

Ethics of Participation: Research or Reporting?

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Abstract

The diverse assemblage of those involved in Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICTD) efforts exposes inherent tensions between fields and perspectives. While debates between researcher and practitioner "intent" are starting to surface, these conversations primarily pertain to the methods and strategies in common and in question between technologists and social scientists. This paper discusses the differing ethics between the academic researcher, the practitioner, and the journalist - which efforts work in support of each other, and where are they at variance? When the journalist is also the researcher, a phenomenon occurring more frequently (especially in academic ICTD efforts), what position does this hybrid entity assume when conducting fieldwork? The authors, an ICTD professor and a professional journalist pursuing a Ph.D. in ICTD, are interested in exploring issues of representation, identity and responsibility in ICTD initiatives through the lens of Development Informatics in order to study the opportunities and challenges inherent when the traditions and perspectives of different academic and vocational fields merge, requiring those from different backgrounds to mediate and negotiate their involvement strategies with target communities. This paper endeavors to provide a "blueprint" for others in ICTD coming from a variety of backgrounds and methodologies, and to begin a larger discussion that can grow to incorporate the positions of additional journalists, researchers, and the combination, from both Northern and Southern standpoints.

I. Introduction

Academic researchers, international development practitioners and multimedia journalists are increasingly converging at program and research sites around the world, inviting discussion and debate about competing interests and contradictory practices related to participant access and professional ethics. This overlap of research, practice and reporting is expected to continue as a result of changes in the news industry and expansion of the fields of Development Informatics (DI) and Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICTD). Development Informatics provides a compelling lens through which to study and reflect upon Information and Communication Technology for Development, where the wider human context is the subject of inquiry, rather than the technology itself. DI, then, is similar to Journalism, as journalism is concerned with information, communication and knowledge production much the way DI is, and both fields are likewise concerned with the impact of knowledge and information exchange within the context of the affected community.

In this paper, we make the case that certain types of journalism can reflect and embody the ethos of Development Informatics; that journalism is not encroaching on development, but

may offer a compelling extension to ICTD efforts that focus primarily on the deployment and impact of technology in a community. The transition of traditional journalism into a progressively digital field and the strong trend towards giving “communities a voice” through citizen journalist efforts offers an opportunity to explore potential opportunities and challenges between DI scholars and journalists in analyzing and explaining ICTD initiatives and their outcomes.

This transition is evident in newsrooms and academia alike. Journalism students make up more than half of the student body in the Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICTD) case studies and methods courses at the University of Colorado at Boulder, courses that consisted primarily of telecommunications, engineering and business students in past semesters. These journalism students state that this increase is motivated primarily by role models in the field of Journalism who take public activist stances on the networks - they cite CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360°* and BBC's *From Our Own Correspondent* as examples. Students also fear a loss of their field's once-venerable tradition and reputation, noting that the bloggers and amateur documentary film makers are replacing them. Thus, these students want to also leverage information and communication technology to “be relevant” in their future careers. Of course, the intrigue of working in challenging environments and the potential to create a positive impact on community development underlie the goal stated most often from student and professional journalists working at the intersections of development and information - the desire to give voice to the “voiceless” and tell their stories.

Many ICTD initiatives share this same objective – community radio stations, internet sites that feature participatory and community-produced content, and NGO bylines employ the phrase “voice of the voiceless” as their core mission. Leaving aside the arguments about subaltern representation -- first expressed by Guha and Spivak (Guha, 1982; Spivak, 1988) and now discussed within the context of ICTD (Bailur, 2008; Ganesh & Barber, 2009; Schech, 2002) – ICTD aims to promote and enable “citizen journalism” where “citizens create, consume, store and distribute information – such as SMS on mobile phones, podcasts and video editing on every PC, and the advent of blogs on the web” (ICT4Peace, 2007). This media is privileged as the most honest representation of underdevelopment and inequitable development, and thousands of efforts worldwide focus on giving community members the technical tools required to transform them into “watchdogs of democracy” (ICT4Peace). The convergence between media and technology is a staple of ICTD objectives and policies: there is an International Institute of ICT Journalism, and Microsoft Corporation will be hosting an ICT for Journalists workshop at the 2010 Development & Democracy conference (IIIJ, 2009).

