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MONASH DEBATING REVIEW

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 7th edition of the Monash Debating Review. This year presents a number of firsts for this publication.

This is the first issue to feature an international editorial board, spanning from Australia and New Zealand to Korea (with Scottish lifeblood) and Canada. Through the wonders of the Internet, and despite drastically different timezones, the editorial staff managed to collaborate to produce this edition.

This is also the first issue to feature empirical papers using data from debating tournaments. Paul-Erik Veel demonstrates the power of econometrics, analysing the impacts of a number of variables on debating achievement, while Steven Kryger uses statistics to post a provocative thesis concerning gender in debating. While each paper employs data samples from single tournaments, we hope that they encourage the international debating community to explore the explanatory power, and limits, of statistical inquiry.

On the more substantive side, Eusebius McKaiser explores whether there is a bias towards liberalism in debating, while Seamus Coleman tackles how debaters should address public international law, particularly in the context of military intervention.

Finally, Ivan Ah Sam and Naomi Oreb provide sage guidance for newcomers, while Andy Hume provides a veteran's perspective on the evolution of parliamentary debate.

We sincerely hope that you enjoy this edition of the MDR. More importantly, we hope it assists in fostering further debate and discussion among our international community.

Michael Kotrly
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Pralabh Gupta
Max Harris

FEATURE
ARTICLE

MONASH
DEBATING
REVIEW

THIS HOUSE WOULD INTERVENE MILITARILY: THE LEGALITY OF INTERVENTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL LAW AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN DEBATES

About the author: *Seamus Coleman* is currently studying towards a Bachelor of Laws and a Diploma of Arts (Political Science) at Melbourne University. He is a three time quarter finalist at the Australasian Intersvarsity Debating Championships (2005, 2006 & 2008) and has been a Grand Finalist at the Australian British Parliamentary Championships (2008). He has also won the ANU Spring Invitational (2009) and ADAM Invitational (2009). Additionally, Seamus is a former President of the Melbourne University Debating Society and will be the Chief Adjudicator of the 2010 Australian Intersvarsity Debating Championships. Outside of debating, Seamus was part of the 2008 Australian Philip C Jessup International Law Moot Court Champion team.

Whenever unrest flairs in the world a motion almost invariably appears at intersvarsity tournaments held in the months following that calls for an intervention, invasion or a ‘surgical’ strike against the offending state. For the sake of simplicity, this article will refer to any such military action as intervention. A sample of such motions was found through a search of Colm Flynn’s debating blog¹:

- This House believes that Africa needs international military intervention to solve her most dire conflicts. (Pan African Universities Debating Championships 2008, Grand Final)
- This House would invade Zimbabwe. (Cork IV 2007, Round 2)
- This House supports military intervention to deliver emergency aid in humanitarian crises. (WSDC 2008, Round 1)
- This House would arm local militia to fight the Taliban in Afghanistan. (WUDC 2009, Octofinal)
- This House would assassinate Vladimir Putin. (WUDC 2008, Round 7)

¹ Colm Flynn, ‘World Debating Website’, available at <<http://flynn.debating.net/>> (accessed 28th July 2009).

- That international institutions should use force to restrict the sale of small arms to African nations. (Australians 2008, Grand Final — Not Debated)

Utilising Erik Eastaugh’s useful taxonomy of debates being either about policy or principle, I would place debates about interventions firmly in the former as they ‘tend to revolve principally around a cost/benefit analysis of the proposed measure’.² At the end of the day, debates on interventions almost always turn on whether the adjudicator is persuaded that the intervention would make a given crisis and, on occasion, the broader region and international community, better or worse. Those ‘principled’ arguments that do arise are often more about the systemic costs of an intervention (such as arguments relating to the importance of state sovereignty for international order) or are, in effect, disguised arguments as to the efficacy of the intervention itself (such as arguments focused on post colonialism).

The advantage of understanding the basics of international law has previously been noted in this review.³ Indeed, some motions demand it; for example the 2006 WUDC Octofinal, ‘This House believes that international law should recognise the right of each state to unilaterally undertake armed humanitarian intervention’. This article will explore what role public international law — the law governing how nation states interact with each other — can play in analysing the costs and benefits of any given intervention. This will involve a discussion of both when interventions are to be considered legal and what regard, if any, states should have to the legality of their actions.

The law of the land or the law of debate land?

For better or worse there is no global legislature and international law is primarily developed through the consent of states; either by directly consenting to obligations in the form of treaties, or by a large number of states tacitly accepting the emergence of a new norm.⁴ This acceptance must be demonstrated by both a state’s practices and by a belief that such practices were

² Erik Eastaugh, ‘How to Win Worlds from Opening Government’ (2004) 4 *Monash Debating Review* 22 at 24.

³ Joanna Nairn and Michael Kotrly, ‘How to tackle Worlds’ (2006) 6 *Monash Debating Review* 14 at 17.

⁴ Ian Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law* (7th ed), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 3-24.

legal — these latter norms are known as customary international law.⁵ As a consequence, for international law to emerge diverse states, with divergent interests, need to come to some consensus, making the development of international law particularly difficult in relation to contentious issues like that of when military interventions are legal (see below for a discussion of the current controversy surrounding humanitarian intervention).

In debates about domestic policy, teams almost always propose wholesale legal reform; just think about motions to elect judges, create bills of rights, even those allowing the sale of marijuana or paid surrogacy. In debates relating to international relations this is much rarer. This is most likely because people neither know nor care that much about international law but, it may also be that, unlike in domestic law, the decentralised nature of international law makes such instantaneous reforms unthinkable. If teams were to propose such reforms, their models would sound unviable, thereby hurting their credibility. Additionally, teams unnecessarily give themselves a higher burden by having to show the benefit of both an intervention and a legal reform which unlike in most debates on domestic policy do not have to go hand in hand as the motion does not call for it. The effect of all this is that teams in debates on international relations almost always implicitly or explicitly accept the international legal framework as it currently stands.

So who does care about international law?

A common misconception is that states do not care about international law, as there is no direct enforcement mechanism to ensure its compliance. In the case of interventions, this is factually untrue as the U.N. Security Council can authorise punitive measures to be taken against states who conduct illegal interventions. For example, the Security Council authorised sanctions against Iraq for invading Kuwait.⁶ There are also indirect methods to ensure that states comply with international law. These include a potential loss of political capital both internally and externally for offending governments, potential exclusion from future international organisations or systems in addition to a desire for reciprocal compliance from other states.

A quick survey of their behaviour confirms that states do have regard to international law. Of the 29 maritime or land boundary disputes heard up to May 2007 by either the International Court of Justice (ICJ) — the United

⁵ Ibid, p. 6-7. There is no firm rule for how many states must accept a practice for it to become customary international law but uniformity is not required.

⁶ Security Council Resolution 661. 6 August 1990.

Nations' judicial organ — or its predecessor the Permanent Court of International Justice, only one decision was not complied with by the parties.⁷ This is in spite of neither the Court nor the successful party having any direct ability to enforce the decision. Britain and America desperately tried to persuade the Security Council and the international community that the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was legal, even though most commentators felt their legal reasoning was dubious.⁸ Similarly, following the invasion of Afghanistan, the United States did not disregard international law but rather sought to argue that it had been expanded to justify their actions.⁹ There is a reasonably well accepted norm of international law that allows states to intervene to protect their nationals abroad as a form of self defence;¹⁰ it has been suggested that Russia's issuing of passports to South Ossetians just prior to their 2008 invasion was an attempt to make the invasion fall within this defence.¹¹

Given that states modify their behaviour based on whether an act is legal or illegal the legality of an intervention can have significant implications. The latter part of this article will address under what circumstances an intervention can be considered legal and what implications this may have in debates. This issue is much too broad to be canvassed fully in this article but it is considered summarily.

When is an intervention legal?

The sovereignty and equality of states are the basic principles of international law.¹² Simply defined, sovereignty is the right of a state to exclusive jurisdiction (control) over its territory and the permanent population within it.¹³ This right places a corresponding obligation upon states; an obligation of non-interference in another state's territory or the activities of its population.¹⁴ This principle of

⁷ Sara Mitchell and Paul Hensel, 'International Institutions and Compliance with Agreements' (2007) 51(4) *American Journal of Political Science* 721, at 735.

⁸ The Economist, 'The legal arguments: Pro, con and muddled', March 20th 2003.

⁹ Martin Dixon and Robert McCorquodale, *Cases & Materials on International Law* (4th ed.), Oxford, Oxford University Press (2003), p 528.

¹⁰ Ian Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, p. 740.

¹¹ Jim Nichol, 'Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests' *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*, 2008, available at <http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL34618_20080922.pdf> (accessed on 28th July 2009).

¹² Ian Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, p. 289.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 289.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

non-intervention has a very broad definition and prevents not only uses of force but also other, more benign interferences. For example, in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis when Myanmar's governing junta would not allow aid deliveries, the French and US governments both discussed plans to drop food parcels without the consent of the junta. However, these plans were quickly shelved as they would have amounted to a breach of international laws.¹⁵

This article will focus on interventions that do constitute use of force since most debates involving interventions will clearly rise to that level. The ICJ has recognised that what constitutes force should be defined broadly and can extend to practices such as providing support to an armed group within another state.¹⁶ The *United Nations Charter*, to which 192 nation states are party,¹⁷ outlines in article 2(4):

All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

This prohibition on the use of force has been stated by the ICJ to be the cornerstone of the UN Charter System.¹⁸ For a state to use force legally its actions must fall within one of a handful of exceptions to this prohibition.

