USING ARGUMENT FIELDS TO DEVELOP STANDARDS FOR CRITERIA IN VALUE PROPOSITION

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A criterion is widely recognized to be an indispensable component of non-policy debate. Pedagogically, the criterion can be used as a starting point to help students understand the nature of the judgment required in a non-policy resolution, the potential issues they will encounter, and the burdens they must meet. Pragmatically, the criterion can serve as the focal point for organizing and outlining a case, as a mechanism to define affirmative and negative ground, strategies, and arguments, and in many debates as a "voting issue." Wilbanks and Church (1991:51) underscore this multi-dimensional importance when they write, that "without criteria or equivalent arguments defining the key evaluative terms, non-policy propositions would be neither understood nor debated intelligently". Given the critical functions it performs, a criterion should be carefully constructed, yet current formulations are deficient in this regard.

Criteria for value propositions are usually constructed with a "highest value" (e.g. "life", "rights", the "quality of life").[1] This approach is derived from non-policy debate literature (e.g. Matlon, 1981; Ulrich, 1983; Boggs, 1987) which directs debaters to sources such as ethical or philosophical systems, and ultimate or terminal values when searching for standards for criteria. In this approach, the "highest value" functions as the standard and the team that attains the greatest measure of the designated value wins. Although using "highest values" appears to be a simple and direct approach, non-policy debate theorists have begun to question their appropriateness as standards for criteria (Berube, 1989; Gill, 1989). As a result, searching for alternative ways to develop criteria should be a priority of the non-policy debate community.

One alternative way to construct a criterion is through an argument field. In this approach, the criterion is determined by identifying the resolution's object of focus, the concept or entity

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[1] Some debaters construct criteria as a decision-making formula (e.g. "cost benefits", "net benefits", "on balance") and stipulate that the team that provides the greatest measure of qualitative and/or quantitative "impact" as determined by the formula wins. However, since this approach does not prescribe a method for developing standards for a criterion, it cannot substitute for either the "highest value" or argument fields approach. In addition, Brownlee and Croassman (1989) have sufficiently demonstrated that using decision-making formula for criteria in non-policy debate is ill-advised. Thus, including a discussion of decision-making formula in this essay was judged to serve no useful purpose.

(e.g. mandatory drug testing, improved relations with the Soviet Union) which the resolution specifies to be judged. Once identified, the argument field of the object of focus is determined. Finally, standards drawn from that field would be used to construct the criterion. The argument fields approach differs from the "highest value" approach in one primary respect: instead of using a value as a standard because of its presumed worth, standards are derived from the particular way the object of focus is conceptualized.

Although the argument fields approach offers a substantially different and, I believe, more productive way to construct criteria, the approach is not adequately discussed in non-policy debate literature. First, there is no fully developed rationale for using argument fields to develop criteria in non-policy debate. Both Warnick (1981) and Brownlee (1987, 1989), the major proponents of the argument fields approach, assume that argument fields offer a viable way to develop standards for a criterion, but neither fully develops the justification for doing so. Second, Warnick and Brownlee advocate vastly different ways to construct an argument field. Warnick advocates that an argument field be constructed according to the function or purpose of the object of focus of the resolution, while Brownlee advocates that the discipline of the object of focus be used to construct its argument field. Since neither fully justifies the operationalization they advocate (Warnick provides virtually no justification and Brownlee does not compare his construction with Warnick's), their work does not adequately defend or develop the argument fields construct.

In this essay, I will first defend the use of argument fields by arguing that, because the standards for a criterion are field-dependent, establishing the argument field of the object of focus is necessary to develop an appropriate criterion. I will also contend that because a "highest value" does not constitute a field-dependent standard and because a "highest value" standard can result in incomplete judgment, the argument fields approach is a more appropriate way to develop criteria for value propositions. Second, I will describe how an argument field should be constructed, contending that constructing an argument field according to the function or purpose of the object of focus better clarifies appropriate field-dependent standards than does a discipline-based construction. Third, I will explain how using the argument fields approach affects both the development and justification of a criterion in non-policy debate.

RATIONALE FOR USING ARGUMENT FIELDS

Toulmin introduced the concept of "fields" as a way of better understanding both the "form and merits" of argument (1958:15). Argumentation theorists have studied the concept of argument fields extensively, reaching general agreement that the "field" does influence the nature of argument. As Rowland writes, it "seems obvious that arguments vary by field" (1982:228). Theorists have also claimed that argument fields should be integrated into academic debate. Ehninger and Brockriede, for example, suggest that argument fields are relevant to academic debate because the arguments presented in every debate are situated within the context of some "field of inquiry" (1978:92). Because debate arguments are situated within a "field of inquiry," the standards used to judge the object of focus are field-dependent. Toulmin distinguishes between the "force" of a judgment and the criteria used to arrive at that judgment. The "force" is field-invariant because its implication remains constant across fields; the judgment "good" has the same implication in one field as it does another. However, the criteria used to arrive at a judgment are always field-dependent because the standards one uses to determine something to be "good" varies according to the field in which the judgment is made. Writes Toulmin, "it has to be recognized that the _force_ of commending something as 'good' or commending it as 'bad' remains the same, whatever sort of thing it may be, even though the criteria for judging or assessing the merits of different kinds are very variable" (33).

