we move them on more critical arguments, or sophisticated counterplans (Yes, while this article is primarily focused on the policy versus critical divide in debate, this concern of “rushed learning” also applies within the policy debate camp). Fourth, judges need to work to make sure they hold policy debate arguments and critical debate arguments to the same standards. This seems to be a particularly important concern, especially when one evaluates differences in speaker point assignment. As this article has demonstrated, despite the seeming decline in policy debate in the high school and collegiate debate worlds, there are several reasons to endorse and reinvigorate the TPD model.

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Bibliography


MORAL ABSOLUTISM AND MORAL EXHIBITIONISM

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This short essay has two parts. Part I discusses the importance of “moral absolutism” arguments in kritik debates. It argues that most kritik implications collapse into moral absolutist claims, so a high-yield strategy is to invest in developing several approaches against these generic arguments. Part II discusses the trade-offs incurred by a debate format which encourages moral exhibitionism as the primary strategy. It argues that the debate community is sacrificing free speech values for the goal of speech purity and that a better approach than self-interested policing would be to develop community standards for speech to protect people and groups from intimidation and harassment.

I. Moral Absolutism

One can make the case that most kritiks inevitably collapse into the following syllogism: (1) A supports X, (2) X is an absolute wrong, therefore (3) A is an absolute wrong. If this is the case, then all an Affirmative team has to do is defend some theory of consequentialism to answer the implications of most kritiks. This point is better understood when one considers the typical responses to a “non-unicitness” argument. The most common response to “uniciness” is that every instance is wrong, followed by a claim that there is a “unique harm” (independent disadvantage or solvency turn) to each use of a particular phrase or each embrace of a particular concept or image.

The unique harm claim is often simple to refute. It relies on the assumption that all impacts are linear. Two examples prove this a mistaken assumption. First, suppose the Affirmative builds extra rows on top of the Berlin Wall to discourage people from attempting to climb the wall, which often results in their injury or death. The Negative responds with an argument about the arbitrariness and evil of borders. The extra rows built on the Wall do not linearly increase the arbitrariness and evil of the Wall. The incremental harm caused by the Affirmative is virtually zero because the additional bricks are irrelevant to the harms of division, which would exist if the Wall was 30 feet high or 100 feet high. Second, suppose the Affirmative advo-
outes pouring a glass of salt water into the ocean. The Negative responds by arguing that oceans are bad on non-consequentialist and consequentialist grounds. The linear impact of additional salt water in the ocean is again virtually zero. When something is as “entrenched” as the ocean, no harm can be traced to individual acts which “re-entrench” the ocean.

The uniqueness and non-linearity arguments answer takes out the consequentialist implications, so often, all the Negative is left with is an absolute non-consequentialist claim. Now there may still be a mutually exclusive alternative that solves the non-unique kritik implications, and thus outweighs the Affirmative, but that is a topic for another essay. What is essential to recognize is that the Affirmative can narrow the range of the debate quickly by attacking the assumption of moral absolutism. The rest of this section will discuss possible approaches for doing so.

How can the Affirmative challenge the assumption of moral absolutism? I sketch out two possible approaches, one based in debate theory, and the other in economics and political philosophy:

Germaneness and Assumptions vs. Stipulations

One of the pillars of modern debate practice is that “everything is up for grabs.” What I mean by that is that no argument is too far outside the decisionmaker’s frame of reference to count as ‘relevant.’ This is somewhat odd, given that all non-debate judge decisionmakers implicitly or explicitly constrain inputs into the decisionmaking process. Perhaps the answer is that the resolution asks for the answer to a relatively general question, so all factors bearing on that question are relevant to the answer. But administrative agencies charged with formulating national policies have to answer similar (and often broader) questions yet they explicitly use constrained decisionmaking models.

