

ISSA Proceedings 2002 - A Pragma-Dialectical Analysis Of Televised Town Hall Meetings Following The Murder Trial Of O.J. Simpson: Competing Demands And The Structure Of Argumentation Practices.



The “televised town-hall meeting” was originally instituted by the American Broadcasting Company on the television program *Nightline*. The program featured a round table of scientists, military experts, politicians and journalists joined by the people of Lawrence, Kansas. Lawrence was the setting for a controversial television movie entitled ‘The Day After’, a fictional account of the aftermath of a nuclear war. The basic idea behind the televised town meeting is that a well known newsworthy person (or group of people sometimes joined by a group of experts on the topic) sits among a group of ordinary citizens to discuss the issues of the day. Given that anyone is allowed to voice an opinion, and that all participants are, at least in principle, to be treated equally, the program is fashioned to reflect the value of open and free democratic deliberation. The town meeting gives ordinary citizens access to government officials and to a mass communication outlet. Even the name of the program, “town meeting” brings to mind an old fashioned forum where the citizens of a town can gather together and test values and policies important to the future of the community. Although the televised town meeting was introduced on *Nightline*, a large variety of variations have arisen since. Both cable networks and the traditional broadcast networks routinely invite callers from around the country to engage in critical discussion with experts regarding issues important to the polis.

Televised town meetings present a significant research problem for

argumentation critics for at least two reasons. First, televised town meetings provide an opportunity for argumentation researchers to extend and refine dialectical models of argumentation theory. Televised town meetings can be reconstructed as critical discussions and evaluated in terms of normative standards for ideal argumentation practices. The pragma-dialectical program of argumentation research and criticism attempts to understand argumentation practices as the result of the way in which argumentation forums are engineered. Evaluating argumentation from this perspective requires that critics move beyond analyzing the logical rigor of individual arguers and arguments to the ways in which the communication environment invites or discourages ideal argumentation practices.

The second reason televised town meetings provide an important subject for argumentation scholarship involves the role of mass media and public sphere deliberation. Several scholars have discussed the loss of public argumentation in which ordinary citizens are able to engage each other in deliberative discussions concerning matters of public policy (e.g., Goodnight, 1982). By taking telephone calls from viewers or by allowing audience members to participate in discussions with a panel of experts, televised town meetings transform passive reception of media controlled messages into a potential platform for the common person to contribute to public dialogue. As Willard (1990) contends, argumentation scholars have a responsibility to examine and evaluate communication platforms and their potential for increasing the quality of public discourse.

Given the significance of studying televised town meetings, the aim of this essay is to examine the ways in which choices made by discussion moderators in response to competing situational demands help to structure the communication environment, as well as the degree to which this environment invites or discourages rational discussion in the public sphere. In order to accomplish this goal, transcripts from the television programs *Nightline*, and *Rivera Live* will be examined. All of the episodes of these programs revolve around the controversy surrounding the verdict in trial of the N.F.L hall of fame runningback, actor, and public personality O.J. Simpson for the murder of his ex-wife and her friend. The *Nightline* episodes aired on A.B.C. October 4, and October 5, 1995. The *Rivera Live* transcript is from an episode that aired on C.N.N. on October 3, 1995.

In this essay, we are interested in illustrating how patterns of argumentation practices can be reconstructed as strategies for dealing with situational constraints and opportunities. Specifically, we argue that deviations from ideal

argumentation in televised town meetings can be understood as responses to the implicit ideals of public participation in policy dialectic in conjunction with the (sometimes) competing demands inherent in the pragmatic necessities of commercial television programming. Since the purpose of this analysis is *not* to make claims about the frequency of particular acts or patterns, or to generalize our results to a specifically identified population, we decided that it was reasonable, in fact advantageous, to focus the study on a single set of town meeting programs involving a single controversy. Examining a single controversial issue and a limited set of cases allows us to illustrate more clearly the ways in which particular argumentation practices can be understood as responses to a particular communication format.