In addition, because judgments are field-dependent, standards used to make those judgments must be field-dependent. Judgments of the value or worth of the object of focus vary according to the field in which they are made. For example, one may judge a covert operation to be beneficial as an intelligence gathering tool but detrimental as a political assassination tool, or one may judge a President to be good with foreign policy but bad with domestic. Just as judgments vary according to field, so too must the standards used to make those judgments. That is to say, since a standard identifies properties (e.g. qualities, characteristics) of the object which may constitute an appropriate measure of its worth, a standard must illuminate those properties possessed by the object of focus which are relevant to the field in which worth is being judged. When a standard does not illuminate those properties relevant to the particular field, no reasonable judgment about the object's value or worth can be made. For example, one could no more judge an intelligence gathering tool to be beneficial by its ability to kill hostile leaders than one could judge an international political assassination squad to be beneficial by the accuracy of information it produces. Hence, standards should produce judgments of the field-dependent worth or value of the object of focus, and to do that they must be field-dependent.

The "highest value" approach, however, does not produce field-dependent standards. Simply because a value is postured as the "highest" does not establish its field-dependence. The hierarchical location of a value vis-a-vis other values does not establish a direct correspondence to any argument field, much less the specific argument field of the object of focus. To the contrary, criteria developed with "highest values" as standards are usually presumed to be field-invariant. However, as Toulmin indicated, only the "force" of judgment can be field-invariant, the standards used to make the judgment must always be field-dependent. Thus, regardless of its presumed worth, a value cannot function as an appropriate

field-dependent standard for a criterion unless it is drawn specifically from the argument field of the object of focus.

In addition, using "highest values" as standards can also produce misleading judgments. "Highest values" are generalized standards which do not render judgments about field-dependent worth because they bear no necessary or direct relationship to the important properties of a particular argument field. Not only do "highest values" fail to establish field-dependent worth, they may undermine the search for standards which could do so. Toulmin (34) warned that using and re-using the same generalized standard(s), regardless of the nature of the object being judged, constitutes a "single-mindedness" and undermines the search for standards which may more accurately determine the field-dependent worth of that object. This tendency is particularly significant when the generalized standard produces the most compelling judgment, as is the case with "highest values" (e.g. "life", "rights") in value propositions. That is to say, primacy is given to the potential "impact" rather than to the value's actual relevancy, i.e., the degree to which the "highest value" measures the field-dependent worth of the object of focus. However, just as the hierarchical location of a value vis-a-vis other values does not establish its field-dependence, the significance of the judgment produced by a standard does not establish its relevance to the object of focus. For example, simply because a standard such as "life" yields the most significant judgment possible about increased foreign investment does not mean that "life" is an accurate indicator of the field-dependent worth of that object of focus.

Overall, because a "highest value" does not establish field-dependent standards and can produce misleading judgments about the field-dependent worth of the object of focus, using it to develop criteria is ill-advised. Conversely, the need for developing field-dependent standards which can render judgments indicative of the field-dependent worth of the object of focus can be satisfied by establishing the argument field of the object of focus and drawing standards directly from that field. Thus, using the argument fields approach offers a more reasonable way to develop criteria for value propositions.

CONSTRUCTING ARGUMENT FIELDS

Although argumentation theorists have not reached a consensus about how to best construct an argument field (Zarefsky, 1982; Dudczak, 1989), two methods have been suggested for non-policy debate. Brownlee uses a discipline-based construction, where either the "discipline of the preponderance of expert sources" (1987:60), or the discipline (e.g. foreign policy, education policy) of the object of focus itself (1989:37-8) could identify the argument field. On the other hand, Warnick constructs an argument field according to how one conceptualizes the object of focus, or as she writes, what the object of focus "is being evaluated as" (1981:116). Determining what the object of focus is being evaluated "as" constructs an argument field according to its specific

function or purpose. For example, in a resolution about euthanasia, Warnick explains, "the affirmative team could decide to evaluate euthanasia (the object of focus) as an act of mercy, a form of death, a medical practice, etc" (116). Similarly, one might choose to view compulsory national service as a citizen employment training program, mandatory drug tests as an on-site work place accident prevention measure, or third parties as a vehicle to represent minority points of view.

