelihood.”

How would you define impact in terms of social media?

“I believe social media leaves a huge impact. We’ve seen these stories with Donald Trump where students have been removed from a Trump speech.”

But what’s the impact?

“The impact of that would be the viewers or the Facebook users being aware of what’s going on.”

That’s an argument I’m finding. With impact, and again I’m focusing on investigative pieces, purely seeing something on social media doesn’t necessarily do anything. This is the argument. Let’s say you’re looking through your Facebook feed and you see some article

and you expand it. Does that expand equate to impact just because somebody saw it? How would you really translate that? Awareness does not equate to impact.

“When you say it like that. If you're seeing any piece on social media, which would be an internal thing.”

“Awareness and impact is a big difference. Did I go out and there after seeing this post? Maybe not. But I was aware. Did it impact me to make a decision? Maybe not.”

I think social media can equate to impact, however, I want to know if you've ever seen a really good promo and then noticed a spike in the minute reports during that story of the segment airing.

“Video viewing has changed so much between desktop or tablet. We may have a larger impact on tablet. It's very hard to figure out and even has I say it out loud, I'm realizing it again. What's the impact from digital to TV and from TV to digital? It's so different and you're using different measurements.”

You were hired in this new position that was created because we are so desperate to get people our age to solve the social media dilemma of translating into viewership. Do you think that it's impossible to really translate social media to eyeballs?

“That's a really good question. Social media to eyeballs. The thing is, we don't know if the people on our social media channels are watching. I can't tell you that Sarah between 18 and 34, has a Twitter account, reposted a video from WFAA that she liked. I can't tell you that Sarah came home and watched the 10 o'clock news. It's really hard to decipher whether that left an impression on you.”

Isn't that why you were hired? Aren't you supposed to figure out how to translate social media engagement to viewership?

“That's right.”

What's the problem?

“You have to have the right tools. Do we know what that is yet? No.”

Name: Lindsay Green-Barber

Date: March 31, 2016

Title: Center for Investigative Reporting's Director of Strategic Research, former ACLSPublic Fellow at CIR working as its media impact analyst

How did you get into impact research? Why did you see the need?

“You need to understand impact so you can put out more effective reporting and allocate resources. The audience wants to know. Our audiences don’t trust the media. That’s been shown for years through surveys and institutions like Pew that in general, we have pretty low levels of trust among audiences and among citizens. Oftentimes when we talk about impact, what we’re talking back to our audience about is institutional change. We may have an investigation or story breaks and it’s some bad government agency or some bad corporation and then we only tell them about the impact if that agency fixes the problem. I think that’s a real myth, because the only thing the audience trusts less is government. We’re kind of in this tough position where we’re telling people things that they might now care about or cause some eye rolling effect. I think there’s this huge opportunity where if we widen out what we think about when we talk about media and impact is and really be able to measure it and then communicate that back to our audience, that it will grow the trust.”

What all components do you look at when you’re measuring impact? Walk me through the pre-reporting, post-reporting, social media and web analytics.

“At CIR, the way we approach it is if a reporter and an editor are working together and they’re identifying the story and decide what to green light and feel like they’re on to something, we bring in the distribution team and myself and the editorial team to think about where there is a potential for change. That includes thinking about if there are particular audiences that need access or benefit from having access to this information. Are there communities who might have an incentive to act? How would we make sure the information is going to get to them? Do we need to partner with someone?”

“If you’re thinking about who your audience, it helps you come up with the most effective way to frame your story to get your message across.”

Why is impact measurement important for investigative journalists, specifically?

“I think on the one hand, it’s a little bit easier than other types of news because you’re oftentimes uncovering something new that people don’t already know about, like showing some shortfall or loophole is there, where it’s easier to measure change. If you’re just in the daily news cycle reporting something and so is everyone else, it’s really hard to really get a sense for what your role is in the system of change. For me, one of the reasons it became so important to broaden out what we think about with impact and introduce new methods – change of behavior, change of awareness, change of knowledge – is because I think in investigative reporting the premium has been so strongly placed on policy change, structural change and government policy. If you only consider success projects where that type of impact happened, imagine all the stories you’re going to kill.”

Advocacy vs. Journalism – Where is the line? Is there a line? Is it really advocacy to want change from a story, or is that just journalism? Explain this: “...Within the field itself, if

reporters crow too much about the success of their stories in regard to “impact” and “change,” they are criticized and professionally labeled as a shill for a cause, an “advocate,” still perceived inside traditional newsrooms as unprofessional.”

“I think it’s different at every organization. I think in general, sure, promoting any one political party is not being an advocate, it’s being partisan.”

“I think journalists can agree they want people to find out more about a topic they are reporting on.”

“For investigative reporters in particular, if you’re uncovering something wrong, something that’s breaking the law, something that’s not being enforced, I think most would feel uncomfortable saying a specific remedy for problem should be.”

“It’s a challenge for reporters that when impact does happen, they are hesitant to talk about it because maybe they don’t want to be seen as advocates, but they also don’t want to be seen as claiming credit when they know it’s a really complex situation that required lots of different pieces falling into place and a lot of people taking action and impact is almost never the result of one investigation.”