1. The Simpson Verdict Controversy as Public Argument

The trial of O.J. Simpson for the murder of his ex-wife Nicole Brown, and her friend Ronald Goldman, was the most publicly monitored trial United States history (Walsh, 1995). In addition to the live cable television broadcast of the entire trial, local and national television news programs typically carried at least one story related to the trial every night (Cose, 1995). Several issues surfaced during the trial that made it a centerpiece of discussion on radio and television news shows (Walsh, 1995). These issues went beyond the trial itself to general questions about the ability of the judicial and law enforcement system to manage the rights of the accused, spousal abuse, misconduct by police, the use of scientific evidence such as DNA, and racism in the justice system. The verdict of “not guilty,” after only a few hours of deliberation was a subject of intense debate over the next few weeks.

The issue of race, more than any of the others, was at the heart of the controversy over the verdict. This issue was particularly poignant in the city of Los Angeles, the site of the trial, which had recently experienced intense rioting following a not-guilty verdict in the trial of four police officers charged with beating an African American motorist. There was some fear that a guilty verdict in the Simpson trial would set off another round of rioting. The beating of the motorist, and the following public response, created more distrust among the African American community of the Los Angeles Police Department and the justice system. Polls showed that public opinion about Simpson’s guilt was split largely along racial lines. Whites believed that the defense’s racist conspiracy argument was a red herring while blacks largely believed Simpson to be the victim of police misconduct. Given public concerns about more racially motivated riots, the

concerns about treatment of minorities by the legal system, and the public persona of the defendant, the issues in this case became one for the public sphere. The examples of argumentation presented below are framed by this context and should be understood as responses to these issues especially.

2. Competing Idealizations of Participation in Public Deliberation

Our conceptualization of discussion design is informed by the sociologist Anthony Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration. The theory of structuration asserts that patterns of behavior on the individual level are structured by culturally constituted rules, roles, and resources (structures) and the recursive use of these elements by social actors in their performances (systems). In order to understand the structure of television town meetings, we need to see the cultural ideals about participation that are implied in the design of the format (see Aakhus, 2000 for related discussion of formats in the context of information and communication technology). We suggest that at least three culturally instituted structures about participation are reflected in the patterns of communication evident in televised town meetings: the democratic ideal of public discussion open to all (e.g., Habermas, 1970; 1989), the western ideal of public policy formed through rational discussion (e.g., Fischer & Forester, 1993), and the contemporary ideal of entertainment as a form of mass participation (e.g., Jamieson, 1988; McLuhan, 1988). These three ideals provide resources through which deliberation in televised town meetings are structured.

3. Analytical Strategy

To see how these ideals compete and their consequences for argumentation, we ground our analysis in normative pragmatics (Jackson, 1993) and use the pragma-dialectical model (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson, & Jacobs, 1993) of critical discussion as our analytic tool. Pragma-dialectical theory involves the comparison of empirical data to a normative model of argumentation in order to identify departures from the ideal. These departures become the object of explanation and critique. The normative model of argumentation in pragma-dialectics models argumentation as the resolution of differences of opinion on the merits of arguments (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992). Arguments are then reconstructed and compared to procedures that in principle maximize the likelihood of deciding a difference of opinion based on the merits. Such an approach draws attention to the procedures of argumentation and how those procedures enable or inhibit critical discussion.

Our analysis focuses on the role of the discussion moderator in the town hall and how the moderators actions contribute to shaping a critical discussion (for further discussion of the role of third parties in critical discussion see Aakhus, in press; Jacobs & Aakhus, 2002). The ideal third-party facilitator for deliberation would engage in behaviors that maximize the argumentative quality of the discussion. In the case of moderators, we would expect, if they were trying to produce a critical discussion that they would take actions such as drawing attention to fallacious reasoning, prevent the discussion from lapsing into quarreling, and to draw out common values and acceptable evidence on which to resolve differences.

4. Analysis of the Town Meeting Structure and Argumentation

Based on a pragma-dialectical analysis of argumentation in televised town meetings, we have identified at least two general ways that actual practices of moderators create departures from the normative ideal of critical discussion. We do not suggest that these two practices exhaustively describe the activity of moderators in televised discussion. Our purpose is to describe how alternative ideals for participating in deliberation compete in the design of a forum and the conduct of deliberation.

