PROPOSITIONAL JUSTIFICATION: ANOTHER VIEW

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Perhaps no theoretical concept in CEDA debate is more utilized and less understood than that of "justification." In standard usage "justify" means to prove, support, or verify by providing grounds, reason or evidence that a thing is warranted, valid, or sound. In this sense every argument in a debate offers "justification." In the context of propositional justification, however, a more specific yet still nebulous set of "stock issues" has emerged. "The Role of Justification in Topic Analysis" by Adams and Wilkins (1987), is an important albeit limited attempt to expand theoretical understanding of propositional justification in general and these "stock issues" in particular.

This author has long believed that the the theory and practice of CEDA debate is not inherently at odds with that of NDT. Adams and Wilkins apparently share this view. They argue that the term "resolution" can be substituted for the term "plan" in the (policy) "justification" literature and that the resolution is the "proposition" that the affirmative presents for adoption by the judge in CEDA. From this initial premise they construct an argument for the concept of "justification" in non-policy argument. They take, as their point of departure, the "Construct of Justification" advanced by Turner (1975/1979). While proceeding from a policy proposition context, Turner makes a point which seems to transcend resolutional type. He writes, "I have concluded that debaters seldom analyze correctly the relationship of the scope of the rationale for change (justification) and the scope of the plan" (p. 78). The juxtaposition of warranting claim and proposition/plan creates at least two justificatory concerns: ". . . plans should not be more or less extensive than those the cases mandate" (Sklansky, 1979, p. 80). Turner agrees that there are two types of misjustification, and Adams and Wilkins subsequently adopt his two-fold model of "Underjustification" and "Overjustification."

It will be the purpose of this paper to explicate and advance the concepts of under- and overjustification as advanced by Adams and Wilkins in an attempt to further expand our understanding of those concepts as rooted in debate practice, argumentation scholarship and rhetorical theory. Specifically this paper will argue that there are two forms of underjustification which may be "voting issues" and that overjustification should not be seen as an independent voting issue.

Subtopical Underjustification

Turner (1975/1979) defines the concept of underjustification simply: "Underjustifying means that the reason for change warrants less than the plan implements" (p. 78). He illustrates this concept by suggesting that if his family doctor advocated the removal of his appendix and his tonsils, that he would expect the doctor "to justify the operation for the removal of my appendix and also for the removal of my tonsils. If he only

provided reasons for removing my tonsils, I would believe he had underjustified his plan" (p. 82). So then, underjustification can be understood as a failure to warrant the entirety of the proposal. Adams and Wilkins equate this problem with that of "topical justification" as advanced by Tolbert and Hunt (1985). It is clear from the context of the Tolbert and Hunt text that they intend (as do Adams and Wilkins) to address the problem of "hasty generalization" when they speak of "topical justification" (p. 23). Adams and Wilkins argue that in CEDA the absence of a plan and a community consensus require the affirmative to make a "more generic defense of the topic," thus justification "is a pre-counter-warrant position, based on the principle that the judge affirms or negates the resolution. . . rather than accepting or rejecting the affirmative case" (p. 21).

Tolbert and Hunt argue that hasty (underjustified) claims are "subtopical." Sklansky (1979) agrees that "an affirmative plan is considered subtopical if it is not a full example of the resolution" and concludes that "subtopicality is a completely valid issue" (p. 81). In short, the Adams and Wilkins' argument seems to be that a case which warrants only a part of the proposition is a fallacious ("hasty generalization") underjustification and as a result the claim is "sub-topical." Hence for Adams and Wilkins, underjustification and subtopicality are one in the same.

It is at this point however that Adams and Wilkins fail to make note of a common yet critical failure to differentiate in the justification literature. Sklansky (1979) explains "for purposes of clarity, let me distinguish between justification and sub-topicality, since the former term is sometimes used to signify the latter." Clearly, Sklansky intends to separate his conception of justification from the concept of subtopicality. Further Sklansky notes that "what Turner calls underjustification is commonly argued by debaters under the simple title of justification" (p. 81). Hence for Sklansky, (under)justification and subtopicality are separate and independant constructs—he does not, as Adams and Wilkins seem to imply, equate the two. Depending on one's perspective then, we might view "under" justification as being one of of two distinct types: 1) What Adams and Wilkins call underjustification, commonly (and by Sklansky) referred to as sub-topicality, and 2) What Turner calls underjustification, commonly (and by Sklansky) referred to simply as "justification." This author believes that both conceptions of underjustification are appropriate and will refer to Underjustification-1 as Subtopical Underjustification and Underjustification-2 as Accidental Underjustification. As the case for the concept of Subtopical Underjustification is made elsewhere (Adams & Wilkins, 1987; Berube, 1987; Bile, 1987; Sklansky, 1979; Tolbert & Hunt, 1985) this paper will proceed to the issue of Accidental Underjustification.

