CONFLICT NAVIGATION AS RHETORIC AND PEDAGOGY FOR

ACADEMIC DEBATING IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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The purpose of this paper is to advocate Conflict Navigation as a new pedagogy aimed at uniting co-curricular debate educators in the United States. Contemporary collegiate debate demonstrates a crisis in pedagogy as seen in a history of "fractionation through structural fortification". This lack of a sustainable pedagogical community has proven to critically strain the resources and curricula of academic debate.

Conflict Navigation (CN) represents a behavior-based approach to conflict with an emphasis on ethical rhetoric. The primary mission of argument within a CN framework is inquiry, cooperation, and engagement.

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For Kate

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For four decades the slanted, stair-filled campus of Lewis and Clark College in

Portland Oregon has played host to one of America's more venerated academic debate

events, the Pioneer Invitational. The early morning through late evening hours of Friday,

Saturday, and Sunday are essentially dedicated to rigorous academic speech and debate

competition. Speech participants may end up walking to two or three rooms an hour to

deliver various memorized and impromptu speeches on topics that can vary drastically.

Each speech will be given at least twice, if not three or four times depending on the size

and disbursement of entries at the tournament.

Debate participants will likewise give a dozen or more unique speeches

throughout the weekend on topics which range from whether or not Obama can win

support from Blue Dog Democrats to whether or not the strategy being demonstrated by

the negative debate team represents an egregious affront to affirmative ground. While

most students emphasize either speech or debate, the opportunity does exist to spend the

weekend doing both. This means that over the course of the weekend any of the hundreds

of 19 to 21-year-old competitive participants could potentially speak in a scrutinized,

pressure filled environment close to forty times. Each instance represents a chance to

experience and learn from public speaking and to explore the pitfalls of verbal argument.

With few exceptions, participants at the Pioneer Invitational or any of the near one-hundred annual collegiate events like it will speak on issues of their own choosing. The debates will also cover pre-selected topics - typically current events with the occasional methaphor thrown in for good measure - and some non-debate speeches will be selected from publication. Regardless of the selected start topic, or the argument's point of origin, the student ultimately guides the discussion. Speech participants will quickly realize that the selection of their piece makes as much of their argument as the lines selected by the author, and thus speech pieces run the gamut from thoughtful reflection to down right bawdy. The leeway given to forensics competitors in this regard has frequently colored the cheeks of 'old-fashioned' community members at the end of the day but many if not all educators recognize the importance of intellectual mobility in learning environments. Given the relationships that exist between verbal arguing skills and personal agency, such mobility is especially valuable to a curriculum in argumentation.

Forensics competitions, as speech and debate participation is often called, offers a unique, co-curricular environment. This means students and professionals from any and every academic background bring their expertise to bear. The majority find value in the repeated discussion of their ideas while the community gets to listen and engage them. Those who decide to dedicate their time to forensics will typically find thousands of chances to practice speaking about their interests, predicated on animated conversation with an interested colleague or educator.

Intellectual mobility is not enough to ensure the best learning environment however. Every academic endeavor must also exhibit some sense of pedagogical sustainability and in this regard forensics education has a somewhat perplexing record. Every academic community is typically expected to outline specific goals and objectives, yet verbal argumentation poses significant challenges in this regard. While competitive forensics has a long history in America, various pedagogical sticking points have caused considerable trouble. In fact, as we shall see, entire formats of forensics education owe their existence to these various "crises" in forensics pedagogy.

It might seem obvious that vast pedagogical disagreements among forensics educators would exist, after all these are debate educators. But those who teach argumentation know that above all else, if we are to argue well we must first and foremost value cooperation. No doubt arguments among certain individuals can begin or end not as reasonable discussions but rather out and out fights, humankind has certainly not failed to provide examples as to how devastating our arguments might become. But at the very core of even our most damaging arguments we can find a remarkable amount of agreement. So when pedagogical discrepancies drive forensics educators of all people apart, there is a very real and very unfortunate irony.

Throughout the last half century, forensics education in general and academic debate practice in particular has suffered this irony and there is plenty to suggest the community will suffer it again. For instance, ongoing questions over what constitutes acceptable evidence use and delivery have sparked considerably divisive community

acceptable evidence use and delivery have sparked considerably divisive community response and yet every year they seem to once again rear their head. Put another way, how involved should the judge get in analyzing the justifications given by students for their arguments (evidence) and the language they use or rate at which they explain them (delivery). For many reasons various interpretations of how judges should operate within academic debate have put redundant strain on the community over these concepts.

It was at the Pioneer Invitational early in my coaching career that I confronted a concrete instance of pedagogical collision. At the end of a long tournament weekend, I sat down to judge two teams who found themselves in the single win bracket (meaning this last preliminary round of the weekend would ultimately mean very little) and was surprised to see a very respected team from the University of California at Berkeley preparing to debate two very nice but clearly inexperienced students from a small North West college. The opening resolution resolution was something along the lines of "This House Would Pass Bush's Immigration Reform." California was to argue the affirmative.

Given the ultimately arbitrary nature of how all debate will be settled, it is not uncommon to find a respected debate team so far down the bracket late in the weekend. What IS uncommon is the way the Golden Bears decided to interpret their burdens under the resolution. The debaters from Berkeley decided to propose the complete legalization of marijuana. Marijuana is a "bush" after all, "immigration" simply means to cross boundaries, and "reform" suggests there must be a deviation from current federal or state policy. What's the big deal?

The big deal, obviously, was that it had never occurred to the negative team that this topic could be read this way, they were expecting a debate about the immigration policies forwarded by then President George W. Bush. The new students were obviously frustrated, their frustration amplified by a long and trying weekend. There were complaints, there were tears, there was not a single responsive argument which engaged Berkeley's argument. The Golden Bears were quick to point out this failure to respond. The affirmative case may be "unfair" they argued, but until the negative could explain why their interpretation was better than that of the affirmative's, I as an objective judge was compelled to vote in favor of the marijuana proposal. Essentially Cal argued, "We may be wrong, but it's up to them to beat us. Until they do, vote Affirmative."

The students from Berkeley and the local Northwest students represent two polar extremes in the world of debate interpretation. We will unpack these extremes in later chapters, for now we see that there are those who feel debate should be about the two teams, what they say and sometimes more importantly what they don't. And there are others who feel debate should be about age-old ideals of 'good people, speaking well'.

In the end, I voted for the Northwest team. Not because I disagreed with the interpretation forwarded by the California team, but because I, too, was tired and fed up with clearly intelligent and capable debate teams refusing to engage bewildered opponents. The novice team didn't win, I said, the Berkeley team lost. While my response is justifiable, the Berkeley team, interpreting the round very differently, were entitled to their upset with the decision.

I felt that the California team failed to engage the new students, and explained to them why judges ought not intervene in debates on behalf of plain interpretations of competitive topics. Meanwhile the Berkeley boys never felt it was their obligation to do so. Academic debate is a game, in games winners win by going for the win, not by making everyone feel good about the fact that there must be winners and losers. And surely they should not be expected to be involved in the coaching of a team that lives hundreds of miles to their north... right? Like a big time law firm beating back the novice public defender not because they are terrible people, but because that is how they interpreted their role in a competitive and academic activity. What better way to learn about the competitive inter-workings of life than within academic debate?

When it comes to argument, obviously no one is perfect. This instance is exemplary of a neutral opportunity for everyone involved, myself included, to examine our behaviors in conflict environments and attempt to find ways we can improve upon them. This is possible if and only if we all continue to argue together, working to revise our habits through re-exposure to old problems.

However this was not to be the case for the two teams involved in this story. While I do my very best to not get overly involved in my decisions, I must admit that there is some justice in my reputation as a more emotional judge. The University of California as a program emphasized this characteristic in the implementation of judge "strikes" against me. Citing my "interventionist" policies, Berkeley took advantage of a system designed to keep judges with conflicting interests from deciding the outcome of

competitive rounds. I would attend perhaps two dozen tournaments with those same students throughout the next year, but never again would I be the judge in the back of the room for these participants. My dialogue with those two students thus functionally ended.

The forensics program that the novice students represented has since followed in the footsteps of others before, leaning away from speech events to focus on alternate formats of debate. They still participate in speech events, but the debate program of that historic team has essentially exited the common sphere, the consensus being that this move was due to questions of pedagogy.

The novice students wanted to be involved in the debate, but expected the judge to know define 'ridiculous' as they did and why it was bad simply upon exposure. The California team sought a predictable, non-intrusive ballot. Both groups, in different ways, opted to stop talking to the other people in the room.

The miracle of argumentation is that instead of the typical conflict binary of "avoid or confront", we can exchange mere symbols, and through these symbols we reason. Humans have a means by which to compare and contrast not only perceptions, but directions as well. We do not depend on argumentation to perceive the world but rather to decide how we act within it. And thus more than anything, argumentation is reliant on cooperation.

While forensics educators have an inspiring history of cooperation which makes the debating landscape in the United States unique in its diversity, there are ongoing pedagogical questions among debate educators specifically which seem to be cyclically

interrupting efforts for sustainable cooperation. Rather than weaving endemic and inevitable pedagogical concerns into the fabric of academic debate itself, all too often participants structurally fortify. Instead of viewing pedagogical disagreement in all the forms it may take as a valuable lesson in the fragility and frustrating nature of argument, there is a trend of structural avoidance..

Simply put debate education is fortified through changes to the activity or to the rules which are designed to eliminate what is viewed by some as 'bad' debate. As we shall see, structural fortification has had a uniquely formative impact on the history of American debate education.

The most obvious way to demonstrate the perceived necessity of structural fortification is to look at the extremities of academic debating. One of the most influential rivalries in pedagogy is apparently the question over whether debate should emphasize "performance" as opposed to "substance" (Herbeck 1). Should the debate be judged on what happened or on the quality of the substance? One one side of this question we see debate communities asking that the debates play out as "performed" by the debaters. Questions of substance are certainly important, but only if they are brought up by the competitors themselves. Otherwise the ballot is supposed to go to the team who out•performed their opponents.

Perhaps one of the more performance-oriented debate communities is the National Debate Tournament (NDT). At the NDT debaters come armed to the teeth with tubs of files prepared throughout the season. The best of them can populate a notepad with a

diverse array of technically interacting arguments at an astounding speed. It is equally possible for a team to win an argument that is admittedly absurd as it is for the same team to win an argument that is true. Evidence drives these contests though not always evidence that is respected. This is because the contest is seen to be between the debate teams themselves, the judge or judges are supposed to stay out of the argumentation process. Instead they call the debate based on what was said and what was not. This is so much the case that participants frequently do not even bother to dress up for the occasion. After all, arguments should be won based on how well they best their challenges, not on how pretty they looked.

In these debates it is felt that the argumentation experts will be able to identify who wins and loses based on a skillfully crafted "flow" (or set of notes detailing not only what was said but also what was said in response to what) and a knowledge of how certain kinds of statements interact with others. Audiences who are not versed and prepared for these kinds of debates may frequently find themselves in the dark. Evidence, perhaps one of the most important components of ethical argumentation, becomes simply whatever is published and left unanswered by the other team. If the judge weighs in too heavily with regards to what ought to constitute evidence claims they are struck, if they do not than they are functionally rewarding poor scholarship and questionable rhetorical decision making.

To find an example of substance-driven debate one might look to the growing influence of British Parliamentary (BP) debate. These debates probably look a lot more

like what is expected by an unassuming public. Participants speak at carefully altered rates, drawing us in, playing on ethos, pathos, and logos, alike. Their arguments would be simple, their answers concise. There would be an incredible amount of maneuvering going on around very particular words or areas of the discussion but these components of the debate would not receive any direct analysis or scrutiny. The debate would be decided after the round by a panel of judges who discuss which team best combined manner with matter. It is entirely possible for a debate team to lose the issue yet win the debate, a notion unheard of at the NDT. The growing popularity of BP debate in the United States is owed in large part to an ongoing quest for traditional conceptions of 'delivery' in debate. This will be explained in later chapters, but once again we see a pedagogical issue driving the community apart.

On the off chance that someone from the NDT were to attend a BP tournament or vice versa critiques inevitably fly. NDTers would indict BP debate as excessively subjective, perhaps calling those who win members of a good-old-boys club. BP participants might look at the NDT as noisy, disrespectful, and even crude. What good is a curriculum of argumentation they might ask that so heavily favors specialization?

Depending on how we approach the world, either community can be incredibly appealing. At one extreme we see an intense scrutiny of the functional relationships between the diverse kinds of statements and an ongoing rhetoric of fair play. On the other we see the Winston Churchills of tomorrow going through their paces, learning how to move a crowd. NDT style debate teaches us that truths are constructed by assent and that

utterances have functional outcomes that if properly scrutinized can become incredibly efficient in contrasting ideas. BP style debate makes for great entertainment as well as an outstanding place for students to examine crucial issues of the day.

As is frequently the case with most binary worlds, either extreme can also be incredibly worrisome. What happens if we teach that argumentation is merely a game? How do literally thousands of speeches given over a career in such an environment effect the way we approach those who disagree with us? On the other hand, what happens if we end up encouraging the manner more than the matter? Does not 'empty rhetoric' pose the same scale of threat to a student's education in verbal reasoning if not in a different form?

For over 40 years these questions and others like them appear to be cyclically pulling debate communities apart. Despite a proud history beginning in colonial America (Potter 9), seemingly divergent interpretations of what academic debate ought to be have not only been colliding in debate rounds as well as conferences across the United States since the late 1940's, we shall see that they have in fact been cyclically tearing the community apart.