There is an additional complexity at this active intersection of journalists, social scientists and community members. While journalists – citizen, student or professional – increasingly leverage ICT along with traditional media technologies for development purposes, how should we consider the journalist who is also the ICTD researcher, rather than practitioner? This becomes complicated when, as both researcher and journalist, the subject matter is also often a partner in the ICTD research (as in the case with Participatory Action Research, or PAR), and the research data can also serve as commercially-viable news content? While the former may produce technologies that can directly assist in community development¹, the latter may have a greater capability to bring attention to the development issue that has inspired the research. The journalism students in the ICTD courses may not see this distinction – or perhaps they do,

¹ The authors consider ICTD research a large field where a subset of the research has direct community empowerment aims; this is often called ICT for Development, or “ICT4D” (Sterling and Rangaswamy, 2010).

motivating them to become critical advocates for the “voiceless” through technology. This is where the lines between documentary making, reporting, research, and participatory ICTD begin to blur.

This blur is occurring amidst a drastic transformation in the news industry as news organizations undergo widespread layoffs, contraction in advertising revenue to support newsgathering operations, and the failure of traditional news organizations to monetize news on the internet.

This rapid downsizing of news divisions has hit international coverage particularly hard. Yet, this restructuring of the industry -- combined with the availability of new affordable, miniature recording and storage devices – has enabled enterprising, mobile reporters to pursue more stories within the international development arena, where they intersect with social scientists. “We are in the early stages of an era of experimentation, innovation, and cross-fertilization” (Kalven, 2010), which may lead to greater collaboration between journalists, social scientists and development experts. These authors foresee an expansion of development journalism and they forecast a greater integration of ICTD and journalism disciplines in the future, given many journalists’² intrigue and expertise with the technologies used in their profession, and the potential impact of using these technologies – recorders, video cameras, blogs – to both “cover” a community and to train communities to tell their own stories.

II. Blurring the lines

“Development studies is explicitly normative, as teachers and researchers are attracted to the field tend to see current reality as sickening....They want to change the world, not only analyse it” (Hettne, 1995, p. 12).

ICTD and journalism are both interdisciplinary by their nature, and often research runs up against practice as research subjects serve as key sources of information. This is especially true for the subset of researchers and professionals discussed in this paper – the activists and advocates. ICTD research projects may or may not have a change agenda, although those who work in the field of ICT *for* Development research argue that if the research does not result in socioeconomic and political power shifts, it is not *development* (Sterling & Rangaswamy, 2010).

ICTD researchers and practitioners alike share the vision that technology can be a democratizing and positive social change agent. The use of similar technologies notwithstanding, activist-based ICTD efforts have a similar approach to those conducting investigative, advocacy and activism journalism. Investigative journalism follows an overt mission to expose inequities and “reveal injustices and abuses of power” (Center for Investigative Journalism, 2010). Investigative journalism aims to empower the citizenry through education and engagement in order to catalyze the public to demand governmental and political transparency and accountability (CIJ). Advocacy journalism encompasses documentary filmmaking, magazines supported by political, environmental or other types of non-profit organizations and ideological television broadcasts and websites with a stated agenda (Entman, 2005). Activist journalism seeks to provide a progressive movement’s perspective on a policy or event in order to mobilize

² It is important to differentiate types of journalists, rather than to consider journalist a homogeneous industry. Reporters practice a variety of models of newsgathering, from public journalism which engages citizens as partial partners in the newsmaking process to peace journalism and participatory journalism (collaborative content production with reporters to citizen journalism that forgoes affiliation with mainstream journalists (Nip, 2006).

and prompt action (Wall, 2003). These three forms of journalism differ dramatically from the standards and procedures of conventional or mainstream news reporters, sector-based journalism (enterprise, economic, *etc.*) and the touted anti-establishment approaches of citizen journalists (Randall, 2000), which all occupy different places along the spectrum of commitment to accuracy, balance, impartiality, accountability, profit and separation of editorial content from opinion and advertising pressures (Entman).

