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CONTEXT EXPLORATION: PARADIGMATIC VARIANCE BEYOND CURRENT USES OF CRITERIA

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CEDA was founded with the spirit of experiment; that spirit should be rejuvenated.
-Michael Bartanen, CEDA Yearbook 1987

Introduction

Considerable discussion has revolved around the establishment of rules for CEDA debate. Coaches and debaters complain about the lack of consistent standards by which to judge debate rounds. Many have attempted to locate resolutional stock issues (Patterson and Zarefsky 1983, Bartanen 1987, Herbeck and Wong 1986, Warnick1981) but do not claim that CEDA must adhere to one type of resolution. Some have written that "there is reason to believe that traditional stock issues are relevant to value debate" (Brownlee 1982)—others have attempted to create a set of stock issues for all non-policy debate (Matlon 1981), maintaining that that is what CEDA is. Our position is that while all of them may be correct and each contributes to the advancement of debate, CEDA theorists need to focus more on the process of stock issues development rather than developing steadfast stock issues. The current lack of standardized, stock issues allows CEDA advocates an unimaginable opportunity for exploration into new arenas of controversy during the round. By encouraging debaters (implicitly or explicitly) to examine the rationale behind their arena of argumentation and why their terminology is appropriate for that particular discussion, we, as coaches and critics, will be enhancing the educational value of the activity. The following paper examines the value of paradigmatic flexibility by explaining the context rationale, identifying advantages and addressing some of the major criticisms.

The Context Rationale

The importance of establishing stock issues was noted by Bartanen: "The identification of relevant stock issues plays an important role in the debate round.

Arguers must identify the issues they are to disagree about in order to facilitate meaningful debate." (1987, 42) While the importance of issue identification proceeds undisputed, when that identification should take place (universal standards or round-by-round delineations) is still in contention. As a result, the use of the paradigm has become commonplace in CEDA's value-oriented discussions. Patterson and Zarefsky in their 1983 book, Contemporary Debate, explain that "though the content of paradigms may change their basic function remains the same—explicating the implicit assumptions that underlie the activity of debate; making clear its general outlook, and answering the question, 'Just what are we doing in debate?"(105) Thus, any paradigm which fulfills these requirements would have some degree of utility. Cantrill points out: "Due to the ambiguity associated with evaluating or judging values, it is often necessary for the affirmative to introduce a judging standard or paradigm."(1987, 140) Many paradigms exist already including game theory, hypothesis testing, judicial basis, legislative basis, truthseeker and policymaker to name a few. In some ways, these paradigms overlap, but each one brings its own formula for testing a particular resolution's validity. However, what is to stop a CEDA advocate from supporting values in a totally innovative manner— from a political consultant's perspective or a foreign diplomatic model in a given round—if the judge is willing to listen?

An underlying theme of the above analysis is that of context. CEDA presents a chance for us to apply multiple contexts and move beyond standardized stock-issue analyses. "Context," according to Patterson and Zarefsky, "refers to the set of underlying assumptions or values on which the entire arguments depends." (10) Every event occurs in, and is interpreted in, a context. Periodically, debaters borrow the rhetoric of politics, philosophy, or economics because a resolution calls for it but, seldom do they actually take on the roles and the implications of that given field. Debaters should put arguments into a context, and argue them in that context.

Currently, there are some assumed contexts; that the judge will render a decision based on policy, value, or sometimes factual grounds. Unfortunately, the norms of competition have largely led to remarkably narrow interpretations of these models. The impacts of debate rounds are measured in numbers killed or all-encompassing values such as "freedom". (Loge 1988, 9) Yet very little of the argumentation that goes on in the 'real world' will use those contexts. More often than not, the context will be political (will it ensure me enough votes to win without sacrificing my integrity?) economic (will it make money?), personal (does this action fit my personal values?) or a combination of factors. By letting the debaters pick a context, or venue which reflects the occupational underpinnings of the resolution rather than static paradigms, we would be increasing the educational value of debate by letting them argue closer to 'the real world'.

A five-step formula provides easy in-round application:

(1) choose and establish a context

(2) develop field-related goals and standards for judges

(3) defend reasonability

(4) adopt speech patterns appropriate to that particular context

(5) justify what positions could be disregarded.