Given the abstract nature of academic debate, identifying all of the diverging forces let alone any single issue on which to place the blame is incredibly tricky. What cannot be denied is at the heart of the trouble lies the question of delivery. If we are going to utilize a competitive debating format there will obviously be a great deal of conflict as to what 'winning' debate should look and even sound like. Debate as contest is obviously going to be endemically subjective, but too much subjectivity begins to chip away at the

confidence that participants have that all of their dedication and hard work is going to get a fair hearing. Perhaps more important is the lesson that no matter how subjective any human enterprise is there is much to learn and gain from understanding how we argue ways to make our endeavors more fair.

Questions of delivery lie at the heart of any curriculum in better argumentation and they should be expected to arise time and again in any and all academic debate environment. What debate educators should not accept however is for such questions to result in a sorting of delivery styles. Such is the case in contemporary competitive debate.

I examine this sorting, which I call fractionation and its suggested cause, structural fortification. Conflict Navigation is then introduced as a unifying pedagogy and rhetoric for academic debate participants in the United States. It will seek to stand as an alternative to the shifts in paradigm which have to date defined and sorted the academic debating landscape in the United States. Conflict Navigation does not seek to resolve these many ongoing disputes among debate educators in the United States, only to facilitate their seemingly inevitable deliberation. It will suggest that above and beyond questions of delivery we find a much more important lesson which ought to demand the attention of academic debate participants. This larger lesson suggests that at the heart of all efforts to argue lies the agreement that we wish not only to argue our differences now but also in the future. Rather than seeking to structurally resolve conflicts we ought to be training ourselves to navigate them in any and every way they may arise. This means that each time we encounter debate interpretations that flow contrary to our own, we see them

less as a 'threat' to our community and more as a novel challenge and opportunity to experience and learn from another form of argument.

Conflict Navigation will not be enforced but rather participated in. By referring to it as a rhetoric I am invoking the lasting tradition of rhetorical study stretching from ancient Greece to contemporary culture. This tradition suggests the methods we select to enter into an argument are perhaps more important than the issues our arguments seek to conceptualize. Our expectations and actions surrounding argumentation shape the ways our issues will be examined as well as the extent-to-which and the methods-by-which they may be re-examined in the future. Within the realm of academic debate we are confronted not only by conflicting and flammable issues of public interest, but also by ongoing disputes within the activity of academic debate itself. Conflict Navigation seeks to facilitate and encourage the continuation of each of these kinds of disagreements.

For example, Conflict Navigation will approach two older pedagogical conflicts amongst academic debate educators, namely what ought to constitute 'evidence' for a claim, as well as how much emphasis and which kinds of emphasis we should place on ideas regarding 'delivery'. We will examine a history of fractionation within academic debate which stems from ongoing, I would argue endemic, disagreement over these two important issues. Rather than take a stance on these issues, Conflict Navigation hopes to facilitate and encourage their ongoing discussion.

Instead of looking at evidence and delivery in the traditional sense, which invokes an emphasis on public oratory and civic activism, Conflict Navigation will examine these

topics as they might apply to the more general and commonplace arenas within the field of argumentation. Humans argue in nearly everything we do, we confront arguments both perceived and real in nearly every aspect of our lives. Rather than prioritizing only the best emphasis and seeking to eradicate the rest, Conflict Navigation asks academic debate competitors to realize that many things can be submitted as 'evidence' for a claim and it is up to them to engage them. Failure to do so, regardless of the apparent quality of the evidence submitted, can frequently lead to community acceptance of what might otherwise be seen as a flawed argument.

On notions of delivery, Conflict Navigation emphasizes the diversity of the discourse communities that academic debate participants might find themselves in. There are times when we are the experts within our own communities and instances in which we are speaking only to other experts. Of course there will always be times when we will be expected to explain our expertise to those who for whatever reason may not be able to follow in our jargon. Rather than seeing these two environments as opposed to each other, Conflict Navigation suggests that academic debate presents a prime opportunity to learn the hazards, shortfalls, and implications of both kinds of environments, and many more.

There are also times for instance when we are entering expert communities. Perhaps we have taken an amateur interest in a topic and we hope to learn more, perhaps we are new members of a flourishing community. Regardless, rather than simply expecting the experts to translate their discussions to us Conflict Navigators know it is up to them to learn the ropes and participate. Then there will be many more environments

where we do not know which of these two scenarios we may be in. We may not know if we are the true experts or if we are in fact relative novices until the discussion has begun. These situations too require their own kind of delivery and evidentiary practices. Conflict Navigation suggests our stance in all such environments should be on of flexibility, inclusion, and genuine curiosity rather than dogmatic exclusion or avoidance.

It takes some people a lifetime to learn the fragility of argument and the patience and self-sacrifice needed to do it well in life. Those who experience academic debate the longest will confront thousands of opportunities to engage ideas that conflict in many ways both hidden and apparent. We'll confront contests where the conflict is perceived but not real, we'll confront ideas and behavior that more than anything make us want to lash out either with our own arguments or with structural fortification, and each and every round we participate in we confront an opportunity to take all of the complicated perceptions we have about the fluid and invisible world that is human argument and articulate them. Before we can truly understand what Conflict Navigation is and how it works however, we must first understand fractionation.

Fractionation - A History for Avoidance

In the spring of 1988, Robert Rowland and Scott Deatherage identified a "crisis" in competitive debate. Their article alleged that students and educators were proving so eager to play the game of competitive debate that they were ultimately willing to sacrificing better research habits, coherent and reasonable content, and student and community access (Rowland and Deatherage). At the heart of their critique and many like

it we see questions about the quality of delivery at the more influential academic debating events.

All who teach debate know that both the best arguments and the most ethical must put a premium on accessibility. There are significant moral as well as practical implications in making available all of the steps and potential implications of our reasoning, or at least as many of them as is possible. We not only benefit in our science when we invite the scrutiny of our peers, we also benefit humanity by encouraging and inviting invigorating perspectives on the problems we have identified. Regardless of their importance however, neither of these two possible forms of criticism are easy to utilize. Professional criticism can be professionally motivated, 'invigorating' new ideas can be outright crazy. But regardless of the personal cost of exploring each of the various kinds of scrutiny which our ideas may encounter we obviously cannot simply allow ourselves to ignore or avoid those we most dislike.

Yet this avoidance seems to be a recurring tactic among debate participants on all levels. All too often some of the most influential shifts in competitive debate organization and format did not necessarily occur because a better model was found, instead they occur because it was felt that a better model was urgently needed. Such a trend is less concerning if it is solvent, but among competitive debate communities it is proving to be cyclical.

Rowland and Deatherage's "crisis" represents an instance when the pendulum has swung too far to the side of specialization. In their world judges needed to take more

accountability (Rowland and Deatherage 249) and orient debate with their ballots. In the world of 'specialized' debate programs however this accountability is labeled as 'interventionist'. Judges who attempt to influence debates in the ways suggested by Rowland and Deatherage as opposed to voting only on the performance in the round are competitively risky and frequently they can be 'struck' by teams at future debating events.

Judge strikes are one form that structural fortification can take. Programs which emphasize specialized or performance-based debating not only impose judge strikes at the tournaments which they host but typically will opt to attend tournaments which offer such strikes as opposed to those which do not. A good case can be made for judge strikes in that they let the community respond to judges who perhaps have relationships with competitors which might somehow inhibit their ability to judge a debate round fairly. It could also be said that the care and scrutiny that goes into striking or ranking the judging field teaches community awareness and ensures fairness. However those who are familiar with academic debate know that it is much more common for these strikes to represent a way of sorting the judging pool along pedagogical lines.

At some national debating events, participants can strike 15% of the judging field and many participants and educators end up feeling especially targeted and thus we see a second manifestation of structural fortification, exodus. The National Parliamentary Debate Association stands as arguably America's most popular academic debate institution and it arguably owes a large part of its popularity to such exodus.

Like Rowland and Deatherage, many debate educators felt that "policy" debate, as the most prevalent debating format in the 1980's was known, was either too prohibitive to new students or was placing too little emphasis on some aspects of delivery. Many of the early NPDA powerhouses were programs making a departure from policy debate tournaments they may have attended for years and the more delivery-friendly NPDA also made it a more appealing format for programs which were just getting started. Those who felt that debate must remain oratorical or that the game had driven the community amok almost certainly flocked to the NPDA.

There were of course many who felt that the structural alterations made by the NPDA to the way debates took place were an over reaction, that in an effort to right the curriculum of delivery the NPDA was sacrificing too much (Bartanen and Frank 31-54), but it is clear that a sufficient number of debate programs felt the risk was worth it. The NPDA was in many ways a wholesale structural reformation to debate education which was either designed or simply made popular because debate needed to be saved.

Had these changes worked there would be no need for concern. In fact many would agree that differing formats of debate prompt new thinking about our attempts at discourse. And we should obviously always reserve judgement of those who are exercising their ability to 'vote with their feet'. If we are unhappy with how certain activities have evolved then we ought to be allowed to seek greener pastures. But when we leave behind groups who are reliant on our existence or when our selectivity in fact jeopardizes our best interests such a response will ultimately prove counterproductive.

It is becoming increasingly clear that in the instance of the NPDA the grass was in fact not greener. After a decade of peace, familiar grumblings are sounding throughout the NPDA. In a 2008 document referred to as "the Kirksville Consensus", the NPDA made what were largely unremarkable changes to national tournament operating procedure. Most of the changes were clearly initiated in order to facilitate a more enjoyable national event but a few stand out examples illustrated that the very same influences supposedly abandoned at policy debate tournaments were now impacting parliamentary debate in a manner sufficient enough to elicit attempts at still more structural response.

While it's not hard to find defensive rhetoric in the body of the document, changes 10, 12, and arguably 16 present themselves as prime examples of not only a perceived need but a continued reliance on structural fortification. These changes include a new judge composition for the semi-final and final rounds of debate at the national tournament, the creation of a 'consolation' event, and even mandated and exclusive use of "National Tournament Paper" [1]. Only the changes regarding the make up of the championship final judging panel would ultimately go into effect but the Kirksville Consensus and the conversations surrounding it prove that despite an historically drastic revision to debate education efforts in the US "crises" continues. Similar to the late 1980's contemporary debate educators face a threat of competitive influences which perpetuate the "...exclusion of several constituencies" including "...novice competitors"

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[1] See Key Documents - Revised Tournament Operating Procedures http://www.parlidebate.org/

and "...programs with traditional perspectives on debating tradition." (NPDA).

The similarities between Rowland and Deatherage's "crisis" and the concerns addressed by the Kirksville Consensus have left many in the intercollegiate debate community somewhat despondent. Despite being fortified against the problems which were seen to have prompted the conflicts of delivery in policy debate a significant number of parliamentary debate educators once again feel pedagogically embattled.

This cyclicality is especially disheartening when educators look at what was given up in the pursuit of better debate. The season-long topic that had guided prior debating in America was eliminated in favor of a more 'extemporaneous' format featuring a new topic announced only 15 minutes before each round of competition began. While earlier debate students toiled over all of the delicate ins and outs of a single topic for an entire season, current students enjoy just enough time to look up a few of the most important terms and frantically cobble together a few arguments. Vertical research methods are perhaps one of the most ill-served academic techniques in much of America's education systems and whereas once competitive debate stood as a motivator and trial ground for the crucial skills at producing a deeply warranted argument, the NPDA reinforces a reliance on the Cliffs Notes. Arguments can be made for a 'horizontal' approach to debating and many were (Trapp, *Parliamentary Debate* 25). It could also be said that there are certainly always benefits available when students are asked to formulate and then articulate their ideas. No matter how beneficial current debate formats are however it becomes very difficult to find any component of debate education that is more important

or more difficult to otherwise learn than vertical researching skill as provided by a season long debate topic.

The season-long topic also allowed students to develop an ongoing conversation about a single issue. Students were introduced to what professionals might call community review. They were competitively driven to keep up on the current approaches to the topic and answers to their approaches as the year went on. Exposure to this kind of discourse community is incredibly rare in college let alone high school and it represents yet another educational opportunity cost of the shift to horizontal research.

As frustrating as the loss of a season-long topic is however, it is at least defendable. One might argue that students of the future need an education in on-the-spot research to keep up with the changing demands our new wireless lifestyle will place on them. Perhaps most notably one could argue that without a single season topic to monopolize student's time, more energy can be dedicated to course work (Trapp, *Parliamentary Debate* 25). Last, the new NPDA format has done remarkable things for smaller programs. Whereas policy debate tournaments were most frequently won by large programs with entire research farms, parliamentary debate has proven little to no bias for larger programs when it comes to national championship wins. In fact in 2009 both the NPDA and NPTE national championship events were won by the University of Nevada at Reno, an upstart program among academic debate communities.

While the loss of a season-long conversation might frustrate debate educators, other changes made in the shift to NPDA are practically devastating. Most notable is the

prohibition of evidence within the debating chamber. In an apparent effort to combat the ongoing delivery problems, documents and evidence prepared before the 15-minute preparation time were explicitly forbidden once the debate round started. The only information students could present in-round was that which they themselves had generated during the 15 minutes of prep.

Now, not only are students incapable of exploring the incredible depths of any issue for debate, the research that they find in the 15 minutes after the topic is read can only be brought into the round if they can write it out by hand. Given the limited time available and the time it takes to copy such evidence it is rare to see any kind of scholarship in NPDA debating. Many programs pride themselves over their researching regimen and rightly so but the ultimate likelihood of even a significant portion of that research showing up in a round of traditional NPDA debate is evidently small.

