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1. Introduction

This paper urges journalists and journalism scholars to explore the fields of argumentation, informal logic, and critical thinking (collectively, AILCT). It argues that within ALICT are ideas that can contribute to discussions about both present and perennial questions facing American journalism.

Granted, these four fields have some history together. For example, critical thinking and the branch of informal logic concerned with fallacies have made appearances in the journalism literature (for example, Merrill and Odell, 1983; Shoemaker, 2003; Stoff, 2008). But the depth of literature attempting to bring the fields together appears to be relatively slight.

The present paper seeks to address this shortage in two ways. First, it contends that, at a general level, journalism and AILCT are well-configured to work in tandem. This paper will define and sketch journalism's "theory of democracy" and the lay of AILCT. In doing so, it will try to show that the fields are well-matched in that journalism attempts to provide information to help citizens in democracies and AILCT aims to understand those attempts, evaluate them, and improve them.

After arguing that the four fields may agreeably mingle, the paper plunges into specific ideas from argument, informal logic, and critical thinking, and presents their applicability to American journalism. It taps primarily into two contemporary debates in the field: the search for a potential replacement for journalistic objectivity as an ethical cornerstone, and attempts by journalists to build relationships of trust with their audiences online. The paper also attempts to show how ideas from AILCT can be applied to the structure of news stories and appeals by journalists, in their reporting, to expert authorities.

The paper approaches the search for a replacement for journalistic objectivity through the concept of the principle of charity. It applies AILCT concepts of rules for discourse, as well as the concept of deep disagreements, to the need for journalists to build relationships. The Toulmin model is introduced as relevant to the construction of news stories. The implication of appeals to authority as potentially fallacious is also discussed.

Finally, the paper concludes with suggestions for further research.[1]

2. Introducing AILCT and journalism as complements

This section will first describe journalism's "theory of democracy" and the role of journalism within it. It will then briefly define and describe the fields of argumentation, informal logic, and critical thinking. It will conclude with a synthesis that attempts to show why the four fields complement one another.

[1] Additional commentary and any errata will also be posted at http://argumentinjournalism.wordpress.com

Journalism's theory of democracy

Nearly all attempts to justify, explain, or critique journalism, at least in the American context, have at their core journalism's necessity in democracy. Its essential place in democracy is an "article of faith among journalists" (Jones, 2009, p. 32).

Journalists can assume several roles in democracies. The concept of roles includes two dimensions: the tasks involved in fulfilling the role and of the purpose of doing so (Christians et al., 2009, p. 119).

Christians et al. (2009, p. 125) classified journalists' possible democratic roles into four types, including "monitorial," which encompasses reporting on "information of all kinds about current and recent events" (p. 125). Norris (2000) assigned journalism three primary functions in a democracy. It serves as "a *civic forum* for pluralistic debate, as a *watchdog* for civil and political liberties, [and] a *mobilizing agent* for public participation" (p. 23, her emphasis).

This paper will focus on the role that Christians et al. (2009) call the monitorial role and Norris (2000) calls the civic-forum role. The monitorial role is perhaps the most important possible set of tasks and goals that journalists could adopt. Christians et al. say the role "is probably the most widely recognized and least controversial in terms of conventional ideas about what the press should be doing" (p. 125). The monitorial role is "required" in each of the four models of democracy their book proposed (p. 133). Norris emphasizes the importance of information in democratic decisions: "What voters need for effective citizenship, and therefore what news media should provide, is *practical knowledge about the probable consequences of their political actions*" (p. 30, her emphasis).

Gans (2003) has referred to journalists' own overriding concern for providing information as "Journalism's Theory of Democracy" (p. 55). The "theory" provides journalists with a role, and therefore with tasks and purposes, in a democracy.

The "task" is "informing citizens," although the topics in need of reportage are unclear: The theory "does not specify … what news is and is not essential to advance or maintain democracy" (Gans, 2003, p. 56; similarly, Christians et al. (2009) referred to "information of all kinds" (p.

125)).

The "purpose" is a straight line from information to an improved democracy. Following the news leads citizens to be more likely to participate more in politics. Increased political participation *ipso facto* makes America "more democratic" (Gans, 2003, p. 56).

The link between journalism and democracy is not drawn at only a theoretical level. The link is part of both what journalists tell themselves about what they do and how they justify their work to the public.