State Consent

One obvious exception to the prohibition is when a state gives their permission to another state or an international organisation (such as NATO or the UN) to use force within their borders.¹⁹ Obtaining the consent of a state can be particularly important in cases where a permanent member of the Security

¹⁵ Andrew Selth, 'Even Paranoids Have Enemies: Cyclone Nargis and Myanmar's Fears of Invasion' 30(3) *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 379. For further discussion of this issue see Rebecca Barber, 'The Responsibility to Protect the Survivors of Natural Disaster: Cyclone Nargis, a Case Study' (2009) *Journal of Conflict & Security Law* 1.

¹⁶ *Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v United States of America) (Merits)* 1986 ICJ 14.

¹⁷ See 'United Nations Member States' available at <<http://www.un.org/en/members/growth.shtml>> (accessed on 28th July 2009). The only states that are not party to the UN Charter are the Vatican and Kosovo. Additionally, Palestine has permanent observer status.

¹⁸ *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v Uganda) (Judgment)* 2005 ICJ 10, 53.

¹⁹ Martin Dixon and Robert McCorquodale, *Cases & Materials on International Law*, p. 558.

Council is likely to veto a resolution authorising intervention. Further difficulty arises when a state has no functioning government to give consent, as was the case in Somalia during the time when the UNISOM and UNISOM II missions were conducted, or in Liberia, when the Economic Community of West African States intervened in 1990. There have also been cases of fabricated consent as was seen during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the United States' alleged invitation into Grenada in 1984 by Grenada's Governor-General.²⁰

An important consequence of an intervention being conducted with the permission of the host state is that any peacekeeping or intervening force has necessarily chosen a side in the conflict. If the force must stay in favour with the government in order to remain involved in the conflict this may alter how they conduct their mission. At the insistence of China, the UNAMID mission — the UN's peacekeeping force in Darfur — was only given authorisation to intervene subject to the cooperation of the Sudanese government. This meant that UNAMID's mandate did not include the ability to disarm militias nor to arrest those indicted by the International Criminal Court²¹ — a particularly important limitation given the recent warrant issued by the ICC for Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir's arrest.

United Nations Authorisation

If a state does not give consent to a force being present, the Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the *United Nations Charter*, may authorise an intervention. The Security Council has primary responsibility for matters of international peace and security and is generally seen to have a monopoly on the use of force.²² So long as an intervention is conducted in accordance with the resolution authorising it, it will be considered legal.²³ Interventions authorised under Chapter VII include the UN missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Angola, East Timor and Somalia.²⁴ The obvious limitation to the Security Council being able to

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ BBC News (Online), 'Sudan "will support" Darfur force', August 1st 2007, available at <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6925538.stm>> (accessed on 29th July 2009).

²² *United Nations Charter*, article 24(1).

²³ Parties to a conflict must also conduct themselves in accordance with International Humanitarian Law — the law governing armed conflict.

²⁴ Patrik Johansson, 'UN Security Council Chapter VII resolutions, 1946-2002. An Inventory.' Uppsala University: Department of Peace and Conflict Research, 2003, available at

authorise the use of force is that the permanent members (Russia, the United States, France, the United Kingdom and China) can veto any resolution attempting to do so.²⁵ The veto, while once a favourite tool of the USSR has, in the last three decades, been most frequently used by the United States.²⁶

One little known (and rarely used) aspect of the United Nations system is the ability of the General Assembly to take action, including military action, on matters of international peace and security where the Security Council fails to act ‘because of [a] lack of unanimity of the permanent members’;²⁷ in other words, when a permanent member exercises their veto. This is known as Uniting for Peace and is the result of a resolution of the General Assembly that the United States pushed for during the Korean War so they could avoid the USSR’s veto. An important limitation of this resolution is that it only gives the General Assembly the ability to act when the Security Council has *failed* to act — it cannot override resolutions or be the primary body for decision making on international peace and security.

Uniting for Peace was first utilised by the General Assembly to authorise the United Nations Emergency Force — a UN force that, ‘secure[d] and supervise[d] the cessation of hostilities’ during the Suez Canal Crisis.²⁸ Action by the Security Council had been impossible due to the United Kingdom and France exercising their vetoes. Uniting for Peace was also used by Zimbabwe in 1981 to pass a resolution in the General Assembly authorizing sanctions against South Africa²⁹ who were at the time occupying Namibia (then South West Africa) illegally.³⁰

The Uniting for Peace doctrine should inform debates on United Nations reform as the veto may not present as many legal obstacles to action as the

<http://www.pcr.uu.se/publications/UCDP_pub/Chapter%20VII%20Resolutions_050921.pdf> (accessed on 29th July, 2009)

²⁵ *United Nations Charter*, article 27(3).

²⁶ Global Policy Forum, ‘Changing Patterns in the Use of the Veto in the Security Council’ (2008), available at <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/tables-and-charts-on-the-security-council-0-82/use-of-the-veto.html>> (accessed on 28th July 2009).

²⁷ General Assembly Resolution 377A, 3rd November 1950.

²⁸ General Assembly Resolution 1001 (ES-1), 5th November 1956.

²⁹ General Assembly Resolution ES-8/2, 16th September 1981.

³⁰ *Legal Consequences for States of the Continued Presence of South Africa in Namibia (South West Africa) Notwithstanding Security Council Resolution 276 (Advisory Opinion)* 1971 ICJ 16.

Charter first suggests. However, given that it is so rarely used the predominant barrier to having authorised (and therefore, legal) interventions remains the Security Council. If in a debate you are discussing an intervention into a state within the spheres of influence of China, the United States or Russia, you can be reasonably confident that it will not be legal unless it falls within one of the other exceptions to the prohibition on the use of force. If an intervention is not legal, it is likely that only states with a significant vested interest will become involved in the intervention. This occurred during the 2003 Iraq Invasion when states cited the illegality of the war as a reason for not joining the 'Coalition of the Willing'.³¹ Illegality affects who will participate in any given intervention and this should be kept in mind by teams; the cost of an intervening force being anaemic and sourced from a limited group of states with vested interests are all too apparent after the Iraq War.

Self Defence

The *United Nations Charter* preserves the right of states to use force in self defence.³² Traditionally, self defence does not permit the use of force to prevent anticipated attacks against a state, only attacks past or those imminent.³³ So it is unlikely that surgical strikes against North Korea or Iran's nuclear facilities would be legal on the basis of self defence as there is no imminent danger to the striking states. Indeed, in 1981 when Israel launched surgical strikes against Iraq's nuclear reactors they were condemned as illegal by the Security Council.³⁴ A final point to note on self defence is that states can use force to defend another state if the latter state requests assistance.³⁵ This occurred in 1990 when the United States repelled Iraq's invasion of Kuwait at Kuwait's request.

³¹ 'Iraq War was Illegal, Chirac tells Bush' *The Irish Examiner*, June 4th 2003.

³² *United Nations Charter*, s 51.

³³ Ian Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, p. 734.

³⁴ Security Council Resolution 487, June 19th 1981.

³⁵ Ian Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, p. 735.

Responsibility to Protect and Unilateral Humanitarian Intervention³⁶

Responsibility to Protect, known as R2P, is an amorphous phrase that attempts to encapsulate how the international community should respond to humanitarian crises.³⁷ It places not only an obligation on states to protect their own citizens but also leaves room for the international community to take action when a state fails to do so.³⁸ This idea was first brought to the fore by Gareth Evans, a ‘roving global troubleshooter’,³⁹ at the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (‘ICISS’). The ICISS was an ad hoc commission requested by Kofi Annan, then U.N. Secretary General, and administered by the Canadian government. It sought to address the issue of how the international community should respond to gross human rights violations.

At the 2005 World Summit — a follow-up meeting to the Millennium Summit, the outcomes of which were adopted by the General Assembly — the international community endorsed the concept of R2P.⁴⁰ The Summit’s Outcome Document makes clear that a majority of the international community support the idea that when states fail to protect their citizens, action should be taken by the Security Council.⁴¹ However, the ambiguity of the doctrine of R2P has left room for both its opponents and proponents to conflate the idea with that of unilateral humanitarian intervention⁴² — whereby an individual state intervenes in another state for purported humanitarian reasons, without UN authorisation.

³⁶ Unilateral in this context means acting without the authorisation of a competent international organisation (almost always the Security Council) and does not necessarily mean one state. NATO’s actions against the former Yugoslavia are considered unilateral for this reason in spite of involving a number of states. See Martin Dixon and Robert McCorquodale, *Cases & Materials on International Law*, p. 521.

³⁷ The Economist, ‘Responsibility to protect: an idea whose time has come—and gone?’, July 23rd 2009.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ General Assembly Resolution 60/1, 24th October 2005.

⁴¹ For analysis of this issue see Carlo Focarelli, ‘The Responsibility to Protect Doctrine and Humanitarian Intervention’ (2008) 13(2) *Journal of Conflict & Security Law* 191. Some commentators have noted that the Outcomes Document doesn’t explicitly preclude the existence of a unilateral right of humanitarian intervention.

⁴² The Economist, ‘Responsibility to protect: an idea whose time has come—and gone?’, July 23rd 2009.

Though some commentators disagree, it is generally well accepted that such a right of unilateral humanitarian intervention does not yet exist in international law.⁴³ However, many suggest that it may be an emerging norm.⁴⁴ As discussed above, for a new norm of international law to emerge there must be consensus amongst states as demonstrated, in part, by their practice. This means that each time a unilateral intervention is launched for humanitarian reasons it strengthens the emergence of the norm of humanitarian intervention. Slippery slope arguments can be useful in a number of contexts⁴⁵ and for debates on interventions this is particularly true as each intervention will change the legal environment in which future decisions are made. Given that states do change their decision making based on what is or isn't legal (see above) allowing one intervention may pave the way for future interventions by changing the law itself. As Kofi Annan told the General Assembly in 1999 such actions 'could set precedents that result in a proliferation of the unilateral and lawless use of force, with or without credible justification.'⁴⁶ There has already been growing reference to humanitarian intervention in the rhetoric used to justify invasions. It was used by the USA after the 2003 Iraq Invasion,⁴⁷ and was used by Russia during its intervention in South Ossetia.⁴⁸

The problem with the right of unilateral humanitarian intervention is its potential for abuse. If there is no external decision maker (i.e. the Security Council) to determine what constitutes a grave humanitarian crisis or to monitor an intervention once it has begun it opens the doors for states to conduct interventions for self interested reasons under the guise of preventing humanitarian catastrophes. Kosovo is a good example of where humanitarian aims and political aims were intertwined. The 1999 bombings were done ostensibly to prevent an imminent humanitarian catastrophe but in the lead up to the campaign they were used as a tool to try and leverage recognition of Kosovo by the former Yugoslavia.⁴⁹

⁴³ Ian Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, p. 742-5.