Another way of getting at this issue would be to imagine a different resolution. Suppose last year’s resolution queried “What is the best way for the USFG to increase PHS for the mentally ill?” The Affirmative has a strong claim that many objections to PHS, such as a claim that the USFG should not increase services, are not germane because they don’t address the question asked by the resolution. If this is the case, then it is not unreasonable to assume that there are implicit assumptions in the resolution that the Affirmative can choose to avoid defending for the purposes of argument. Suppose the IAC begins with a series of stipulations. It says “We don’t support PHS but the status quo does, so there is benefit in determining the least harmful way to provide PHS.” For the purposes of the argument, we assume X, Y, and Z to be true.” The Negative cannot validly kritik X, Y, or Z assumption because the Affirmative is not defending those assumptions, it is simply stipulating to get to another question.

To use debate language, every Affirmative is conditioned upon a series of core assumptions, meaning that a challenge to those core assumptions fails to recognize this implicit conditionality. Moral absolutist arguments, such “all infringement on property rights are bad” are non-responsive because the Affirmative is conditioned upon the assumption that the state can validly infringe property rights, because that is an authority that it currently enjoys and uses frequently. The obvious response is that the Affirmative can define away all objections as non-germane. The challenge is to develop standards that allow exclusion of some arguments, yet retain ground for others.

The Approximation Fallacy and the General Theory of the Second-Best

The moral absolutism claims are often defended by arguing that it is best to get as close to the ideal society as possible, even if such an ideal society is not possible. Even if we cannot eliminate racism, we should do everything we can to minimize it, which is an approximation of the ideal state of no racism. This seems perfectly sensible, yet it may be a disastrous approach according to the General Theory of the Second Best (“GTSB”).

In economics, the first-best option is often considered a perfectly competitive market with no government regulation. But if perfect competition is impossible, due to externalities or monopoly, the second-best option is not necessarily to approximate the ideal arrangement as closely as possible. It may be that monopoly and externalities justify extensive regulation in order to promote the ends sought by the first-best option. The same holds true for public policy choices. The ideal society may be one in which race is as irrelevant as eye color, a society in which people are judged by the ‘content of their character’ rather than the ‘color of their skin.’ But what happens if our national psyche is too wedded to the idea that race matters to make a colorblind society possible? Does it follow that the best we can do is to ignore race as much as possible? Absolutely not. It may be vastly preferable to explicitly consider race, and provide members of disadvantaged racial groups cash and in-kind benefits to overcome the injuries imposed by ongoing discrimination. Importantly, the advocate of racial consideration is not making an abstract claim about the desirability of using race; rather, it is a contextual recognition that if race is going to matter, the state should offset the injury created when race matters.

II. Moral Exhibitionism

Debate has, to borrow a phrase, become “about the moral doing battle with the immoral.” A commonly accepted alternative to the comparative policy-making model of judge decisionmaking is that debate is about ‘representations’ or ‘about discourse.’ Too often, this means that the team using the ‘best’ language wins. And, too often, the best language is that which avoids embracing the absolute moral wrong of one of the ‘isms’ (e.g., racism, sexism, capitalism). This approach to debate has serious unexamined costs, in the form of sacrificed free speech values. Yet it appears that many kritiks treat indifference to the costs of moral exhibitionism as evidence of moral superiority.

First Amendment Values

Standard First Amendment theory argues against punishment for speech. In debate, the constitution does not apply, because there is no restraint on speech by the state. Yet there are important First Amendment costs imposed when speech is punished by the loss of a ballot. Mill argued that free speech aids the search for ‘truth’ in three ways: the suppressed opinion may be true, open discussion prevents ‘dead dogmas’ (unchallenged ideas), and free speech may provide portion of truth that can be integrated into existing truth. There are certainly limits to this claim, but it is hard to argue that society would be consistently made better off by having less rather than more speech. That is, most people, even critics of free speech, start off with the assumption that most speech is good, and the debate is over whether certain speech can be limited. When debate focuses on representations or discourse, the likely effect is less frank discussion and thus less progress toward some form of truth (relative or absolute). This imposes a great cost on activity with a proud tradition of tolerance and open-mindedness.