4.1 Reliance on Experts as the Voice of the People

The *Nightline* and the *Rivera Live* transcripts were dominated by those with connections to the legal or law enforcement fields. Both *Nightline* and *Rivera Live* had panels of lawyers that were continually the focus of interaction. On the four hour *Rivera Live* episode the night the jury came out with a verdict, Geraldo Rivera, the show's host and moderator, constantly posed questions to defense and prosecuting attorneys. In fact, except for friends or family of either Simpson or Nicole Brown, and two dismissed jurors, the panel was made up solely of attorneys. These attorneys were not involved in the actual trial but were the network's in-house experts on criminal trials generally. Rivera declares, "Not guilty - kind of a four-hour town meeting. We're inviting the entire country to join us," however, in the course of the four hour show, Rivera took only ten calls from people not associated with the case or the legal profession in general. For the viewers, the invitation to "join" does not necessarily extend to an invitation to participate in the discussion.

A typical example of one of the few non-expert contributions in the *River Live* transcript is depicted in example one. Notice that while there may have been people on the panel who disagreed with Vanessa's (the caller) statement, they

were not invited to respond. Instead, Rivera cuts off argument and moves on to the next caller. Several instances of this kind occur where the caller's argument goes without comment. Rivera treats callers as participants in an opinion poll rather than as participants in a critical discussion.

(1) Rivera Live 3 October, 1995

Rivera: Vanessa, Georgia. You're on the air Vanessa.

Vanessa: Hi.

Rivera: Hi.

Vanessa: Yes, I just called because I think it's sad and kind of ironic that Nicole Brown Simpson actually had the last word in this. It was she who had left the evidence in the safety deposit box and she pointed to him. And she had told friends and relatives that he was going to kill her and get away with it. And she actually ended up having - you know, she - it's rather sad, actually.

Rivera: So you think justice was not done?

Vanessa: No.

Rivera: No. Joan from Connecticut, what do you think?

Arguments in the town meeting transcripts reveal that contributions from non-experts are treated as expressions of attitudes rather than assertions of standpoints, or are used as discussion prompts for the experts. However, once non-experts have made a contribution, they tend not to be cut off from serious discussion. In the few instances in which a caller's arguments were entered into discussion, the experts generally took over after the caller's initial speaking turn. Example 2 depicts a typical example. Victoria is a non-expert caller, Monahan is a criminal defense attorney:

(2) Rivera Live 3 October, 1995

Victoria: I just want to say that I feel sick to my stomach with - with what happened today. I have no doubt at all that O.J. Simpson is totally and completely guilty, and the jury just completely ignored the evidence. When Jeanette Harris (the jury foreperson) came out and starting speaking, it was clear that she was not listening to the evidence. And I know that race has been a big part of this case, but I think another factor - and that is that people in this country worship wealth and celebrity. And O.J. Simpson wasn't just a black man; he was an idol, you know, to not only to the black community, but to other people, sports fans. And I think that this verdict just confirms that anybody who is popular enough and well connected enough and rich enough can buy a license to do anything.

Monahan: Can I respond to that? I - I - I - Victoria, I don't think that's always true. I mean look at Mike Tyson. Mike Tyson, heavyweight champion of the world, a lot of money, popular in many circles convicted; now he's fighting his way back. I mean, I think that the American public - they love to tear down public figures.

Rivera: Tyson had a much, much different image than Simpson.

Monahan: Yeah? OK. but Still...

In this example the caller expresses the standpoint that wealth, power, and popularity can be used by defendants to sway juries unjustly. Monahan responds to the caller's argument by using the famous (perhaps *infamous*) boxer Mike Tyson's rape conviction as a counter example. Once the caller had made her point, she was cut off from discussion. Rivera did not ask the caller to respond as he does with the attorneys. Instead, he responds for her and the argument continues for a few turns without the caller ever entering back into the discussion. Rivera and the panel of experts exclude the original protagonist from the give and take of the discussion and become the voice of the people.

Although, expert domination of a discussion is not in-principle a violation of pragma-dialectical rules for critical discussion, the way they tend to be privileged by moderators in the town meetings is. If, in the give and take of a critical discussion, experts dominate the conversation simply because they have more to contribute, are more willing to speak, or are given the floor by other participants, then no rules for critical discussion are violated. However, the program moderators' tendency to favor contributions of experts or authorities over non-experts departs from normative standards for ideal argumentation in at least two ways. First, the rules for critical discussion articulated by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992) require that participants not be discouraged from entering or advancing standpoints. Rivera's and Koppel's treatment of non-expert contributions as trivial discourages, and in some cases prevents, non-experts from becoming active participants in the dialogue.