Evidence comparison is no easy task, it too is now absent from a majority of competitive debating events in the United States. Knowing why certain evidence might be more illuminative when evidence sets disagree represents some of the more fundamental work for any scientist, philosopher, or ethical arguer. Comparison is an especially pertinent skill set for a growing society with practically the universe of evidence in their pockets.

Obviously evidence-based debate rarely looks ideal even in the best policy debates. But whereas policy debate frequently consists of franticly paced, dubious appeals to printed authority, parliamentary debate citation if they happen at all frequently

consist of little more than terms like 'studies show' and 'scientists have found'. Such methods of suggestive and innuendo-laden citation may be sufficient for contemporary cable news punditry but they have little to no place in ethical and effective argumentation.

By forcing students to utilize only what they prepared in 15-minutes educators hoped both to counter-act the evidence-hoarding that gave large programs noticeable advantages and to respond to rapidly increasing rates of delivery. They hoped to curb an ongoing reliance on jargon and community-specific short hand and to throw open the doors of debate education to the average college student or crowd (Trapp *Parliamentary Debate*).

If one were to observe any of the later elimination rounds at most NPDA sanctioned tournaments today, they would quickly see what the recent influx of familiar complaint is about. They would see that despite admirable goals the ultimate differences between the pedagogical concerns including but not limited to questions of delivery that are faced by the NPDA are not that much different than those faced by prominent debating enterprises which came before.

The damage inflicted on debating curriculum from the structural reformations themselves (not to mention by the example of ongoing reliance on such tactics) is mirrored by the physical damage done to what was at one point a growing and vibrant community of debate educators. The exodus to the NPDA arguably facilitated to the death of many policy debate regions not to mention entire programs. When teams are

forced to travel long distances to compete they can decide either to change their debate format, to sacrifice student participation to travel further away, or to close their doors. There must be a more sustainable and less expensive way to 'protect' debate.

Educators were ready to accept the challenges that came from regulating away the use of evidence, but what do we do when these regulations and structural sacrifices prove for the most part to be fruitless? The Kirksville Consensus suggests that many of the pressures of the activity have followed the community from policy debate to the NPDA but rather than realizing that such problems are not only endemic to competitive debate education but also an important part of it many programs are simply packing their bags. The 2004 - 2005 season was the last time the NPDA national tournament hosted more than 300 programs. According to the NPDA website, participation presently hovers around 245 schools. This number looks much smaller when one realizes that many of those schools are relatively new to the NPDA while many of the more notable programs from the past have gone.

It is hard to say exactly where they all are going and more importantly it should be noted there are obviously many reasons as to why they might leave, but stand in the hallway at any NPDA sanctioned tournament long enough and you're bound to overhear a conversation about how "world's debate" (also known as British Parliamentary or "BP" debate) recaptures a lot of the elusive traditional debate priorities. Still others in our hallway may be discussing an inevitable split between the NPDA and the newest example of structural fortification, the National Parliamentary Tournament of Excellence (NPTE).

Founded in 2003, the NPTE appears to stand apart from earlier efforts of structural enforcement of debate tradition in that rather than being a tournament designed to reclaim traditional goals for debate, the NPTE is built in a way that seems to prioritize the game. While the NPTE predates the Kirksville Consensus, it is seen by many as a response to the growing chorus of voices at the NPDA who suggest that things are getting out of hand and in many ways the response is structurally fortified. The NPTE for instance includes an incredibly complicated system of judge ranking designed to let teams sort the judges in the competitive pool. Rather than learn about the fragility and scope of the challenges within delivery students are encouraged to believe that we can control who is listening to us and when.

Depending on how well the NPTE and the NPDA can get along, and the extent to which debate educators are wooed by alternative formats like BP debate, the landscape of intercollegiate debate in the United States could be on the verge of yet another drastic shift. Even if both communities find some sort of equilibrium where they can coexist, competitive debating in the United States will have taken another blow to education in that rather than learning to confront those with whom you ardently disagree, competitors and coaches can simply choose to go play somewhere else. Both the NPDA and the NPTE offer national debate championship events and as transportation costs climb debating programs wishing to pursue both kinds of debate are more than ever having to make difficult decisions. At best the two organizations will informally work to keep their tournaments on differing weekends and maybe even in the same state but history is

beginning to show that even these cooperative efforts may be short lived.

BP debate continues to be on the rise and for good reason. BP debate is the format most like that of the global community. No world-wide debating event can rival that of the World's Universities Debating Championship whose debate set-up is identical to the growing number of BP tournaments in the United States. Given the growing number of BP debate tournaments in the Pacific Northwest alone, a region which for many years has been one of the more competitive parliamentary debate regions in the country another exodus likewise seems almost assured. Either way, we are probably facing still more debate acronyms not less, not to mention the difficult choices programs will face as to where to allocate their precious resources.

There is indeed a crisis in intercollegiate forensics. While it may not seem ironic that debaters and debate educators cannot get along, for those who know well the potential of argument as an alternative to avoidance and violence the irony is too clear. A community that could ideally examine, develop, and propagate all of the promises of our species' most essential behavior, explorative argumentative reasoning, is seemingly stuck with a broken rhetoric. This broken rhetoric and the resulting history of fractionation should be viewed as a much larger problem than any crisis over delivery. Every community will face conflicts surrounding differences of culture, ideology,or otherwise intractable conflict. Pearce and Littlejohn suggest that the resolution of such "moral conflicts" is of vital importance (3). These conflicts will seemingly place members on mutually exclusive ideological terrain and thus threaten to end the project of

argumentation. Problems like delivery, accessibility, and the implications of 'gaming' on debate clearly represent moral conflicts and yet time and again debate communities are teaching primarily avoidance.

Rather than using the moments of most visible conflict to rehearse their own abilities to confront what are obviously ethically valuable questions, all too often we see participants 'playing trump' by signing a repudiating ballot, crafting new debate communities or rules, or out-right "striking" (a term used for when a team 'strikes' an unsavory judge before a tournament) members of the community.

When one confronts some of the more inauspicious practices that have redundantly but diversely convinced so many that current debate methods need to be changed it is not hard to at least partially sympathize. When teachers decide to teach they obviously understand that this will mean exposure to student ideas and efforts. When those ideas are coupled with a confrontational environment such exposure can quickly prove exhausting. It is easy to get 'fed up' with debate when one sees students who apparently do not even care enough to get dressed up or who argue positions that can be absurd or even insulting. It certainly doesn't help that debate tournaments primarily take place over weekends that otherwise might be filled with reading, gardening, guitar playing or maybe even getting caught up on grading or other work put off as the tournament run-up monopolized a busy teacher's time. 8 am on a Saturday is hardly the time or place to expect a cool head when one is made to watch 2-4 students shout at each other at incoherent speeds over arguments that are admittedly ridiculous or worse. As

debaters these students are not likely to take a loss laying down, so there will always be instances of swaggering students sometimes mockingly dismissing the comments of a dedicated educator. Obviously debate tournaments tend to lead to argumentative bickering and occasional feelings of hopelessness.

But this is exactly the environment argumentation must confront and thus this is exactly the kind of place we need to find a way to continue to work together. We almost never get to chose the time or the place or even the participants in all of our future personal or professional arguments. Should we not value the environments these moral conflicts create in order to best simulate the instances when argumentation truly must replace violence?

Perhaps the largest sacrifice of the history of fractionation and structural fortification is the notion that at its very core argument demands of us the patience and determination to constantly return to the table as we seek new ways to fix common problems. The ongoing sacrifices that we make from sitting in an early and sometimes ugly debate round to refusing at all costs the seduction of violence are what make argument the wonder that it is. These sacrifices demonstrate the awareness that in order to truly master the problems that face humanity we must first master our abilities to reason and we must do so on any terrain and regarding any issue.

What those who pursue structural fortification fail to take into account is that when they opt for structural fortification they wall out a profound opportunity to learn some of the most crucial lessons of argumentation. Argumentation is not homogeneous

nor should we ever wish it to be. Because our arguments will always look different to each of the individual participants and because the difference between a fight and an argument depend so heavily on the same individuals moral conflicts demand an attention to the relationships which facilitate better arguing above all else (Pearce and Littlejohn 38).

Rather than demonstrate the rededication which all argument demands and which offers new opportunities to build these necessary relationships debate participants in the United States have all too often embraced a 'take your ball and go home' response. This response works if all can live peacefully apart but a quick glance at the history of 'fractionation' suggests they do not.

Fractionation started not in 1994 with the construction of the NPDA but back in 1971 with the founding of the South West Cross Examination Debate Association (SWCEDA later simply CEDA) (Trapp, *Future of Policy Debating* par 1). Responding to a growing rift between 'rhetorical' debate educators and 'scientific' debate educators, CEDA itself was created as an off-shoot to the nation's first truly national debate entity appropriately named the National Debate Tournament (NDT) (Bartanen, personal communication; Trapp *Future of Policy Debate* 25).

Like the NPDA, CEDA relied on several structural reforms as the primary mode of insulating itself from the 'evils' perceived in an overly competitive and technical debating style in the then status quo. Where the NPDA represents a sweeping reform to the way debates take place in the United States, CEDA represented a more measured

approach to change. These small changes proved inconsequential, CEDA and the NDT

merged after about 15 years prompting the invention of the NPDA (Ziegelmuller 29) See

Figure 1.1.

NDT - (1947) The National Debate
Tournament
"policy" debate

↓

CEDA - (1971) Cross Examination
Debate Association
refined "policy" debate attempting to
recapture 'traditional' debate interpretation

↓

NPDA - (1994) National Parliamentary
Debate Association
"parliamentary" debate formulated and
endorsed in part as an 'alternative' to
ongoing crises in policy debating

↙   ↘

BP - (??) British Parliamentary
Debate
global parliamentary debate
style seen as alternative to
crises in parliamentary debate

NPTE - (2001) National Parliamentary
Tournament of Excellence
refined parliamentary debate
procedure endorsed as an alternative
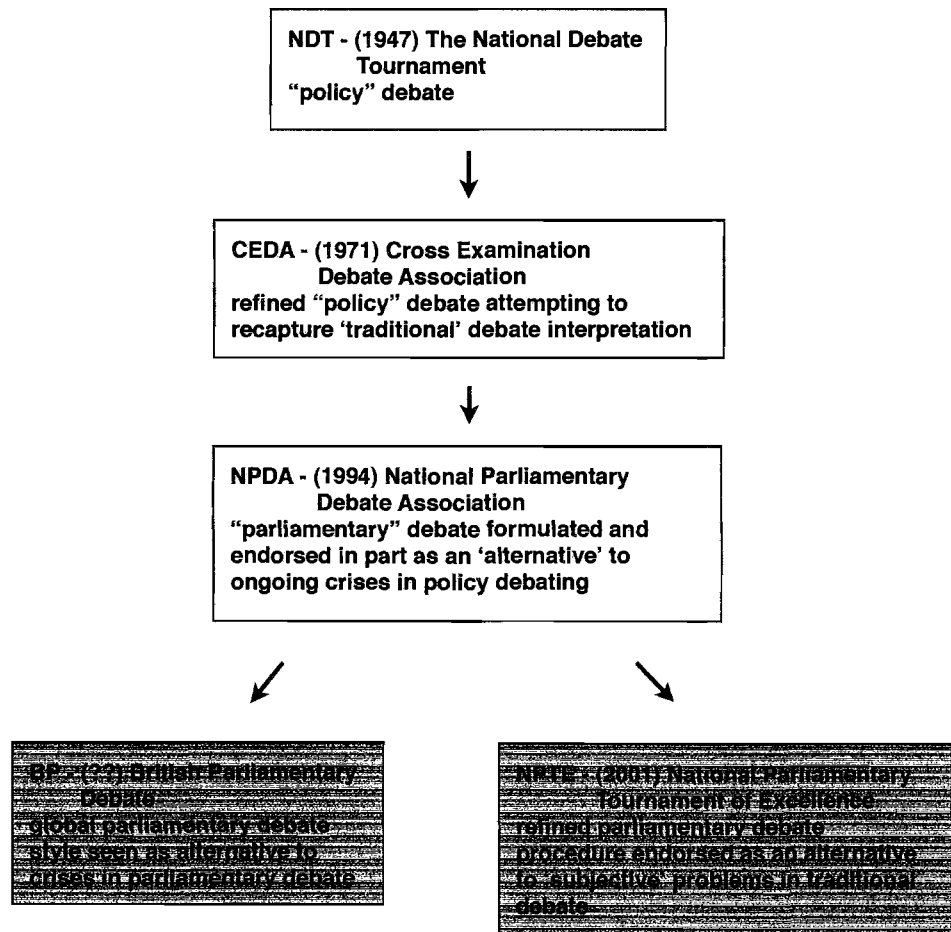to subjective problems in traditional
debate

Figure 1.1. The history of fractionation through structural fortification

So what does it mean to "value the relationships in conflict" so we can argue productively? Can we even define arguing productively? For many in America the mere mention of argument implies a stagnation and thus speaking of arguments as "productive" seems oxymoronic. We frequently hear about politicians resorting to mere rhetoric, we prefer men of action. This stand-offish approach to debate is well documented despite the fact that implicit in every decision we make, every equation we build, and every action we take we see a truly miraculous and uniquely human ability (Billig 39). We see our utterly pervasive faculties of language use and argumentation as defined by the great minds of Aristotle, Quintilian, and Cicero (Billig 64).