What journalists tell themselves and the public about their work is important for this paper. It provides a standard that journalists have announced they should meet. Keeping that standard in mind helps ensure that an effort to merge journalism and AILCT is based in positions actually held by journalists and not against straw portrayals.

So it is important for this paper that, for example, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), attempting to describe "the common ground on which journalists [stand]," (p. 257), reported that the "primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing" (p. 12). According to their surveys of journalists and "journalism mission statements," the adherence to the providing-information doctrine is consistent (p. 14–15). International survey data also hint that providing information for political decisions is a nearly universal goal of contemporary journalists (Hanitzsch et al., 2011, p. 280).

The conviction that journalism foremost serves information needs in a democracy surely influences mainstream commentators such as Rutten (2009), who went so far as to say that the press acts as the "custodian" of the First Amendment "on behalf of the American people" (para. 7). The conviction also underscores warnings, such as that from the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (2009), that the Washington, D.C. press corps increasingly targets elite, niche audiences and decreasingly attends to the interests of the "general public" (p. 1).

Lastly, the reference to the "general public" alludes to another characteristic marking journalism's dedication to democracy: Its effort to keep its work accessible to both expert and layperson. Although certainly there is journalism aimed at the elite, the "general-interest" newspaper generally attempts to serve a wide audience by using, for example, short paragraphs and simple language.[2]

Argumentation

Argumentation theory is concerned with understanding claims made and defended in daily life, where people do not always follow the rules of formal logic.

The roots of modern argumentation theory are in ancient Greek work on rhetoric and logic (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, and Henkemans (1996), p. 29; Benoit, 1992). But only in the last century or so did argumentation theory evolve into its own domain, with goals adjacent but not parallel to its classical origins. Van Eemeren et al. (1996) said that the study of argumentation was "dominated by the classical tradition inherited from antiquity" until the 1950s (p. 51), when the contours of modern argumentation theory begin appearing (Gronbeck (1992) placed the beginning of argumentation's "identity crisis" later, in the mid–1960s, but in either case the point remains).

Van Eemeren et al. (1996) defined argumentation as an "activity of reason aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint ... by putting forward a constellation of propositions intended to justify (or refute) the standpoint before a rational judge" (p. 5). Argumentation theory itself examines "the production, analysis, and evaluation of argumentative discourse" (p. 12).

Argumentation theory's particular concern for everyday argumentation — how people take stances on issues — begins with the observation that people tend to argue about certain kinds of

[2]There is, however, opposition to the view that journalism's primary purpose is monitoring, facilitating, or anything else related to democracy.

An obvious response comes from the libertarian perspective, such as that of Merrill (1974). His view of freedom of the press commands that the press be assigned no social responsibility, but rather that the press have the autonomy to do what it likes. The U.S. Supreme Court, which generally encourages the press to carry out the monitorial role — such as in *Near v. Minnesota* (1931, pp. 717–720) or in *New York Times v. United States* (1971, for example p. 724) — endorsed Merrill's libertarian view, at least regarding newspapers, when provoked in *Miami Herald v. Tornillo* (1974).

A related critique comes from economics. Fengler and Russ-Mohl (2008) attempted to explain journalism using rational choice theory to determine what journalists do as rational, self-interested actors. Journalists, under their view, primarily seek prestige and attention, not to serve citizens in a democracy.

Boyd-Barrett (2004), meanwhile, argued that some journalists are intentionally compromised — that they consciously cultivate relationships that influence their writing. Indeed, the Central Intelligence Agency has acknowledged striking covert agreements with reporters to gain their cooperation (Holt, 1995, p. 174).

issues: controversial ones. "A person is in an argumentative situation when he [or she] addresses himself persuasively to an idea against which objections are likely to be in his audience's minds," said Black (1965, pp. 149–150), in one of the early field-altering works (Gronbeck, 1992, p. 18; on controversy as part of argumentation, see also van Eemeren et al., 1996, p. 12).

The existence of controversy — and hence counterarguments — says something about the kind of situation arguers enter: one in which getting one's way isn't the goal. Johnstone, Jr. (1965) said that to claim that argument is futile because of the persistence of counterarguments misses the point; it would be to claim that argument functions to force something upon another. But argument is a means for exploring the world, not a power grab. Through argument, humans embrace the possibilities for creating consensus and confronting complexity in human affairs through a process in which no absolute force may be applied (Cherwitz & Darwin, 1995).