It is these students, who aspire towards investigative and advocacy journalism, who comprise the majority of students in the ICTD courses. From our experiences, journalism students and professional journalists are asking to be embedded in field research in order to make the research part of the story. This is likely due to sharing the ICTD researchers' interest in international development, marginalized and migratory populations, disasters, social inequity, health and, yes, the "exotic." Many of these pressing social issues are "defined by media" (Bird, 2010, p.9) and thus seem to offer natural on-ramps to being part of the both research and change agenda, as well as reporting on it.

There is a fine line between social sciences' (and we count ICTD among this academic field for the sake of this paper) motivation to "get the truth" and journalism's determination to "get the stories," as there is often a convergence of purpose between researchers and reporters around change and empowerment – particularly by those journalists involved in producing advocacy journalism and documentary films. Journalists and researchers often share a passion for "the transformative agendas" of action-based research and ideals of self-determination.

These journalists echo the primary principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) – the method often employed by ICTD experts to discover information that results in policy or behavioral change, to engage the community towards self-reflexivity as a catalyst for change, and to champion a progressive standpoint towards human development. While the end goals maybe similar, it is important to recognize that PAR practitioners undergo extensive training with a community to design and evaluate a development intervention. PAR mandates that understanding context through the eyes and partnership of the community is a prerequisite to intervention (Stoecker, 2005). Journalists do not share this approach, as it would be tantamount to subjects "vetting" information before its release; however, both the ICTD expert and types of journalists described have a change agenda – either through the community directly or through reporting. It is this common drive that underlies the intersections of these "journalisms" and PAR-based ICTD, among other development social science endeavors.

This intersection of already-hybrid fields informing each other offers great opportunities for both, and the potential to offer double-strength development efforts through collaboration – the community is undergoing change at the local level, while regional or international attention can be brought to bear as well. This is not to gloss over the inherent tensions that reveal themselves in real-world collaborations between the stated sub-groups of ICTD researchers and journalists. Related work on the similarities and differences between journalism and social science help frame these challenges and opportunities, which will in turn help advise those students and professionals working at these intersections to optimize their research and reporting for the benefit of all communities and constituencies involved. The related work, analysis thereof, and the case studies that follow provide the background necessary for this timely exploration.

III. Related work: precedence and pressures

Similarities

Previous and related works that look at the relationship between journalism and social science, primarily anthropology, demonstrate overlaps between reporting and activism-oriented social science research (including PAR). These similarities fall into three broad categories: parallels between ethnographic and journalistic content-gathering methods, goals of social betterment, and pursuit of originality and newsworthiness. Thus, while there is little published discussion of collaborations or the collaborative potential between journalism and ICTD (or DI specifically), this literature offers a precedent for expanding relationships across these fields.

According to Boyer “news journalism and anthropological ethnography are distant cousins, equally storytellers (albeit in different narrative forms and representational registers) and equally social analysts” (Boyer, 2010, p.6). In the research process, be it reporting or fieldwork, journalists and social scientists often use similar qualitative observational methods to gather and analyze information -- data to the social scientist; narrative to the reporter (Weaver, 1980; Cramer & McDevitt, 2004; Haggerty, 2004; Bird, 2010). Overlapping skill sets, such as interviewing, recording, systematic investigation and identification of key informants are a testament to a shared professional admiration for “facts” and accuracy (Weaver; Haggerty; Boyer; Feinman, 2010).

As mentioned earlier, there is often a shared agenda between the types of researchers and reporters we are discussing in this paper – the advocate and activist -- to educate and engage the public with “actionable information” (CIJ). Similar to action-oriented research, interventionist and ideological reporting aims to influence behavior and promote public deliberation and solutions (Lee & Maslog, 2005; Center for Public Integrity, 2010). This suggests that both researchers and reporters are motivated by the “arousal effect” (Paulo Freire as cited in Lather, 1986, p.73) that research can have on target communities and reporting can have on the public and policy makers. For example, a PAR-grounded ICTD research project designed to empower women through community radio might also lead to print and broadcast stories that heighten awareness about inequitable gender conditions, ideally forcing a policy change. This sentiment is echoed by the journalist students in the ICTD case study courses: while they might not specifically reference “the arousal effect,” they report a dual enthusiasm for the potential ICTD has to promote change in marginalized communities, along with a desire to bear witness as a reporter and engage the public through journalism (thus using ICT for development purposes).