Why is the likely effect of these counter-models less open dialogue? The answer does not lie in the specter of Big Brother sanctioning unpopular speech. While it is true that many teams furiously scour their opponents’ evidence for taboo phrases, the problem is deeper than this. Chilling has a much more mundane explanation: it is a product of strategic incentives. Debaters have overwhelming incentives to ‘purify’ their language and avoid politically controversial positions because of the risk of embracing certain modes of thought or certain images to which the Negative can attach a moral absolutist impact. To concretize this assertion, consider an Affirmative team that is debating a Negative that only runs discourse-based
criticism. What is the smartest thing for the Affirmative to do? Strip out their entire IAC to the bare basics. The strategic incentive is not to make one's arguments as strongly as possible, it is to avoid argumentation on potentially controversial issues as much as possible.

While many posit that the result has been a positive attitudinal change, the real result has been avoidance of controversial issues. Why take a contrary position on race when someone can call you a racist and demand that you and your ideas be rejected? From a strategic perspective, it is a loser position to advance controversial positions on race because you will be labeled. So the result is an orthodoxy that all racism (even when undefined) must be rejected; even questioning that proposition may cause you to be labeled racist, or at least call into question your commitment to social justice.

The Unfounded Slippery Slope Fear
The most powerful response to the First Amendment challenge is to argue that some speech should be deterred because of the harm it causes to listeners. But the hate speech analogy is problematic. Consider the definitions of hate speech offered by two of the primary scholars on the subject, Richard Delgado and Mari Matsuda. Professor Delgado limits the case for punishment to speech that is intended to demean through reference to race and is recognizable by a reasonable person as a racial insult. Professor Matsuda defines racist speech as "ideas so historically untenable, dangerous, and tied to perpetuation of violence that it is properly treated outside the realm of protected discourse." This definition recognizes that the vast majority of speech should be protected, especially because it is "those on the bottom who are most hurt by the absence of rights." University speech codes based on this scholarship typically distinguish between 'protected free expression' and 'discriminatory harassment,' with the line being drawn at intimidating behavior or personal vilification on the basis of race.

Now that we have defined hate speech, several problems with the analogy to in-round representations or discourse emerge. First, there is an enormous difference of degree. Neither Professor Delgado nor Professor Matsuda advocate punishment for relatively minor acts of intolerance. Second, hate speech requires an intent to harm or demean. Statements based in ignorance or insensitivity do not qualify as unprotected speech. The speech must be for the purpose of intimidation or injury. Third, hate speech requires a victim. Racist speech is narrowly defined as speech targeted at the member of a racial minority, not any speech that may perpetuate what someone considers a "racist idea."

Debate rounds rarely rise even close to what these authors are defining as "racist speech." A judge may be justified in voting against a team that uses a racial slur for the purpose of intimidating and harming their opponent. This is vastly different than someone who uses a concept or mechanism that some people believe to be racist. The requisite degree of harm, intent, and victims are typically missing.

A final point is that kritiks in their current form are not necessary to prevent harmful racist speech. Instead, tournaments could approve codes of conduct among the participants that would solve the harmful examples people raise, yet people would be free to discuss race or sex or any other "ism" without risk of sanction. Or we could just rely on informal norms that egregious behavior will not be tolerated in our community. Both options show there is no slippery slope that accepting any speech labeled as racist forces acceptance of egregious anti-social behavior. The community can reject the garden-variety discursive kritik as destructive of free-speech values without accepting all racist speech. This is a logical application of Professors Delgado and Matsuda's arguments.

III. Conclusion
This essay has addressed two interrelated concepts: moral absolutism and moral exhibitionism. The first portion provides a positive account of the importance of moral absolutism to the implications of most kritiks and provides some novel strategic approaches for countering absolutist claims. The second portion examines the trade-offs produced by an increasing emphasis on the 'value' of discourse or representations. It concludes that the harms to free speech values are quite severe, and that the most powerful exception to freedom of speech, based in the harm speech causes to others, does not apply to the vast majority of situations in which the exception is invoked by debaters. Moral absolutism undermines deliberation by avoiding hard choices; moral exhibitionism does the same by discouraging hard arguments.