Accidental Underjustification

In philosophical usage, an accident "is an inessential property, that which may be attributed to a substance without being essential to that substance. For instance, a girl may be blonde, but she must be female; blondeness in this example is an accident,

femaleness is not" (Flew, 1984, p. 4). Grooten & Steenbergen (1972) elaborate when they argue that in logic an "accident is a nonessential predicate that is not found in the definition of the subject. If this attribute is necessarily connected with the subject, we call it an essential quality . . . if, on the other hand, the connection is not necessary but contingent then we call it, in the narrower sense of the word, an accident" (p. 3). Guthrie (1983) explains that "accidents may change, disappear, or be added, while substance remains the same." He concludes by noting that an accident "is that quality which adheres to a subject in such a manner that it neither constitutes its essence nor necessarily flows from its essence: as, a man is white or learned" (p. 18).

The logical fallacy of "accident" was introduced by Aristotle and "the cause of this fallacy lies in the confusion of an accidental subordinant property (accidens) and an essential property" (Eemeren, Grootendorst, & Kruiger, 1987, p. 81). Eemeren and colleagues (1987) conclude that if an "accidental property is treated in argument as if it were an essential property, a fallacy is created" (p. 88). Whately (1869) agreed that equating essential and accidental concepts is problematic and that an accident fallacy occurs when a term "is used, in one premiss, to signify something considered simply, in itself and as to its essence; and in the other premiss, so as to imply that its accidents are taken into account with it: as in the well known example, 'What is bought in the market is eaten; raw meat is bought in the market; therefore raw meat is eaten'" (p. 218). He suggests that "the fallacies which are frequently founded on the occasional, partial, and temporary variations in the acceptation of some term, arising from circumstances of person, time, and place, which will occasion something to be understood in conjunction with it beyond its strict literal signification" may be understood as accidents (p. 219).

Hence when debaters define terms in an strict "essential" or "intrinsic" way, and warrant the proposition on circumstantial "accidental" claims, they are engaged in the fallacy of accident. It is this justificatory failure which I call "Accidental Justification" (as contrasted with intrinsic justification) and which debate theorists and practicians (excluding Adams and Wilkins) have simply labeled justification. For example, Flaningam (1981) argues that if failure to produce a benefit is an accidental feature of the non-resolution then it does not justify the resolution. He contends that "for an advantage to justify a resolution's adoption, it must be unique. Uniqueness is defined here as the the establishment by the affirmative that benefits flow from essential difference between the resolution and logical alternatives to the resolution" (p. 3). The affirmative must therefore justify the specific resolution under consideration by demonstrating that negative ground (the non-resolution) is intrinsically incapable. Zarefsky (1987) explains that the wording of the resolution is important and that "a specific defense must be made for proposition X– not just a 'a change' or even a direction in which change should proceed. Hence, the genre of the 'justification' argument is of special significance" (p. 209). Those whose claims are accidental are therefore vulnerable to the challenge of intrinsic (as contrasted with accidental) justification. This author has previously explained that "The (intrinsicness) argument suggests that an opponent's claim does not justify the affirmation/negation of the resolution unless the claim is unique to that side of the resolution or its absence intrinsic to the other" (Bile, 1987, p. 13).