Journalists and social scientists likewise share a desire to produce original work. Both are concerned about contributing to the overall understanding or advancement of a subject. In the case of the reporter, this amounts to “getting a scoop” or being granted exclusive access, which parallels the professional reward a social scientist reaps from publishing original research in a peer-reviewed journal. For both the researcher and the reporter, professional enterprise is governed by standards of originality, verification and accuracy imposed through the peer review process for social science and the editor function in the news business. In many cases, the output converges. The news industry recognizes the importance of scientific contributions; research has become newsworthy in its own right (interesting research makes for interesting news stories), and news coverage of quantitative and qualitative research now has an established role in the news cycle (Anthropology News, 2010).

Differences

The natural affinities described above can mask profound differences and conflicting values between social science research and the practice of journalism (Cramer & McDevitt; Haggerty; Bird; Boyer; May, 2010). Of primary concern is the ethical context in which either

research or reporting is being conducted. Most researchers are bound by a formal, written code of ethics overseen by institutional review boards (Singleton & Straits, 2010) while journalists operate with no official, universal code of ethics nor are they required to receive formal training in their craft. Taking into consideration that ethical principles differ worldwide based on cultural mores and laws, reporters generally adhere to a common set of guidelines to honor truth and accuracy, desist from having a “personal interest in the causes, (or) businesses... of their sources” (Herrscher, 2009, p.280) and comply with generally accepted standards of behavior and common sense. Despite the lack of a common canon in journalism, professional ethics are taught in most journalism courses and are enforced by news editors. By comparison, social scientists are required to obtain and uphold tenets of responsible research as established by Institutional Review Boards (IRB), which set the standard for ethical engagement with research subjects, including informed consent and academic rigor. The IRB process is not necessarily well-suited for ICTD research, or any social science research with a change agenda, given its roots in medical and scientific inquiry, and ICTD researchers are increasingly calling for an IRB process more appropriate to action research (Sterling & Rangaswamy).

In the field, discord between social science and journalism can arise over the distinction between a source and a human subject and contrasting requirements for consent, anonymity and content sharing. By way of definition, a journalistic source is anyone outside of the newsroom who contributes to the production of a report. A reporter typically pursues and cultivates sources that can provide analysis and/or anecdotes to inform the story. Sources include experts, politicians, scientists, leaders, victims, participants or peripheral actors who are deemed capable of providing knowledge, detail or opposing perspectives. Good sources are the key to good journalism, and journalists approach their sources with both enthusiasm and skepticism, constantly gauging their trustworthiness and motives (Byrd; Randall).

Journalists work on the assumption that “interviewees are capable of speaking in their own voice, and only rarely require special protection” (Haggerty, 2004, p. 410). In most cases, journalists will request and expect their interviewees to be named and “on the record.” Public attribution of sources strengthens and legitimizes editorial content (Byrd) and holds both the journalist and interviewee accountable: identification helps assure the public that the reporter is not fictionalizing or editorializing, and by providing their statements on the record, sources are held responsible for their opinions and perspectives. This professional reluctance on the part of a journalist to grant anonymity stems from a long-standing assumption that a journalist’s credibility and a story’s legitimacy, in part, hinge on information transparency (Byrd). This is often in direct opposition to social science research, which aims to protect the identity of research subjects out of fear of risk or retribution for the subject’s involvement. This is particularly true when the research calls for potentially contentious social change such as PAR-based research. In addition, researchers endeavor to develop social theory from their data in order to posit more general findings to inform their field and thus shape future inquiry.