Beyond the common perceptions of average Americans, dedicated participants in academic debate may also need to reconsider what we mean when we say we wish to teach productive argument. Academic debate in America is rooted in a university environment and thus should prioritize citizen building and dedication to the purest of scholarship but that does not mean we simply throw out all that directly contribute to these goals. Tolerating some of the worser elements of discourse can seem counter productive and dangerous but attempting to eliminate 'bad' interpretations of academic debate has proven to be far worse. These efforts have proven to be non-sustainable and to potentially be robbing students of the opportunity to explore all of the contents of discourse in a structured conflict environment.

Pure scholarship is ideal but illusory. All humans have are facts based on reasons, reasons which are essentially manufactured and assented to by other humans. Some of

our facts and reasoning can be rigorously tested, at least as far as we are concerned, but ultimately all we have when it comes to knowledge is our ability to argue well.

When internal arguments reach their full potential we see perhaps one of the most essential components of our sanity and general feelings of self worth: predictable and reinforcing outcomes. We also see individuals making decisions that factor in the most far-reaching of implications, producing more sustainable and ultimately more beneficial behavior. No matter how smart we get or how thoughtful we are however, we may never fail to recognize zealotry or stubbornness sufficiently either on behalf of ourselves or those who motivate our actions. We must constantly expose ourselves to these kinds of behaviors to know how to recognize them in our own deliberations.

When conflicting individuals or groups argue best their deliberations represent a coming together of conflicting minds and a rejection of violence (Crosswhite 129). They represent a dedicated, patient, and dogged determination to continually swap words as opposed to the more destructive rhetorical symbols, avoidance or violence. If we are arguing well, we are exploring our con•icts in an engaged, educated, transparent, and organized manner. The best arguments will expose the dirty secret about some of our more significant rifts in ideology, namely that they tend to be little more than questions of vocabulary. When we have identified our conflict to be real, the best arguments will allow us to locate and examine only the most crucial points of friction, tossing aside the flammable distractions that frequently bog down or even explode our discourse.

In taking our discussions only to the communities that sound most like us we not

only abandon essential education regarding our abilities to confront and cope with the frustrations and insults of argument, we also limit the scope of the various kinds of perceptions that we have available to scrutinize and explore. Productive argumentation asks us to cast aside certainty just long enough to produce a round of verbal communication from which to begin our conflict management.

Ceaseless as these arguments may be, there is always the reward that comes from reaching the smallest agreement on the location of our most significant friction points - in spite of all that is fragile, random, and unpredictable in argument. That step alone ought to provide significant potential for future collaborations.

It is this devotion to the kinds of relationships which create the most productive arguments aimed at community and personal development that Conflict Navigation attempts to target. I offer Conflict Navigation as an ethical pedagogy and rhetoric for the next generation of intercollegiate forensics educators and participants. It will not attempt to restructure debate, nor does it simply allow the doors to open to only the most dedicated of competitors. Instead, it will seek to elevate (though not in a normative sense) the scope of the mission of competitive debate to a sturdy platform, somewhere above the ongoing fracas over delivery that has to-date so defined and shaped the community.

Conflict Navigation is certainly not new. It is in many ways a collection of the best moments of standing academic debating practices. It is drawn in many ways from well understood and largely respected perspectives on rhetoric and argumentation. In this specific context, Conflict Navigation is poised to suggest that perhaps the most

fundamental lesson of argumentation can be learned within any and every academic debate round, regardless of that round's structure or content.

I suggest that above the ethical lessons placed on audience accessibility and thus our delivery and well beyond the numerous benefits that tournament models can promise, we find a much more important lesson. It is the lesson which suggests that every time we present a word, a gesture, or a facial expression to stand in for our perceptions of meaning we are in fact taking huge leaps of faith. If anything, communication is attempting to execute a direct exchange of mental phenomenology. Obviously there is little hope for complete success but we can tirelessly dedicate ourselves to improvement.

But there will be a connection. While our arguments can indeed destroy us and our efforts to cooperate they are substantially more likely to end up benefiting our lives if we are capable of carrying them on even in the most difficult of circumstances. So somewhere we need to find an environment that encourages students to confront those frequent moments of breakdown. It needs to be understood that when we argue, we argue not only about what we are experiencing but also about who it is we are experiencing things with.

Many arguments can be ignored but on occasion we are forced into confrontation. The rituals which ensue are frustratingly fragile, complicated, and emotive things. The better prepared we are to approach these rituals of argument, the better chance we have of ensuring that our disagreements stay within the bounds of verbal confrontation, and away from much more devastating alternatives.

Conflict Navigation prioritizes components of argument that emphasize cooperation, inquiry, patience, and the ability to suspend our own personal agendas and ideally egos long enough to fully and even redundantly examine and then engage those of others. It stresses that the means by which we enter into an argument and the manner by which we argue can both prove to be just as important as the content our arguments posses. If we can carry ourselves well, focus on learning how to discover as best we can who or what it is we are arguing with and then to develop a means by which we can join them in argument then not only are we taking a huge step towards solving our topical conflict at hand, but we are also laying essential ground-work for the inevitable relational (or in the instance of academic debate participants we might say pedagogical) conflicts in our future.

Conflict Navigation attempts to prepare us for the reality that we all live in environments of constant conflict. The rapidly growing scope of our communicative abilities suggests that young people of the future will argue in more ways and with more people than ever before. The questions that precede those of form or content then include how are we going to confront those conflicts? We cannot allow running away to be even a primary option.

Many will say there is no need for a new rhetoric or pedagogy to forensics. Classical traditions of rhetoric have served us well and I agree they will continue to do so in the future. In fact in many ways Conflict Navigation is perched upon not only classical rhetorical scholarship but also on more contemporary approaches to rhetoric which seek a

re-emphasis on our audiences and a prudent valuation of formal logic systems. But the
conflicts as to which components of rhetoric ought to take precedence have proven to be
too damaging. Rather than replacing any debate interpretation I hope to inquire into ways
that we can look at the broader literature on rhetoric for justifications as to how they all in
fact are already working together.

Others will argue that we should not be afraid of diversity. Indeed, as American
debate educators have abandoned established debate settlements they frequently have
encountered and created many wonderful new ways of conceptualizing a curriculum of
argumentation. There is merit in nearly all such activities. I find no reason to prioritize
one format over the other, and I do not wish for anyone to read this document as an
attempt to do so. All Conflict Navigation hopes to accomplish is a means of emphasizing
the damage that is done when those formats are sought out and constructed not on the
basis of their merit but as a means of limiting the directions that others may wish to take
the activity at any given time.

I will argue that when a critical mass of participants opt to seek out new debate
activities or emphasis structural fortification as a reaction to perceived 'evils' within their
current communities they do tremendously more harm than good. And neither of the
primary interpretations are free of blame. We will examine the composition of these
interpretations and their contributions to structural fortification in chapter two. In chapter
two we will also look more closely at the road connecting the NDT to the NPDA and
beyond for clues as to what kinds of damage is being done and what kinds of

opportunities are being lost.

Chapter three will examine the rhetorical scholarship which influences and brackets conflict navigation. We will look briefly at the rhetorical theory which influenced early academic debating efforts as well as a contemporary movement in rhetoric which places the audience and the other at a place of priority within ethical argumentation. By the end of chapter three the pedagogy and rhetoric of Conflict Navigation should be laid plain, we will only need to apply it to the world of academic debate.

In chapter four these practical questions will be examined. Of most important is the question, what does it mean to participate in competitive debate as a Conflict Navigator? We will answer this questions for coaches, judges, competitors, and students. We will see that the endemic nature of competing interpretations in debate which has contributed to ongoing damage being done to the curriculum and the community is also the home for an incredibly unique discussion about the challenges of argumentation.

Ultimately, Conflict Navigation strives to expand the walls of academic debate as a simulation of argumentation in the 'real world'. In order to simulate the diversity of topics and opinions and the inevitable frustration or anger that perceived affronts to those opinions may cause, it is imperative that our environment welcome and engage everyone. Competitive intercollegiate debate is the only place in higher education where hundreds of competitors, administrators, and coaches -students all - can sufficiently engage confrontation and postitively illuminate the errors of our argumentative ways.

CHAPTER II

THE REALM OF INTERCOLLEGIATE DEBATE INTERPRETATIONS

Before we can understand any of the crises in intercollegiate debate either that

perceived by Rowland and Deatherage or those seen through the lens of Conflict

Navigation it is important for us to confront the term debating interpretations. There will

certainly be many ideas as to what constitutes the best format for debate education, but

there are only two which must remain in place if we are to span the gaps created by

fractionation.

First it must be accepted that while we need to know the person we are talking to,

we must recognize that valuable criticism can approach us in literally any form. Second

we must understand that there is no single "right way" to teach argumentation and if we

ever come to an agreement that there is and that we have found it, we may well be ending

the human project of reason. If a rich environment of interacting academic debate

communities are going to become sustainable it will be because they along with several

other approachable interpretations recognized their interdependence. There are not and

cannot be certainties in the best arguments, only mutual benefactors.

Even if the world's thinkers could somehow define the best debate education in

an easy to implement curriculum, that somehow perfect curriculum would have to

impossibly include the encouragement of scrutiny upon itself. Otherwise that defined

model which dictated each and every argument we had would quite literally end human evolution. We would be stuck with the world as it was seen when our "perfect" model was built.

Perhaps the most important kinds of arguments for professionals of any field are the ones that are constantly scrutinizing the mechanisms that define their professional existence. Our modus operandi helps us run clean, but it may very well end up lulling us into complacency or, worse ignoring what might otherwise become a crucial innovation. In failing to enlighten the next generation that the systems we hand them are invented and pliable abandons half of the project of human reason. So if any one interpretation of the best debating were to ever reign supreme, it would have to be one that invites interrogation and which more importantly views such 'assaults' as opportunities for self improvement. Growth may come as a result of some winning idea within the argument but it always comes as a strengthening of the processes we use to analyze and in many instances tolerate conflict. This fact that no single interpretation is above scrutiny is perhaps the only single rule that debate educators can accept.

Unfortunately they must likewise accept that there is no list of arguments or argument types that will transform a student into an Aristotle or Descartes. Because it is essentially rhetorical, argumentation in any form is a created, choreographed exchange of symbology. The best arguing is thus rendered utterly circumstantial (Billig 92). Quintilian called this unfortunate truth about rhetoric the *Principle of Uncertainty*. As Billig points out, Quintilian simply reminds us that "we can never capture the infinite variety of

human affairs in a finite system...." (92).

Every student and every coach, every school administrator and every parent will come to academic debate with different backgrounds, expectations, and thus with very different agendas. We could therefore rightly state that there are as many interpretations of what competitive debate ought to be as there are participants. At the end of the day, this is the closest one can get to understanding the complicated fabric of competitive debating interpretations. Debate systems above reproach are broken systems, the best debate is circumstantial and it comes in possibly millions of varieties. These are not promising constraints to be placing on a curriculum which will be expected to meet academic muster.

Academic debate however time and again has suggested that such an environment can exist. Hidden among the infinite interpretations is a dedicated group of educators who recognize the benefit of ongoing conflict in any and every form. It is seen as a mental obstacle course through which we must somehow run the notions of 'better debate". This means Conflict Navigators are as eager to engage the most foreign or even the most 'crazed' interpretations about argument as they are to see their respected colleagues. Only this way are we going to develop the necessary abilities to teach to a thousand students and to learn from a thousand teachers.

The first way in which competing interpretations contribute to fractionation then is that they assume they are exclusive to even a limited number of alternatives. There are other ways in which a few long-standing conflicts within the academic debating

community have triggered structural fortification. In order to explore the interactions between various debating interpretations and fractionation we will thus need to compartmentalize if only a little. There are of course dangers to oversimplifying complex social conflicts. Doing so hampers our ability to understand the problem and thus potentially harpoons any efforts we have for resolution.

No experienced Middle East diplomat for instance conceptualizes the ongoing strife in the current nation of Israel as a struggle which exists simply between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Both terms include countless accountable and influential parties all of whom must be understood to fully understand the scope and the tragedy of the problem. In instances such as this, oversimplifying could have dire consequences for any efforts at sustainable peace.

So hesitantly we split academic debate into two clouds of overlapping and interacting points. The points on each cloud that is furthest away from the area of intersection represent the polar extremes of our binary construction. We will arbitrarily call the point furthest to the left 'traditional' debate and the point furthest to the right will be called 'contemporary' debate.

At the left extreme we find communication participants and at the right flow participants with the term 'flow' once again referring to the notes taken during the round which represent the debate as-it-happened. Using our terms from chapter 1, debate participants who want to see the "content" of debate take priority would fall in the communication category, and those who value "performance" would be flow participants.

Calling a judge a 'flow judge' for instance means that regardless of presentation style they will vote for the team who 'won on the flow'. If ever a pure flow judge existed they would ignore literally every component of an argument from their opinions of it to the way it was delivered and only vote on whether or not the other team responsively beat it. If they missed some intricate portion that the asserting team effectively took advantage of, the debate is over. The asserting team wins regardless of whether their advocacy is to "devolve" the human species through nuclear war or to build a "Super House" over the contiguous United States. The flow rewards not the team who was right, after all 'right' and 'wrong' are simply agreements we all arrive to. The flow in theory rewards who 'wins' by best conceptualizing and articulating the functional interaction of what was said and what was not. It should start becoming obvious that 'traditionalists' on the 'left' might value academic debating that is most accessible to a 'lay' public while 'right-wing' 'contemporaries' value academic debate that is as scientific and thus arguably 'clear' as possible.