This form of underjustification can perhaps best be understood as a failure to account for non-resolutional alternatives which would eliminate the accidental justification. If for example, the resolution states the covert actions are undesirable and the affirmative "justifies" this resolution on the basis that aiding the contras is undesirable they are likely engaged in an accidental underjustification. This is true to the extent that the negative (presumedly) need not defend contra aid in order to support covert activities. An intuitive non-resolutional alternative would be for the negative to support a shift from covert contra aid to covert Sandinista aid. Trapp (1979) writes that "when the negative argues that some particular term in the proposition is not justified, in effect they are arguing that there are policy alternatives short of the affirmative resolution that will generate the same benefits as the affirmative plan" (p. 75). Sklansky (1979) concurs that "the reason the affirmative team could be accused of not justifying its plan is that there may be a better or simpler way of gaining the affirmative advantages" (p. 81). Using the topic "Resolved: that a federal program of health care for all U.S. citizens would be desirable," several potential accidental underjustifications would become evident. For example, with regard to underjustification of agents, one might imagine a situation in which an Affirmative attempted to justify the proposition solely on the basis of the desirability of health care and the "accident" of non-action by the states. "Thus even though the plan might call for a federal program, the case does not justify one" (Thomas, 1979, p. 73). Further, one might underjustify the scope of action. Trapp cites the example of a case which proposes medical care to all citizens while warranting it only for some citizens, i.e., the poor.

Other topics suggest other potential underjustifications. For example, when one proposes the elimination of all covert involvement on the basis of only CIA abuses he/she is probably underjustifying the proposal (Turner, 1979). Turner further cites examples of affirmatives supporting regional political primaries on the basis of their indictment of "the accident" of state primaries despite the fact that there was no explanation "why the justification given leads to regional primaries as opposed to national primaries, county primaries, a dictatorship or even anarchy" (p. 79). The point common to all these examples is the simple truth that the negative is not required to defend accidental (inessential) characteristics of negative ground. Affirmatives who premise their claims on the assumption of such a false comparison are engaged in an underjustification.

The problem of accidental underjustification would seem especially troubling in non-policy debate. When the affirmative warrants its value claim on the basis of accidental policies currently resting on negative ground, the proposition practically shifts to one of policy. As this author has previously argued, "to disallow intrinsicness arguments shifts the focus of non-policy debates from the inherent worth of values to the coincidence of current policies" (Bile, 1987, p. 13). To force the negative to defend status quo policies is not a requirement of policy debate; why should it be a requirement of non-policy debate? Recent CEDA topics provide examples of this accidental justification

problem. Does the fact of US budget support of undesirable UN economic growth projects prove that membership in the UN is an undesirable value? Only if such a policy of support is essential to membership. Does the fact that the current administration has placed us in antagonistic arms race affirm the value of further increases in military preparedness? Only if the negative is forced to defend the administration's military policies. Does the fact that random drug tests constitute a unwarranted violation of privacy affirm the value claim that drug testing is an unwarranted violation of privacy? Only if the negative is forced to defend the policy of random testing. In each case the affirmative posits a claim about a policy to determine the value of ground which only accidentally includes that policy and therefore assumes that the negative must defend that policy. If the policy is not intrinsic to negative ground, why does it constitute a justification of the resolution as opposed to some non-resolutional alternative? It doesn't. Affirmatives who choose to attack status quo policies ought to prove that those policy decisions, and the subsequent absence of affirmative benefits, are an essential feature of negative ground.

To summarize, an affirmative claim underjustifies the resolution if that claim (a) proves only a part of the proposition true, thereby failing to warrant the truth of the resolution as a generic whole (subtopical underjustification), or, (b) proves the proposition true only by comparing it to inessential characteristics of negative ground, thereby failing to warrant the specific resolution in dispute relative to alternatives to it (accidental underjustification). Either form of underjustification is logically, and ought to be pragmatically, an absolute voting issue against underjustified claims. As Turner (1975/1979) concludes, "I say that underjustification is still a logical valid paradigm for voting against the affirmative case" (p. 82).

Overjustification

Turner (1975/1979) defines our next concern by arguing that "overjustifying means that the reasons for change warrants more than the plan implements" (p. 78). Note that the Turner definition does NOT suggest that the affirmative has not justified the proposal, only that they have justified more. He suggests, for example, that when an advocate supports two years of physical education for students but offers arguments warranting three such years, that the advocate has overjustified. Adams and Wilkins imply (p. 23) that Turner defines overjustification as the "establishing of overwhelming non-causal significance in order to justify a less expansive resolution" but this author could find no such indication in the Turner text; and it would seem most inconsistent of Turner to have meant this given the education example above and the "comparative advantage" implied below. Turner does argue that an attack on overjustification is usually in the form of solvency: "The overjustification plan-meet-need argues that the new agent-to eliminate-the harm will not have enough scope of power to eliminate the complete harm so that some of the harm will perpetuate" (p. 79). Clearly Turner believes that the issue is far from absolute, instead "for overjustification the issue is centered

around the degree that the negative can minimize the the advantage through plan-meet-need" (p. 80). Turner does not argue that overjustification is an independent voting issue.