Second, privileging the contributions of experts violates second order conditions for critical discussions (van Eemeren et al, 1993). There are several preconditions for the conduct of critical discussion (second order conditions) that go beyond the procedural rules for conducting a critical discussion (first order conditions). Since critical discussion is founded on symmetry in the status of participants, the moderators' treatment of non-experts' contributions as mere expressions of attitudes or shifting the argumentative burdens from non-experts to experts

creates a departure from an ideal argumentation forum. Critical discussion is not possible when all participants are not given the same rights and responsibilities in advancing standpoints.

Rivera's decision to favor experts can be reconstructed as a strategy for reconciling the competing demands of the situation. Rivera uses the callers as resources for structuring the dialogue around the competing demands of public participation, rational dialogue, and audience entertainment. By taking calls from viewers, Rivera attempts to maintain the ideal of free participation in public controversy. By relying on legal experts for elaborating and extending debate regarding viewer initiated topics, Rivera maintains the ideal of rational discussion. Moving from caller to caller also maintains the entertainment value of the show because viewers are less likely to become bored by extended dialogue. However, by focusing on experts' contributions to the discussion, Rivera neglects the public's perspective of the controversy. By cutting to the next caller or by jumping in and defending the caller's standpoint, the moderator is cutting off discussion, discouraging callers from making arguments, and preventing callers from defending their own standpoints. For example, it's not clear at all that Victoria in example 2 would have defended her standpoint in the same way Rivera did.

A similar pattern emerged on the *Nightline* episodes. The setup of the stage was the first clue that the town meeting favored some citizens more than others. The general audience was separated from a panel of "authorities" by a small railing running between the audience and the panel. Most of the speakers for both of the episodes were considered to have some sort of technical knowledge. The first town meeting was to discuss the verdict itself. For this meeting, the panel included attorneys, city officials, family members of the victims and defendant, and several representatives from law enforcement. The second town meeting televised the following night concerned the media's influence on the trial and the panel consisted of family members, press representatives, and once again, attorneys.

One set of exchanges points out how the program's host and discussion moderator, Ted Koppel, denies that there is a privileging of authorities when challenged by a non-authority participant. Example 3 begins as Koppel is looking among those present for a participant associated with the Police Protective League and is interrupted by one of the "towns people."

(3) Nightline, 4 October 1995

Koppel: We have a number of policemen here tonight. I - wait a second - who's from the Police Protective League? Go ahead, sir.

Johnson: How can you call it a town meeting when you're only talking to cops and Daryl Gates (former L.A. police chief)? What about the people?

Koppel: Well wait a second.

Johnson: But you know, this is a joke.

Koppel: Are you a people?

Johnson: Yeah, I'm a people.

Koppel: Fine. hang in there for one minute and I'll get to you, but this man is first.

After Cliff Ruff from the Police Protective League speaks, Koppel returns to Johnson.

Koppel: All right.

Johnson: May I - May I -

Koppel: Go ahead sir. It's your turn.

Johnson: This is -

Koppel: Who are you, other than being a person?

Johnson: My name is Joey Johnson, I'm a revolutionary activist against police brutality in South Central Los Angeles.

It is interesting to note Koppel's defensiveness at Johnson's suggestion that city officials are privileged over ordinary citizens. Even though there were people other than police speaking up until that point, almost all speakers were of some official capacity. A few lines later in the transcript Koppel returns to Johnson's complaint indirectly through the use of sarcasm and ridicule:

(4) Nightline 4 October 1995

Koppel: We have roughly 20 minutes of airtime left, and I know there's a lot of frustration building up among people who haven't had a chance to talk. Tom Hayden (then a member of the House of Representatives), I don't know if you qualify as a people, but go ahead and talk.

Koppel's tactic can be reconstructed as an example of the fallacy of equivocation by changing the meaning of the term "people" from "unofficial, ordinary citizen," as Johnson means it, to "human being" so that everyone, including the government authorities, qualify as "people" too. Though almost every participant

after Johnson is connected to the government, law enforcement, or the legal profession, Koppel's insistence that these are all "people" reflects the importance Koppel places on maintaining the appearance of equal participation by all. Koppel's equivocation strategically blurs the line between public and expert participation in public controversy in a way that makes the competing demands of open participation and rational dialogue mute. By reframing Johnson's criticism, Koppel points out that government authorities are equally entitled to participate in open deliberations since they are equal members of the citizenry. The result is much the same as in the *Rivera Live* transcripts. Ordinary members of the non-expert, non-official public are ostensibly participating in public deliberation but are in practice relegated to the sidelines.