How can one conduct this process of testing views? On one hand, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1965) noted, there already exists a "well-defined science" of demonstrating proof: logic. But on the other hand, they continued, "a great many of the proofs utilized in law, ethics, philosophy, political debate, and daily life cannot be considered relevant to logic in the strict sense" (p. 102). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, then, highlight two of the key foci of argumentation: everyday issues and the capabilities of ordinary humans, even those engaged in serious debate.

Subsequent research and theory in argumentation solidified the field's humanistic tendencies. Brockriede (1975) began his "search" for argument by immediately stating a bias "that denies an interest in logical systems, in messages, in reasoning, in evidence, or in propositions — *unless these things involve human activity rather directly*" (p. 179, his emphasis).

According to Brockriede (1975), argument involves the need to choose among competing claims while restrained "by what [people] know, what they believe ... by how they relate to other people and to situations ... by cause and by chance" (p. 181). This mood of limitations, the need to get on with it in suboptimal situations, will be important for argument, informal logic, critical thinking, and the application of them to journalism.

Brockriede's concern for how argument is actually practiced led to an important distinction from O'Keefe (1977). O'Keefe said a field dedicated to everyday argumentation must also concern itself with two everyday senses of the word "argument." He called them "argument (1)" and "argument (2)." Arguments (1) are positions. They are arguments "that" something, like "my argument is *that* he's crooked." Arguments (2) are arguments "about" something, like "they argued *about* who would wash the dishes."

O'Keefe's distinction is so influential that writers in the field today are often expected to clarify which sense of "argument" they mean to discuss (Burleson, 1979, p. 140; for example, Wangerin, 1993, p. 196). This paper will focus only on arguments (1) — such as the argument of a journalist "*that* the mayor is crooked."[3]

Informal logic and critical thinking

Informal logic and critical thinking are of even more recent vintage than argumentation as fields unto themselves. They began developing earnestly in only the 1970s (van Eemeren et al., 1996, p. 166; Hitchcock, 1996, p. 273; but see Pomeroy, 1983, for clues to informal logic's philosophical predecessors). Their boundaries — even their names — remain unclear after many attempts at clarification (Johnson, 2006; Scriven, 1987).

Informal logic develops concepts for an ethical appraisal of real-world arguments. It relates to both philosophy and formal logic by way of its concern for epistemology, justification, and argument structure (van Eemeren et al., 1996, p. 164). But as with argumentation, informal logic proudly proclaims its goals to be practical above all:

> It is the branch [of logic] that takes argumentation as its focus, particularly the argumentation of nontechnical everyday discourse and discourse about issues in the *polis*. . . . [It insists] on taking as its point of departure the natural language argumentation of the "market place" and the political arena. (van Eemeren et al., 1996, p. 164)

[3]Some years after the initial analyses by Brockriede and O'Keefe, Hample (1985) claimed that O'Keefe neglected a third form of "argument," which Hample considered "foundational" to both O'Keefe's distinction and argumentation in general (p. 2). Hample's form of the term "argument" considered the cognitive elements of both giving and receiving arguments. Arguers must, for example, use cognitive processes related to storing and retrieving the data used in arguments, or even noticing the need for an argument at all (p. 2). Hample called this dimension "argument (0)" (p. 2; for a fuller introduction to the Brockriede-O'Keefe-Hample exchange, see Benoit, Hample, & Benoit, 1992).

Informal logic divides into two broad categories. The first category concerns the proper way to reconstruct an argument for analysis (van Eemeren et al., 1996, p. 175). Such inquiries are related to theoretical models such as Stephen Toulmin's, discussed later in this paper, but focus specifically on dissecting arguments into premises that could fit into those models.[4] Concerns about reconstruction also encompass concerns about fairness, which this paper will also discuss more fully later.

The second category of informal logic concerns methods for deciding whether to accept arguments without relying on formal logic (van Eemeren et al., 1996, p. 177).