Adams and Wilkins further assert that "Sklansky has argued that overjustification in policy debate is merely 'the threat of a counterplan'"(p. 23). Their assertion is, however, clearly incorrect. Suggesting that Sklansky is "arguing that another, broader resolution is justified by the affirmative need, leaving little reason to debate the solution in a resolutionally limited scope" (p. 23) is likewise incorrect.[2] Instead, Sklansky's single comment on overjustification seems directly at odds with such attributions since he states: "Turner rightly concludes that overjustification means nothing in a debate unless the negative presents the issue as a plan-meet-need" (p. 80). This makes sense. The overjustified portion of the claim (original justification minus resolutional justification) would be extra-topical and hence could not be addressed by the affirmative/resolution. This in turn might impede "solvency" for the resolutional portion of the justification.

Even if Sklansky did support Adams and Wilkins' "broader resolution" position, the arguer would still logically face a competitiveness-topicality dilemma: Either the "alternate" resolution would not entail the affirmative claims and hence not compete with them, or the "broader resolution" would entail the affirmative proposition and hence affirm it. For example, to argue that all components of American government overemphasize freedom of the press certainly does not refute, but rather tends to support, the claim that the American judicial system does. If the affirmative warrants the proposition it is not easy to see why is it theoretically unsound that they also warrant more. Claims that "each word must have unique meaning" do nothing for the negative on overjustification. The unique meaning here is a limitation on negative underjustification arguments: the affirmative could have chosen to, and was topically entitled to, justify less.

Adams and Wilkins further assert that "specificity and analysis are lost . . . when the resolution is overjustified" (p. 23). It is hard to understand why analysis is lost when one tackles broader rather than narrower issues. Admittedly overjustification would sacrifice some specialization for more generalization, but why is this bad? A number of scholars (Biscounti, 1976; Eastman, 1981; Goodlad, 1976; Sawhill, 1970) have argued that over-specialization in learning diminishes content relevance and longevity. Therefore, this author is not convinced that an increase in general learning is such an awful idea.

Adams and Wilkins' statements that overjustification "has no parallel in other analyses" and that it "presents a new issue which has been neglected" are not too surprising. What is surprising is their suggestion that it be a "voting issue." What Adams and Wilkins call "overjustification," logicians have for hundreds of years, been calling the "major premise" (Eemeren, 1987). If I understand them correctly, Adams and Wilkins propose that the judge vote against the affirmative proposing that "Socrates is mortal" on the basis of the justificatory premises that "Socrates is a man" and "all Men are Mortal," since the "ALL men" premise overjustifies the resolution. If overjustifica-

tion is the claim that what is universally true is true in a particular instance, then I fail to see the problem. If overjustification is something else, then it faces other problems. It is not my intention for example, to legitimize fallacious "division" arguments: clearly arguing that something is generally true does not prove its truth in any particular instance (unless of course that generality is universal). But clearly fallacious division is a shortcoming in justification, NOT an overjustification. While overjustification is an interesting conceptual tool (suggesting substantive solvency and symbolism objections, for example) it is not, and should not be, a theoretical voting issue.

Conclusion

This author takes issue with the Adams and Wilkins' implication that subtopicality is the only form of underjustification. Such an impression ignores the fallacy of accident and a rich tradition of justification in policy debate. This author also disagrees with Adams and Wilkins that overjustification is a voting issue. Such a claim is not supported by the cited literature nor is it consistent with the rules of deductive logic. We also seem to disagree about the method of assessing justification. Adams and Wilkins' language (i.e.,"voting issue") seems to make justification an all-or-nothing matter. This view is substantiated on the other end by their suggestion that a claim which is not representative and which "could easily be labelled a squirrel" can be salvaged by combining it with a separate but more acceptable (generic) claim. They argue that "this case makes the justification argument illegitimate" (p. 24). Why? Can the affirmative run non-topical claims as long as some topical ones are included too? One would hope not. This author would prefer to see justification handled in the same manner as extra-topicality: The affirmative must "justify the resolution on the basis of advantages which stem at least in part from topical provisions. The critic must disregard any benefits which may be achieved without relying on resolutional action . . ." (Benoit, Wilson & Follert, 1985, p. 138). It is not my argument that justification and extra-topicality are the same concepts. I am merely suggesting that disposing of non-justified claims the way we dispose of extra-topical claims (ignoring them) makes some sense.