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TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB TO IMPROVE DEBATE

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Just as technology has provided opportunities to improve all aspects of our lives, it has provided many new opportunities for debaters and coaches. These opportunities extend beyond research, still the most common use of technology in debate, to community-building and instruction. This essay highlights some of the many opportunities that the World Wide Web (WWW) has made available to debaters and coaches.

Research
The primary way that the WWW has been used to date has been to facilitate research. This largely began in the early 1990s when college debate teams began bringing laptops (and in some cases desktops!) to debate tournaments to access the Lexis-Nexis database. For many years, Lexis-Nexis was the only database that most debaters could access remotely at tournaments and was also one of the only databases that debaters could access that contained full-text articles.

Lexis-Nexis made its way into debate much faster than the WWW and justifiably so. It was not until 1990 that Tim Berners-Lee invented the WWW, and it wasn't until 1995 that users could browse the WWW with a graphical interface through such popular browsers as Netscape and Internet Explorer.

Although debaters could obtain the relatively limited amount of material on the web through such protocols as gopher and ftp prior to 1995, this material was difficult to search and difficult for those with more limited technical capabilities to access. As a result, it was rarely used in debate.

But just as the development of a graphic interface facilitated an explosion in use of the web, so to did it lead to rapid increase in the use of the web by college debaters, and eventually by high school debaters. This started during the 1995-1996 college season and the web was primarily used to research affirmatives to provide Defense Support Satellites (DSS) to Israel and regulate the use of commercial satellite
Since then, use of the WWW by debaters has largely paced its development and society's use of it. Over the past eight years, a tremendous amount of material that is useful to debaters has been made available online. This material can be divided into four general categories.

**Periodicals.** There are a large number of scholarly and popular periodicals available through the WWW at no cost. Scholarly foreign policy publications include *The Washington Quarterly* (twq.com), *Foreign Policy* (foreignpolicy.com), and *Foreign Affairs* (foreignaffairs.org). Popular weekly periodicals include *Business Week* (businesweek.com) and *Newsweek* (msnbc.com/news/news/NW-front_front.asp). Many high school debaters may not have access to these scholarly foreign policy publications in their own libraries.

Topical-specific periodicals include *California Coast and Ocean* (cesres.ca.gov/coastalconservancy/Publications/pubs.htm) and the *Marine Fisheries Review* (http://sps.nw.noaa.gov/mcontent.htm).

Newspaper and newswires. Newspapers and newswires are what most people are familiar with on the web. Debaters can access many of the articles in such reputable papers as the *New York Times* (nytimes.com), the *Christian Science Monitor* (csmonitor.com), and the *Washington Post* (washingtonpost.com) online at no charge. At the *Washington Post* site debaters and coaches can also search the *Associated Press* and *Reuters* newswires. Sites such as *Dyip.com* and *Google News* (http://news.google.com) can be used to search thousands of new sites at a single stroke for the most recent information. These sites index thousands of sources that are not available on pay service applications such as *Lexis-Nexis*. Ocean-specific news can be found at the *Ocean Futures Society* (http://www.oceanfutures.org/news/news_index.aspx).

**Government information.** Almost all government information that is publicly-available is available online. The General Accounting Office (gao.gov), an independent agency that evaluates new proposals and existing programs from a relatively objective point of view, releases all of its reports available online as soon as they are complete. Almost all of the Congressional committees make their hearing transcripts and reports available online. Senate committees can be found at senate.gov and House committees can be found at house.gov. Of particular use on this topic is the House resource committee (resourcescommittee.house.gov) and the Senate energy and natural resources committee (energy.senate.gov). All of the materials produced by the federal Commission on Ocean Policy can be accessed at oceancommission.gov and the House Oceanics Caucus can be found at house.gov/greenwood/OCEAN/index.html

**Think tanks and advocacy groups.** Almost every think tank and advocacy group in the U.S. has a website with a substantial amount of material that reflect their own point of view on particular topics. Generally, these groups represent particular ideological points of view. The Heritage Foundation (heritage.org) is the leader conservave voice on the WWW and has opinions on everything from gun control to taxation to missile defense, though always with a conservative slant. The CATO Institute (cato.org) also has an opinion on nearly everything but with a libertarian perspective. A more middle of the road liberal perspective can be found on most issues at the Brookings Institute (brookings.edu).