There are no automatic stock issues, only a formula to define the framework of the context rationale. If a team wanted to evaluate the resolution in a political model—one in which the judge played the role of the political candidate, and the two teams the roles of rival political consulting firms, attempting to convince the 'candidate' of the political efficacy of taking a stand in favor or against the resolution at hand—then criteria and stock-issues which focused on electoral politics or on the principles of public relations would be appropriate. Using the same analysis, teams could defend propositions on purely moral grounds (defining that which is 'moral' in the criteria), religious grounds, etc. The manner in which resolutions could be weighed is limited only by the insight of the affirmative into the relevant vocations for that semester's resolution.

A specific hypothetical example will help clarify the role of the occupational perspective. The spring 1987 CEDA debate topic read: Resolved that regulations requiring testing of employees for controlled substances is an unwarranted invasion of privacy. Many debate teams resorted to a quasi-policy approach, and argued that there were better, less intrusive means of solving the problem of drugs in the workplace; some took a values approach and explained that the right to privacy was so great that it could not be abridged for economic reasons; other teams took similar tacks. An application of context expansion could have led to a series of other case areas. A team could have argued a political consultant's context: that a candidate would be better served (electorally) by holding that mandatory drug-testing was unjust. Here the team would have to first establsh that the debate could reasonably take place in the political context by pointing out the relevance of the drug issue in the political forum. Then, assuming that the candidate's goal is to win the election, the team should establish criteria by which to measure the political efficacy of such action (against testing), possibly constituent polls or political party support. The affirmative would then offer contentions that pointed to Americans' fear of the growing power of big-business, their demand to be left alone, the feeling that what one does at home is no one else's business. The negative would then be obliged to argue that, politically, drug-testing was popular and would make the candidate look strongly anti-drug, etc. An affirmative might limit the scope of debate by arguing that concerns over the election would not include, for example, multiple-links to a totalitarian regime because the operating context relies primarily on grabbing

headlines and other forms of quick attention-getting, which induce shifts in voting.

Another approach available would be the businessman/accountant paradigm. First, the judge assumes the role of a businessman with the opposing teams presenting two separate economic strategies. Again, the affirmative would have to establish that a business context was a reasonable one by showing that drugs pose a threat to profits or competitiveness and then set criteria that fit that context (probably based on stock valuations, profit margin or market share). The affirmative would then offer contentions that pointed to the amount of money lost due to illicit substance abuse in America, and the apparent success of mandatory drug-testing at hedging that abuse and its subsequent losses. The negative team could then counter that, in the long-run, the business would suffer due to expensive employee strikes and lawsuits, lost productivity because of a growing feeling of distrust between management and employees, and that other means of solving the drug-problem would work better on a permanent basis. The negative team has the option of accepting the affirmative interpretation—which it should do if the affirmative is reasonable—or rejecting the affirmative interpretation by demonstrating that the affirmative interpretation is unreasonable. If the affirmative in our example proposed that the judge take a drug-dealer's perspective (leaving the negative little or no ground since the drug-dealer would be opposed to any attempts to curb drug use), the critic should reject the affirmative approach in favor of a negative context. In both of these examples, the affirmative is choosing the context for the debate, then setting criteria based on that context, and establishing what standards are appropriate for that context and criteria. Also, in both of these examples, the judge may not end up voting for "the good of all mankind" and instead may choose a course with only short-term benefits. This reintroduction of short-term analysis creates a zone for more case areas that don't apply to the fate of the universe.

Advantages

One need turn only as far as the basic educatonal values of debate to uncover the strengths of context expansion. In locating exactly what those educational values are Colbert and Biggers included that, "First, forensic competition improves the students' communication skills. Second, forensics provides a unique educational experience because of the way it promotes depth of study, complex analysis and focused critical thinking. Third, forensics offers excellent pre-professional preparation." (1985, 237) These three areas were supported with studies, and seem eminently reasonable. Thus, it seems fitting to evaluate context expansion based on all three.