Communication participants feel that demonstrating an awareness of all audiences is perhaps the most essential component of debate education. In the tradition of rhetoric and thus important to those who began academic debating efforts in the United States there is a clear obligation owed to those whom we confront with our reasons. 'Flow' participants or contemporaries on the other hand may value accessible argument but the access they care most about is that of the informed. Eloquence to contemporaries is a less sensitive variable in deciding who wins and loses. They might argue that once we begin

placing too much emphasis on subjective notions such as delivery or persuasion we potentially jeopardize the transparency of the game we utilize as our tool of learning. While judges and audiences may wish for a more eloquent debate for instance the real question is who said what and with regards to what were they saying it? Ideas must be conveyed, but ornamentation is superfluous if we hope to present any kind of identifiable standard for excellence. This strict adherence to transparency and predictability has earned 'flow' participants another nick-name: gamers.

Conflicts over how influential a 'gaming' pedagogy or model should be in academic debate will be explored in more detail below. Suffice to say while games frequently bring out the best in human learning and performance, they can also introduce all sorts of nasty human qualities and reduce their content to triviality. This tug-of-war becomes all the more potent when it is applied to rhetoric and argumentation.

While these distinctions echo the polar extremes of debate interpretations, Conflict Navigators must ultimately reject their use. The first reason is simply that all too often these terms as used have conveyed excessive normative weight which only complicates the picture. Depending on who you ask either pole is home to remarkably potent education as well as significant pedagogical pitfalls. Conflict Navigation recognizes that we have no more control over the debating interpretation of our interlocutors than we have over the orientation of their opinions. What is more, the distinctions real or perceived that are drawn between all of the various interpretations and perceptions have value in that they challenge our stagnate notions of argument or simply

challenge us again to defend that which we know to be right.

Secondarily, I reject the idea that "gamers" can't persuade or that "comm. debaters" cannot be players. Much as is the case in athletic competition some of the most compelling 'players' are also the most charismatic and accessible. These individuals bring the 'worser' or 'sillier' elements of the community into the light and thus find new ways to make plain the risk of such silliness but also its absolute necessity. While the LeBron James of academic debate will never get the endorsements of their NBA equivalent many would argue the same level of talent and keen awareness for the implications of their activity are on display most seasons on the competitive circuit.

Despite the risks associated with using these terms there are some happy coincidences. Generational divides reflect the tensions that go on between 'traditional' and 'contemporary' debate participants. One side carries great wisdom from experience but is perhaps a little too rote for contemporary tastes. The other side thrills to the more extreme nature of the exploring process and brings both youthful curiosity but also energy levels to the fore. Granted, some of the older members of competitive debate circles are staunch 'contemporaries' and some of the youngest are 'traditionalists' but the parallels are intriguing none-the-less. These extremes can be understood within the gradient development of forensics education as it has taken place in the United States.

Competitive Debate History and the Evolution of Interpretation

The title Director of Forensics (DOF) begins to crop up as early as the 1920's but evidence proves debate education in America stretches back even to the early 1800's if

not earlier (Bartanen, *History of Intercollegiate Forensics* 14). No single volume detailing the development of co-curricular debate throughout history exists but one of the leading efforts to do so is being carried out by Dr. Michael Bartanen at Pacific Lutheran University. Bartanen breaks competitive debating evolution down into roughly 5 eras. See Table 1.1.

Declamation	*1870's - 1917*	• School versus school debates before significant audiences.
Suasoria-Controversia *Debate as competitive training*	1920 - 1955	• Tournament format emerged. • Push for "one topic". • Fractures appeared - audience versus training. Canned versus spontaneous.
Science *Forensics as a laboratory*	1955 - 1990	• The apex of forensics participation. • Judge as "computer" rather than "audience". • Popularization of IE originally as "counter weight" but eventually sucked into debate norms. • Fractures grew much wider - rhetoric versus Comm theory; rhetorical debate versus scientific debate led to CEDA
Games *Forensics as a game with many different players, each with their own rules*	1990 - ?	• Forensics dividing and uniting. • Rise of student run programs and declining number and influence of forensics educators. • Significant rise in "game theories"

Table 1.1. Eras of competitive debate as defined by Bartenan

The more important components of Bartanen's interpretation of competitive

debating for our current purposes include the development of the tournament format

during his second era, that of "Sensoria-Controversia / Debate as competitive training"

and his second and third eras identifying the growing influence of 'scientific' debating

and the influence of gaming paradigms (Bartanen, personal communication).

It was during this first era, sometime between 1920 and 1955 that Bartanen shows

the theory and rules beginning to formulate in ways culminating in a national tournament

agenda. The first NDT was held in 1947 at the West Point Military Academy and

represents perhaps the cornerstone of this agenda (Bartanen, personal communication).

Developments in transportation technology as well as what Bartanen calls a "resurgent

interest in public issues" took full advantage of this developing agenda as World War II

drew to a close (Bartanen, personal communication). Debate educators in this era

certainly drew on the ideas from those who came before, indeed clear back to the

ancients.

The concepts of oral argumentation, interpretation, dialogue, oration, and

empirical dispute have always been key components of education in early colonial charter

schools but the honorary societies developed during this second era of competitive

debating as well as interest and infrastructure which offered cheaper events once

resources pooled took the organization and scope of these contests to a new level (Potter).

It was during this time that Egbert Nichols who defined what it meant to be a Director of

Forensics began the first widely produced debate magazine and began keeping careful

track of the questions at issue and the results of these events. Nichols' efforts are the first

'scorecards' available and in many ways current organizations follow his lead. Nichols

was attempting to insert some method to the unorganized madness that was academic

debating at the time but no one could have guessed as to how far such efforts would go

(Nichols 11).

Regardless of the date at which debate education may have started, the general

time frame suggests it would be intimately tied to the understanding and usage of

classical and contemporary rhetorical study. Rhetoric maintained significant prominence

as a means of entertainment, learning, governance, community building, and the

dissemination of information and thus it follows that oratorical delivery went hand-

in•hand with sound reasoning practices as core principals for the earliest debate

educators. While questions of technique and procedure were certainly no strangers to

traditional forensics events, they certainly didn't have the priority that they would later

develop once the national tournament agenda began wielding its full influence.

Another component of debate format that would change as tournaments grew was

the role of the judge or educator. Early on it was clear that these rolls were one and the

same. Early debate coaches were not only esteemed members of the English, Philosophy,

or Rhetoric faculty, they were also the most preferred judges for the competitive events.

This was true because unlike any other individual who may be of service to competitive

debating, "impartial" coaches had a unique "...sympathy with the work" (Nichols v.).

This represents important evidence that while traditional debate was supposed to operate

as an eventual service to the public through the creation of Cicero's "good men" it was

still recognized that these contests had a distinctive nature and that fairness was indeed

important. Traditional debate also recognized the benefit of technical questions of

procedure, as evident by a list that includes lawyers as the second most preferable critic to a DOF given their familiarity with such issues (Nichols v.).

Judges in the traditional mold are active educators and their feedback is a crucial component of the overall debate. As a result they felt a greater amount of leeway in making their decisions with regards to the amount of personal investment they were expected to place into the decision. These judges were than score boards, but active (although silent) members of the discussion. These critics and educators would weigh in on their ballot with their thoughts not only of the quality of the content of the debate, but also on the more oratorical aspects of it.

As the competitive sphere continued to rapidly expand however, it started getting harder and harder to keep track of all the critics and all of their respective decision making frameworks. The allure of a national championship was as seductive as ever but the subjective nature of argumentation was leaving many to feel a national title took perhaps more luck than skill.

Thus, the model of judging began to shift as the 1950's. Competitors and coaches alike started manufacturing ways to make the game more transparent and fair. In this third era which Bartanen calls "Science / Forensics as a Laboratory" (*History of Intercollegiate Forensics* 18, personal communication) we see judges being encouraged to vote as exclusively on "the flow" as possible. Notions of a mythical Tabula Rasa judging paradigm grew in significance. The Latin term, meaning 'blank slate' suggests that individuals sweep their minds clean before confronting the debate. As a result

Bartanen suggests that judges were over time thought of more as computers than as an audience (personal communication, *Eras of Debate*). Given what we know of the ethical concerns regarding the individual nature of rhetoric, such an approach was less than appealing. Thus we see the kick-starting of our history of 'fractionation'.

Examples of structural fortification during this time included traditional attempts to separate from this new computational approach to rhetoric and contemporary efforts to provide predictable access to the ballot. Traditional minded coaches created new activities including CEDA debate and began heavily emphasizing participation in individual speaking events (including platform speaking and dramatic interpretation) as a counter-weight to the contemporary influences in debate (Bartanen and Frank 36; Bartanen, personal communication). Meanwhile, contemporary participants insisted on more and more judge strikes and judge ranking methods designed to give students only the friendliest (read most predictable) of environments to compete in. Instead of the judge-as-educator model that pervaded early debating efforts judges now watched only the rounds they weren't stricken from or only when both teams ranked them equally. Over time and for justifiable and unjustifiable reasons alike the judge became less of an educator and more of a scoreboard.

On one end, the judge is a pre-eminent educator and instructor. Students are asked to take on faith that the professional nature of their critic's development will ensure a professional attempt at a fair outcome and to accept that for many reasons this may include adjudication of the chosen methods of performance or questions unexamined by

the opposing team. At the other end, we see the judge relegated to the status of score board. Students carry on the debate and the judge does little more than count and weigh all the "beans" to assign a winner. Towards one end of the spectrum the judge will be an active member of the game, towards the other the judge provides little insight, only infrastructure.

Critics on one end justify their interpretation by pointing to their expertise as educator, and to the inevitable uncertainty that is argument. Argument is not demonstration after all and pretending that it is creates potentially devastating mindsets. We will explore the implications of these mindsets in chapter three. Alternately, judges who sit back and let anything and everything win if unchecked argue that they make the game fair ensuring participation and equal opportunities for all to win, while at the same time they reward argumentation that is both difficult to understand as well as potentially intellectually bankrupt (Rowland and Deatherage 247).

As the early 1990's progressed, according to Bartanen, one more era of interest began (personal communication, *Eras of Debate*). What once was an honored tradition among honors societies and intellectual communities was gradually being seem as a "Game". Perhaps one of the defining notions of a 'contemporary' approach to competitive debate is the implication that aside from a few strict rules regarding speaking time and order, the activity belongs to the students and anything goes. Assuming judges are no longer voting on the general content of the discussion but rather strictly the content of the debate, strategy and 'gamesmanship' begin to creep to the fore of academic

debating.

Notions of procedure and the technical implications of arguments began to push "controversy content" out of vogue and debates became much more questions of quantity as opposed to quality (Bartanen, *History of Intercollegiate Forensics* 19). The intended "wedding of wisdom and eloquence" (Bartanen and Frank 31) became a super fast paced swagger festival as to whether a topical counter plan excessively restricted affirmative ground with rates of delivery that began approaching the auction block (Pinkus 6; Hollihan, Baaske and Riley 185). Perhaps most notable of this fourth era of competitive debating was that apparently it was the students, as opposed to professional forensics educators who were calling the shots. This had far reaching implications including what many felt was an almost fetishistic allegiance to the activity which pushed common students out and began a seemingly irreparable split between competitive debating, professional communication studies and rhetorical academic circles (Bartanen and Frank 32).

As the CEDA experiment began folding back into the NDT, the NPDA began flooding with 'contemporary' refugees. Between 1994 and 1996 participation at the NPDA doubled from 50 or so teams to over 100 (Bartanen and Frank 32). Still many felt that parliamentary debate associations had effectively 'thrown the baby out with the bath water', creating a false dichotomy between extensive research, procedural debate, and effective public speaking (Bartanen and Frank 34) Cerlin attributes this phenomena to an over-emphasis on delivery while Knapp and Porrovechio contend that efforts to foster

arguments of more personal significance frequently devolved to misguided attempts at

humor featuring debates about Looney Toons or the quality of certain microbrews (Cerlin

339-50; Knapp and Porrovechio 281). Hardly the stuff of public consequence.

Rather than sorting out the "madness" Nichols and others sought to reform

through standardization, the competitive framework was only exacerbating the rifts in

pedagogy. Now educators saw not only a growing gap between academic institutions like

the National Communication Association and debate, but also a split between 'policy'

formats and 'parliamentary' formats (Bartanen and Frank 32). The former meant that

debate was gradually being relegated to academic "backwaters" and was growing overly

"insular" (Zarefsky 311). Accordingly, those hoping for professional achievement as

forensics educators, and the latter of which seems to demonstrate that the members of this

niche market for advocacy were wholly incapable of getting along and that in their efforts

to answer each other were willing to sacrifice key components of argumentation like

research.

While the literature discussing the seemingly cyclical nature of this fractionation

is less clear, I would argue a key component of the ongoing split and reunion that

Bartanen identifies in contemporary debating eras is based on the nature of the

individuals who tend to make up our two 'tents' of debating interpretation (personal

communication, "Eras of Debate"). As the gaming paradigm began to take hold and judge

strikes and preferences began to more drastically shape tournament participation, the

number of recently graduated student judges increased. These students were perhaps

much closer to the whims of their comrades and perhaps not far enough away to see the implications that their actions endorsed.

More often than not, those who became disillusioned were not these younger judges and the competitors but the 'traditional' minded professional debate educator of old. While student run programs began to crop up nation-wide in the nineties, by and large most of the resources belonged to more professionalized programs (Bartanen, personal communication *Eras of Debate*). Once these programs began to lose faith and go elsewhere their separation left the remaining community critically wounded. When a traditional exodus occurs, the community loses not only what are typically the largest entries at the tournament (filling the brackets for diverse competition and providing precious entry fees) they are also losing the tournaments that those programs might host. This can create critical instability among remaining debate groups.

