

## Works Cited

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RESPONSE  
Cindy L. Griffin

Like Sonja, I have never participated in or been to a debate. As I listened to the demonstration debate between Kristina and Amanda at the National Communication Association Convention, I felt a bit like an alien who landed in this classroom trying to make sense of what was going on. I know from my own perspective that I can't think and work in the structure of debate, even as it was modified in that demonstration. Throughout the whole experience I kept asking myself, "do I feel safe, do I feel valued?" I actually felt quite nervous. So, I do know that I've probably never participated in or even seen a debate because I am uncomfortable with this kind of interaction – I consciously choose not to participate in the kind of debate that we teach on our campuses.

On a slightly different note, though, I am very impressed with the work done here. I am honored by the amount of time and attention given to this project and to have our ideas taken so seriously: to have them thought through in a way that was systematic and careful is wonderful. The authors of the essay and the individuals involved in the debate asked hard questions about the nature and possibility of an "invitational debate" and, although they may not have offered all the answers to the questions they posed, they did create an environment where we can begin to consider the possibilities for such a framework. I want to thank the authors and participants for starting this project. It is incredibly ambitious and I also would like to know how it progresses.

I have a slightly different perspective on change than Sonja does, although it is not at odds with her position at all. Before the debate, you asked us to respond to the question of whether change should be evolutionary or revolutionary. My answer is "yes," it has been and can be both: change is both revolutionary and evolutionary. This response comes from my own life experiences, a series of metaphors, as well as how I search for examples of change. I almost always begin to try to understand the nature of change feeling intimately connected to and with other people. Because of this orientation, I believe that when I make changes in my life, those changes affect others. I try to consider the nature of my evolutionary or revolutionary changes and how those alterations will affect others.

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I also think that we have excellent models or metaphors for change as revolution and change as evolution in the world around us. I think that when we engage in or enact revolutionary change, that process often is very radical and traumatic: it usually is painful and people get hurt in the process. I have a metaphor from nature that I like to use to illustrate what I'm suggesting. When change is revolutionary in nature, we have tremendous upheavals: earthquakes and tornadoes are examples of revolutionary change. A lot that is new comes out of these forces of change, but much is hurt and damaged in the process. For some of us, this kind of revolutionary change works because we need that radical upheaval. When we no longer can participate in an activity in which we once were involved, we sometimes need and depend on revolutionary change to get us out of that situation. So, I do think that change has to be revolutionary at times.

I think, however, that this revolutionary perspective on change can devalue those who are not interested in revolutionary change. I think that this perspective on change is a bit like the choices we make when we exercise: another metaphor I'd like to offer to illustrate my point. When we exercise, we can decide to take time to warm up or simply decide not to warm up. For me, revolutionary change is the equivalent of deciding that you are not going to warm up. Revolutionary change is deciding you are going to sprint toward your goal, without warming up. This may be fine for some, but those who are not ready for the revolution can end up with quite a few torn muscles.

But, I also think that change can be evolutionary. I think that it can be a process in which we consider what we do not want in our lives anymore. I think we can give ourselves time for dialogue and discussion about the changes we want to bring about. We can, with evolutionary change, make choices about where we want to go that are, perhaps, more systematic, and more thoughtful than they might be in revolutionary change. In evolutionary change, we take a bit more time to bring new things into the world. Here, I like to use a birth metaphor to illustrate my ideas. When you are in labor and you have your child in two hours, that is revolutionary change. The mother doesn't have time to figure it out, the child doesn't have time to get massaged and gradually brought into the world. There can be problems with this rapid transition. But when you're in labor for eight to ten hours, then there is an evolution in your body – it has a chance to expand and stretch and move the child, or this new idea to return to a more academic realm, into the world. There is less tearing, perhaps, because our body is getting used to and accustomed to opening up and allowing this new person to come into the world. The caveat here is that I also think that

evolution can take too long. If you are in labor for twenty-four hours, that is hard on the child and hard on the mother: there is a balance to be found in my metaphor, I realize.

So, is change evolutionary or revolutionary and how does this fit with debate? I think that change can be both and that it functions in different ways for all of us. I think we need to consider how change would work in any given situation and to find out how change works best for us as individuals, and then as members of our communities.

I also have a few thoughts about what makes a debate invitational, or not. I think one important issue is the judge. If we are being judged, then I don't believe that we are creating conditions of safety. If someone is evaluating us using an external criterion, how can we create an environment of safety, which is inherently nonjudgmental? The question here is whether we can judge another and still create an environment where their decisions and choices are valued. If we impose an external criterion on debaters, and they don't meet that criterion, then we judge them as less satisfactory than those who do meet the criterion. That all seems very arbitrary and antithetical to an invitational environment. In an invitational environment, individuals establish or offer their own criterion, because it makes sense to them, and no one is judged for how close or far away they are from it. So, I think that the question and role of a judge is a bit of a stumbling block in this debate format and needs to be reconceptualized from an invitational perspective.

A second issue worth reconsidering is the question or resolution posed for debate and the idea of affirmatives and negatives. Just in listening to the resolution, "that the U.S. Federal Government should adopt a policy. . ." suggests that little freedom is available. Resolutions come in the form of "should" questions and it seems to me that if we want to establish an invitational framework from the very beginning, then we might begin with resolutions or questions that look for "implications." We might ask, "what are the implications of" something and in this way begin to discuss the issues without one side being against another. If we took this approach, we could have discussions that center on the complexity of issues, what their implications are, who might be affected and in what ways, and how one choice over another changes the issue itself. So, I think the issue of the "resolution" needs to be reconsidered from an invitational framework as well.

This is all very new ground to consider and I appreciate this effort enormously. I am quite impressed with what has been done here and congratulate the authors and participants on their exceptional efforts. I hope this project continues and appreciate the inclusion of Sonja, Josina, and I in the process.