⁴⁴ Carlo Focarelli, 'The Responsibility to Protect Doctrine and Humanitarian Intervention' (2008) 13(2) *Journal of Conflict & Security Law* 191, 195.

⁴⁵ Ivan Ah Sam, 'Slouching Toward Bethlehem' (2005) 4 *Monash Debating Review* 28.

⁴⁶ Quoted in *The Economist*, 'United Nations: Fighting for Survival', November 18th, 2004.

⁴⁷ *The Economist*, 'Responsibility to protect: an idea whose time has come—and gone?', July 23rd 2009.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Ian Brownlie, *Principles of Public International Law*, p. 743

International law is currently in a state of flux in regards to when humanitarian interventions, conducted in the absence of Security Council authorization, are legal. Debaters should be aware of this fact when debating these issues as each individual intervention may create system-wide costs or benefits.

Conclusion

Though admittedly debating is not the best forum for discussing the current state of international law or determining which hypothetical interventions are legal or illegal, having some knowledge of how international law interacts with the way states make decisions can be beneficial. States do modify their decision making in a variety of ways based on the legality of a given course of action. Interventions conducted in self defence, against a consenting state, or with the authorisation of the Security Council or General Assembly, are legal. It is less clear when states may intervene for humanitarian reasons without authorisation.

In a debate the fact that a proposed intervention is legal or illegal matters very little in and of itself. If teams can analyse how an intervention's legality changes the involved state's behaviour they may be able to demonstrate an additional cost or benefit and get closer to persuading the adjudicator whether or not this House should intervene militarily.

DEBATING POLICY

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THE FATE OF CONSERVATIVE ARGUMENTS IN A LIBERAL DEBATE UNIVERSE

About the author: Eusebius McKaiser is a political analyst at the Centre for the Study of Democracy based in Johannesburg. He broke 9th and placed in the top twenty speakers at the 2005 World University Debating Championships in Malaysia. McKaiser studied philosophy at Rhodes University and Oxford University (as an international Rhodes Scholar). This paper is based on an earlier publication in *Molotov* that was reworked and published here with kind permission from the magazine's editorial team.

Introduction

Ever since I can recall, I have dreaded having to defend the conservative side of a motion - particularly on moral and social policy issues. The chances of winning a debate concerning homosexuality, for example, by arguing for the claim that gay persons should not be allowed to adopt children or that they should not have their partnerships recognized by the state seemed slim to none. The last few years I have been reflecting on this fear of conservatism in order to puzzle through a persisting question: do non-liberal arguments face a higher burden of proof in competitive debate?

One simple possible explanation for my 'fear' might be the fact I – *personally* - happen to be deeply committed to liberalism. And so it is very likely that I just have a *personal* preference for arguing in favour of liberal values and principles. Upon reflection, however, that cannot be the end of the matter. The international debate community, in general, is a community of liberal interlocutors. There is therefore a higher burden of proof that falls on non-liberal arguments.

The gap between a logically sound argument and a psychologically persuasive one is not always admitted by debaters. But if we are honest about this extra ingredient that is required of logically sound arguments – i.e. that they should also be *psychologically persuasive* – then we are closer to recognizing how our personal and overlapping, deeply-held, beliefs and values affect debate outcomes. The implication for competitive international parliamentary debate is that the general dominance of liberalism in the beliefs of individual debaters and judges drive the (implicit) higher burden of proof faced by conservative propositions – or rather, faced by those debaters who have to defend these propositions. This is not always recognized explicitly since doing so would betray the desperately neutral gazes and body language of many judges.

I should qualify my thesis further. There certainly are some debaters within the international debate community who wear their *actual* conservatism on their sleeves. My particular interest, however, is in respect of what happens during debate rounds and when it is time for judges to evaluate the arguments that had been presented. In these contexts, in my experience, even those minority of debaters and judges (and they are, importantly, a minority) who have deep *personal commitments* to conservatism, also demonstrate (or accept) an implicit expectation of a higher burden for proving non-liberal arguments to be cogent. Put differently, even a genuinely conservative debater would more likely kick him or herself for ‘losing’ a liberal argument than for failing to persuade judges and audiences of the cogency of a conservative proposition.

This essay is a meditation on this trend. I narrate an illustrative example (at some length) of how this liberal bias in parliamentary debate arises from as early as when we are taught the rules of competitive debate. My reflective intuition is that this is, perhaps, somewhat unavoidable as liberalism is inherent in debate. Still, this raises a critical, evaluative question: is this bias good, bad or innocuous and what can we do about it? Before we can embark on any of these journeys, however, it is important to do some definitional work— what exactly do I mean by ‘liberalism’?

Liberalism?

First, it is important to distinguish economic policy debates from social and moral policy ones. The reflections that inspire and drive this essay are exclusively those relating to social and moral policy motions. We can therefore set aside substantive definitional issues related to the economy.

It will suffice to point out that, interestingly though perhaps not unexpectedly, debaters are less personally married to ideological positions within economic policy debates than they are within social and moral policy ones. Debates about economic liberalism, for example, have a roughly equal chance of being won by either side of a motion. This speaks to the personal nature of questions of identity and the role of the state in our individual lifestyle-choices that morality and social policy centre on. This is not, of course, to suggest that economic policy is less relevant to us or disconnected from our lives. It simply reflects the *less immediately existential* nature of economic discourse – telling me who I can have sexual intercourse with affects me on a psycho-sexual level that touches the core of my being in a way in which telling me how much tax I should pay, does not. Due to these less emotive overtones of economic policy debate, there is less bias in favour of any particular ideological position with regards to economic motions. For these reasons, economic policy motions are not the central site of the action for examining the thesis under discussion in this essay.

Let us set economics aside then, and assume that liberalism – to be defined shortly – is intended to range over issues of morality and social policy, and not economic policy.

The definition of ‘liberalism’ that I have in mind throughout is derived from John Stuart Mill’s essay, *On Liberty*, which sets out the moral constraints on the exercise of power by the state over citizens.¹ As already circumscribed, I am particularly restricting this state-citizen relationship to the domains of morality and social policy. Liberalism, in Mill’s sense of the term, implies a few theses: first, there are many different ‘conceptions of the good’ that exist in society; second, the state should not prioritize any particular conception of the good; third, the state should not interfere in an citizen’s exercise of their individual conception of the good unless such interference is required in order to prevent harm to others (‘other-regarding’ harm) and, in some cases, harm to oneself (‘self-regarding harm’). This third feature of Mill’s blueprint of a morally liberal society is captured in his so-called ‘Harm Principle’ – “That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others”.²

‘Conception of the good’ simply means a vision of what constitutes an ideal life, or a life form that is worth living. Some person might judge, for example, that the introspective aesthetic life of a hermit artist is ideal, while someone else might think that a public political life is most desirable. In Mill’s ideal society, no moral judgment is made as to which of these life forms are preferable. In that sense, we can explain the Harm Principle from a different angle: it requires a state that is a morally minimalist one. In other words, just as economic liberalism implies – broadly speaking – a state that stays out of the marketplace and broader economy so far as possible, similarly, Mill’s ideal government refrains from interfering in the moral choices – including moral *ranking* of choices – of its citizens. It has a minimal role; safeguarding the space within which individuals have the maximum possible freedom and opportunity, consistent with the Harm Principle, to exercise, and live, their conceptions of the good.

There are many nuances, and criticisms, of Mill’s conception of morality, and the relationship between the state and citizen as he posits it, that have been widely examined.³ It is beyond the scope of this essay to rehearse these

¹ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, London, Longman, Robers and Green, 1869.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ See, for example, Joseph Hamburger, *John Stuart Mill on Liberty and Control*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999 and William Whewell, *History of the Inductive Sciences*, London, John W. Parker, 1837.

(ongoing) academic debates. The central insight from Mill, for my purpose, can be captured as follows: the essence of liberalism finds expression in a pluralistic society with a non-judgmental state that allows for wide ranging conceptions of morality to exist and be the determinants of people's life forms.

There is, in addition, debate within moral liberalism. It is important to acknowledge disagreement that liberals have with each other. Some, like Isaiah Berlin most famously, have argued that only negative liberty is worth pursuing.⁴ Negative liberty, in essence, implies that the state refrains from interfering in our lives but places no obligation on the state to ensure that the enabling conditions for a successful life are in place. Put in practical terms, this means that while the state should not stop me from living, say, the life of an artist, the state equally does not have a duty to provide me with money and other resources to live the life of an artist. This can, as one might expect, be contrasted with positive liberalism, which is premised on the equally plausible intuition that a right to live your preferred conception of the good is worthless if it cannot be realized. Hence – going all the way back to Rousseau and more recently theorists like Thomas Hill Green – these thinkers insist on a notion of positive liberty in society's political and legal architecture, i.e. arguing that the state must create the conditions that will make it possible for all us to live genuinely autonomous lives.⁵

The liberal bias within competitive debate is a bias in favour of both negative and positive liberty, though more strongly in favour of negative liberty. There is less agreement – but only marginally so – about the extent to which governments need to provide material conditions for citizens to successfully realize their individual 'conceptions of the good' than there is agreement that negative liberty is a good. In fact, the overlapping consensus between all liberals can more adequately be expressed as agreement that negative liberty is a 'great', not just a good.