Using a discipline-based construction creates a broad argument field which may inhibit identifying specific field-dependent standards. Within a broad argument field the relationship between the object of focus and the standards upon which that object should be judged may be unclear. Broadly constructed argument fields promote rough classification but do not account for potentially subtle albeit important differences that may exist among objects grouped into the broad classification. Rather, a broad construction presumes that any standard derived from a field should be appropriate to judge any object situated within that field. For example, any object located within the field of "politics" could be judged by any standard deemed "political" since the standards within the "political" field are presumed to "link" the objects within that field vis-a-vis their "political-ness". As a result, the presumed relationship between the standards and the object of focus is derived from a coincidental classification (both the standards and the object of focus are termed "political"), rather than from the direct relevance of the standards to the object of focus vis-a-vis its specific nature.

However, considering the specific nature of the object of focus is necessary to determine the appropriate field-dependent standards upon which it should be judged. For example, situating a judgment within the "legal" field does not adequately inform the evaluator of the most specific field-dependent standards. That is to say, while there are a number of "legal" standards (e.g compelling state interest/least restrictive alternative test, the rule of reason test, proximate cause), it cannot be presumed that all "legal" standards are equally well suited to judge all objects of focus deemed to be "legal". Rather, the evaluator would need more information about the specific nature of the object of focus in order to determine the legal standard that could be used to make the most appropriate field-dependent judgment. Illuminating those field-dependent standards appropriate to judge the object of focus may be difficult within a broadly constructed field.

Conversely, using the function or purpose of the object of focus to construct the argument field is more conducive to developing field-dependent standards. First, because the function or purpose better clarifies the nature of the object of focus, identifying the field-dependent standards is easier. Creating an argument field based on the function or purpose of the object of focus segregates the properties or characteristics of the object of focus relevant to the impending judgment from the irrelevant ones. In turn, this illuminates the field-dependent standards upon which

a judgment should be made. Baier (1958) provides an excellent example of this integral relationship when he writes:

> "In order to know what is the criterion of 'running a better mile'... one must in addition know the purpose of the race. If we know that races are competitions in which people are trying to run as fast as they can in order to win, we know what the purpose of races is. It is then also obvious that we must evaluate miles on the basis of speed" (62).

To extend the reasoning in Baier's example, one would presume that if the purpose of the race was determined to be something other than "running a better mile" such as "promoting friendships", the race would be located within a different argument field and evaluating the race on the basis of speed would make little sense because speed would no longer be a field-dependent standard. Rather, it would be necessary to develop a field-dependent standard such as "the degree of interaction promoted among participants" to determine the field-dependent worth of the race.

Other examples further illustrate how one's view of the function or purpose of the object of focus influences selection of the standards upon which it should be judged. In the "legal" example, identifying the purpose of the object of focus would enable the advocate to select the particular "legal" standard that could be used to make the most appropriate field-dependent judgment (e.g. the compelling state interest/least restrictive means test might be used if the purpose of the object of focus is to protect individual rights).[2] In addition, judging whether a particular set of democratic elections are "good" (desirable, beneficial, etc.) depends on whether one views the function of the elections as fostering democracy or as electing a suitable candidate. That is, a democratic election could be judged either by adherence to the process or by its product. Depending upon purpose, the Philippines elections might be judged "good" because they promoted democracy and the 1933 German elections are a failure because, although democratic, they elected Adolph Hitler. Similarly, Democrats might judge the 1980 and 1984 elections as "bad," in spite of the adherence to the democratic process. Thus, using the function or purpose to construct its argument field more clearly illuminates those field-dependent standards upon which the object of focus could be properly judged.

Second, because the function or purpose is likely to create a more narrow argument field identifying the field-dependent standards would be easier. An argument field constructed according to the function or purpose is likely to be more narrow than a discipline-based construction because it establishes a more specific and limited focus on the object being judged. Conversely, a discipline-based construction inherently provides a more

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[2] This example was supplied by one of the Yearbook reviewers. It clarifies the concept I am trying to explain much better than the example I used in the original manuscript.

generalized view of the object of focus. For example, placing compulsory national service within the argument field of "a citizen employment training program" (function or purpose) is a much more specific way of viewing that object of focus than placing it in a discipline-based field such as "government programs", or "domestic programs". Since what the object of focus is viewed "as" is more specific, the argument field is more narrowly defined. In addition, within more narrowly defined argument fields there would likely be fewer field-dependent standards from which to choose. The more narrow the argument field, the fewer the properties or characteristics of the object of focus which establish field-dependent worth, thus the fewer the field-dependent standards. For example, there would be fewer field-dependent standards for "employment training programs" than there would be for "government programs", or "domestic programs".