The first reason we should support forensics is because it improves communication skills. While one can bicker endlessly over the merits of speaking quickly, the idea that debaters are forced to speak to a very limited audience type,

within the confines of traditional policy-making or CEDA debate, certainly limits the possibility for communication skill improvement. In defending the development of argumentation skills, Patterson and Zarefsky established its worth "through its emphasis on the generation and arrangement of persuasive appeals, the critical function of audience analysis and the adaptation of the ideas to audiences." (314) If a debater is encouraged (by virtue of the ballot) to adapt not only speed but frame of reference, that debater will acquire more depth and breadth in individual communication skills. The manner in which Congressmen speak to their constituents is far different from the manner in which they address colleagues on the floor of the House. Context rationale allows debaters to potentially call for the dismissal of an opponent's position if they do not conform to the neccessary roles. What would happen if a Congresswoman spoke faster than the normal ear could absorb? Her message would be lost and probably the election or passage of her bill as well. A judge assuming a particular role in a given round would certainly have to take his listening expectations into account. Tradeoffs and short-hand occur in every professional's vernacular and the debater who understands those different tradeoffs could be rewarded. Encouraging a variance in the venues of speech will clearly add depth to communication skills level.

The second reason we should support forensics is because it "provides a unique educational experience because of the way it promotes depth of study, complex analysis and focused critical thinking." Herein lie the greatest benefits of theoretical freedom. Currently policy debaters look at a topic and want to answer a very limited number of questions, all relating to what happens if one were to try to make the resolution come true. There is no analysis of the theological questions involved, the philosophical merits, the political impacts, the relative morality, or anything else that doesn't move one towards or away from impending catastrophe. The analysis is deep, but narrow. Establishing stock issues in CEDA would do the same. If however, debaters were enticed (by the ballot again) to examine several of the ramifications and angles of a given topic, their depth and breadth of study and ability to engage in complex analysis would certainly improve. A debater would have to look at all sides of an issue—not just those that apply to policy implications. We are reminded that "it is not researching and knowledge generation that is important but the development of skills required of a debater who is adapting argumentation and analyzing processes to new issue fields (topics) rather than merely adapting the much narrower (in application to anything outside of the debate activity) normative field (debate theory) to the topic." (Jewell & Wong 1988, 7). Indeed, debaters would have to examine the underlying moral schema of a given topic; they would be forced to view the world as an oil magnate or a would-be dictator. In researching debate topics, students would need to look beyond Foreign Affairs and The New York Times and into religious and political theory, communication theory, and the specific stock issues that effect a wide variety of specific fields.

The final area that Colbert and Biggers say forensics helps is in the realm of pre-professional training. Few would argue that the ability to flip "growth" fives times in a minute and a half is good pre-professional training—they don't even do that in the U.N. The type of pre-professional training that debate provides mostly consists of a good work ethic, the ability to problem solve, and the ability to work under pressure. Context variance would help in the ability to look at a problem from many angles, and to be able to 'sell' a position in many different situations. Thomas and Fryar suggested in 1981 that "one of the main reasons value resolutions are coming into vogue is to give students more experiences in debating values, not facts and in relating arguments to people, not to computers."(529) Any professional must be able to adapt to any number of sitiuations: a lawyer must be able to appeal to a judge as well as a jury; a politician to polls and publics; and businessmen to bankers and bilkers. Let's take the example of a brainstorming session which occurs at the beginning of the semester. Teams discuss if they want to approach the topic from a values perspective, philosophical perspective or policy perspective. Afterwards, they may address how certain negative and affirmative positions would interact. With context variance as a concern, debaters must also address the question, "what would a diplomat, a lawyer or an economist aruge under this resolution?" By encouraging debate rounds to encompass all of these audiences and moré over the course of a semester, we cannot help but to increase the educational benefits of debate.