Reporters and researchers also diverge around the issue of consent. IRBs mandate informed consent, defined as “the knowing consent of an individual... able to exercise free power of choice without undue inducement or any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, or other form of constraint or coercion” (Nuremberg Code, 1949). Sobel further defines both *informed* and *consent*, stating that consent is the act of participating voluntarily; informed requires the subjects to understand the scope, duration, risks and goals of the research (Sobel, 1978). Generally, journalists neither require nor acquire formal written consent to conduct interviews. “The mere act of talking with a journalist... is a self-evident demonstration that one is

willing to be interviewed and must self-evaluate any risks that might entail” (Haggerty, 2004, p. 407). Reporters operate on a system of implied consent: providing one’s name and title, answering questions, speaking into a microphone and participating in a conversation with a reporter who is taking notes often suffices as informed consent.

Other contentious issues that may arise between ICTD researchers and reporters involve practices of story verification and vetting (Cramer & McDevitt). One of the golden rules in journalism is to retain editorial control and independence from outside interference: inviting a source to vet story content directly violates these principles. Short of verification of facts and translations, most reporters are opposed to letting study participants, group members or any sources consult on or check editorial content prior to publication. It is precisely this control of content that aims to separate journalism from publicity or propaganda. This points to an important distinction between reporters and researchers and how they define their responsibility to community members who are the sources and subjects of data. Community participation in all phases of PAR research is critical, as this participation invites community interest and “ownership,” which PAR practitioners believe is the key to project sustainability. Likewise, community involvement in the design and evaluation of the research substantiates data validity (Stoecker). This is not publicity nor propaganda, but the ethics and core of PAR -- and an example where journalism and ICTD diverge in approaches. This is not to say that interesting news cannot be surfaced in PAR-based activities, such as group meetings or “Search Conferences” (Stoecker); however, should the Search Conference be conducted under the auspices of an IRB, the journalist must proceed very carefully in their use of PAR activity-generated information as news.

ICTD and journalism efforts further diverge around the issue of audience: the end-products of ICTD research and journalism target different constituencies and outcomes. In ICTD efforts, there is at least an implicit responsibility to “prove” an impact to demonstrate “good” work. Often, there is the undercurrent of positive reporting in order to appease funders and secure ongoing support to further work in the community or to scale the effort. This is a purposeful distortion that may be ethically unsound but justified by social scientists who advocate for greater funding in order to conduct projects that have a long-term impact. While it is brash and bold to call this “spin,” there is a tendency to talk about “lessons learned” rather than failures, although events such as the two FailFaires³ held in New York and Washington, D.C. demonstrate a trend towards more candid disclosure. In ICTD research, there are standards of publishing as rigorous as any academic field, in part because ICTD researchers are pursuing promotional and professional goals in order to conduct additional and ongoing ICTD research. These publication and promotional goals are at variance with journalistic deliverables, which have a different set of parameters by which success is judged.

By contrast, news features and multi-media content are produced to inform, educate and entertain, a task made even more challenging by different requirements of balance, objectivity and detachment. (Conventional wisdom in journalism requires that traditional journalists uphold the highest standards of balance and objectivity; advocacy journalism requires less balance as it embodies a political or change agenda, and citizen journalism does not claim to follow journalist ethics but to tell the truth from the perspective of the citizen journalist.) Thus, there may be clashes between journalists and ICTD experts centered around the ethical and style considerations a journalist employs to create narratives of reality (Bird). Working at a faster pace and lower level of detail, the journalist is often involved in producing a snapshot of a situation

³ See <http://failfaire.org/>.

rather than a comprehensive account, especially in time-critical situations such as disasters and elections.

IV. Negotiating Relationships

Win-win

The commonalities and conflicts between researchers and reporters present interesting opportunities for working together. We suggest that there are three major modes of interaction between the two: collaboration, co-production and co-existence. Collaboration between ICTD researchers and reporters extends beyond simply granting access to the reporter. It involves a more consultative arrangement between the professionals -- creating a field partnership around the generation of journalism content, although the reporter and researcher maintain separate output. For instance, researchers and reporters might collaborate on story structure or share key informants and sources that enhance a reported story. Co-production is a more intellectually intimate enterprise as it involves both the researcher and reporter in the direct production of journalistic content. In a co-production arrangement, the social scientist and the journalist share authorship of an article or multimedia content. In some cases, the ICTD expert may serve as the guide, or narrator through the piece, in other instances, the editorial copy may be co-written by the researcher and reporter. These efforts could conceivably play to the strengths of both professions by fully integrating the expertise and erudition of the ICTD professional and the efficient story-telling skills of a reporter. Co-existence, on the other hand, requires the least amount of contact or overlap between the researcher and the reporter. This negotiated arrangement authorizes the reporter to go about their business of collecting “fair, balanced, useful accurate, compelling, impartial, and complete information about substantive problems and issues” (Ryan, 2001, p 17), leaving the researcher free to conduct their fieldwork alongside of but unencumbered by the demands of a journalist.