With what standards can "How good is this argument?" be judged? Fallacy theory seeks to provide one such standard. Fallacies can be broadly defined as "violation[s] of one of the criteria of a good argument" (Damer, 2005, p. 43). Fallacy theory has yet to determine the shape and scope of fallacies (van Eemeren et al., 1996, p. 181), and quite a bit of research in the field probes "known" fallacies, such as begging the question (Walton, 2005).[5]

As said, within the preexisting history between journalism and informal logic, fallacy has played an important role. Examinations of fallacies have appeared in journalism's scholarly literature (Buss and Hofstetter, 1977), trade literature (Stoff, 2008), and today in blogs and other mainstream commentary (Rosen, 2011). Fallacies have also been a bridge that argumentation theorists and informal logicians have traversed to reach journalism. For example, McMurtry (1988) referred to a system of assumptions in the mainstream media as an "underlying system of fallacy" (p. 134).

While not contesting the valuable role this work has played in merging informal logic and journalism, this paper tries to nudge the attention of journalists and scholars beyond fallacies. Soon, the paper will turn to other questions of interest to informal logicians.

[4]The challenge of dissection at issue in this first category is not only whether to use numbers, arrows, or some other method to display arguments. The challenge also encompasses how to parse, for example, extended real-world arguments for which an attempt to distinguish and number "premises" would quickly stupefy an analyst (Rothbart, 1983).

[5]Fallacies have, of course, been studied for millennia. The more recent investigations of them by informal logicians, though, were prompted by an attack on the "standard treatment" of fallacies by Hamblin (1970). Certainly, there are also those who critique the very concept of fallacy (van Eemeren et al., 1996, p. 180). Again, this claim, while deserving attention, is not novel (Hamblin, 1970, p. 136).

While informal logic provides tools for evaluating arguments, critical thinking, though sometimes seen as synonymous with informal logic, is more precisely an extension of tools.

Theories of critical thinking provide methods for engaging with a world in which writers in “textbooks, magazines, and on the Internet … present ideas they want us to accept” (Browne & Keeley, 2004, p. 2). Critical thinking promotes an “intellectual habit and educational ideal” (van Eemeren et al., 1996, p. 187) for answering perhaps the most practical intellectual problem: deciding “which conclusions to accept, which to reject, and which to study further before committing to a decision” given frequent attempts against our beliefs (Browne & Keeley, 2004, p. 2).

In other words: What should I think? What should we do, and based on what reasons?

The height of applying these critical questions is not in the protection of one’s beliefs against threats to them, but in examining both the beliefs and the threats. “*Strong-sense critical thinking* requires us to apply the critical questions to all claims, including our own” (Browne & Keeley, 2004, p. 10, emphasis theirs).

Browne and Keeley (2004) also distinguished between “prescriptive” and “descriptive” issues, or arguments. “Prescriptive issues are those that raise questions about what we should do or what is right or wrong” (p. 17). By contrast, descriptive issues and questions are those that “demand answers that attempt to describe the way the world is, was, or is going to be” (p. 17).

Putting it together

Having sketched the lay of the fields of argumentation, informal logic, and critical thinking, along with journalism’s theory of democracy, it is possible to see why, at a broad level, the four fields could have a close, mutually beneficial relationship.

The first reason why these fields could benefit one another is that they have an interest in descriptive arguments: Journalists attempt to tell ways the world is, was, or will be,[6] and AILCT scholars attempt to figure out the strongest and fairest ways to do that.

[6]Consider, respectively, news headlines like "High-end medical option *prompts* Medicare worries," "As many as 1,000 *killed* in Ivory Coast town, Red Cross says," or "Budget Battle *to Be Followed* by an Even Bigger Fight."

The second reason is that all of the fields have an interest in real-world decision-making: Journalists provide information in large part to assist with democratic decisions that citizens face, and AILCT scholars attempt to provide strategies for people who want to nurture their beliefs and conclusions in a society chockablock with challenges to them.

The third reason is that all of the fields are, at the core, humanistic and pragmatic: They attempt to help people while acknowledging the mind's limits.

From here, this paper will dive into some specific applications of the preceding argument. It will describe the concepts of the principle of charity, dialogic fairness and deep disagreements, the Toulmin model, and arguments from authority. It will try to apply those ideas into questions that journalism regularly confronts.

3. Some applications of AILCT to journalism

The previous section argued that the fields of argumentation, informal logic, and critical thinking pursue similar goals as practicing journalists and journalism scholars. If that argument is sound, then it is safe to move into specific ideas from AILCT that can inform ongoing debates within journalism.