Allowing the debaters to select the context for the debate would also work to diminish some of the current practices that many see as unfavorable. A team that didn't have (or didn't want to use) large back-files researched at debate camps could circumvent those files by selecting a context that precluded them. For example, what would be the use of arguing deforestation or space-debris against a team that used a political paradigm? What good does it do to run 30 pages of "growth is good" against someone who is arguing in the moralistic ideal? Context attempts to control vernacular and argumentation which provides more lattitude for an affirmative to avoid arguments that tangentially apply to their criteria. The affirmative need only respond to the briefs with a simple, "This doesn't meet our model, and falls outside of the context of the affirmative, therefore it has no bearing on the round." Context-dependant arguments would also foster thinking skills. If one's ox-box full of nuclear-terrorism briefs were mooted out by a team wishing to compare existentialism to essentialism, thinking would have to occur. The negative would be forced to examine the premises and claims of the affirmative. They would have to debate the affirmative, not compare depth and speed. Few would argue that clash on the intellectual level fosters bad debate. The problem of speed (if one sees it as such) could also be mooted by context. For clarification, we can again turn to the political example. If the judge were a political candidate, and the debate teams chose to be rival consulting firms trying to convince him or her to take a given position, it

would hardly behoove the 'consultants' to speak as quickly as possible; very few political candidates can take a good flow, and fewer still base their decisions to hire and fire on words-per-minute.

A final area of benefit that merits exploration is one designed for us, the critics. By the end of the semester, debates can get fairly dull. Yet, with the contexts of debate rounds being decided in the round, and with each context challenging the judge to take a different role and to look at the arguments in a different light, judging could be infinitely more interesting.

Responses to Criticisms

The recurring question surrounding the workability of widespread uses of differing contexts is, "how would a critic evaluate the round?". Judging would require a two-tiered analysis of the round. Context formulas are evaluated by means of the judge's normal debate paradigm, while the substance of the affirmative's position requires roleplaying by both debaters and judges. Offering quotations from an alternative field is not a revolutionary idea but actually assuming the roles of persons using those quotations may result in a revolutionary formula. The expectations for substantive appraisals mirror those associated with tabula rasa judging. A critic should be willing to listen with an open mind and take part in the roleplay to the best of the person's abilities. If the judge had familiarity with a profession then he should apply those skills to his analysis of the round to add to the realism. Should the vocation appear totally unfamiliar, the critic can rely on the debater's information to form his role. In either case, the qualms about intervening which plague debater and coaches alike could be eased by more exacting contexts and a greater understanding of what the individuals in that field really think about an issue such as drug testing or gun control. Strangely enough, debate could proceed at two different rates and with two or more differing types of refutation depending on whether discussion focused on the context formula (standard debate patterns) or substantive arguments (vocational patterns). This does not imply or suggest that debaters need to become actors or even interpers. They merely need to understand the vocations from which their approach originates.

In discussing this idea with both debaters and colleagues, other common criticisms arose, most of which are answerable. Some note that allowing the affirmative to not only choose the case area, but also the context, would be abusive to negative teams. Cantrill warns, "alternatively, a debater may defend an esoteric value stance certain to be ignored or misconstrued by the opposition. The application, of say, General Systems Theory or other obscure analytic frameworks to the resolution may be so alien to the other team that they cannot apply their argumentation to the affirmative standard". (141) While this comment is not without merit, it is easily refuted. There are a plethora of theories available to

debaters today. However, many of these do not exist in any real-world occupational context. While a person may be an anarchist or a Malthusian empath, neither of those are occupations. A belief structure or a group membership would simply not offer a vocational outlook and could be dismissed on those grounds. Beyond this analysis, if the affirmative context were too obscure then the standard theoretical attacks could be launched. If it could be shown that the affirmative didn't present, "a significant and representaational example(s) of the resolution, presented through reasonable definition of terms" (Lawson 20), then the case could be dismissed on those grounds alone, as noted above. The negative team would then be obligated to present their own context and appropriate stock issues, and defend them (providing the judge a second, independent reason to vote negative). If the affirmative criteria were unreasonable, undebatable, or unacceptable for other reasons, then the negative could (and should) challenge it, arguing for a use of a different paradigm.

One complaint is that it would work against the novice. Debate is hard enough, the critics charge, for the new debater to figure out what's going on now, without changing round-to-round. Paradoxically, it may help the novice. Those who are bright, but haven't memorized enough terms and rules, could attack the differing contexts on the purely intellectual level based on everyday knowledge of the profession, thus minimizing any advantage that the varsity debater might have. A second response would be that there is currently a lot of debate that the novice cannot understand. The more intricate and involved debate (not only of positions, but also of theory) tends to take place at the very highest level of debate. There is no reason to believe that it would be different with contexts. The engaging novice might even be able to catch on quicker since an occupational context is closer to the tangible realities that the student would encounter outside the debate world.