The lesser agreement on positive liberty reflects differences in the class, constitutional and geographical backgrounds of debaters. Someone coming from a country such as India or South Africa with a constitutional system that enshrines citizens' entitlement to force the state to provide for their socio-economic well-being may already be socialized into a *prima facie* acceptance of positive liberty as a good. If, on the one hand, you were raised in a context

⁴ Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1958.

⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (G.D.H. Cole, trans.), New York, E.P. Dutton & Co., 1973; Paul Harris & John Morrow, eds., *Thomas Hill Green: Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Essays*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

with only civil and political rights to protect citizens against an overzealous state, then you may cherish and prioritize negative liberty over positive liberty.

Still, these cleavages – details about the nature of what constitutes sufficient ‘harm’ for the state to be justified in constraining our freedom; what the full reach of liberalism is (economic versus moral); the intra-liberal dialectic about versions of liberalism, such as the negative-positive rights discourse and debates – should not be overstated. The overarching intuition that you and I have the freedom to live self-authored lives and that the state has a duty, in some shape or form, to ensure this is possible, encapsulates liberalism. This, in turn, captures the substance of the liberal bias that is inherent in parliamentary debate.

The liberal bias in action: an illustrative journey to the Middle East

December 2007. A group of Oxford University debaters are dispatched by a Qatari non-governmental organisation (the Qatar Foundation) to set-up, promote and develop debate in schools and universities across Doha.

After a few workshops in which we had reinforced the rules of formal parliamentary debate, it was time for some practice debates. Thinking it is best to choose social policy motions, rather than complex political motions that require greater factual knowledge, we decided to flirt with homosexuality (Homosexuality is illegal in Qatar). So I announced, not without some trepidation that ‘This house would legalise homosexuality in Qatar’.

The students wrote down the motion quietly, before one debater shouted rather excitedly, “I am so glad to be on the opposition for this one!” while another (realising he’s on the proposition team) moaned, “Oh no!!” We were promptly served a choice buffet of assorted homophobic assertions as ‘argument’. I was grateful that my feminist co-judge (and friend) agreed to do the bulk of the oral feedback after the debate.

The arguments themselves are not worth deconstructing. Besides, many countries that are supposedly liberal democratic, like South Africa, are also still deeply homophobic, despite constitutional commitments to protect gay people. When a student asked us to change the motion before the debate, however, I was truly stumped. After twenty minutes of searching for the relevant explanation, he finally explained that while he “did not have a problem with discussing homosexuality”, he could not do so in the presence of women. That would be inimical to his brand of Islam. He ended with a plea that this business of spreading debate in the Middle East should not, as it had started to do already, lead to an erosion of local culture and religion. He had already seen the

changes in his own sister, who had started dressing differently, and was starting to comport like a (Western) boy.

How does one respond to what is surely not an unreasonable fear of Western cultural imperialism under the pretext of promoting value-neutral debate? How can one convince a group of students of the instrumental value of debate while not offending local norms and culture with the choice of subject matter – yet, at the same time, not being so politically correct as to undermine the very *telos* of debate?

The truth, I began to realise, is that there is a liberal bias inherent in parliamentary debate. It is no coincidence that most competitive debaters in the West are liberal. Of course not all of them are liberal. But even the ones who self-identify with conservatism accept the fundamental tenets of a liberal democratic state.

You are unlikely to find a trained debater in the West at an anti-gay rally. You are unlikely to find a trained debater in the West opposing a woman's right to take up leadership positions in politics or business. You are unlikely to find a trained debater in the West lobbying against my entitlement to consume self-destructive quantities of alcohol or tobacco (barring cases where this might harm others.) At the very least, then, even conservative debaters accept that they have to 'tolerate' the pluralism of modern, multicultural societies. At most they lobby for the right to carve out some private spaces (like church communities) within which they can participate in praxis that express their particular conceptions of the good life.

Still, even such liberal conservatism is the exception. Most debaters I have come to know over the past ten years are, quite simply, full blooded liberals who accept an orthodox reading of Mill's Harm Principle as the correct way of delineating what the bounds of acceptable state power is. For most of these debaters, state and mosque should always be kept apart.

With these sociological (if anecdotal) facts in hand, it would be fanciful to imagine that a debate program would not cause substantive value shifts within Qatari debaters – in the direction of a substantive liberal orientation towards life.

In theory, parliamentary debate is merely a formal vehicle for thrashing out different solutions to the world's problems. No particular solution has priority over any other. Evidence, argument and rhetoric determine which solutions, or policy proposals, survive a debate round. I successfully sold this half-truth to the Muslim student who wanted the motion about homosexuality changed,

partly because I almost believe it but mostly because we had to get on with the workshop.

It is a half-truth because the whole-truth contains a few more uncomfortable edges. The half-truth is that the criteria by which parliamentary debates are judged do, of course, emphasise evidence, argument and rhetoric. The winners are therefore chosen by a process that is mostly objective. The key outcome that debate training leads to is a sharpened ability to analyse problems, and learning to justify why a particular policy proposal is both desirable and feasible, with fewer or no side-effects compared to competing solutions. How can training students to think through problems in such a systematic manner not be an inherently pedagogically useful tool?

Yet, the whole truth is fuzzier. There are norms implicit in the very activity of parliamentary debate. These norms are not value-neutral. One norm at the heart of parliamentary debate is openness to the possibility that a view contrary to one's most cherished convictions just might be right. This norm is practised, and reinforced, by asking debaters (depending on which side of a motion they randomly end up) to rehearse the arguments for views they do not actually hold.

“Surely,” you might say, “a little bit of open-mindedness can't hurt anyone?!” Well, it could. The fact is that conservative moral codes partly sustain themselves by regarding certain propositions as beyond the pale. Of course there is no need to discuss homosexuality. Why? Because homosexuality is obviously wrong! Of course there is no need to discuss whether or not alcohol should be more widely, and easily, available in Qatar. Why? Because consuming alcohol is obviously bad.

A debate program that instills in conservative students a healthy, almost chronic, *skepticism* about their own convictions will shatter a key meta-belief they always had – propositions that were beyond the critical pale must be susceptible to radical revision. Liberal tolerance replaces conservative dogmatism, *even if* liberal values are not yet taken to heart (that takes a little longer). Is such open-mindedness a good thing? Perhaps. Those of us who would say ‘yes’, almost unreflectively, answer the question from *within* the liberal paradigm. Outside the liberal paradigm, this value-shift represents a dismantling of conservative morality. This undercuts the claim that debate programs ‘merely’ impart critical thinking and public speaking skills. Such programs cause deeper, more substantive, and very personal changes.

The students themselves seemed as yet unaware of the inevitability of some of these changes. I asked one student what motion they had debated at school the

previous week. She gave a fascinating response: “This house would legalise prostitution *in the West*.”

“Why ‘in the West’? Why not ‘in the Middle East?’” I asked. My inner-anthropologist was getting excited. “If that was the motion there would be no arguments for the proposition team. They would lose!” That response intrigued me on many levels. There I was imagining that the rules of logic are, in fact, universal. Surely an argument that is valid in London ought to remain valid in Doha? Yet, here was a bunch of students who thought that an analysis of the right to bodily integrity or the value of autonomy can only be persuasive if judges, audience members and fellow debaters pretended to be British rather than Qatari. Perhaps logic is culturally relative after all. Of course, this is not what was going on here.

Upon reflection this exchange made me appreciate the difference (discussed above) between logical soundness and persuasiveness. While a mathematically talented student could complete the worksheets for a course in symbolic logic, he could not necessarily persuade an audience of anything – even maths-related. The spoken word introduces a psychological element that is absent in formal logic. So while debate requires the most rudimentary of formal logical rules to be observed, it requires more than just formal logical skills. No amount of logic training can tell you which argument, among an array of equally-plausible (often non-deductive) arguments, will be regarded as *persuasive* by an audience. That requires psychological insight rather than rule-manipulation.

These young debaters had in fact already demonstrated the pay-offs of a good debate program. One debate penny had clearly dropped: persuasiveness is context-dependent.

Soon they would mimic their liberal Oxford trainers more fluently. But what they did not realise, it seemed to me, is that one can pretend to be a liberal for only so long. After a while, you start to mimic these liberal trainers, befriend them, become part of the liberal debate fraternity and before long you take to heart the attitudes and arguments that you had initially merely rehearsed. Liberalism and multiculturalism lie around the next corner.

Conclusion

To some extent, as already argued, the bias in favour of liberalism is inevitable. A meta-belief inherent in debate is that debate, as an activity, constitutes an orientation towards accepting the *possibility* of any proposition being false, unacceptable or unpersuasive. Substantive liberal theses, and forms of life that flow from them, are consistent with this openness to changing one’s mind.

Inherent in conservatism, on the other hand, is a general resistance to change. This is not to conflate conservatism with recalcitrance. That would be both unfair and simply wrong. Many liberals are recalcitrant, and many conservatives are open-minded. But there is no denying that at the heart of conservatism there is a *spirit of resisting* radical changes in how society is organised and in considering what customs and forms of life we should abandon or alter. To that extent, non-liberal arguments will always be more difficult to prove.

This is not an innocuous fact about competitive debate. It is undesirable. Motions dealing with social policy and questions of morality are inevitable at debate tournaments. So we cannot avoid the liberal bias coming into play, yet the bias (barring explicit mechanisms to address it) will skew evaluation of who the best debaters in a round – including a World Championship final – are.