These ideas do not necessarily raise new questions for working journalists and scholars. Instead, they can provide a fresh perspective on existing issues or offer alternate routes out of some of the field's thickest thickets.

The first idea to be discussed is the principle of charity and its potential contributions to discussions about journalistic objectivity. Next, the section will suggest ways that AILCT can assist with journalists' increasing need to develop relationships of trust with their online audiences and users.

The section concludes with a brief look at how AILCT might contribute to recurring journalistic discussions about arguments from authority (or appeals to expertise) and the structure of journalistic argument.

The principle of charity

The principle of charity, broadly stated, is that when one responds to another person's argument, one has a responsibility to respond to the strongest possible version of that argument. "Responding to the strongest possible version" of an argument can mean doing many things on the other person's behalf, including supplying unstated assumptions, using more precise language, or ignoring irrelevant statements. In short, the principle of charity gives the other person the benefit of the doubt (Damer, 2005, p. 16–17).

Applying the principle of charity to another's argument during a debate is, in part, an efficiency move. It avoids losing time when the architect of the argument under discussion offers a correction to a uncharitable restatement of it, which would oblige the respondent to address the stronger version of the argument anyway. It also reduces the likelihood of a critic committing the "straw man" fallacy: misrepresenting an opponent's argument to make it more vulnerable to attack (Damer, 2005, p. 17; p. 183).

Primarily, though, applying the principle of charity to an argument is a move of fairness (Damer, 2005, p. 17). Its role as an act of fairness leads to its potential application to journalism as part of a replacement for traditional journalistic objectivity.

The meaning of "objectivity" is slippery, but it can be invoked to defend journalism that attempts to "play the story down the middle," or "give both sides of an issue," while keeping their opinions out of the news (Ombudsman, 2009a, 2009b).[7] "Objectivity" came to dominate mainstream journalists' view of their responsibilities to readers over many decades, helped by many influences from society and politics (Schudson, 1978; Mindich, 1998).

Traditional objectivity is seen as an ethical practice that assists citizens in a democracy. In the words of journalist Ted Koppel, "objectivity … is presented to the public at large so that you out there have enough information that you can make intelligent decisions of your own" ("Should objectivity," 2010).

[7]These blog posts were written by Alicia Shepard, then the ombudsman at NPR, although they were credited to "Ombudsman" (see "Torturous wording," 2009). As of June 2012, the blog had changed hands to Edward Schumacher-Matos.

Traditional objectivity has been the focus of critique (Glasser, 1992) and even ridicule (Cockburn, 1982) for many years. More recently, however, stronger signs have emerged that objectivity's grip on mainstream journalistic ethics is loosening.

Some of the signs are incremental, such as defections of high-profile writers from newspapers to online outlets like the Huffington Post, where they have, as one such writer put it, "a chance to write with a point of view ... With the dysfunctional political system, old conventional notions of fairness make it hard to tell readers directly what's going on." (Kurtz, 2010; see also Gillmor, 2010).[8]

Other compelling signs are institutional. For example, National Public Radio released an Ethics Handbook in 2012 that downplayed the importance of creating "the appearance of balance" in favor of being "fair to the truth" ("Fairness," n.d.). At The New York Times, journalists are almost certainly reviewing their ethical compasses after the newspaper's ombudsman asked whether the Times "should challenge 'facts' that are asserted by newsmakers they write about" (Brisbane, 2012). The question itself indicated how far the norms behind traditional objectivity had led journalists away from a type of work that was useful to readers (Shirky, 2012; Rosen, 2012a).[9]

Those journalists who would abandon objectivity as an ethical framework face a challenge. They must propose an alternative framework that skeptical journalists like Koppel could adopt. This alternate framework would assuage fears that journalism without the backing of objectivity will descend into little more than *fortissimo* flapping jaws, ceasing to provide citizens with important information about the issues of the day that they can use to participate in democracy (for example, Koppel, 2010).

A news organization once might have tried to cover "both sides" of a controversial issue by "balancing" them or allowing each to bash the other. Now, NPR has declared itself among the news organizations more willing to "acknowledge" when "the balance of evidence in a matter of

[8]Online news organizations have in general been less interested in adopting traditional journalistic objectivity. One small publication even fired a writer for holding "the notion that there was an objective reality that could be reported objectively" (Nouraee, 2010).