This critical instability is reflected in the numbers generated by Ronald J Matlon and Lucy M Keele's 1988 Survey of Participants in the National Debate Tournament. Matlon and Keele argue that by 1970 it was becoming evident that participation in the NDT was declining rapidly (203). In fact, while the 1973 - 74 school year boasted 324 events in 44 states and the District of Columbia, the 1988 - 89 school year would see only 71 tournaments in 27 states (Henderson 32-33). Factoring out the states that only hosted one event over the course of that season, the number of states with diverse (meaning more than one) options for policy debate fell to 15 (Henderson 32-33)[2].

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[2] Henderson's chart on pages 32-33 estimates the numbers of events between 73-74 and 88-89

This meant that if a program wanted to maintain a competitive schedule and to participate in the discourse communities that policy debate was building they would over time have to drive further and spend more. As regions began to fail their participants would clamber into whatever had been offered as an alternative and over time develop ways to fit it to their designs. Thus it would seem the debating traditions are potentially stuck forever in a game of cat and mouse.

Rather than pursue new ways to approach their concerns, 'tradition' minded coaches have simply left. Likewise, a critical mass of those dedicated to learning through mastery of the game frequently allow themselves to become excessively wary or competitive with regards to inexperienced audiences. Critics who can't or wont follow along are typically seen as liabilities first, and necessary participants second. No one blames the students for getting carried away with the motivation to win. Students in competitive environments are like that, and they all work very hard and sacrifice a great deal to be there. But when individual students turn in to groups, and when coaches don't aggressively invest themselves in counteracting the more damaging components of the rhetoric of swagger that competitive environments can percolate, animosity tends to leak fast.

Perhaps worse, "gamers" have shown a strong tendency to view those inexperienced or bewildered opponents that they face as nothing more than an easy win and worse still as opportunities to show off. While a strong majority of even the most

competitive within the debate community demonstrate incredible hospitality when they confront those who are perhaps new, a lot needs to be done to help egos from being excessively maimed in contests of argument. When the worst of us are on display, it's no wonder new people want to leave.

Given the hyper-sensitive nature of numerically small national communities, it only takes a few programs shifting course to encourage a 'bleeding over' into the new model. While still a statistical minority, the numbers appear to be sufficient to alter the apparent texture of the format they move into. What's more, the theses behind contemporary traditions, namely calls for a more 'fair' game, are appealing to all students and thus in short order contemporary interpretations will again be on the rise.

This ongoing division is not only damaging to the sustainability and academic integrity of debate communities, it is ultimately ironic given the implied mission of argumentation. Structural reformation and the ongoing tactics of avoidance send the message that educators are incapable of resolving their conflicts with the techniques they claim to teach. One is reminded of the trouble Corax had arguing that he had taught his pupil Tisias well when Tisias couldn't even defeat his teacher in an argument. How long is it until students of American debate look at this history and decide that rather than engage those we disagree with in argument, we're probably just better off simply abandoning discourse all together and only talking to those with whom agree?

Throughout the turbulent history of debate both ends of our gradiated spectrum have proven to be resilient. Despite the ongoing pressure that this history has introduced

into debate, a multitude of interpretations exist across the United States and even the globe. There can be no doubt there is a demand and a need of a sustainable competitive debate organization, or at least a means of staunching the flow of 'traditional participants' away from 'contemporary' problems. By looking back to some of the broader lessons of contemporary and even classical rhetoric, Conflict Navigation hopes to offer a method of sustainable unification.

CHAPTER III

NOTIONS OF RHETORIC AND CONFLICT NAVIGATION

Now that we have a general understanding of the interpretational landscape

among some of the more influential intercollegiate debate programs we can begin

discussing ways that Conflict Navigation can attempt to bridge the gaps. As stated earlier,

the notions which have guided 'traditional' debate thought include ancient and

contemporary approaches which seek to build informed citizens and advocates. Since

antiquity, a divide has existed between those who pursue rhetoric as a means of public

participation and enlightenment and those who pursue it purely for personal gain. Those

who would pursue rhetoric or who would offer to teach it purely for personal gain have

been typically referred to as 'sophists' and in many ways the implications of sophists

among true rhetoricians parallel those between the 'contemporary' and 'traditional'

debate communities. In fact in much the same way that Aristotle confronts those who

would learn to make the "worse... the better cause" (Billig 67) many in the debate

community have critiqued notions of debate in which "no holds [are] barred" (Frank,

Solipsism 38) and students are left to pursue competitive success by "any means

necessary".

Of course the study of rhetoric goes beyond notions of sophistry and true wisdom.

Over the years rhetoric has continuously needed to reassert itself as an ongoing and

critical participant in the processes of human logic. It is no secret that formal reasoning has begun to monopolize our professional and even educational discourses. There are two main concerns shared by Conflict Navigators and contemporary rhetoricians alike. First, an exclusive reliance on formal reasoning abandons the dialectical components of the human reasoning process in institutional education and practice. We have already lamented the fact that students in America seldom if ever are asked to demonstrate an ongoing articulation of their lesson materials extending beyond simple memorization and report. Students learn to seek academic reward through memorization and report leaving out the more active processes of learning not to mention all of the shades of gray that even the most perfected formal systems can only imply.

Second, when we begin to place an excessive amount of confidence on our formal systems, or simply fail to scrutinize their use, they allow us to commit atrocity with the same levels of perfection as any of our more honorable achievements. It is no coincidence that the horrors of the second World War gave birth to new conceptualizations of rhetoric which sought to re-emphasize the importance of rhetorical relationships. Of perhaps most significance when it comes to the contemporary movements in rhetoric will be approaches offered by Chaim Perelman, and Martin Buber. Among these writers we see the consistent defense of all forms of rhetoric ranging from verbal demonstration to discourse but we also begin to hear constant reminders that the relationships which we create with regards to our conflicts can dictate their course more than any formalized systems which we may choose to employ.

It is within this contemporary shift in rhetoric that we not only see interesting similarities to the delivery conflict going on among academic debate participants but also the more important notions of argument that can serve as our 'glue' to keep this conflict from continually pulling the community apart. Among members of the 'contemporary' or 'gaming' tradition we see the dogged pursuit of a pure game. One that is fair and which thus encourages a great number of students to participate. By bringing regions of debate students together we begin to represent the diversity of argumentative approaches which students will be expected to engage. Campuses provide the perfect spaces for large multiple debates to take place at once. After a small break even point debate programs can begin to see these events run with remarkable financial efficiency allowing them to spread the benefit to all. Yet contemporary shifts in rhetorical thought have given us no shortage of reminders as to the damage we can do when we approach rhetoric as a purely formalized activity.

While formal systems are absolutely crucial to reasoning, attempts to reclaim Disneyland rhetoric from notions which equate it only with Gandhi eloquence have long been underway. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca are forceful advocates of reclamation. Despite the heavy (some might say exclusive) emphasis placed on the elusive "universal audience" which symbolizes attempts by arguers to make their justifications accessible to all, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca continue to see "particular audiences" (or discourse communities) as critical and inevitable components of human reasoning (31-47). Particular audiences such as the one which exists in contemporary debate tradition let

arguments evolve and carry earned knowledge forward in their fabricated formal systems and techniques. Our abilities to evolve and transmit knowledge across the generational gap are perhaps most responsible for our current technological achievements. Shifts in our environment which may herald extinction for other animals who must undergo generations of evolution can be met by humans with simple solutions which exponentially improve over time. At the heart of the contemporary shifts in rhetoric lay the idea that while communication to and among particular audiences is certainly useful and probably inevitable, such specialized communicative efforts cannot be the end or even the apex of our understanding of argument. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca warn:

> Argumentation aimed exclusively at a particular audience has the drawback that the speaker, by the very fact of adapting to the views of his listeners, might rely on arguments that are foreign or even directly opposed to what is acceptable to persons other than those [s]he is presently addressing. (31)

According to Perelman and Olbrects-Tyteca, arguments are only as good as the minds that they are capable of persuading (24). While strong arguments are no doubt developed within particular groups, stronger arguments are still needed to justify, scrutinize, and apply the notions of the particular audience to the public at large.

Martin Buber is perhaps best known for drawing attention to what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca refer to as our "obligations" (25) to our audiences. In Buber's perspective there are two kinds of relationships: I and Thou, and I and It relationships (6). When we encounter an It, according to Buber, we see that object as something to be manipulated for a desired outcome (6). We enact our will upon objects which surround us

on a daily basis never giving much thought to their states of being of feelings on the matter. As soon as we classify objects, or define them based on relational events, we relegate them to a caged existence in our past as opposed to an evolving existence in our present (Buber 6). Buber is aware that I/It relationships are essential to efficient progression but our awareness of the implication of such relationships is the cornerstone of life which utilizes the more present Thou.

We must obviously be on guard then when we confront people so as not to extend this I/It relationship into the worlds of subjective audiences. When we encounter other individuals, the most ethical means of engagement in Buber's world is to engage them in the present and to see their existence not as something we have previously defined but as something which unfolds before us. When we fail to consider the full extent of the significance of individualism we run the risks of not only objectifying those we encounter in life but also of unnecessarily expanding the bounds of our conflicts. Again it is the relationship between the interlocutors which most heavily defines the kinds of arguments we have. Arguments devolve to fights or simple avoidance when it is felt verbal reasoning no longer can succeed or cannot be trusted. Therefore the most important notion to effective rhetoric in the contemporary mold is the idea that we must maintain that relationship at all times and confront any and every instance of rhetorical exchange with an eye on Thou as opposed to It.

This is obviously not a foreign notion to scientists. Even the staunchest of scientists will be quick to agree, it is not the equations that create the remarkable

successes in science but rather the mindset of the scientist to diligently and ideally presently look for new ways to scrub out noise or bias. Like religion, science has experienced accusations of heresy and perceived insanity. Yet wise scientists know that in many instances it was exactly these kinds of 'crazy' ideas which produced some of the most significant departures from otherwise tapped out scientific dogma. The openness to new ideas and new perceptions is a defining component of the scientific method, so too with rhetoric.

Conflict Navigation demands a definition of rhetoric that is prepared to reach out to a wide array of ideas even if in many of the individual instances of deliberation we utilize language that is more specialized. We need to be true to the traditions of rhetoric as seen through the eyes of traditional debate educators but we cannot overlook the importance of not only specialized communication but also the arguments that facilitate specialized communication. Chapter four will attempt to establish this balancing act but before we can implement a rhetoric of Conflict Navigation we need to more closely define what we mean when we say 'rhetoric'.

Rhetoric as Defined by Conflict Navigation

There are several very good definitions of rhetoric to draw from, some of which date back thousands of years. The more notable distinguish rhetoric from other forms of verbal interaction. Aristotle, for example, saw rhetoric and discourse as different notions entirely (Tindale 70). Our present purpose calls us to collapse these notions, Conflict Navigation approaches the term rhetoric in its largest form.

In short, Conflict Navigation seeks to draw from definitions of rhetoric which incorporate all of the ways in which human kind seeks to share and compare their experiences. Conflict Navigation sees rhetoric as what happens when we confront instances of conflict real or perceived. The definition of rhetoric that Conflict Navigators settle on must keep a close eye on heritage and at the same time realize that both the identification of the conflict as well as its articulation of the conflict are rhetorical actions. Put simply, rhetoric is what we do when we argue either with ourselves, others or with our environment.

In *The New Rhetoric*, we're told that "The goal of all argumentation... is to create or increase the adherence of minds to the thesis presented for their assent" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 45). Again we see that argument is not something that is done to "win" but a means by which we work together to scrutinize a thesis. An argument 'won' is not necessarily an instance where one idea triumphs over another, but rather a moment where minds which were once conflicted have now come together. Thus rhetoric is more than the verbal tools we use to articulate truth it is in fact the only way by which we discover truth. The entire process is spotlighted when Conflict Navigators use the term 'rhetoric'.

One of the more comprehensive of definitions of rhetoric which captures not only the nuts and bolts of Aristotle's Topoi but also the creation of the crucial components of contemporary shifts in rhetoric comes to us from Wayne C. Booth who tells us that rhetoric is "...the whole art of creating and discovering warranted claims" (Booth 11). Booth's definition is preferred because it includes both the acts of creation and discovery

- both notions are fundamental to the more comprehensive understandings of 'argumentation' and to our larger interpretation of rhetoric (Billig 64).

Languages, grammar, and argumentative schemas are wholly artificial. Our ability to engage with our environment is heavily limited in that we depend exclusively on the kinds of input we can gather through our senses and developed instrumentation.

That already selectively filtered input is then further sifted through our emotive and cognitive processes. We assign words to experiences even before we know what those experiences represent (Goleman 19). As a result of this permanent state of disconnect with our environment, humans cooperatively create systems of meaning from which to start sorting out conflicting data. These moments of genesis happen every time we are present among others whether we like it or not (Pearce and Littlejohn 89). We create warranted claims as to why we can sleep in in the morning, we create warranted claims as to what to be when we grow up, and we create warranted claims as to whether or not we believe the presence of homosexuality depletes unit cohesion among our fighting forces. We create these claims individually as well as with others through implicit and explicit arrangement. Failure to understand these acts of genesis for what they are, fallible human creations, immediately impedes our abilities to argue well.

Once we have created our warranted claims we can begin to test and refine them against the data we have available, either the arguments brought by others or the consistency of the outcomes our claims produce. The act of discovery includes the marvelous hidden nature of things that we can begin to demonstrate as our warranted

claims are improved upon. These discoveries alone should be reason enough to encourage more people to study the implications of rhetoric-as-discovery but contemporary rhetoricians would argue that these 'facts' are only the tip of an amazingly productive iceberg.