Justification carries reciprocal implications for the affirmative and the negative in propositional debate. Just as the affirmative case is expected to justify the resolution (affirmative ground) so too should a negative objection be expected to justify the non-resolution (negative ground). Affirmative claims which do not justify affirmative ground do not warrant the resolution, and should be irrelevant to the outcome of the debate. Likewise, Negative claims which do not justify negative ground do not warrant the nonresolution, and should be irrelevant to the outcome of the debate. Underjustification, whether by sub-topicality or accident, should be understood as a theoretical issue which is conceptually analogous to topicality. Overjustification, on the other hand, is a substantive consideration which may or may not be combined with other considerations to produce an "issue" in a given propositional debate.

While this author disagrees with Adams and Wilkins about many things, there is

agreement on at least two points. First, we agree that "with the issue of justification there is a clear parallel between policy and non-policy forms of argument" (p. 25). The logic of propositional justification offers a natural bridge between the theory and practice of CEDA and NDT debate. We also agree that justification clarifies the role of the resolution and provides a sound analytical approach upon which propositional judgments can be grounded.

Notes

[1]The author would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance provided by Ken Bahm, Brian McGee and the WHOLE Saluki Debate Squad. They have all certainly JUSTIFIED his faith in them.

[2] Sklansky's attack focuses on underjustification, his only mention of overjustification is a single sentence in the first paragraph. Sklansky's "threat of a counterplan" argument in the sixth paragraph is certainly in reference to underjustification.

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ASSESSING COUNTER-WARRANTS: UNDERSTANDING INDUCTION IN DEBATE PRACTICE

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Since the early 1970s NDT debaters have shifted from debating the resolution to debating examples of the resolution (Paulsen & Rhodes, 1979). Rhodes and Pfau (1985) suggest that "the long-term perspective of traditional practice seems to favor the resolutional approach, while the short-term perspective seems to favor the example approach" (p. 147). In CEDA, while there is no firm consensus on this issue, the bulk of debate critics appear to believe that the resolution as a whole should be the focus of debates (Ulrich, 1984). This general belief, however, has not stopped CEDA debaters from using examples of the resolution in attempting to prove the resolution true (Tolbert & Hunt, 1985).

In the midst of this controversy over resolutional focus lies the continuing debate over the validity of negative counter-warrants, i.e., negative instances offered to disprove affirmative instances of the resolution (Paulsen & Rhodes, 1979). Since counter-warrant theory is premised on the notion that the resolution is the focus of the debate (Keeshan & Ulrich, 1980), one would expect some level of consensus to have developed among debate theorists and critics, particularly among those who favor the resolutional approach. However, even a cursory glance at the judging philosophy booklets for the past two national CEDA tournaments indicates no such agreement. It is not surprising, then, that critics have given little consideration to a specific aspect of the use of counter-warrants: once introduced into a debate round, how should negative counter-warrants be evaluated in comparison with affirmative warrants? As Tolbert and Hunt (1985) admit, "Perhaps the most obscure aspect of counter-warrants is how a counter-warrant debate round should be judged" (p. 26).

In academic debate, arguments are often evaluated by weighing risk (often operationalized as probability of link multiplied by size of impact). Tolbert and Hunt (1985) appear to encourage the use of this approach for weighing counter-warrants when they suggest that "the debate comes down to an on balance [sic] judgment of affirmative case impacts versus the negative counter-warrants. This is the kind of decision that debate judges are accustomed to making and explaining in their critiques" (p. 27).

This traditional approach to judging the strength of arguments is inadequate when dealing with counter-warrants. Since counter-warrants, as explained by Paulsen and Rhodes (1979), are attempts to ascertain the truth of the resolution inductively, the strength of competing inductive generalization attempts must be the first concern of those trying to assess resolutional truth. This essay will argue that the inductive strength of affirmative and negative examples must be measured first. The debate team winning the most inferentially sound warrant about the truth of the resolution should win the debate round.

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