Why is it so difficult to correlate social media engagement with viewership or readership?

“They’re not built to be correlated. The business rankings that happen are built to be black boxes if you will. It’s really tough to know exactly what it is that is happening. That being said, if you know at exactly what time spikes are happening and you’re able to – through your own social networks – able to see that there’s some sort of activity, then the challenge is content is disaggregated on the internet. The activity that’s happening on social media can sometimes be harder to see.”

How can we use social media analytics usefully when there are so many factors and errors in terms of numbers? Example: Unique users, privacy browsers, multiple viewers on one screen.

“I think one of the most important things for any organization, consistency is what matter most, so using the same platforms for your social media metrics and then using the same specific analytics and only pay attention to the analytics that help you know if you’re achieving your goal. You have infinite metrics out there between your web reach and social media networks, but pick what’s important to you. It might be unique, you’re right, and you might be over counting, but if you’re using the same platform all of the time, you’re probably roughly over counting by the same proportion every time, so you still understand magnitude. You still undertint story A performed better than story B and you can ask yourself ‘why’. You might be off by a few hundred or a few thousand views, but they’re both off by the same amount, so I think you can still make comparisons. With metrics in general, that’s kind of my biggest complaint is that we often take them and try to think about them in the context of ‘we’re going to look at them in the context of one

specific project,’ and you can’t do that. You have to contextualize your data. It makes absolutely no sense to look at one specific story or one specific project in the vacuum.”

Do you see privacy increasing, making these numbers even harder to analyze?

“It’s not something I’ve really studied, so I’m not sure.”

Why is so much emphasis placed on social media and web analytics when revenue for TV still comes from on-air broadcasts? At WFAA, only 15% of our revenue comes from digital.

“I don’t know. I agree with you that it is [important]. I think people get a little bit crazed when things are new and things are changing and there’s this pressure to figure it out and also an assumption that you can figure it out. People think because they have access to these analytics that they must mean something. I don’t know if that’s true necessarily. They can mean whatever you want them to mean....If you’re a TV station and most of your revenue comes from on-air, you have a good idea who your audience is, when they’re with you, if there are different people at different times. If you know all that, that’s valuable. Of course, if you have a digital presence that’s growing, you want to know who those people are as well. You want to know if those audiences are the same or if they’re different, and if they’re different, how can you bring those two together.”

You mention Richard Tofel’s engagement definitions as, “the intensity of reaction to a story”. How do we quantify and analyze likes, comments and web engagement?

“If you’re trying to measure the intensity of reaction, you could probably do something like a share. The more people sharing it, the more intense their reaction. However, what is that reaction, we don’t know. Is it outrage? Is it happiness? Is it frustration? I think that becomes a question. You could do text analysis of the surrounding text of every retweet or every share of a piece of content and then you could start to get a sense. That sounds really labor intensive and not something that we have done, but you could hypothetically do that.”

In “Zing” by Jessica Clark, she states there is no “master metric” to measuring impact. So, how can we set some kind of framework that is consistent and reliable across various platform?

“I 100% agree with Jessica. It’s the second time today I’ve been asked if we can assign number values to this kind of stuff and I think we can. I think that being consistent in how we measure stuff is super important...by using the impact tracker, we can keep track of everything.

Tell me about your impact tracker.

“It’s a database that holds all the offline qualitative impact that happens around our content. You can actually look at the web form.”

“When something happens after a reporters project goes out, the reporter or editor or whoever is going to post to the content as things start to happen. They fill out a web

form. Hit enter. It goes to the database and then everyone in the organization has access to it. If I'm doing a project analysis or trying to pull a project or put together a memo on a project, I'll look at all the analytics and the social, and I'll also look at what the impact was."

"There are about 20 different organizations that have a form of an impact tracker."

"The macro, micro, meso, which are the big categories of impact, those are the same for everybody, but when you click on the dropdown, for us, macro change is like a government investigation. For another organization, it might be a school district implements new policies."

"I can go in based on all of those tags. If someone asks me, 'What has our impact been on our criminal justice beat?' I can go in and filter just by criminal justice. I can set any time frame that I want and see what the impact is."

"I can use it for research. The development team can use it. The distribution team can also use it so if there is a follow up that needs to be done, we can write about what happened after a story broke."

Why is measuring impact not a "one size fits all" in terms of audience?

"I think different platforms do different things, and different organizations are trying to achieve different things. I think there are some standard things we can look at."

"I think this offline impact framework is a general framework that works for different platforms, pretty much across the board, from large commercial media to super small single-issue non-profits. I think there's something about the simplicity of the framework. It's not one size fits all, but the approach is one size fits all."

What advice can you give to news directors and journalists who want to start tracking impact?

"Don't be scared. It's not that bad, but also impact measurement should be a way to show the value of investigative reporting, whether it be to your audience or it be subscribers if you do have a commercial value or funders if you have a nonprofit model. It's a way to do better work and get more support for your work."

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