When conflicting social worlds collide, as explained by former NDT champion W. Barnett Pearce and his colleague Stephen W. Littlejohn, an entirely new process of discovery must begin. When our disputes constantly evade our attempts at solvency, as is the case with those over delivery within competitive debate, Pearce and Littlejohn tell us that we may need to "...go some new place to reach one another. We are convinced that these other places can be found, or more accurately, created" (7). So not only do we discover 'facts' about our universe, but we discover new "places" we can go to communicate. Pearce and Littlejohn refer to this as the extent to which "...participants in moral struggles choose to develop and exercise a wide range of ways of relating to one another" (7).

Booth presents rhetorical efforts as a "whole art", once again speaking to the circumstantial nature of effective rhetoric and again to the ideas that no list of perfected rhetorical techniques can exist. Our minds trained in modernism perhaps recoil at a heavy reliance on something as trivial as a "whole art" but rhetoricians would argue it is simply the way of things. As Kenneth Burke once famously put it, humans are a "symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal / inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative) separated from [their] natural condition by instruments of [their] own

making" (Burke 16).

Individuals who are capable of not only conceiving of warranted claims but also discovering all they have to offer and all which they perhaps omit demonstrate an amazing artistry. All of us not only create ideas, we must also drive them. We need to know the kinds of challenges that put our ideas in a ditch and the kinds of terrain our ideas can respond to.

Rhetoric as seen by conflict navigation is ongoing, one might even call it more of a behavior. It is the discussions we have in our mind as to which issues we feel need to be identified, examined, and rectified and it is the language we use when we present our findings to our peers and the public at large. Conflict Navigators see this entire process as fraught with imperfection, bias, and hazard but they also see the entire process as essential. Argumentation is and always has been an invitation extended across conflicting worlds to use the differences we have accumulated to better understand ourselves and hopefully at some point the world around us (Crosswhite 54). The acceptance or refusal of these definitions is heavily predicated on the ways they are extended and the implicit expectations that they carry. We must find ways to challenge our knee-jerk reactions to refuse invitations or simply never offer them in the first place. We must scrutinize our motives when we offer them at every turn and invite further scrutiny still from outside sources. Conflict Navigation approaches argument as a cooperative affair and yet in the game of debate there can be only one winner. The following and final chapter will attempt to rectify this seeming contradiction.

CHAPTER IV

APPLYING CONFLICT NAVIGATION TO THE GAME OF DEBATE

Like it or not, competition seems to be the primary motivator among students in the United States. Learning is fine and good but students continually want to know who won and why. It is important that educators engage the enthusiasm about the game because therein lies some of the more important if not pervasive kinds of professional and social rhetoric. More important still is that we never lose sight of the implication of the skill that we teach as an alternative to punishment, violence, or avoidance.

Argumentation carries a special significance in that it is frequently seen as just if not heroic, while at the same time it is viewed as a mechanism of power and dominance. Those who exact their will through argument, from Mahatma Gandhi to Dr. Martin Luther King, achieve a special place in our history of famed leaders. At the same time, the "argument culture" as defined by Dr. Deborah Tannen sees argument as a demonstration of our intellectual superiority. It allows us to compete and the resulting clash pronounces a winner. Such oppositional perceptions of argumentation pervade the American culture and even psyche (Tannen 22).

As discussed in chapter three, however, we need to do everything in our power to ensure that we do not engender argument as objectification or coercion, but rather argument as cooperation and comparative discourse. Using the term 'game' to refer to

debate makes a large portion of the community justifiably uneasy. Games encourage

solipsism, motivism, trickery, and adversarial relationships (Frank, *Pedagogy and*

Politics 38). Yet just as we should not allow ourselves to see academic debate as only a

game, we must not be too hasty when we view games as excessively trivial or mean

spirited. While most games are indeed played aggressively, if we can change the

conversation about the game we can take advantage of some very useful components of a

competitive model. We examine the 'game' and 'simulation' metaphors for competitive

debate first, and then we'll move on to explain how the various participants ought to

insert the rhetoric and pedagogy of Conflict Navigation into the activity.

Games and Simulations

When the first NDT was held many felt the community had opened Pandora's

box. Despite the fact that America isn't the only nation to pair debate education with a

tournament structure, it seems to be the only country who's debate educators seem so

divided over what that combination should look like. Regardless of the concerns, there

can be no denying that the infrastructure of academic debate is in fact based in a

tournament, or gaming, paradigm. We assign wins and losses advance teams up a bracket

and declare a champion. Those who have been around awhile know however that debate

can never be a perfectly fair game. At any moment and always seemingly at random even

the brightest of competitive debate careers come to an inexplicable end. No matter how

good debate students or coaches get, only a few will ever conquer the game. The rest will

have to come to terms with the the fact that argumentation frequently ends unexpectedly

and with disappointing outcomes.

This dismal outlook can be made to go away if we recast our perceptions of success in competitive debate. Obviously competitive victories will be the primary motivator for students, but given the invaluable lessons that the most 'unfair' of losses carry with regards to the determination required to commit to ongoing argumentation there are perhaps more teaching and learning moments available to academic debate participants when we 'lose'.

So while the infrastructure of debate may be a game and while it is certainly played like a game the metaphor of a 'simulation' carries the most weight. Unlike most games, debate is forever limited by the obscurity and failures of language. We can tinker with the structure and formatting all we want at the end of the day debate judges cannot point to a ball crossing some predetermined threshold for a predetermined point-value.

Games give us not only an inner structure around which to orient our simulations, but they arguably give us a glimpse into the ways that humans think. Despite all the legitimate concerns regarding framing life as a game, there have been ongoing discussions among social psychologists as well as rhetoricians which do just that (Billig 39). One of the most accessible summaries of the game approach as it relates both to psychology and rhetoric comes to us from Michael Billig's influential text Arguing and Thinking A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology.

Billig tells us that while our initial inclination upon hearing the word 'game' is to think of fun, gamers don't see it that way. He tells us that organized games are typically

played in full seriousness and throughout the course of history have frequently

represented matters of life and death (47). The gaming metaphor for Billig focuses more

on the interactions we have with the rules of the game. Rather than engaging in set scripts

as theater metaphors might suggest, Billig argues that game players are constantly

working within more general formal guidelines that can and do change. While

these rules are critical to the playing of the game, he further emphasizes that "...mere

knowledge of the rules will not enable one to predict the outcome...." (Billig 49). So

while games to some might impose excessively strict limits on the ways in which we

'play', Billig might argue that those limits themselves are up for discussion. Rather than

being set pieces of the stage or words on a script, rules in games are created and changed

as the game changes frequently in ways designed to make the game 'better'.

So the first distinction to be made among Conflict Navigators who refer to debate

as a 'game' is that while rules exist to be followed, the discovery and creation of these

rules is very much a part of the game. In as many ways as possible we should seek to

open that level of play up to the community to give everyone as much access as possible

to the conversations that go on there. While certain rules are essential (the rules

governing speaking times in debate for example) others can be argued ad infinitum. In the

case of competitive debate they in fact should be.

Creation of rules is a complicated task with unforeseeable outcomes. I'm

reminded of the reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone National Park. Rather than

being pristine wilderness areas, America's national parks are gradually becoming more

like a natural Disneyland. As the implications of caged habitats begin to present themselves, well-meaning park officials have tried to 'preserve' the environment as it was. Even small changes, like the introduction of a few hundred wolves into the park, can lead to significant and unpredictable outcomes. Academic debate participants have tinkered with and molded their activity in ways both nuanced and blunt, the outcomes of such tinkering reflects this same kind of organically unpredictable development. Instead of constantly tinkering with format necessitating more and more acronyms and judge strikes, Conflict Navigation asks that this discussion go on. It should go on in debate rounds and out between students, educators, competitors and judges. As the conversation goes on we may not get the satisfaction of passing structural reforms to implement what we feel to be the necessary actions and we may very well get fed up with all the rehashing of the same old problems, but we will be over and over again rehearsing the vocabulary and dedication that argumentation requires.

Perhaps one of the most significant threats of a gaming model being thrust upon competitive debate is the notion of motive. In games, we want to win. Arguing to win according to Buber and others is not only unethical, it can be downright dangerous. So how can we salvage the relational aspects of rhetoric in a competitive gaming environment? We approach this question from two stances. We have already looked at ways we can recapture education even when we 'lose' debates, we must now go on to redefine what it means to 'win'. Next we'll examine how viewing fellow interlocutors as 'opponents' creates unique challenges to ethical debate.

Redefining winning can be tricky especially if we do not want to rely too heavily on sappy inspirational posters. When we look at winning in a competitive debate environment one thing ought to become remarkably clear for all involved, no matter what we do the outcome it is almost certainly going to end up being unfair and not everyone is going to have an equal opportunity to win every debate. There will be varying degrees of experience both with debate and with any topic which ends up taking precedence and of course there will always be the ultimately uncheckable inclinations of the judge. Despite these obvious barriers to a level playing field for all 'exclusion through experience' continues to be a primary justification for efforts to move debate back towards a traditional camp.

At the 2008 NPDA business meeting held during the National Communication Association annual meeting in San Diego California this conversation seemed to dominate demands for the structural fortifications suggested by the Kirksville Consensus. Clearly no one wants to see their students getting beaten out of the activity but at the same time we cannot structurally fortify debate enough so that all start on the same footing.

In this regard we must depend on the coaching of our educators as well as on the rhetoric of our participants to make certain that all feel welcome and encouraged regardless of how lopsided the contest may become. We have already spoken of the patient and dogged determination necessary to make argument go what better way to learn than to time and again be confronted with frustrating losses? Is it not also the case

that in the legal world major corporate firms will 'snow over' their competition to win in court? And yet we don't call for a change to the legal structure limiting the number of arguments we can make in the court room. Instead we idolize the dogged little firm that could and debate should be no different.

One could approach which ever complicates debating events are the constantly changing mechanisms of judge-preferencing or striking. One of the hallmark differences between the NPTE (the 'contemporary' parliamentary debate organization) and the NPDA is a complicated process of judge ranking by the competitors. Mutual Preference

Judging attempts to sort all of the competitors and judges into rounds that hopefully preserve predictability. The only way a team will see a judge that they rank 'low' on their form is if the other team ranks them similarly. The ways this schema are played can boggle the mind. All of it is yet another attempt to preserve equality and fairness in an activity that is played entirely inside of the mind of someone who cannot participate. At what point to these sorting, seeding, and ranking exercises become unnecessarily cumbersome? At what point do they begin silencing voices and making judges who are routinely ranked 'low' on the scale feel unwelcome? We must seriously ask ourselves do they provide a sufficient benefit to risk unpredictable outcomes?

What the debate community needs to realize throughout is that the education from competitive debate comes in all forms and from engaging all forms. The one place it seems to come from least is that which is apparently the most coveted, a won ballot. While there is a great deal individuals can learn about how debate works and what kinds

of arguments do best in particular situations, even national champions themselves will attest that winning it all is as dependent on luck as it is on skill. We can train and research until Doomsday to produce a predictable result in-round yet ultimately we will probably be frustrated by the debate itself and almost certainly by the outcome. This is argument.

If we can not only salvage but also invite as many interpretations of debate as possible into our communities we can train ourselves as coaches, judges, students, and competitors to patiently and thoroughly analyze then respond to them all. Rather than attempting to weed out the gamers, instead of striking the interventionist judges we must find a way to engage them. The times we fail to do so in a way that produces a won ballot must be chalked up to another lesson in the unpredictability of argument. If we can do that we'll have developed not just a fun game to play on the weekends but a comprehensive simulation of argument as it exists in the real world. We'll have developed an activity that time and again exposes its participants to all of the challenges that argument imposes and hopefully, even when winning eludes us, reminds us the value of these arguments.

So how can we build this community 'in-round'? It is important to remember that Conflict Navigation refuses to offer a paradigm for competitive debating practice. Structural changes, orienting ballots, or the endless striking and rating of judges are all attempts to create new paradigms for how debate should be played and by now it should be clear that Conflict Navigation sees these efforts as at best bothersome and at worse damaging. Remembering that Conflict Navigation seeks to provide a rhetoric and

pedagogy but not a paradigm will take the reader a long way in figuring out how it ought to be implemented. Pedagogies ask us to guide thinking generally towards larger goals and broader value systems, paradigms are structural or physical attempts to implement the achievement of these goals. Conflict Navigation calls on all of us to change our expectations for debate. Instead of seeing the structure of debate as the mechanisms for entrenching education, CN asks us to discuss our goals around simple competitive structure. We change the way we engage those who apparently disagree with us, we do not change the way the activity runs.

Maybe winning would not be such a big deal if in losing we did not have to get beat. Ego becomes so wrapped up in argumentation that any method we can find to push it from our mind as we confront others is probably beneficial. Losing arguments we do not feel like we lost is one method, arguing in a way that encourages and inspires our opponents is another.

When participants let themselves get too carried away with winning trophies and awards or when they use the 'uneven' outcomes from tournaments with regards to one tradition or another to indict the activity as a whole, they perpetuate the cycle of fractionation that has frustrated the activity for decades. Pomp and circumstance has its benefits. We get to cheer, we come together for the most exciting rounds, the students who are fortunate enough to see those opportunities set before them will undoubtedly rank that as one of the more memorable moments in their lives while the rest of them get something to keep shooting for. We all like to take something home to show our

administrations but we cannot get caught up in thinking that we debate to win these tournaments.