In addition to these general advocates of their ideological outlook, debaters and coaches can find many sites that have topic-specific materials such as the Pew Oceans Commission (pewoceans.org), the David Suzuki Foundation (davidsuzuki.org/Oceans), *Ocean Defense International* (oceandeference.org), and the National Resources Defense Council's oceans page (nrdc.org/water/oceans/default.asp).

The resources just referenced are a very small sampling of the tremendous volume of material that is use to debaters that is freely available on the WWW. And, although the WWW is often heavily-criticized for making available material that is factually inaccurate or poorly qualified, much of the material that is available is written by leading government officials, field experts, and academics. The quality of most of this material far exceeds what most individual debaters and coaches are likely to find in their own libraries.

**Lexis-Nexis** and the WWW are not the only means that debaters and coaches have at their disposal to do online research. Many services such as *Infotrac*, *Ebscohost*, *ScienceDirect*, and *JSTOR* make an extensive collection of full-text articles from hundreds of journals available online. Generally, schools and libraries, not individuals, subscribe to these services since they are very expensive, but debaters and coaches should investigate whether or not they have access to these services because they can often find full-text articles through these services that are not available for free on the web or through *Lexis-Nexis*. Most debate researchers seem to fail to take advantage of these services, instead relying almost exclusively on *Lexis-Nexis* and the WWW.

**Community Building**

Research is not the only thing that debaters and coaches use the WWW for. One very important use of technology in debate is to provide a means for debaters and coaches to communicate.

The most popular means of communication is listservs. Listservs are essentially large email lists that enable a poster to post a message to the group. Everyone who is signed-up to the listerv receives the posts and can respond back to the poster individually or to the entire group. College coaches and debaters communicate largely through the *Edebat* listerv (http://www.nitisceda.com/mailman/listinfo/debate). The listserv is used to post tournament invitations, tournament results, discuss controversial issues in debate, and even controversial issues in the world. Sometimes, personal messages, such as wedding and birth announcements are made. High school policy debaters use the *CXL* (http://www.cxl-admin@debate.net) high school LD debaters use *id-l* (To subscribe or join the id-l, send an email message to majordomo@world.std.com with the single phrase “subscribe id-l” in text.)

Listserv are not the only means to communicate in the debate community. As in the rest of society, message boards are becoming a popular means of communication. Although use of the boards has not caught on in college policy debate, they are used extensively in high school debate.

Cross-X.com was launched in 1999 and is the leading community discussion site for high school debate. The discussion forums have thousands of active users from every region of the country and cover every topic of interest to debaters. The site also features an evidence exchange, articles of interest to debaters, chat, and categories links to external resources. The site is supported by evidence sales, including the weekly *Thursday File* politics update service.

Hsdebate.com is an Internet debate landmark—since 1996 the site has archived a variety of “hard info” for the high school debate community, and now includes many years of historical results and invitations as well as other information in its archives, which are updated regularly. The site also features discussion forums, chat, and the Evidence Exchange, a fictional currency free market for trading debate evidence.

PlanteDebate.com also provides a number of free community services, including message boards, chat, high school and college case lists, tournament invitations, tournament results, and judge philosophies. Currently, the judge philosophy database has over 800 judge philosophies and can be easily sorted into high school and college categories and by the national tournament.

Another way of promoting community is by encouraging the growth of national and regional debate organizations. Many of the forensics organizations have websites to promote the growth of their own organizations and debate in general. The National Forensics League (nflonline.org/) has a website where debaters and coaches can find out
about new LD and Ted Turner topics, check their NFL points, purchase merchandise, and read the Restrum online. The National Debate Coaches Association (thendca.com) has a site for members, and so does the Washington-Arlington Catholic Forensics League (wacfl.org). The WACFL made use of its site this Spring to provide important information for those attending the Catholic national tournament in May. The college Cross-Examination Debate Association (ceede.org) also has a useful site. More debate organizations can be found at http://directory.google.com/Top/Society/Organizations/Student/Academic/Competitions/Debate/.