The moderators' departure from ideal discussion practices, in the form of violating participant's ability to argue for themselves, can be understood as a response to the competing demands of equal participation, informed public policy debate, and the practical necessity that the program be entertaining. Koppel as well as Rivera use callers and "town's people" as discussion prompts and as thermometers of public opinion reflecting the implicit ideal of discussion open to public dialogue. The need to balance open dialogue with well reasoned and well informed debate is reflected in the domination of experts in the role actual "argument makers." In doing so, both moderators draw on the knowledge and experience of their expert guests as a resource for presenting arguments that are founded on a sophisticated understanding of the complex issues surrounding the case. While the result is a departure from ideal critical discussion standards, it is not clear that other choices available to the moderators would have been more inviting. For example, Koppel and Rivera could have seized on non-experts personal interest in the case as a resource for accomplishing more open dialogue, and perhaps for maximizing viewer interest by involving them in a more direct way. However, the quality of the arguments presented in support of viewer's standpoints may not have been as logically or factually sound as the arguments presented by the experts. Given the constraints of the situation, the moderators' made choices and those choices influenced the structure of the discussions, for good or bad.

4.2 Undeveloped Standpoints

The resolution of a difference of opinion based on the merits requires that standpoints be developed so that participants are able to refute and affirm standpoints in light of the argumentation offered by an opponent. One procedural

requirement of ideal critical discussion articulated in the pragma-dialectical model is that standpoints must be defended until abandoned by a protagonist or agreed to by an antagonist. The choices a moderator makes about how to develop a conversation may encourage or discourage the full development of standpoints. There are several instances in the Nightline and Rivera Live transcripts in which moderators' actions result in standpoints that are under developed or that are concluded prematurely. Example 5 is one such case.

(5) Nightline, 5 October 1995

Koppel: Sitting right next to you is Michael Jackson, another talk show - longstanding talk show host in this community.

Jackson: We don't agree.

Koppel: I was reading that -

Praeger: Ever.

Koppel: I was reading that from your body language, Michael. Maybe you'd like to -

Jackson: I was very angered by something I just heard, and something I remembered.

Koppel: Well, put into English for us.

Jackson: Okay. Dennis, throughout the trial, you said, categorically, "he's a murderer." I don't think you have the right to do that. You said it over and over again.

Praeger: Well, the ACLU took out an ad that day after the video came out about the Rodney King beating and said that the police were guilty. I don't recall Michael attacking the ACLU for making that judgment immediately.

Jackson: They were not going to be executed or put behind bars, depending.

Praeger: Well, I didn't make that judgment until the evidence seemed to me, from Marcia Clark's opening statements and the lack, I felt, of a good defense, to be overwhelming, and I still feel it's overwhelming, and most of the country does.

Koppel: Jeffery Toobin, you wrote a seminal piece for *The New Yorker* early on, in which you revealed, I think, for the first time, that the defense was going to go after a Los Angeles detective by the name of Mark Fuhrman, and you suggested for the first time that race was definitely going to become an issue, at least racism was going to become an issue. Incidentally, I gather he dropped his libel suit against you, today. Is that right?

Toobin: I noticed that, yes.

Koppel: Talk for a moment about - we've been talking about radio, we've been

talking about television. – talk about the print medium: newspapers, magazines.

In example 5, Jackson makes the argument that Praeger should not be making claims about the guilt of a man on trial. Praeger's first response is not directly related to the standpoint Jackson has advanced. Instead, Praeger argues that Jackson didn't complain when the ACLU did something similar thing during the trial of the police officers who beat Rodney King. This tactic amounts to a variation of a *tu quo que* but is aimed at an organization Jackson identifies with instead of Jackson himself. Praeger later responds by providing arguments in support of his standpoint. Even then, Praeger's response only partially answers Jackson's objection. Praeger justifies why he could have come to the conclusion of Simpson's guilt but still does not answer the question of his right to express the opinion on the air. Praeger's response creates a disagreement space in which Jackson could offer counter argumentation. Rather than giving Jackson a chance to respond, however, Koppel moves to another participant and away from the current disagreement.