[9]Professor Rosen was also bullish about comments made by the incoming publisher of USA Today in May 2012, which suggested to him that objectity's "View from Nowhere" had "become a liability" (Rosen, 2012b).

controversy weighs heavily on one side." Soon readers might find The New York Times more willing to "challenge 'facts' that are asserted by newsmakers." How can that process be made more fair?

NPR's goal of being "fair to the truth" is one method. Others have promoted "transparency" as a means of rebuilding reader trust and promoting accountability among media organizations (Craft & Heim, 2008).

The principle of charity can assist in the effort to promote an alternative framework for journalistic ethics, one that advances past traditional objectivity, while preserving objectivity's goal of presenting in a fair manner the arguments of those whose positions it is important for citizens to understand.

Journalists whose work is informed by the principle of charity can more usefully reconstruct the argument of a politician or pundit before critiquing it. They can reconstruct those arguments in a way that respects their readers' intelligence and the efforts of those engaged in the public square. The principle would warn them against, for example, "taking cheap shots" or "nit-picking" an opponent's argument through, perhaps, the use short or incomplete quotes, or by setting up a "straw man" argument (Scriven, 1976, p. 71).

Additionally, the principle of charity leads to some important questions about reconstructing arguments, which AILCT scholars have investigated. For instance, when reconstructing an argument, how generous must a critic be? Should arguments be interpreted as accurately as possible as they were delivered — that is, warts and all — or should needed but missing premises be inserted on the arguer's behalf to create a stronger position? (Hitchcock, 1996)

Journalists who plan to critique arguments publicly and also apply the principle of charity in their work might want to consider these questions as well. Demonstrating an interest in these questions would go far towards supporting the position that there is opportunity for intellectual curiosity even among journalists who abandon objectivity. They are not destined to engage in partisan quarrels.

Relationships with the audience

When one engages with another person — particularly when the engagement involves the exchange of arguments — how do the other person and their argument deserve to be treated?

It is safe to say that a blunderbuss has no place in the affair. However, other answers do not come as easily. Questions surrounding the demands of the principle of charity have just been discussed. What about when a person in debate is obligated to abandon their argument? Or: What is the proper response when it becomes clear that neither side will budge from their position?

Argumentation theorists and informal logicians have an interest in these topics stemming from "humanist principles" that underlie the fields (Boger, 2006). Their attention to "dialogical pragmatics" is another example of how their work can be applied to journalism, for their interest in generating ethical, productive discussion can guide journalists as their audience engages with them and their journalism online.

"Social life in the shared online world involves new types of relationships and connections," Singer (2010) has written, "including some that pose challenges for media professionals" (p. 118) She argues that as journalism has moved into "the network" — the Internet — the "rationale" for its ethical stances changes. Journalistic ethical standards previously arose from the fact that journalists "performed a privileged task: deciding what information was to be disseminated to the public" (p. 118). Because only journalists could provide the information that citizens in a democracy depended on, they incurred an ethical duty towards standards like fairness and truth-telling.

But online, information is everywhere, so people need to figure out "which information providers they can trust." For journalists to build trust online, they must build relationships, and, Singer argues, these relationships provide an updated rationale for journalistic ethics. Truth-telling "is as important as ever," not because the populace will lack alternative sources of information if journalists are untruthful, but "because telling the truth is, generally, the ethical thing to do in any relationship" (p. 119).

Journalists who develop relationships on "the network" face additional new struggles, Singer argues. They will need to adapt to the fact that the relationship is two-way: citizens can contribute to the network, too (pp. 125–127). Journalists will also need to build trust in relationships by being more forthcoming about their background and the work that goes into their journalism (pp. 121–123).

The vibrant social media landscape only amplifies the need — and opportunity — for journalists to engage with their readers. These opportunities facilitate the relationships Singer describes. Indeed, journalists at the time of this writing are learning more about sharing "opinions" on social networking sites (Buttry, 2012), with soliciting and vetting content from the "audience" (if they could be called that) (Farhi, 2011; but see Ingram, 2011), and with literally opening their doors so that the community can watch the news be made (Harlow, 2012; Applebome, 2010).

