Draft of Voqal PPT

Our society is based on John Stuart Mill’s fundamental insight that truth is founded on the open exchange of ideas. Mill believed that the only way to distinguish truth from falsehood is to constantly challenge our beliefs. If a belief can hold up to rigorous questioning, then at least part of it may be true.

Separating true beliefs from false ones is critical for the functioning of our society. Take climate change. The future of our coastal communities may depend on how quickly we can reach a consensus on why climate change is happening, how fast it is happening, and what can be done about it.

Our founders, realizing how important the open exchange of ideas was, instituted not only a system of checks and balances and protection for free speech, but also the insistence that we have a free press. The press is meant to be a “fourth estate,” a constant inquisitor of the government and civil society. The role of the journalist is to provide information that forces us—individually and as a society-- to constantly reassess our beliefs.

Well-done reportage leads us to learn new ideas and to question old ones. It can reaffirm or shift our opinions. Journalism is influential because good stories influence us as individuals and as a society.

The power that journalism has, in potentia, is not always realized, however. One reason is that journalists do not have strong enough means to measure whether, when and how their stories have influence.

Without being able to measure influence, we can’t make our stories more influential.

The project we have undertaken with the generous support of the Voqal Fund has been designed to measure that influence. Our guinea pigs have been the members of my organization, the Media Consortium.

Good: Produced something; we didn’t have to keep paying; have a methodology

Bad: Took a long time; don’t have a way to pay for method; don’t know what it will cost

14 people: most of them fund media, are interested in media, want to find ways to make it work better; they are explicitly activist and lefty and willing to rock the boat; how do we make a difference

point 1: investment of time is in the past

point 2: doc film has done great impact studies that rely heavily on focus groups. News is very different

**what I should stress**: **what are the possibilities from the juncture we are at now?**

**immigration as example; media frames—how people think and process ideas**

**how do we increase influence?**

small outlets do produce an effect—affecting public conversation-- qualitative aspect of stories, excitement of members, collective impact effects, vision of how it can be applied and what it can do

**Expand influence of progressive media. What can we learn? We have a way to get answers to these questions and we’ve built systems that we want to keep active**

--scale vs collective impact?

--quality vs quantity on topics

--point of view vs. “neutral” journalism?

What questions would you like to get answered? Not just what you are curious about, but also what advances the field?

**answers are potentially quite powerful**

storytelling—

time: 15 min; . I’m right after lunch

**aim**: get people talking and debating

**how to pay for it?**

Gov—no

Companies—no

Billionaires—maybe

$150k to keep the wheels moving

I see a path to make a difference for progressive media:

If we can influence the conversation our measurement will work

We don’t yet have good tools