Koppel's move away from the development of the standpoint in example 5 is not a weakness in Koppel's ability to effectively moderate a discussion. There are several examples in the *Nightline* transcripts in which Koppel redirects the discussion when it begins to go off track or when Koppel directly asks for a participant to respond to a particular argument (see Aakhus, in press, for a discussion of the use of redirection by third-parties to manage impasse in disputes). Rivera also skillfully moderates the discussion in several instances in the *Rivera Live* transcript but on many occasions cuts off the development of an argument by changing topics, speakers, or moving to a commercial break.

The fact that standpoints often fail to develop completely can best be understood as the result of strategic choices made by the discussion moderators for balancing the competing demands underlying televised town meetings. Koppel and Rivera do not always allow protagonists and antagonists the opportunity to fully develop and defend their standpoints. In doing this, they draw differentially upon the resources available to them in the different ideals for participation: open discussion, rational planning, and entertainment. They could use any of these ideals to explain the efficacy and appropriateness of their actions. For instance, the entertainment ideal could be used to point out the practical realities of commercial television programming and the real "needs" and "interests" of the audience. By explaining the need for gathering the largest possible audience in

securing the success and profitability of their programs, Koppel and Rivera might justify interrupting argumentation because they must go to a commercial advertisement to pay for the air time that makes the event possible. They might also appeal to the limitations of the audience to justify their actions. For example, television audiences tend to have short attention spans and drawn out discussions of single issues are not entertaining enough to attract and hold an audience's attention. The many ways in which the critical discussion is circumscribed can be justified by one of the competing ideals embedded in the structure of the format itself. Movement to new issues, speakers, and new controversies can prevent well developed debate. However, allowing arguments to develop to conclusion may discourage public participation through boredom, may limit the number of issues that are exposed to critical public inquiry, or may contribute to public confusion or misunderstanding by bogging down non-expert viewers in esoteric detail. For example, Koppel's termination of the argument begun by Jackson and Praeger could be reconstructed as a skillful redirection of format resources (e.g., time, participant expertise, etc.) to issues more germane to Koppel's vision of issue significance.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of our essay was to illuminate the ways in which competing situational resources are emphasized by discussion moderators in the structuring of deliberative discussion in the public sphere. Specifically, we examined televised town meetings as examples of moderated discussions characterized by competing demands and resources for discussion. In examining town meetings we see how moderators moves encourage different kinds of participation among participants and how those moves highlight different conceptualizations of appropriate participation in response to the competing demands and the resources available to the moderators. We also see that the resources moderators draw upon and emphasize have consequences for the content and the direction of the talk produced in the mediated even. Further, the examples discussed here reveal that rational planning and entertainment tend to be privileged over open participation. The underlying competition among the ideals for public deliberation become explicit when moderators struggle in keeping their choices among these ideals from becoming apparent or even an issue in the discussion itself. Our analysis of televised town meetings enlighten our understanding of the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation and our understanding of argumentation in the public sphere.

This essay contributes to our understanding of the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation reconstruction and analysis. Our analysis shows the utility of the pragma-dialectical approach in uncovering the role third parties play in the structure of argumentative dialogue which is often invisible in more traditional theoretical approaches of argumentation analysis (see Aakhus, in press). Pragma-dialectical reconstruction illuminates how the conversational moves of town meeting moderators deal with both the practical aspects of managing the event and also with how the formulation of those moves can be justified by alternate ideals of participation - even if the ideal is not critical discussion (see Aakhus, 2000;).

Postman (1985) and others (e.g., Goodnight, 1982) assert that the monopolization of public dialogue by mass media and technical elites has resulted in the decline of the quality of argumentation in the public sphere. One implication of our analysis is that the shape of discourse in the public sphere is the result of choices among competing possibilities for the design of mediated communication forums. In the televised town meetings we can see how procedural aspects of deliberation influence the conduct of deliberation. So, while it might be easy to say that the quality of deliberation is due to economic, psychological, or sociological factors, we have shown here that deliberation is given a particular shape by the competing requirements of conducting argumentation in a mass media discussion space. Different choices, for example giving the mass media argumentation to non-expert participants, will have difference consequences that may or may not move us closer to ideal argumentation practices (see Croy, 1995; Willard, 1990).

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