A second concern is that there would be more debate about debate and less debate over substantive issues. This may or may not be the case. A given topic might lend itself to five or six contexts that most teams consider reasonable, and the semester's debate would take place in those contexts...without significant complaint from the negative. While it would add another minute at the beginning of the first affirmative (to set the ground), it need not take any more. An additional response is that even if there were more debate about debate, it would not detract from the educational value of the activity. The reasons to support debate outlined by Colbert and Biggers say nothing of substantive issues. That a debater having debated the spring 1987 topic knows more about the GCMS drug test than most of his peers is not one of the things that we point to when speaking of the value that debate provides. By debating debate, debaters will need to think critically, be made to look at the world in ways that they are not made to now, and have to address issues and audiences and their ramifications in ways that are not done now. Indeed, if anything, debating contexts would enhance the educational value of debate. Teams would still have to do the in-depth research required (if not more, to have evidence

to support and attack differing contexts), and would also be looking at the world in ways that they don't do now. The next challenge posed is that contextual variance would make debate harder to coach and impossible to teach because the basic rules would change with each given resolution. Again, the important element to keep in mind is the familiarity of the audience. Teaching a new debater to look at a topic as a politician would, if the topic is political, or as an arms control expert would if the topic dealt with arms, would be far easier than asking the student to look at a topic abstractly and think of a case. Since CEDA resolutions are supposed to be timely, cases could reflect what was happening in the world of elections, protests and courtrooms, providing the instructor with many additional teaching aids that only applied tangentially previously.

A final concern is that contextual flexibility could be subverted like any other form of debate argumentation with teams developing large backfiles on a particular vocation or arguing that the judge is "a political candidate who just happens to take a great flow." While we certainly are not claiming that contextual variance is a cureall for CEDA or that it can deny the persistent debater's opportunity for vocational creativity, contextual variance does not provide a chance to change directions and, perhaps, through good sense, avoid some of our earlier errors. The value of contextual freedoms are apparent and quite tangible. Our only task is to insure that the development of new ideas is not stymied by the loss of the spirit of experiment.

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HASTY GENERALIZATION REVISITED, PART ONE: ON BEING REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES

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This essay addresses the ongoing discussion on resolutional focus in three sections: an indictment of whole resolutional focus: a review of current perspectives and a deeper level of criticism, a defense of the inductive method: justifying example analysis, and a phenomenological analysis of representativeness: a test of the fallacy of biased statistics and hasty generalization. The purpose of this paper is to help objectify standards by which both debaters and critics may resolve debates involving whether the affirmative warrant(s) or negative counter-warrant(s) is sufficient to determine to probable truth of the resolution. Too many debates have devolved into whining matches about what's fair and how best to punish one another. Before rules can be applied to help resolve this sniveling, criteria needs to be examined, but even before reassessing hasty generalization as a criterial argument form, the controversy in CEDA regarding what we try to do needs to be clarified.

INDICTING WHOLE RESOLUTIONAL FOCUS

The debate over resolutional focus has regressed into bickering over externalities. Bile (1987) argued that "the more generic arguments are, the greater their educational utility substantively promoting a more general education" (p. 9). Confusing whole topic focus with holistic and synthetic thinking, with general education as both cause and characteristic, and with a liberal art curriculum, his criticism centers entirely upon the implications of whole resolutional focus. In response, though Madsen and Chandler's article (1988) effectively rebutted that his perspective "cannot be drawn from traditional educational theorists" for "critical to any theoretical position are the specific operationalizations of its assumptions and predictions," and though "a student can be taught theoretical knowledge, it is difficult to provide useful information to students without any application to the everyday world of existence" (p. 32), they also examine the consequences of whole resolutional focus without examining its intrinsic justification.

Furthermore, Bile asserted that students in non-policy debate are asked to make decisions regarding general concepts, and under the cloak of holism, he sententiously epigrammed that "the whole always exceeds the sum of its parts" presumably done to convince us that some greater truth is discoverable with a whole-istic method in debate. However, he failed to prove that some of the parts are not sufficient to reveal the truth of the whole. Berube (1983/1987) wrote: "What is at