Each of these moves by journalists opens them to relationships with readers that might, perhaps even should, involve debate and discussion, in person and on social networks, about the issues of concern to their communities. AILCT scholars have an interest in the way to carry out such debate and discussion, and as journalists develop their relationship, they might turn to AILCT to inform their efforts.

For example, Boger (2006) summarized van Eemeren and Grootendorst's "ideal model in which the rules for reasonable argumentative discourse are specified" (p. 160). These rules include:

> Rule 1: Parties must not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or casting doubt on standpoints.
>
> Rule 2: A party that advances a standpoint is obliged to defend it if the other party asks him to do so.
>
> Rule 3: A party's attack on a standpoint must relate to the standpoint that has indeed been advanced by the other party.
>
> Rule 5: A party may not falsely present something as a premise that has been left unexpressed by the other party or deny a premise that he himself has left implicit.
>
> Rule 10: A party must not use formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous and he must interpret the other party's formulations as carefully and accurately as possible.

Even if a journalist rejected these particular rules, their larger aim is one that journalists building relationships in a network might find useful.

A second branch of argumentation and informal logic that might interest journalists who are building relationships is the topic of deep disagreements.

Fogelin (1985) defines a deep disagreement, in part, as occurring "when the argument is generated by a clash of framework propositions" — those "underlying principles" of a person's argument that cannot be addressed through debate (p. 5). In a deep disagreement, it is not the case that "arguments cannot be settled," but that "the conditions for argument do not exist. The language of argument may persist, but it becomes pointless since it makes an appeal to something that does not exist: a shared background of beliefs and preferences" (p. 5).

Journalists who are more actively engaged with their audience are naturally more likely to find themselves in a deep disagreement. The deep disagreement might occur with someone on Twitter, or with someone who has stopped by the newsroom for a muffin and a look-see on the morning news meeting.

The literature about deep disagreements can help journalists prepare for such encounters. If journalists want to engage with someone and yet find themselves in a deep disagreement, what should they do, especially if they want to retain (or gain) that person's trust?

Since the publication of Fogelin's article, ALICT scholars have investigated deep disagreements more fully. They have asked the basic question of "how can we know when a disagreement is deep?" (Adams, 2005). They have also asked: Once we are in a deep disagreement, what should be done? Feldman (2005) argues that deep disagreements can be rationally resolved and that participants should press on — and for both sides to suspend judgement if no resolution can be found.[10] Campolo (2005), meanwhile, argues that for those in deep disagreement to try to resolve their debate by finding "things in common" is to start down a dangerous path.

For journalists who want to build trust by building closer relationships with the community, then, AILCT can provide a useful head-start in their thinking about issues that might arise in the process.

[10] An extension of this idea might even have journalists abandoning the conclusions of their articles if they cannot reach a resolution with someone they engage with.

Elsewhere in ALICT

So far, this section has presented some ideas from argumentation, informal logic, and critical thinking that are relevant to some of the more urgent matters facing journalism today. It has posited that the principle of charity is a useful concept to remember when discussing objectivity. It also suggested that ideas about dialogic fairness and deep disagreements could be useful to journalists as they build increasingly personal relationships with their audience.

This section will close by presenting two other ideas from argumentation, informal logic, and critical thinking that are potentially relevant to journalists and scholars. The pace will be brisker, seeking primarily to reinforce the general thesis: that ideas from the fields can profitably cross party lines.

Arguments from authority

There is no escaping the need for authorities in modern life, be it politicians who call on experts to help with policy choices or academics-in-training who gratefully hand their car keys to their mechanics.

Journalists rely on authorities every day to provide background information and analysis in their work. On some topics, journalists claim to be experts themselves.

Argumentation, informal logic, and critical thinking have raised important questions that are applicable to journalists' appeals to experts and authorities, as well as journalists' own claims of expertise.

First, what is an appeal to authority and when is it fallacious? Of course, embedded in the question are two assumptions: that appeals to authority are not fallacious at the outset, and that it is possible to determine who is or is not an authority. For Walton (1997), Browne and Keeley (2004, pp. 89-90), and Damer (2005, p. 79), appeals to authority are not necessarily fallacious. They specify conditions under which an appeal becomes more problematic or more acceptable.