Yet, in the final analysis, there really is no quick-fix solution. However, we can begin to do two things as a debating community. First, we need to *own up* to this liberal bias, debate the extent of its reality, and become self-aware on an individual level about how it impacts our own orientation towards motions, teams, and debate. This exercise of personal reflection is particularly crucial for judges who decide the competitive fate of teams. Second, once we acknowledge this trend, we simply need to work hard to guard against undue favouritism of liberal arguments. This can be achieved in at least two ways, from a judge's perspective: i) always ask yourself whether a liberal conclusion had, in fact, been successfully established with adequate logical and evidential substantiation, or whether you are imputing the arguments to the debater because you own them yourself; ii) in coaching and oral feedback, it is important to hint at the kinds of argument that can, in fact, be built in support of conservative propositions in order to slowly start to dismantle the false belief that there are no persuasive ways in which conservative theses can be established. Obviously such remarks should be carefully distinguished from the rationale for a ranking, and offered as additional, beyond-the-round comments for future debate success by the participants.

In the final analysis, parliamentary debate's core value of promoting healthy belief-scepticism would be prosaically undercut should we not become capable of checking our liberal biases at the debate door. It is worth reminding ourselves, that when a debate is called to order, good *conservative* arguments are *good* arguments.

CITIUS, ALTIUS, FORTIUS: THE EVOLUTION OF COMPETITIVE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATING

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Peter Schmeichel says that the present Man United team would beat the 1968 European Cup winners. He's got a point; we're over 50 now.

- Nobby Stiles, former Manchester Utd and England footballer

That university debating, particularly as practised at the highest level (such as the World University Debating Championships (WUDC)), has evolved in recent years is not in serious dispute. The relatively short “career span” of the average debater means, however, that much of the evidence for this is anecdotal; for obvious reasons, most comparisons across the space of a decade or more will necessarily come from the particular perspective of those who were active in competitive debating in earlier eras. The purpose of this article is simply to examine how and why intervarsity (IV) debating (particularly as regards the use and adjudication of matter and manner) has changed, over the past two decades or so, as it has become a truly global pursuit; whether those changes are all to be welcomed; and if not, how they might be addressed.¹

Backdrop: the globalisation of debating

Although occasional tours and exchange visits exposed university debaters to opponents from other cultures during the post-war period, it was in the 1970s that organised international competition began to take root, culminating in the first World Debating Championships at the University of Glasgow in 1981². The ‘Worlds’ of the 1980s were predominantly Anglophone affairs, contested almost exclusively by students from North America, Australia and New

¹ Many of the observations in this article were informed by conversations and online exchanges with debaters and adjudicators past and present. The author would like, in particular, to thank Manus Blessing, Bob Dalrymple, Ray D’Cruz, James Dray, Sam Greenland, Will Jones, Neill Harvey-Smith, Ian Lising, Rob Marrs, Omar Salahuddin and Ian Walsh.

² <http://flynn.debating.net/worhist.htm>

Zealand, and the British Isles; it was not until the turn of the 1990s that significant numbers of debaters for whom English was a second language (ESL) began to participate. At the same time, the Australasian IntersVarsity Debating Championships ('Austral's') was expanding to include participants from all over the Asia-Pacific region, and that decade also saw the foundation of the All-Asian IntersVarsity Debating Championships in 1994 and the revival of the European Debating Championships in 1999.³ While many regions - particularly Africa and South America - remain underrepresented in international competition, the era of truly global debating may fairly be said to be approaching its third decade.

Parallel to this rise in the international character of debating has come an explosion in the number of university debating societies, as well as a commensurate upsurge in the number of competitions available to student debaters in many parts of the world. One major consequence of this change is that, in many regions, the dedicated university debater has the opportunity, should he or she so choose, to compete in far more tournaments today than was the case fifteen or twenty years ago.⁴ The debating circuit in Australia and New Zealand is an exception to this general trend.

This expansion in the reach and depth of university debating has been an overwhelmingly positive phenomenon, extending participation in the discipline to people and places that were previously excluded from taking part in competitive debate. However, as I will argue, the expansion and globalisation of debating has transformed the way that international competitions are adjudicated and led, sometimes indirectly, and to the adoption of new strategies by those seeking to win them. Broadly speaking, these can be considered in two categories; the decline of manner as a major factor in the adjudication of debates, particularly at the highest levels, and the rise to pre-eminence of matter and method.

The decline of manner in the adjudication of debates

Manner is no longer a significant factor in the adjudication of debates at the highest levels of intersVarsity debating. It is considered decisive only in its absence - where one or more speakers make major stylistic errors - or, occasionally, as a tiebreaker in very tight decisions, particularly where audiences

³ For more information on the history of these tournaments, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-Asian_IntersVarsity_Debating_Championships and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Universities_Debating_Championship respectively.

⁴ The 2008-9 British university debating calendar (<http://www.britishdebate.com/calendar>) lists 66 competitions for that academic year, 51 of which were held in the UK or Ireland.

are present. In those forms of debate where adjudicators confer before reaching a collective decision, it is not uncommon for there to be no formal consideration of manner issues whatsoever.

On the face of it, this seems odd. After all, anyone who has done any debate coaching will be aware that manner is perhaps the biggest single factor to which trainers and adjudicators find themselves returning, time and again, in their feedback to less experienced debaters. Once a satisfactory level has been reached, however – once a speaker’s manner has progressed to the point where they are clear, audible, confident, and engage the audience and participants in the debate rather than reading from their notes – it is as if an invisible switch is flicked in the adjudicator’s mind, and the manner of the speakers in front of them ceases to be an explicit consideration in deciding the result.

To an extent, perhaps, this merely reflects the reality of competitive debating, where most teams in break rounds or finals display clear strengths in presentation and few, or minor, weaknesses.⁵ However, there are also a number of other factors at work which have, over time, contributed to the decline of manner as a key consideration in deciding many debates. Foremost among them is the widespread, if often subconscious, misconception among adjudicators that manner is not an objective criterion for adjudication in the same way that, say, a speaker’s timing or handling of points of information are. A debater’s style is often seen by judges almost as a matter of individual taste, rather than affecting her performance in a measurable way which should be reflected in the overall score.

This tendency has arguably been influenced by the growth of oral adjudication into the standard medium for delivering results to competitors at all levels of debate. Oral adjudication – the practice of delivering the result of a round to the speakers, with explanations for the decision and general feedback on their performances – was introduced at WUDC level at the 1999 tournament in Manila, after many years in use in Australasian debating⁶, and requires adjudicators to codify their reasons for a judgement into a form which competitors can understand and use to identify and address their weaknesses. It has been a resounding success and is now a common feature of competitions all over the world.

⁵ WUDC World Parliamentary Rules (Ray D’Cruz and others, 1996), 5.4.2

⁶ It is perhaps not commonly realised that, prior to this time, formalised oral adjudication was extremely unusual in intervarsity competitions in many parts of the world – at best, competitors would receive copies of judges’ ballots after the tournament was finished, with written comments ranging from the cursory to the illegible. In British parliamentary debating it was all but unheard of.

An unforeseen consequence of this greater accountability and emphasis on feedback, however, is that it may over time have shifted the grounds on which adjudicators decide debates, or at least choose to justify those decisions. If adjudicators are unsure how to assess manner, or view it as an essentially subjective impression on which they're reluctant to place too much emphasis, they will be less likely to use manner considerations to justify their decisions to debaters. In the words of Omar Salahuddin, author of the WUDC Guide to Adjudication⁷: 'It is too easy for adjudicators to work on the matter aspects, because they are largely objective, and too easy for them to ignore the manner aspects'.⁸

Indeed, the idea that one team's stronger arguments can be beaten by another team's better manner is considered heretical by most contemporary debaters; delivering such a judgement in an important round at WUDC, say, would be met with incredulity and, no doubt, complaints to the tournament's Chief Adjudicator. Yet this is a perfectly logical, inevitable and, arguably, desirable consequence of using manner as one of the criteria for assessing speakers' performances.

This reluctance to give manner explicit consideration when assessing speakers' contributions is understandable, particularly in the globalised debating community of the twenty-first century. There is a widespread assumption that a debater for whom English is the mother tongue has an inbuilt manner advantage over an ESL debater; many ESL debaters therefore welcome the decline of manner as a judging criterion, because they argue that it levels the playing field. Some observers have even gone so far as to describe the very idea of "manner" itself as a culturally imperialist construct.⁹ According to this view, expecting speakers to conform to Western cultural norms, such as making strong eye contact with other participants or interrupting their speeches to ask questions, is inherently discriminatory to debaters from cultures where such behaviour is considered unusual or rude.

Even if this formulation may be considered somewhat extreme – there is nothing "culturally imperialist" about requiring debaters to speak without excessive reliance on notes, for example, or to explain arguments clearly – it is certainly true that there are pitfalls aplenty when trying to compare the manner of speakers from widely different cultures.¹⁰ Given all these objections to trying

⁷ <http://flynn.debating.net/omarguide.htm>

⁸ Email to author.

⁹ Jason Jarvis, "Manner, Culture and the Rise of Asian Debate", *Monash Debating Review* vol. 5 (2006)

¹⁰ The WUDC rules acknowledge this problem by reminding adjudicators (4.4.2) that there are many different styles of debating, and that '*they should not discriminate against a*

to distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ manner, it is perhaps hardly surprising that judges prefer to play it safe by assessing teams on their matter and particularly their method – criteria which are seen as objective and measurable, in relative terms at least.

Of course, this is not to say that a speaker with good manner will not, all other things being equal, trump one whose style is poor. Judges do still reward or punish speakers for effective or ineffective manner; they just seldom choose to do so *explicitly*. This, too, is a matter for concern, because if judges are making *implicit* value judgements on speakers’ manner, but refraining from sharing those judgements with other participants in the debate, their decision making may be subject to all sorts of unexplored prejudices and biases.