As more journalists engage with the ICTD field, and as ICTD researchers look to publicize their work on a broader stage, we agree that this “argue(s) for increased communication and cooperation between the two” (Weaver & McCombs, 1980, p.491). Collaborating or co-producing content with journalists can assist the ICTD researcher in meeting their responsibility to communicate their research with the broader public (which has often contributed to research funding through tax dollars) and policymakers, as “success of applied researchers depends on their ability to communicate their findings clearly to sponsors so as to facilitate rational decision making” (Singleton & Straits, 2010, p. 462). Journalists also provide an important link between ICTD research projects and other stakeholders and audiences who are likely to get their information from the media rather than peer-reviewed journals or specialty publications, as “print, broadcast or online journalists offers great potential for making our work more accessible, as well as boosting public understanding of and engagement with anthropological research findings and perspectives” (Anthropology News, 2010, p.5). News coverage can magnify a topic and bring much-needed attention to pressing issues in the development arena by raising awareness of conflicts, crises and concerns and by contributing to a broader understanding of the intricacies of development work. While it is impossible to guarantee a positive outcome from all press coverage, communities and researchers can, in some cases, directly benefit from press coverage in terms of fund-raising and policy impact. For better or for worse, journalists are well-placed to “convey the beauty (and occasional warts) of the scientific process at work” (Feinman, 2010, p. 13).

Highlighting the opportunity for social scientists (we are extending this to include ICTD for the sake of this paper), Bird posits “The time is right for more anthropologists to engage with news media” (Bird, 2010, p.5). Professionals in the field of anthropology demonstrate a potential model: Worldwide Development (Worldwisedevelopment.org, 2010) links anthropologists, development practitioners and students, by putting “worthwhile and relevant anthropological knowledge” within reach of development practitioners in “order to help them design and implement more efficient projects” (Worldwisedevelopment.org, 2010). The interactive site offers “realtime feedback on a proposed intervention” and “links aid workers with anthropologists who possess regional and topical expertise” (Moore, 2010). We envision similar efforts for creating alliances between ICTD professionals and journalists as well.

Lose-lose: Mitigating and managing concerns

These opportunities must be balanced with recognition of the risks inherent in social science and reporting partnerships. Journalists often battle the criticism that their work lacks the depth to produce authentic portraits of social life (Cramer & McDevitt). But the goal of most journalism projects is tell *a story* of a condition, curiosity or commonality, not *the story* of a culture, a collection of beliefs or a social system. To do this, reporters sometimes rely on individuals (or communities) to represent a universal value or a key component of an issue – be it victim, victor, perpetrator, maverick, the wronged, the beneficiary or the exception. This can lead to tension between the reporter and the ICTD expert whose background in research methods, as a qualitative interview with one person does not capture the nuances and heterogeneity of the community and its unique development concerns. Likewise, working with only one or a few people in the community, the journalist may skew attention towards the person being interviewed, without recognizing social and cultural undercurrents that could serve to embarrass or endanger the person being interviewed. The risk is that a research participant may not understand the journalist’s role, or that a community member may not fully understand the effect of their participation in a news story. These tensions need to be negotiated in the field and mitigated as they arise after publication.

It is imperative that ICTD scholars and researchers share their concerns with journalists about story content and representation, just as it is important for reporters to clarify their plans and goals with ICTD and DI leaders. This will likely require negotiated access and cross vetting between the ICTD researcher and the reporter in order to set community expectations while honoring both the research process and editorial independence. The reluctance on the part of some social scientists to engage with journalists is, in part, due to the broad public criticisms that have been launched against the craft and industry of news. This emphasis on the weaknesses and failures of journalists and journalism at large often triggers a flight response amongst scientists. These concerns can, and should, be expressed and managed so that misunderstandings and unnecessary antagonism doesn’t prevent interesting collaborations between ICTD research and journalism. Ideally, different professionals converging on a common community should establish rules of engagement before conducting activities with the community.