Instruction and Learning

In addition to researching and communicating, debaters can use the WWW to improve their understanding of the art of debate. The innovators in the use of the WWW to deliver debate instruction is Dr. Tina Snider, Director of Debate at the University of Vermont, who, through his website, Debate Central (debate.uvm.edu) has made debate instruction available at no cost to a worldwide audience. Debate Central features a free debate textbook, online videos on the basics of debate, lists of debate organizations, demonstration debates, journal articles about debate, and many other materials.

PlanetDebate.com, a Project of Harvard Debate Inc., is moving beyond its role as a provider of research materials for debaters to being a provider of instructional materials for debaters and coaches. This year, under the direction of Dr. Timothy O'Donnell, the Director of Debate at Mary Washington College, Planet Debate is developing a complete instruction section that includes general debating instruction, topic specific lesson plans, course activity materials, and coaching materials. Debaters and coaches can already access Stefan's Oceans Guide, a 400 page textbook that explains arguments on the upcoming topic, over five thousand research links described above that are organized by topic and side, and a number of downloadable .pdfs that can be used for skill evaluation.

This summer, Planet Debate is partnering with the Wake Forest Debate workshops (wakedebate.org) to deliver two unique instructional opportunities. First, through a partnership with Planet Debate, Wake Forest will be offering year-long learning to all of its summer participants. Students who will not even arrive in Winston-Salem until the middle of June or the beginning of July began their instruction in mid-May with online readings from Stefan’s Oceans Guide and introductory topic and topicality lectures. Students also received early access to their starter briefs and a chance to meet other debaters through special forums that only Wake students can access. After the students leave Winston-Salem, they will be able to continue their instruction through additional and additional online forum conversations with lab leaders. Northwestern and Dartmouth are also taking advantage of Planet Debate’s infrastructure to enhance the learning experience of their students through the summer.

Second, students who are otherwise unable to attend a summer workshop program will be able to learn all summer through Planet Debate’s E-Institute. In partnership with Wake Forest, the E-Institute is going to provide audio files of the Wake Forest camp lectures to students who participate in the E-Institute. In addition to listening to these lectures and receiving feedback from online instructors, students will learn with readings from the Oceans Guide, do research with the research links, and practice blocking with Planet Debate’s 25,000+ card evidence database. Summer Debate (summerdebate.com) also offers an online program.

Commercial Product Delivery

In addition to being used as a means to research and promote instruction, the web is also being used to deliver evidence-based products such as debate handbooks to students. Planet Debate provides subscribers with a 25,000+ card evidence database with research on the current oceans topic and an extensive backfile. The evidence database contains all of the evidence in Wake Forest’s Debater’s Research Guide, the Harvard debate Impact, the Michigan Blue Book, and a number of other sources. The evidence database is updated throughout the year so debaters will always have evidence on new affirmatives. In addition to the database, Planet Debate offers fully-briefed affirmatives, kritiks, and counterplans in .pdf form through its “Blockhouse.” Most of the materials delivered through the Blockhouse are available in print from Debatehandbooks.com. For 2003-4, Planet Debate will be offering a Lincoln-Douglas topic briefing from Minh Luong, the Assistant Director of International Security at Yale and the Director of the Yale IY scholars.

Paradigm Research (onparadigm.com) offers a full line of CX and LD products available in print or as pdf downloads, as well as its latest project - BLOX - which offers a selection of topic briefs for CX and LD debaters from the Paradigm library - an online library with ready-to-run arguments available to the entire squad every hour of every day. Paradigm is the longtime distributor of the Wake Forest DRG.

Other debate handbook providers include Victory Briefs (victorybriefs.com), Big Sky Debate (bigskydebate.com), and West Coast Debate (see.cis.net/sec/wedebate).

Conclusion

The WWW has provided many opportunities for coaches and debaters to improve their research efforts, build community, assist in learning, and distribute evidence-based resources. Those who take full advantage of these resources are likely to enjoy a competitive edge.