

VALUE BENEFITS ANALYSIS AS AN AFFIRMATIVE PARADIGM

Raymond Bud Zeuschner
California Polytechnic State University,
San Luis Obispo

In leading the way for a tremendous period of growth for intercollegiate debate, CEDA has stumbled upon new areas for argumentation theory. This theory is at best an awkward collection of traditional ideas about debate being grafted upon a value orientation. The purpose of this essay, as well as others of similar type, is to add energy to that exciting growth by providing suggestions for specific forms for new theoretical constructs to be tested. This paper will examine the concept of "value benefits analysis" as a potential for legitimate affirmative case construction in a value oriented debate.

Value Benefits Analysis should be viewed as a legitimate affirmative strategy because of its parallel to already established models used in policy oriented debate, because of its grounding in the already accepted negative strategy of "value objections," and because of its prima facie reasonableness. I could argue for the independence of each of these contentions, but it is unnecessary.

The easiest justification to make for Value Benefits Analysis follows the path CEDA commentators have traditionally taken -- it is very similar to that which is already well established in the policy debate arena. Quite simply, Value Benefits are to value oriented debating like Comparative Advantages are to policies. The affirmative team, instead of detailing the ills and woes of the present system, offers a plan and then justifies that plan on the basis of the new,

significant advantages to be accrued. In this vein, Value Benefits would offer the value claim -- usually the resolution or a defined subset thereof, and then offer decision-makers a rationale which would support some sort of expected benefit(s) to be derived from the new value. No "harms" or ills need to be expressed. What is most attractive about this position is that CEDA debaters have often been plagued with a difficult burden on the affirmative to "quantify" whatever might be wrong with the value expressed by the opposite of the resolution. Especially difficult were the debates on Affirmative Action and those we have currently on Rights of the Accused. The negative teams have been successful in demanding a "significant" number of harmful or deleterious instances. Affirmatives have been hard pressed, and have resorted to a sort of "philosophical" case. While these cases might be attractive, they are also abstract, difficult to support in a realistic decision-making context, and easy prey for a negative who is sophisticated in arguing for a "rational" (read: "quantifiable") criteria.

The Value Benefits Analysis recognizes the legitimacy of paralleling Comparative Advantages as a clear, straightforward, and realistic/rational paradigm for seeking adherence to a value claim. While it does open itself to policy implications--i.e., the "benefits" may be couched in instrumental terms, it is not required of affirmatives to do so. They may instead be

directed to phrase their "benefits" in terms of consistency with other important components of American Value Systems.

While there is nothing wrong, per se, with instrumental values, CEDA debaters may wish to shy away from such justifications for the simple sake of maintaining a clear cut space between themselves and debaters working on clearly policy questions.

Thus the first reason is clearly in the mold of other adaptations CEDA practitioners have made--borrowing on already established models which have proved their reasonableness. In particular, Value Benefits may assist affirmatives by removing the tendency for negatives and judges to seek "hard data" as part of an indictment of status quo values.

The second reason flows from current CEDA practice itself. If we find "value objections" as a legitimate--even necessary component of negative strategy, we should also accept their counterpart--value benefits--as a legitimate affirmative option. When Robin Boyes coined the term "value objection" several years ago, and his CSU-Northridge students began to enter it into debate rounds, the reaction became almost one of relief on the part of negative teams. They now had a division of labor which made some sense. Because judges found these objectional consequences (read: "disadvantages") to be persuasive and rational grounds for rejecting a value claim, CEDA debaters began to use them to the point where they are now institutionalized. Just as policy debaters thought up the idea for comparative advantage cases on the basis that the negative could

legitimately argue against a topic using disadvantages, so should CEDA debaters feel comfortable in turning "value objections" around into an affirmative rationale.

By paralleling what negative CEDA debaters are already doing, affirmatives which opted for a Value Benefits Analysis format would keep the division of labor clear and add structure to the debate round. It adapts especially well to a "comparison of values" or an "on balance" debate by clearly squaring off the benefits of adopting a value versus its risks. When CEDA has chosen topics which have this process built in ("Energy vs. Environment" for example) we have all benefited from the increased clarity--affirmatives and negatives both knew which territory they were to defend. Value Benefits Analysis would make such clarity possible in all of our topics, and would assist judges in weighing arguments--especially value objections. It also returns some equality to the affirmative team in their burden by permitting them to stake out this ground first as they offer their benefits. Thus, CEDA would be back into a traditional balance concerning the notion of presumption.

The final reason for incorporating Value Benefits Analysis into CEDA affirmatives is a mixture of the very pragmatic and the very philosophical. It simply makes good sense. On its face, Value Benefits Analysis is consistent with the real world. People do make decisions, do weigh judgments on the basis of perceived benefit. If CEDA keeps as a goal the use of an audience adapted style, Value Benefits would clearly be attractive to our audiences.

They would be able to identify with it in the best Perelman tradition. If the "universal audience" were not enough, the more specific ones of the "reasonable person" and the trained critic, in Toulmin's sense, would also respond easily.

Toulmin justifies this approach through his focus on the warrants people use in connecting data to claims. Such a warrant could easily be that "one should adopt a belief system or value structure which benefits oneself." Outlining what those benefits might be, how they might come about, how they are consistent with another value, or how they improve a perspective or decision-making process might all be seen as legitimate functions of an advocate dealing with value oriented claims. If an affirmative team were to identify that warrant and focus in on it at the beginning of the debate, then CEDA rounds would provide an integrating mechanism for people to systematically examine the underlying reasons/warrants/values which determine our adherence to arguments. A paradigm which makes it possible to isolate the warrant involved would be an easy way to get to the heart of "value debate."

On the pragmatic level, affirmatives are in need of a new tool to put them back into the debate picture. At several major tournaments this year, negatives have been winning at a rate which belies their chance expectations. It makes good sense to adopt a case structure which better balances the team advantages in order to keep the activity functioning as an educational tool.

Thus, by adopting the Value Benefits Analysis, CEDA would benefit through the inclusion of a new model which parallels one used in other forms of debate and which is therefore consistent with a developed body of argumentation theory; we would benefit from taking what we have learned about reason-giving on the part of negatives who offer "value-objections" and apply its counterpart for affirmative use, thereby increasing the clear weighing of values in a given round; and finally, we would benefit by increasing our appeal to audiences who will recognize this format as one of the ways they make decisions.

The foregoing has been a fledgling Value Benefits Analysis.