The *means* of invoking authority are also important. Of particular interest for journalists are the implications of using quotations as part of arguments from authority. Walton and Macagno (2011) argue that the use of quotations triggers a fresh set of criteria for the recipient of the argument from authority to use in evaluating it, such as whether the quoted expert's view is consistent with other experts'.

Walton and Macagno also cast doubt on the power of anonymous or obscured sources:

> The author is concealed and simply defined as "official source", "scientists", "knowledgeable", or with other epithets and attributes that can seem to strengthen the argument. A proper shifting of commitment based on expert opinion requires that the authority be named, and not merely made implicit without any name or institution being specifically quoted. (p. 31)

Finally, what are the effects for democracy of appeals to authority? Willard (1990), while examining the necessity and role of experts in modern public life, was unforgiving: "the Medieval logicians' chief reason for seeing the argument-from-authority as a fallacy still holds: to invoke authority is to abort debate" (p. 18). That would be a troubling conclusion for journalists who see their chief mission as inspiring and informing debate among citizens in a democracy.

Argument structure

Journalists who present claims about the way the world is, was, or will be use reasons and evidence to support those claims. Those claims are also based on assumptions, often unstated ones.

For scholars, argumentation provides techniques for understanding the structure of those arguments, and the relationships among their components — X, which is warranted by Y, supports Z, and so on. Working journalists, though, might also find ideas about structuring arguments useful simply to help them ensure that the stories they write have a logical flow and include the necessary support for their conclusions.

An example of a methodology for structuring arguments, well-known in the field, was born from Stephen Toulmin's book *The Uses of Argument* (1958). Toulmin was "perhaps the pre-eminent modern figure in the field of argumentation theory" (Wangerin, 1993, pp. 202–203; see also Loui, 2005). His model attempted to account for arguments' everyday use — an important consideration when considering a relatively imprecise field like journalism, whose writers face pressure to produce copiously and on deadline.

The specifics of the Toulmin model are beyond the scope of this paper. But it is worth noting that the model has been applied to a range of fields, including mathematics (Aberdein, 2005) and conflict resolution (Simosi, 2003). It has also been applied to fields of communication such as advertising (Ripley, 2008).[11]

4. Conclusion

This paper has had two related tasks. First, it attempted to show why, at a broad level, there is great potential for research and practice that merges the fields of journalism, argumentation, informal logic, and critical thinking. Second, it attempted to present a proof of concept of how ideas from AILCT could inform both current and classic debates among professionals and scholars.

Assuming a degree of success in these tasks, what are some possible next steps?

It is worth reiterating that the present discussions of the principle of charity, deep disagreements, and the rest do not provide the rich portrait of those ideas that they deserve. There is ample room for a more nuanced investigation of those ideas and their implications for journalism.

For another, although this paper has presented itself as going "beyond fallacies," the concept and varieties of fallacy are crucial to informal logic and critical thinking. In fact, any road that might lead one "beyond" fallacies would be terrifically long indeed. AILCT researchers such as Douglas Walton have conducted deep explorations into not only the definition of particular fallacies, but also contextual nuances that help determine the harm to arguments caused by their use.

[11] Critiques of the model have followed a few paths. One critique is that Toulmin played fast and loose with language, such as with qualifiers such as "presumably" (Verheij, 2005, p. 355) and with more important terms such as "valid" and "validity" (van Eemeren et al., 1996, p. 155). Freeman (2006) argued that the examples in *The Uses of Argument* are singular statements ("x is y," or "Harry is a British citizen"); so the model should be considered applicable to only those statements, and not, say, generalizations. Hample (1977) criticized some of Toulmin's distinctions, such as that between warrant and backing. Finally, Ball (1994) said that the model could not be used on complex policy arguments without a specialized computer program (which Ball happened to have at hand).

Perhaps obviously, given that many ideas from AILCT attempt to help their users determine when to accept arguments, the fields could also be used to interrogate the arguments of journalists that make up their news reporting. Fallacies are a part of this interrogation. So are asking critical questions of a journalist's evidence and reasoning, descriptive assumptions, and ambiguities in language, to name a few.

Finally, as a practical matter, readers might have noticed frequent reference in this paper to van Eemeren et al.'s *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory* (1996). A scholarly pursuit into the branches of AILCT and their interplay could do worse than to begin with that book. But the writing is friendly enough that working journalists might also find it a useful introduction.

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