Nevertheless students will always play to win seemingly regardless of how we coach them. So how do we tend to the issues of motive that lurk behind competitive argumentation? The first answer to that question is at the end of the day we probably cannot. At the point that we are asking students to assume sides to a fabricated issue there is going to be infinite ground to claim that their arguments stem from a personal competitive agenda as opposed to an ideal search for personal and communal enlightenment. However if played properly games can offer us at least the beginnings of our quest for relational management.

Engaging in assaults on motive with regards to the arguments of others is perhaps the easiest mechanism of avoiding their issues not to mention one of the most immediately damaging assaults on the relationship necessary for the argument to continue. While we know that motives in competitive debate can be far from pure we can always remind ourselves that going there with our critics is rarely fruitful. Instead we need to find ways to confront the statements made by our opponents in much the same way two friends confront a move in chess. It is clear that it was done to achieve an objective but it is obviously not designed to carry threat or condemnation.

While players of a game seek to vanquish a foe, in order to play the game the opponent is essential (Pearce and Littlejohn 38). The opponent not only "speaks the same language" as we do, but is in fact a "mirror image of [the] self."(Rapoport qtd. in Pearce

and Littlejohn 38). In too many competitive environments this important distinction is lost.

As we attempt to examine how Conflict Navigation plays out in the minds of participants, it is important that we briefly examine the role of 'external' audiences. Obviously those who happen upon academic debate are incredibly important to the activity's future success and mission. But because provosts, parents, or curious audience members do not out right participate in competitive debating enterprises we are excluding them from the list of 'participants'. Funding obviously has a significant influence on how and if debating takes place but that sort of participation is not the kind addressed by Conflict Navigation.

Instead, when we speak of Conflict Navigators we speak of students, coaches, judges, and competitors. While there are four 'roles' that are embraced in order to participate in academic debating it is not meant to be argued that we only wear one role at a time. For instance, all of the participants in academic debate as seen by Conflict Navigation are students of argument. We identify students to remind ourselves that no one has mastered the trade we seek to teach and that we are in fact all constantly hoping to better develop our abilities as an arguer. This is an important idea for everyone to keep in mind when we approach interpretations of debate that ignite our anger. We must treat our own arguments whether they come in the form of an argument on the topic or an explanation of a decision as the products of a growing student and realize that in many ways there are going to be things we can do to improve upon them.

Another important distinction made in Conflict Navigation is between coaches and judges. We have already discussed the implications that various interpretations of competitive debate have on judging. Traditionalists in the past have seen judges as active members of the discussion while contemporary debate practitioners relegate them to the role of score board in the name of fairness. It is in the spirit of keeping both traditions a live that we separate the two roles.

Coaches are educators who work with their students to help guide them towards better, more ethical advocacy and who attempt to contextualize the experiences of academic debate. It could be said that it is the coaches not the activity that provide the education in academic debate. Judges on the other hand are there to call the game as it is played. All too often judges have been too heavy handed with 'punitive' ballots meant to orient competitive debate towards their world view and they are thus as responsible for the rash of strikes and preference forms as the students who fill them out. Likewise, too many judges encourage frustrated young debaters who lose to cagey arguments or super fast debates to do more speed drills or to develop a cagier response as opposed to improve their listening and articulation techniques. It is rare that experienced teams or contemporary judges go out of their way to explain to those who get beaten by such tactics how such victories come about.

If 'punishment' through the ballot is one way in which coaches over step their role, then 'orientation' through the ballot is another. The ballot is excessively 'blunt' and it comes from the only silent participant in the round. Judges who attempt to 'reward'

certain behavior in the face of a clearly won round or who otherwise attempt to direct future debating through their cast ballot do little to promote better debating while at the same time they insight structural responses from frustrated competitors.

Current debate interpretations whether they are traditional or contemporary which ask the competitors to place their focus exclusively on the judge literally ask them grope in the dark. Time and again we have been shown that rather than get to know judges who decide rounds in ways that do not line up with their view of debate, competitors will simply strike that judge if given the option. Publication of judge philosophies (booklets handed out at many of the large tournaments including comments from each judge in the pool as to what they like to see) do not go nearly far enough to counteract all of the uncertainties with regards to threshold that can go on within a debate round. Students who read that a judge 'likes persuasive debate' for instance are just as likely to over adapt and speak as though they were teaching a 4th grade class room about debate as they are to find what it means for that judge when they ask for 'persuasion'. Adaptation is an essential component of competitive debate and indeed many of the times we are forced to adapt our discourse we do so 'blindly'. But when we look at the premium that not only students but an apparently critical mass of participants place on an 'objective' ballot it is apparent that asking for blind adaptation in a round which decides a national champion is too risky.

With few exceptions judges and competitors do not meet nearly enough to develop the kind of rapport that is necessary for competitors to accurately adapt to the

silent judge, so instead Conflict Navigation asks that the competitors do all they can to adapt to each other and that the judge engage only the responsive components of the arguments they see. In this way Conflict Navigation continues what many felt to be the mistaken agenda of Tabula Rasa judging. Of course judges ought to engage teams who they feel are unethical or 'bad for debate' in conversation after the round, and they can offer losing teams advice as to how they can engage abusive ideas in the future. But when judges attempt to make the ballot a coaching tool they only invite future structural fortification on behalf of opposing programs looking to maintain a more predictable game.

The notion of strict objectivity as presented by the Tabula Rasa judge is of course impossible. We are permanently biased creatures who bring our whole personal history, abilities and faults to the act of judging. Further confounding real objectivity is the fact that we are not observing reactions in a laboratory but claims made by developing students. Pretending that objectivity exists in the minds of an audience as it does in the petrie dish does little good. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca distinguish impartiality from objectivity for this very reason (60). Conflict Navigation asks us to chase the elusive notion of impartiality. When judges let their guard down for any reason and begin to question the motives of competitors or feel the need to jump in and point debate one way or another they sacrifice an opportunity to practice engaged listening techniques.

Asking judges to vote purely on responsiveness opens the doors to arguments and strategies that many will find questionable. The debate community recognizes the

notorious instance of 'contemporary' debaters winning contests with arguments that are admittedly absurd. These arguments can range from advocating a violent 'devolution' of the human species in order to save the planet, to building a 'super house' over the entire continental United States (except the Dakotas, Kansas, and Idaho). In a world where judges only vote on responsiveness, opposing teams who confront these arguments with confusion or anger can quickly lose the round. Bringing oneself to vote for such arguments causes legitimate pause. But judges must remember that these victories do not represent an intellectual concurrence with the thesis of the argument. If judges always voted their conscience the debate would be over after the topic was announced. That said, judges recognize that at times they will vote in ways that do not correspond with their world view and in so doing remind us that all arguments demand interaction with a functioning response before they are to be dismissed. While this is frustrating to some and brow raising to others, it is important to remember that judges are not here to debate students, only to gauge how well they debated each other.

Given all of the unsettling argument that Tabula Rasa may invite, we might do well to point out that such arguments win the day in the 'real world' as well. Some of us are reminded of this when we see school boards continue to refuse evolution to students or insist on equating it with the 'theory' of intelligent design. Health care advocates see it every time much needed reform efforts fall to fears of 'socialism'. The only way we can change these unfortunate realities of the 'absurd' defeating the 'rational' is to confront those arguments as they come to us, as potentially real and formative ideas. Judges who

insert their opinions on the qualities of 'absurd' arguments or who insist on punishing teams who in reality did not functionally respond deny the opposing team a truly valuable lesson. An open and honest hearing for all ideas is a mandatory means to learn the necessary skills to articulate responsive answers to perceptions of 'bad'.

We have discussed what we mean when we say 'student', 'coach', and 'judge' and so we now turn our attention to the term 'competitors'. It is important to stress that there are obvious problems with assuming that once we don our 'competitor' role we can check all of our scholastic agendas at the door. I identify competitors as separate from students because they carry the unique burden of sustaining the activity through encouraging participation. Conflict Navigation asks competitors to temper their thirst for victory with an eye on sustainability.

The most potentially damaging situation in competitive debate is when we have an instance of an 'odd team out'. When like minded participants share a round together it does not matter what their individual interpretation of debate may be, chances are good that we'll have a pleasant and educational debate. But when we have only a two-legged stool - when a team from tradition A meets a team from tradition B and the judge is an exclusive A judge - all sorts of problems emerge.

Competitors from interpretation A tend to simply 'go for the judge' with little to no regard for the opposing team. Team B loses the round and is typically engaged hardly at all as to why. At this point it is sadly common to see rhetoric's arch nemeses, 'swagger' and 'ridicule', and neither are these attitudes strictly endemic to the winning

team. This approach is not sustainable, nor does it demonstrate the obligations that contemporary rhetoric insists we owe our audiences.

If in an ideal world judges made decisions strictly on responsiveness, then students could turn their attention to their opponents. Rather than see opponents as individuals who must be beaten, debates can quickly turn into an exploration for the areas of conflict given a certain topic and two ideally clashing interpretations. Obviously we cannot have a competition where everyone wins, but if students make part of winning an explanation to opposing teams (not just the judge) as to the reasons behind their perceptions of success, then the discussions that ensue should benefit all. Teams can explain their view of debate as they see it and part of that explanation must stem from the apparent orientation of their opponents. Judges can comment on how well it was all explained and hopefully the 'odd team out' can at least learn a bit about an opposing view of debate rather than leave the room feeling ignored or cheated.

Put another way, competitors must understand that the participation of their opponents is in fact essential. Winning may be important but if the teams that lose do not feel welcome or important as they are beaten then there may not be enough of them left the next time around. Unlike the judge, opponents talk back and thus give competitors a visible set of arguments to confront and respond to. This is where adaptation ought to take place. Competitors must be able to trust the judge to remain impartial and they must attempt to debate the issue from the interpretation of their opponents. Assuming they take what we have learned about the rhetoric and pedagogy of Conflict Navigation to heart,

participants can simultaneously win from within their personal interpretations of what debate ought to be and explain their position to a new audience in a way that bolsters their opponents commitment to the activity.

Conclusion

It will probably be said that Conflict Navigation boils down simply to "can't we all just get along?". In many ways, that is exactly what Conflict Navigation asks. Academic debate stands alone as a rare instance where participants spend as much time speaking about the curriculum as they do listening to it. In this regard, debate is perhaps one of the most promising educational forums in institutionalized learning.

The level and consistency of the conflict speaks volumes to the passion that academic debate participants have shared throughout the years and of course there will always be different formats which are more appealing to different people. Parliamentary debate as it presently stands in the United States provides students with unique insight into the best and worst of argumentation; moreover, it provides significant opportunity to respond to each. Instead of attempting to do the impossible - eradicate 'bad argument' - debate participants should be encouraged to view such instances as important learning opportunities.

As careers expand and educators grow such a pedagogy will certainly test our fortitude. Students flit through academic debate communities too fast to establish any kind of institutional memory as to what the best debates look like. Educators it seems will have to resign themselves to redundantly confronting and articulating the same lessons of

'bad debate' while at the same time struggling with the notion of 'rewarding' it by giving it their ballot. No one should blame debate educators for wanting an efficient response, be it a ballot that teaches a lesson or a new format of debate which maybe extinguishes a few of the worst-case scenarios. But such instances of 'trump' are contrary to the larger goal of an education in invested argumentation.

We must keep the game simple so that we can all share in the varied discourses around it, but at the same time there will be those who take the activity very seriously. There will be times when all feel as though the other side is contradicting everything we are here to teach but when we give in to the need to force change upon our community we are perhaps flirting with hypocrisy. The game, as important as it is, is merely the skeleton around which the true curriculum of academic debate is built. The curriculum ought to seek to challenge our initial responses to argumentation and thus it has its work cut out for it. Chances are change will be slow but if a sustainable debate community can somehow exist which rallies around the notion that argumentation is cooperative, inquisitive, incessantly curious and interested in difference, and most importantly ongoing we can rest assured that the curriculum of rhetoric and the joy of the game can both be well served.

To serve the larger curriculum of argumentation well, academic debate needs to emphasize not simply tolerance, but temperance and inclusion on all sides. If we are going to define thresholds, they must be based on the purposeful exclusion of alternate forms of participation. As so much of debate is a mental activity, let us be clear that

determining the threshold of such an action is going to be very difficult but if there is one practice which devastates argumentation efforts more than avoidance, it is motivism.

Part of effective argumentation is a willingness to give others the benefit of the doubt and to interpret what may appear to be the most willful acts of negligence as novice mistakes or impersonal differences in opinion. Assuming that we are left to interpret whether or not someone is being malicious or excessively callus means their actions could, somehow, be otherwise justified. Once we select negative motives and react accordingly we end that conversation. Those we indict feel potentially unjustly wronged and are likely to assign negative intent to our actions, casting us in the same light we cast upon them.

Undoubtedly there will be many times when judges wish to impose interpretations on debate using their ballot (or to defend novices from callused or aggressive older teams) but in so doing, efforts to create a continuous discussion are hindered. Game oriented participants who have emphasized expertise and oratory style over feeling or empathy have closed themselves off, threatening the sustainability of the larger community and likewise jeopardizing what should be the prime motives of argumentation. Argumentation and reason are humankind's most potent assets, yet we are continuously reminded how amazingly fallible and fragile they are. Sustainable arguments are only cultivated through repeated exposure and subsequent navigation through a gauntlet of rhetorical challenges old and new.

While this is a substantive task in the real world, let alone amongst the novice

laden world of academic debate, we must preserve the opportunity to practice its implementation. No matter how valuable the game may be, no matter how essential it is that we combine some of the traditional components of argument, it is the learning of the lesson which is most important. If we unnecessarily dilute our learning environments in search of a 'purer' community, we threaten the sustainable foundation of argumentation.

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