Overall, although using either the discipline or the function/purpose of the object of focus to construct an argument field is superior to the "highest value" approach, using the function or purpose better clarifies the nature of the object of focus and makes identifying appropriate field-dependent standards easier. Thus, Warnick's construction should be preferred for value propositions because it is likely to produce standards for criteria more suitable to establishing the field-dependent worth of the object of focus.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NON-POLICY DEBATE

Using the argument fields approach would have two immediate effects on criteria for value propositions. First, using the argument fields approach would necessitate a change in the process used to develop criteria. Debaters usually do not conceptualize the object of focus within an argument field, rather they presume a globalized, or non-field view (Cantrill, 1988). However, using the argument fields approach would require that debaters develop a clear and complete understanding of what they intend to view the object of focus "as" before selecting standards for their criteria. As a result, the argument field would become the unifying perspective or context from which the relevance and significance of every component of the affirmative case (claims, evidence, warrants, etc.) would be judged.

Second, using the argument fields approach would change the way standards for criteria must be justified. Debaters routinely justify their criteria based on the importance of the value selected as a standard. That is, they presume that since "life is the highest value", it is the most appropriate standard for judgment. Using argument fields to develop criteria invalidates this approach. The justification for any standard used in a criterion would be determined by a three-prong test: (1) the legitimacy of the function or purpose identified for the object of focus; (2) the importance of the function or purpose identified; and (3) the reasonableness of the standard selected as a measure or indicator of that function or purpose.

Affirmative debaters should be able to demonstrate that the function or purpose they have identified for the object of focus is legitimate. The judgment that a function or purpose is legitimate is not evaluative, it is descriptive. That is to say, the debaters obligation is to demonstrate that the object of focus is recognized or intended to have the particular function or purpose, not that the function or purpose is worthwhile. Debaters could draw information from a number of sources (e.g. legislative histories, judicial interpretations and opinions, program justification and goal statements, policy statements, or experts) to demonstrate that the object of focus is recognized or intended to have a particular function or purpose.

Next debaters must be able to demonstrate the importance of the function or purpose they have identified. An object of focus can have more than one legitimate purpose or function. If the object of focus has more than one legitimate function or purpose, it is possible to generate more than one field-dependent judgment. When multiple field-dependent judgments are possible, consideration of lesser issues should give way to consideration of those deemed to be more encompassing or important. Thus, debaters should prioritize the various argument fields of the object of focus, considering first those that are most compelling. A purpose or function can be judged compelling based either on the degree to which it accounts for the existence of the object of focus, or the degree to which it accounts for the uses for which the object of focus is engaged. For example, if intelligence gathering was determined to be the major reason covert operations were developed, or the major reason they are now used, that function/purpose would be more compelling and would construct a more important argument field than other possible legitimate functions (e.g. stimulating political instability). Affirmatives should demonstrate the importance of the function or purpose they have identified and be prepared to defend its comparative importance against any legitimate purpose(s) or function(s) identified by the negative team.

Finally, debaters must be able to demonstrate the reasonableness of the standard(s) selected as a measure or indicator of the function or purpose. In order to demonstrate that a standard is a reasonable measure, an advocate should be able to establish its direct relevance to the function or purpose identified for the object of focus. For example, if the purpose of higher education is determined to be "career preparation", one must be able to demonstrate that the standards used in the criteria yield judgments about that purpose. For example, the number of graduates being placed in jobs might yield a judgment about how well prepared graduates are for their careers, while the degree to which graduates grow to appreciate great literature would not. Certainly criteria can embody multiple standards as long as those standards individually and collectively yield a field-dependent judgment. Thus, the test of reasonability simply imposes a burden on the debater to demonstrate that using the particular standard(s)

will produce the required field-dependent judgment about the object of focus.

Changing the way criteria are justified will have two significant effects for the practice of non-policy debate. First, values could not be justified as standards for a criteria based on a simple comparison of their importance vis-a-vis other values. Thus, debaters would no longer be able to justify their criteria simply by demonstrating that "life" is higher than some other value. Second, the relevance of generic "catastrophe arguments" could be better assessed. Gill (1988) argues that CEDA debaters routinely use "catastrophe arguments" which have questionable relevancy. She believes one way to regulate this practice is by demanding more stringent justification for criteria. Using the construction proposed in this essay would necessitate that the standards used in the criteria be directly linked to the argument field of the object of focus. Because of the integral relationship between the standards and the argument field, it would be easier for debaters and judges to separate relevant "catastrophe arguments" from ones irrelevant to the field-dependent judgment being made.

SUMMARY

This essay challenges the assumption that appropriate standards for a criterion can be developed independent of consideration of the nature of the object of focus. "Highest values" do not produce satisfactory criteria for value propositions simply because they ignore and obscure the inherent need for field-dependent judgments. Defining the argument field of the object of focus according to its function or purpose can help debaters locate the field dependent standards necessary to make reasonable and responsible judgments.[3]

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