V. Case studies and rules of engagement

In the last two years, there have been two students in the ICTD Case Studies course who have engaged in ICTD field research, one in the role of journalism professional, and one who will be serving as both a journalism student and student ICTD researcher. The hybridity of these roles, and the differences between them, ground the related work and recommendations this

paper aims to make. As surmised, data used for ICTD research may be attractive to the academy, media outlets, and the community itself. How can various iterations of the researcher/reporter mediate their activist and reporting roles while maintaining their academic roles? Issues of agency, impact, compensation, confidentiality and research validity combine to create complex scenarios that may become all the more common as the ICTD field grows and journalism continues to redefine itself.

Case study 1: co-existence

In the first case, a professional journalist in the ICTD course, possessing more than 20 years of experience in broadcast media, accompanied a joint engineering and ICTD project with both research and practical components. The student joined the project specifically as a journalist and not as a contributing researcher, although the entire group traveled and worked together, obscuring their different roles. The student identified herself as a working journalist to both the community and the NGO sponsoring the project; the shared community esteem for the NGO resulted in transitive trust of the journalist. This was demonstrated in her requests to interview community members: no one refused an interview; no one shared any curiosity about the journalist's relationship to the project or what she planned to do with the footage. The only tension came from the faculty leads and student researchers and practitioners who pressured her to give them free footage for public relations and revenue-generating purposes, although all stakeholders had agreed that there were no restrictions on her activities and that she held all the rights to her reporting.

This was a fairly straightforward and traditional arrangement. While the research team did not buy the material, the reporter went on to sell it to several text, print and video outlets, resulting in a prestigious media award, and subsequently garnering significant attention for the research project. The technologists and engineers did not have content control, although they did check data; the journalist herself was responsible to the editors of the various media outlets who picked up the reporting. Since then, this journalist has become a full time ICTD student, and is currently negotiating issues of access, control and compensation with the department and university.

As a student, she was under no obligation to disclose commercial efforts stemming from field opportunities where she served as a journalist. While the faculty has a duty to disclose external activities, students do not, and thus there is an assumption of ownership. However, when graduate research abuts commercial journalism, the lines must be clear and concise: the professional journalist who is also a full time doctoral student has to uphold IRB requirements during research activities to ensure research validity and subject protection, while being granted the leeway to conduct reporting activities where the same sources can be made explicit for journalistic validity. She must disclose both her research and journalistic aims to both the target community and funding/editorial entities. She is able to commercialize her reporting but not her research. Conversely, information discovered in the reporting process may not be covered by the IRB and thus may not be integrated into the research findings without first altering the human subjects protocol.

Case study 2: collaboration

In the second case study, the student is not in the ICTD department but the School of Journalism. In the summer of 2010, she intends to join an academic ICTD research study in which she will conduct both the qualitative interviews and ethnographic data collection, but also

gather material for her master's thesis in documentary studies. In order to explain the dual role, the student's journalism advisor and the ICTD faculty lead decided it would be most appropriate for the student to disclose to the community that she is there in two different capacities – first and foremost as a member of the research team, and secondarily as a journalist. Such positioning is seen as a way to keep community members engaged in the research activities; the seduction of being heard and seen may otherwise trump community interest to participate in anonymous focus groups.

Given the heterogeneous composition of the team, the ICTD faculty lead authored a Code of Conduct for all team members as representatives of the University, explicitly outlining behavioral expectations including subject matter, pre-approval for pictures/artifacts, and personal responsibilities while on site. Under this model, the journalism student is under the purview of the research IRB during her research duties; and under the Code of Conduct while operating as a journalist, which gives her guidelines for engagement without impinging on journalistic freedom. The interviews she will conduct as part of the research team are already scripted and approved; they are also designed to be anonymous. Interviews conducted under the guise of reporting are not thus protected, and she must obtain explicit consent to conduct on-the-record interviews with subjects. As discussed in the previous scenario, stories that arise in the pursuit of journalism cannot be used in the ICTD research as the subjects are not implicitly protected by the IRB; thus the journalist cannot contextualize or frame her ICTD research findings from her journalistic efforts.