Either way, the decline in an explicit emphasis on manner as a major factor in the adjudication of debates has had a direct effect on the way that debaters approach them. Most obviously, the typical parliamentary debater now speaks a great deal faster than they did a couple of decades ago. More matter is condensed into the available time, and speeches are denser, more closely argued, and peppered with less levity than would once have been the case. This is an entirely rational response to the changed emphasis in judging criteria; if you are unlikely to be rewarded for stylistic flourishes, it makes little sense to waste undue time on them. Whether the casual observer sitting in the audience is well served by this shift is another matter.

The dominance of matter and method

The decline in emphasis on manner has been mirrored by the rise to supremacy of matter and method as controlling factors in the deciding of debates. In part, this is simple mathematics; if judges are not awarding a significant proportion of speaker points for manner, other considerations must necessarily fill that gap. As you make it harder for matter-light teams to overcome their deficiencies with good manner, you place a correspondingly greater value on content, preparation and research.

This premium is further raised by the growth of the debating circuit that was previously discussed. Until the late 1990s it was extremely uncommon for teams to adopt any kind of research strategy unless participating in a competition with pre-announced motions. Given the greater time and dedication required to research issues in an era when that meant an afternoon craning to look at bookshelves in the university library, rather than an hour or

member simply because the manner would be deemed ‘inappropriate Parliamentary debating’ in their own country’.

two with Google, this is hardly surprising. However, it was also a function of a more sparsely filled IV debating calendar. The futility of making a major time commitment researching a wide range of possible topics when you are only going to participate in three or four tournaments every year¹¹ is self-evident. Although not all regions of the world offer the opportunity of a competition every weekend – and although there are still some people, mercifully, who occasionally choose to do something else with their spare time – today’s dedicated student debaters can, if they wish, hone their skills at a growing number of tournaments every year; they therefore tend to encounter debates on any given issue more frequently than was the case twenty years ago. It makes sense to know something about them.

This is not to say that every successful debater on the contemporary circuit has spent hundreds of hours printing off articles on carbon trading or the independence movement in Abkhazia, though a depressing number do just that.¹² Knowledge can be acquired on the job, and any good debater learns from other teams and cherry-picks their most compelling facts and arguments for future use. Again, though, the opportunity for doing this is far greater when one attends upwards of a dozen major competitions a year. Rather than building every 1st Proposition essentially from scratch, as debaters in previous generations were obliged to, regular competitors will often (though of course not always) be able to take a mental ‘shortcut’, thanks to their greater depth of knowledge and experience, and build more complex and rigorous cases as a result.

Allied to this is a growing emphasis on method, particularly on issues such as structure and strategy. At the risk of generalisation, it is reasonable to argue that the approach of top debaters to these considerations is often much more sophisticated than in the past. Once again, this is a sensible response to judging behaviour. Anyone who has seen more than a few oral adjudications will be aware that adjudicators spend a great deal of time discussing method issues; speakers are constantly criticised or praised for their structure, prioritisation of arguments, and strategic choices. As a result of this increased emphasis

¹¹ In an email to the author, 1994 WUDC winner Manus Blessing estimated that he would ‘rarely have taken part in more than 4 IVs per year’, and this would be typical of many top debaters of that time.

¹² It was behaviour like this that led tournament organisers to close motions ever more tightly, in a largely successful attempt to stymie the “case file” culture that threatened to overwhelm Worlds-style debating at the turn of the century. Any reader who doubts that competitive debating has changed utterly in the past 15 years or so is invited to visit <http://flynn.debating.net/wudcmot.htm> and compare motions from recent World Championships with those of the 1990s.

debaters have, over time, improved their performance in these areas. Method has replaced manner as the second pillar of adjudication.

Conclusions

As we have seen, competitive debating has undergone profound changes over the past couple of decades. It has evolved from being a forum for “gifted amateurs” with a flair for rhetoric into a more specialised, inward-looking discipline with its own norms; one in which success depends on constant practice, a proactive desire for self-improvement, a degree of dedication and, not least, a depth of factual knowledge across a wide range of issues. In doing so, debating has perhaps become – to use the phrase of one experienced chief adjudicator – ‘more intellectually rigorous but less persuasive’.¹³

It is important to qualify these observations in one important regard. The best speakers on the current circuit compare very favourably with their counterparts from two decades ago, whatever those senior citizens may mutter into their beers. They often display excellent manner; they are persuasive, fluent, and can be extremely funny, and it is certainly not the intention of this article to suggest otherwise. However, I would contend that these traits are no longer as vital as they once were to debating success. In an era where matter and method are prized above manner, at least as explicitly stated in judging standards, it could hardly be otherwise.

If we do accept that manner is no longer treated as a major factor in deciding debates, what is to be done about it? The first option which has been suggested by some¹⁴ is to “reduce” the proportion of the overall speaker score decided by manner to somewhere in the region of 20%,¹⁵ thus retaining it as a consideration but sending a clear signal to speakers that it is to be viewed as a minor factor at best. Others argue that manner should be removed from scoring criteria altogether. The problem with such proposals is that they explicitly relegate manner to the deep background and set the seal on the primacy of matter and method in its place. Indeed, some observers already detect a developing bias *against* wit and humour as weapons in the debater’s armoury; it is hard to see how sidelining or eliminating manner as a category is going to lead to better or more persuasive debating.

¹³ Neill Harvey-Smith (former Worlds DCA and EUDC CA), in an email to the author.

¹⁴ Jarvis, “Manner, Culture and the Rise of Asian Debate”, p. 57

¹⁵ The word ‘reduce’ is here placed in inverted commas because, while many people continue to labour under the misapprehension that manner constitutes 50% of the overall score in Worlds style, the WUDC rules are in fact silent - deliberately so - on the precise weight that adjudicators should give to style and presentation when assessing speakers’ persuasiveness.

One possible solution is to use the major tournaments, which have been so influential in changing behaviour over the past decade or so, to try and restore manner to something like its proper place in the judging of debates. Chief Adjudicators and their teams have a great deal of power in these situations to set the tone for a competition; how refreshing if one were to use the platform to remind participants in forceful terms that debates can be won on style as well as structure and analysis. Further, chair judges should be asked specifically to comment on manner in every oral adjudication they give, even where it is not a decisive factor in the result. Debaters need to become reacquainted with the idea that how they deliver an argument is just as important as the argument itself - if not more so.

Finally, it has been argued that as international tournaments have grown, the competition among every larger numbers of teams to reach the knockout stages has stifled creativity and encouraged the more method-driven approach that is seen from many break-level teams nowadays. The lead author of the WUDC rules, Ray D’Cruz, suggests a radical solution: ‘Expand the break [at Worlds] to 128 and let everyone breathe... this is why debaters are very orthodox in their approach (method-driven). They don't want to put a foot out of place - debaters and adjudicators. Everything is terribly risk-averse’.¹⁶ Breaking to octo-finals made sense when there were 150 teams at Worlds, but in an era where a thirty-two team break eliminates 90 per cent of the competitors, there is certainly a strong case for a less brutal cull after the preliminary rounds – not least to give the best ESL teams a fairer shot at the later stages of the competition.

It may be, of course, that the reader is pleased to see the back of the old dispensation, when well-constructed and carefully-argued speeches could be bested by a canny team with a decent grasp of first principles, a quick mind and a flair for rhetoric; and certainly the contemporary debater needs to be more organised, better informed and stronger than ever before. However it would strike this author as a terrible shame if competitive debating were to remove itself yet further from its roots as an interactive, audience-centred spectacle to become an even more esoteric, inward-looking discipline, as US policy debate has become. After all, debating is about persuasion, or it is nothing.

¹⁶ Email to author.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

MONASH
DEBATING
Re view

DETERMINANTS OF DEBATING SUCCESS: A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF A CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE TOURNAMENT

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Part I-Introduction

Competitive debaters love to argue not only about a variety of real-world topics through the medium of parliamentary debate but also to argue about debate itself. Anyone who has spent more than a trivial amount of time in a competitive debating circuit will inevitably have heard or been a part of an argument about, for example, what makes a good debater, how to win rounds, or the causes of, and responses to, equity or gender issues in debate.

Although debaters' natural tendencies might be to argue through these issues as they would in a round of debate, these discussions can also be informed by statistical analyses of the wealth of data generated by competitive debating tournaments. Thus, while individuals have argued at great length about the importance that a variety of factors can play in determining who wins or loses debating rounds, this paper will examine whether there is any empirical support for the propositions frequently advanced. Specifically, this paper will examine whether factors such as the side of the debate on which one finds oneself, the use of certain optional speech time variations, or one's educational institution have a statistically significant impact on the outcomes of debates.

The focus of this paper is admittedly limited. First, its examination is limited to a statistical analysis of one Canadian parliamentary debating tournament. Second, even within that, its analysis of that tournament is limited to a number of particular factors. Notwithstanding these limitations, this paper may still be of value and interest to the debate community at large. First, to the extent that there are strong similarities between different styles of debate, some of the conclusions from this analysis may be relevant or applicable in different debate contexts. Second, given that there is so little statistical analysis of debate-related issues, this paper may be of interest to those looking to use statistical tools to investigate debate phenomena in the future.

In line with the statistical focus of this paper, this paper unabashedly employs statistical terminology and methodologies which may be unfamiliar to many debaters. However, I also attempt to interpret and explain the results of this analysis in order to make the results relevant to discussions going on within the Canadian Parliamentary debate community. Hopefully this will mean that those familiar with statistics can critique and engage with the methodology while those without much knowledge of statistics will still find the paper useful and relevant to ongoing meta-debates.

Part II-The Project and Hypotheses

In order to understand the analysis undertaken in this paper, a brief exposition on the structure of debating is necessary. In Canadian Parliamentary Debate — the style most often used in Canada and the style which will ground this paper — each debate is comprised of two teams: government and opposition. The government team proposes a debate topic and makes arguments in favour of that topic, and opposition team opposes the topic.