Inevitably, human stories surface during ICTD research, which should be considered in the research design so to protect community participants and information while conducting formative and iterative research – a PAR hallmark. These human stories – a mainstay in development work -- pose an interesting challenge to communicate. The potential commercial value from journalistic investigation may do more to heighten community and public awareness to inequities and issues than will an ICTD research paper exploring the same community or topic. Conversely, ICTD research may enjoy greater assumed “validity” due to its academic grounding than might a CNN broadcast, a BBC radio report or a front page story in *The Times of India*. Which venue and author can make the greatest impact, and under which conditions? The hybrid researcher/reporter may be able to most effectively champion a development issue, given his or her access to both communities of practice.

Recommendations

The negotiations required to uphold the tenets of valuable research and journalism alike in the context of ICTD are complex. Rapidly-changing technology and the uniqueness of target communities compound this complexity. We suggest a set of tactics as guidelines in hybrid fieldwork settings. To ensure a common engagement strategy, we suggest authoring an overarching Code of Conduct that all “team” members must uphold in order to espouse a focused and cohesive mission. Good behavior should not be onerous, but should help people tread lightly in a community and keep each other in compliance in order to present a unified and respectful approach to community development. In our experience, journalism students and professionals find the postulates in the Code of Conduct obvious and reasonable; it is often the journalists who have to explain appropriate engagement to the technologists and other ICTD experts, who also feel that their code of conduct, as shaped through the IRB process, is the correct model to follow.

Access and use of data is more complex, but can also be managed through thoughtful attention to the goals and outcomes of the researcher and reporter, and the implications of these

goals in the data collection process. We suggest the following rule of thumb: information discovered via qualitative or quantitative methods approved by the IRB that does not violate IRB standards can be discussed in the light of journalistic investigation, as these data have been disclosed under informed consent. Thus it is assumed that community members have weighed the risks and benefits of disclosing information. In this vein, data can become news. However, news cannot as easily become data – the journalist’s efforts are not governed by IRB approval, and thus are privileged, even though the source is often made public by design. Information “on the record” cannot be easily integrated into research; there is no way to grant anonymity retroactively. Both the researcher and reporter share the responsibility to communicate to and educate a community about the different roles a social scientist and a journalist play -- especially if this is the same person.

Conclusion

As interest in academic ICTD efforts grows, and journalism seeks to further define itself in an increasingly interdisciplinary academy, there is a need to balance potential engagement strategies between the ICTD reporter and the ICTD researcher in order to most appropriately serve all stakeholders. The different perspectives and methods between researchers and reporters do not have to be a roadblock to working together; one can envision both sets of professionals consulting with each other and challenging not only the methodologies and motivations of each other, but negotiating issues of access and privacy to the benefits of both the researcher and the reporter. In many circumstances there is little distinction between a reporter and a researcher.

As noted, journalists are increasingly pursuing development stories for mainstream and advocacy press outlets, cultivating stories about ICT in development scenarios precisely because ICTD represents a new vehicle for news coverage about development issues. The actual impact of the application of information systems in development remains an under-covered story in both the press and in the ICTD field; it is this knowledge that both journalism and Development Informatics aim to produce, which underscores our effort to link some of the ethics of journalism and DI together – for potential collaboration and mutual effect.

This paper represents the preliminary step – starting a public conversation that can be carried into the field. We suggest those engaged in hybrid reporting/research activities consider the recommendations and examples described in this paper, and add their experiences to the dialogue. Hybridity is inventive and iterative – while the approaches discussed in this paper attempt to expose both shared and different standards, it is necessary to evaluate these approaches across the continuum of journalism and ICTD. We assert that the uneasy but interesting joint venture between reporting and research can reap profound gains for both; further practice and introspection should focus on an even more important question – will these gains result in similar benefits to the communities being reported on and researched?

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