Each team has two members who speak for set amounts of time. The standard timing is as follows. The Prime Minister (government) speaks for seven minutes. This is followed by the Member of the Opposition (opposition), who speaks for seven minutes. The Member of the Opposition is followed by the Minister of the Crown (government), who speaks for seven minutes. This is followed by a speech from the Leader of the Opposition (opposition), who speaks for ten minutes. Finally, the Prime Minister gives a three minute rebuttal address.

There are two variations to these times that teams may choose to use. First, the government team may elect to use what is referred to as the PMRE (Prime Minister's Rebuttal Extended). If the government uses the PMRE, the Prime Minister's first speech is shortened to six minutes and his or her rebuttal speech is lengthened to four minutes. The second option is commonly referred to as the split rebuttal option. If this option is chosen, the opposition speeches are split up in a way similar to the government speeches. Under this model, the first opposition address is a seven minute speech given by the Leader of the Opposition. The second opposition address is then split into two speeches, with the Member of the Opposition giving a seven minute speech, and the Leader of the Opposition immediately thereafter giving a three minute speech.

Following the round, the judge or panel of judges must make two decisions. First, they must decide who won the debate. Second, they must assign individual speaker scores to each of the debaters in the round. Each debater

will receive a speaker score between 35 and 43; only integer scores and half-point scores are permissible (e.g. 37.5 is permissible, but 37.8 is not).

With this in mind, this paper seeks to examine four hypotheses commonly heard in the Canadian debating community. First, some have argued that the government team is unfairly disadvantaged. It has been argued that judges impose a higher burden on the government team and that this leads to an unfair advantage for the opposition team. Moreover, it has also been argued that the limited time in which the Prime Minister has to respond to the arguments of the Leader of the Opposition is a major disadvantage for the government team. If these arguments are correct, opposition teams should win rounds more often than government teams.

Second, it has been argued that the PMRE helps to mitigate the above effect and gives the government team a much needed boost. Introduced into Canadian debating in 2003, it was argued that the PMRE would help to negate the advantage which opposition teams had by giving the government team a greater opportunity to respond to the arguments introduced in the Leader of the Opposition's speech. If this justification for the PMRE were true, then one would expect to see government teams using the PMRE winning more often.

Third, there has been significant criticism of the split rebuttal option among Canadian debaters. The split rebuttal option was introduced at Canadian debating tournaments in response to American requests for it to be available. While some Canadian tournaments permitted it in order to accommodate American debaters, it has been largely the case that, at least until very recently, most Canadian debaters have disliked and have rarely used it. Most Canadian debaters argue that a single ten minute address is an advantage for opposition teams. If this is true, one would expect to see teams using the split rebuttal option losing more frequently.

Finally, there have been suggestions that there is a systematic bias among judges in favour of debaters from certain universities. Historically, debaters from certain schools have enjoyed greater debating success than others. While not disputing that there are factors which have legitimately led certain universities to have greater debating success, some have argued that past successes have led to an ingrained bias in favour of debaters from these institutions, whether or not the actual debaters themselves are successful. If this is true, controlling other factors, one would expect to see debaters from certain schools winning more often than others.

This paper will empirically investigate these four claims by estimating whether they have any statistically significant impact on the probability of a team

winning a round of debate. Following this section, part three of the paper will provide a brief description of the source of the data analysed in this paper. Part four will give a more precise description of the variables included in the analysis. Part five will provide empirical results from the estimation of a series of models and interpret those results. In part six, alternative interpretations and potential problems with the data will also be addressed. Part seven will serve as a brief conclusion.

Part III – The Source Data

All of the data acquired in this study was collected at the McGill University Winter Carnival debating tournament, which occurred in mid-January, 2006. The tournament was attended by 64 teams, and there were six rounds of debate. All of the teams at the tournament participated in all six rounds of debate, with the exception of one team, which only participated in three rounds of debate. After that team dropped out, replacement debaters from McGill University, who as per customary practice were not participating at their own tournament, filled the spaces for the remaining four rounds of debate in order to ensure that there were an even number of teams. Rounds including those replacement debaters were not included in the data set. Also, one sample point from round six was not included in the data set due to incomplete information about the teams' use of the PMRE and the split rebuttal. This yields a sample size of 188.

All the relevant information used in this sample was obtained from the judging ballots completed by judges after each round as well as scoring tabulation spreadsheets provided by the McGill University Debating Union following the conclusion of the tournament.

Part IV – Variables

The Dependant Variable

Each sample point in the sample represents one debate round. The dependant variable used in all the estimates below, *GovWin*, is a binary variable representing which team won the debate. If the government won the round, the variable is coded 1. If the opposition won the round, the variable is coded 0.

The Independent Variables

The following independent variables are included:

PMRE – This is a binary variable which is coded 1 if the government team used the PMRE and 0 if they did not.

SplitRebut – This is a binary variable which is coded 1 if the government team used the split rebuttal and 0 if they did not.

GovSchoolStrength – This variable captures whether either of the teams in the round was from a school which has historically had success and towards which a judge might be biased. The variable was constructed as follows. Both the government and the opposition were assigned dummy variables coding whether they were from one of these schools. If the team was from Hart House, Queen’s, Yale, or MIT, the variable was coded 1.¹ Otherwise, the variable was coded 0.

Following the construction of these variables, a new variable was created which subtracted the opposition school code from the government school code, thereby creating a new variable which took values of -1, 0, and 1. Thus, if the government team was from one of the above schools and the opposition team was not, the variable was coded 1, indicating an advantage for the government team. If the government team was not from one of the above schools but the opposition team was, the variable was coded -1, indicating an advantage for the opposition team. If the teams were either a) both from one of the above schools or b) both not from one of the above schools, the variable was coded 0.

RootGovStrength – This variable captures the relative strength of the two teams in the round, and it is thus a necessary control variable. Because one would expect the better team in the round to be more likely to win that round, a proxy measure for the relative strength is required and is given by this variable. The exact construction of this variable is somewhat complicated and requires some explanation.

The obvious source for some measure of the strength of each of the teams is the speaker scores assigned to the teams. However, the speaker scores assigned for the round in question do not give a good proxy, since they are determined at the same time as the team won or lost the round; thus, they are not an exogenous proxy for debating skill. For the same reason, the average of speaker scores over the course of the tournament is not a good proxy.

¹ The University of Toronto’s Debating Club is normally referred to as the Hart House Debating Club. There are convoluted historical reasons for this, but it also helps to distinguish the pan-university debating club from smaller debating clubs which certain colleges run. These four schools were chosen because of their reputations. Hart House and Queen’s, along with McGill, have historically been the dominant schools in Canadian debating, and they are largely perceived by judges as being different from other Canadian debating schools. Yale and MIT are included in the list not only because they are perceived to be among the strongest American universities in debating, but also because debaters from both clubs enjoyed significant success in prior McGill tournaments, thereby giving them a stronger reputation.

However, a reasonable and exogenous proxy for speaker scores would be the average combined speaker scores obtained by both members of the team over the course of the *other* rounds of the tournament. This is a reasonable proxy for debating skill since a) it provides a measure of skill which is averaged over a number of rounds, and b) it can be reasonably be assumed that it is exogenous, since there is no reason to think that one's performance in one round would affect one's speaker score in another round. These variables were constructed for both the government and the opposition, creating two variables called *GovSkill* and *OppSkill*. Moreover, because the important question is not how good each team is absolutely but rather the magnitude in the difference in skill between the teams, a new variable was created by the difference these variables as follows: $GovStrength = GovSkill - OppSkill$.²

Finally, intuition seemed to indicate that there might be less marginal impact on the probability of winning as the difference between the two teams increased. To examine whether this might be the case, a new variable was created as follows:

$$RootGovStrength = \sqrt{|GovStrength|} * \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } GovStrength \geq 0 \\ -1 & \text{if } GovStrength < 0 \end{cases}$$

While it was originally planned to include both *RootGovStrength* and *GovStrength* as two different proxies for relative debating skill, only *RootGovStrength* was ultimately kept. This was because there was an extremely high correlation between *RootGovStrength* and *GovStrength* (0.9536), and thus only one of them was going to be kept. *RootGovStrength* was ultimately chosen because it performed much better than *GovStrength* in a variety of model specifications.

Round2; Round3; Round4; Round5; Round6 – Dummy variables were introduced for rounds two through six. They were included as control variables to control for the possibility that teams would employ various strategies in different rounds of debate. For example, teams tend to save their good debate ideas for later rounds. It is possible that government teams would generally use better debate ideas in later rounds, thereby increasing the probability of the government team winning in those rounds. No dummy variable was included for round one, since the inclusion of dummy variables for all rounds as well as a constant would have produced multicollinearity.

Constant – A constant is also included. The constant gives an estimate of the probability of the government team winning the round, controlling for all the

² Preliminary regressions indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the coefficients of *GovSkill* and *OppSkill*, thus indicating that no significant information was lost in taking the difference between the two. In other words, the increasing skill of both the government team the opposition had roughly the same marginal effect on the probability of winning the round, thereby indicating that the important factor is the difference between the two.

other factors. Thus, the higher the constant, the greater is the likelihood of the government team winning the round.

Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

This section will briefly present and examine some descriptive statistics. Immediately below is a table which presents some basic descriptive statistics for the variables listed above. There are two interesting results which are evident from this data. First, government teams won less often than opposition teams; 43.6% of rounds were won by government while 56.4% of rounds were won by the opposition. A hypothesis test of this proportion shows that this is statistically different from 50% at the 0.10 level. Second, in accordance with Canadians' general assessments of the merits of the two options mentioned above, over two-thirds of government teams chose to use the PMRE, while only slightly more than one-third chose to use split-rebuttal.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Govwin	0.43617	0.497233	0	1
Rootgovstrength	-0.10081	1.291551	-2.42899	2.614192
PMRE	0.680851	0.467392	0	1
Splitrebut	0.345745	0.47688	0	1
Govschoolstrength	-0.04255	0.601511	-1	1
Round2	0.170213	0.376823	0	1
Round3	0.170213	0.376823	0	1
Round4	0.164894	0.372075	0	1
Round5	0.164894	0.372075	0	1
Round6	0.159575	0.367189	0	1

A full table of correlations between the variables is listed in Appendix A. Also listed are two small tables showing 1) the correlation between *Govskill* and *PMRE*, and 2) the correlation between *Oppskill* and *Splitrebut*. In both cases, there is no statistically significant relationship at any conventional level. This is important, because it suggests that good teams and bad teams are equally likely to choose to use both the PMRE and split rebuttal.

Part V – Estimation Results

Main Estimation Results

The following table reports the main estimation results. The first two models are both probit models. The only difference between them is that the first one uses standard errors, while the second uses robust errors.³ The values reported in the first two columns are the coefficients, which are obviously equal for both models. Since the reported coefficient in a probit model cannot be interpreted as the marginal change in the dependent caused by a unit change in the independent variable, that marginal change, which is the same for both models, is reported in the third column for ease of interpretation. It should also be remembered that the marginal change is not constant at all points in the probit model; as is standard, the reported marginal changes are the marginal changes at the mean of the independent variables.

The third model is a linear probability model. While the linear probability model suffers from certain obvious failings—e.g. heteroskedasticity that is dependent on the independent variables, the possibility of predictions outside the [0,1] range—it still has some utility as a basic point of comparison.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Marginal Change in
	Probit Model with	Probit Model with	Linear Prob. Model	Probability for
	Standard Errors	Robust Errors	With Standard Errors	both
				Models (df/dx)
Rootgovstrength	0.6500821***	0.6500821***	0.1872513***	0.2493398
	(0.1078146)	(0.986432)	(0.0268937)	
Pmre	-0.5495882**	-0.5495882**	-0.1269542**	-0.2130902
	(0.2454625)	(0.2309873)	(0.0641243)	
Splitrebut	-0.05495882	-0.05495882	-0.0186658	-0.0218616
	(0.2332706)	(-0.2324814)	(0.0632336)	
Govschoolstrength	0.699176***	0.699176***	0.1740834***	0.2681699
	(0.2312369)	(0.2305244)	(0.0584811)	
Round2	0.852627	0.852627	-0.000191	0.0329392

³ The estimation of a model with robust errors is especially important in a probit model, since, as stated by Greene, “a probit maximum likelihood estimator is *not* consistent in the presence of any form of heteroskedasticity, unmeasured heterogeneity, omitted variables..., nonlinearity of the functional form of the index, or an error in the distributional assumption.” See William Greene, *Econometric Analysis*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003) at 673. The estimator employed by Stata to generate robust error estimates is that typically associated with White; see Halbert White, “Maximum Likelihood Estimation of Misspecified Models” 50 (1982) 1 *Econometrica* 1. See also Greene at 518-521.

	(0.4439796)	(0.4179099)	(0.1077438)	
Round3	0.1534407	0.1534407	0.0182329	0.059562
	(0.4431106)	(0.4048688)	(0.1044121)	
Round4	-0.0556186	-0.0556186	-0.0472921	-0.212152
	(0.4444563)	(0.4068045)	(0.1091155)	
Round5	0.6371159	0.6371159	0.1180629	0.2493964
	(0.4389788)	(0.4294902)	(0.1048244)	
Round6	0.652156	0.652156	0.1233474	0.2552128
	(0.4373924)	(0.4284573)	(0.1060189)	
Constant	-0.318635	-0.318635	0.520921***	
	(0.3894695)	(0.3284122)	(0.0899412)	
Chi-Squared	86.34***			
Wald Chi-Squared		70.68***		

R²

0.3759***

The values reported in parentheses are the standard errors.

* p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

In interpreting the above the results, a few general observations are in order. First, the results are quite consistent between the linear probability model and the probit models. Second, within the probit models, the standard deviations and significant levels do not change appreciably depending on whether standard or robust errors are used.

It is important to note what was *not* statistically significant in the above models. First, contrary to the hypothesis that the opposition side wins more often than the government as well as the basic intuition provided by the descriptive statistics above, once other factors are controlled for, the opposition is statistically no more likely to win a round than the government. In the linear probability model, the constant is not statistically different from 0.5, and in the probit model it is not statistically different from 0. In both cases, controlling for other factors, the two teams are roughly equally likely to win the round. There is thus no evidence in these models of a systematic bias on the part of judges towards the opposition. Second, the decision of the opposition to use split rebuttal makes no statistically significant impact on the winner of the round. Thus, the above models do not provide any support for the proposition that using the split rebuttal option is a poor choice that lessens the opposition's chances of winning the round.

While the insignificant variables shed light on many of the claims made above, the statistically significant variables are also quite revealing. First, it should be

noted that the PMRE variable was statistically significant, but the coefficient was of the opposite sign than expected. These results suggest that, rather than giving an advantage to the government, the PMRE is actually more likely to cause the government to lose the round of debate. This strongly contradicts the arguments made in favour of PMRE. Second, the models above also suggest that debaters from those schools with stronger reputations are more likely to win rounds after controlling for other factors. The magnitude and statistical significance of this variable is surprising, as it suggests that reputational effects may play a large role.

Having estimated the full model above, the probit model will be re-estimated using a more limited number of variables. The models below will include only those variables determined to be statistically significant above including a constant), and in some of the models these variables will be left out as well.

	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	Coefficients	Coefficients	Coefficients
rootgovstrength	0.5701704*** (-0.096425)	0.6665042*** (0.090239)	0.6581175*** (0.888865)
pmre	-0.4631572** (0.23291567)	-0.361353 (0.2229755)	
govschoolstrength	0.6979494*** (0.2131567)		
constant	0.1561905 (0.1893047)	0.0881562 (0.1816473)	-0.1532012 (0.1039595)
Chi-Squared	80.00***	68.45***	65.80***

The values reported in parentheses are the standard errors.

* p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

The above results are interesting because they demonstrate how the effects of the two omitted variables are absorbed into the remaining variables. From the descriptive results presented elsewhere, it is apparent that there is a high degree of correlation between a) *PMRE* and the constant (0.681), and b) *RootGovStrength* and *GovSchoolStrength* (0.456). Thus, when these variables are omitted, their effect is partially absorbed the remaining variables. When *GovSchoolStrength* is omitted, *RootGovStrength* increases by an appreciable margin.

Similarly, when *PMRE* is omitted, the constant changes from being weakly positive with no degree of statistical significance in model 5 to being moderately negative with at least some degree of significance ($p=0.141$) in model 6. This demonstrates the extent to which failure to include certain relevant variables can impact the results significantly. Moreover, it further demonstrates that the traditional debating claim made about how it is disadvantageous to be on government is only valid when the *PMRE* is not considered; these results suggest that it is not the being on government *per se* that lowers one's chances of winning the round, but rather it is choosing *PMRE* when on government that meaningfully decreases one's chances of winning.

Accounting for Heteroskedasticity in the Model

Much of the above proceeded with the assumption of homoskedastic error terms within the probit model. While model 2 partially corrected for this by using robust error terms, the possibility of heteroskedasticity was not explicitly included. However, it is important to test for the possibility of heteroskedasticity, as heteroskedasticity that is not accounted for can be even more problematic in the probit model than in the case of ordinary OLS estimation, as the estimates of the coefficients themselves will be inconsistent.⁴ To this end, the following model seeks to explicitly include the possibility of heteroskedastic error terms. The heteroskedastic probit model which Stata estimates follows the work of Harvey and assumes heteroskedasticity of the form $\sigma_j^2 = \{\exp(z_j\gamma)\}^2$.⁵

A number of different model specifications were examined implementing a heteroskedastic probit model which simultaneously tested for heteroskedasticity and estimated a new model on the basis of those heteroskedastic errors. The estimates indicated that there was a limited degree of heteroskedasticity that was dependent on two variables: *RootGovStrength* and *SplitRebut*. The results of that test and model estimation are presented immediately below.

Model 7 - Heteroskedastic Probit Model
Estimated Coefficients

<i>Choice Model</i>	
rootgovstrength	0.7895049***
	(0.1621597)

⁴ Adonis Yatchew & Zvi Griliches, "Specification Error in Probit Models" 67 (1985) 1 *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 134 at 137.

⁵ A.C. Harvey, "Estimating Regression Models with Multiplicative Heteroscedasticity" 44 (1976) 3 *Econometrica* 451.

Pmre	-0.6345061**
	(0.2927624)
Splitrebut	-0.1694043
	(0.3619176)
govschoolstrength	0.806679***
	(0.2951833)
round2	0.633889
	(0.715243)
round3	0.6918097
	(0.7054131)
round4	0.1050615
	(0.6484692)
round5	1.115851*
	(0.6579181)
round6	1.154787*
	(0.6900954)
Constant	-0.1621675
	(0.5720408)
Wald Chi-Squared	35.34***
<i>Variance Model</i>	
rootgovstrength	0.25785
	(0.1814533)
Splitrebut	0.5725963
	(0.4054783)

* p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

The above results seem to show the presence of some heteroskedasticity, although it is, arguably, fairly weak. Moreover, despite the presence of this heteroskedasticity, the results do not seem to change substantially once it is accounted for. The magnitudes of the coefficients are comparable to those estimated in model 1, and all statistically significant variables in that model remained statistically significant here at about the same levels. The only noticeable difference is that the dummy variables for rounds 5 and 6 became statistically significant at the 0.10 level; this is not a significant change from

earlier, however, as they were previously statistically significant at the 0.15 level. Thus, although there might be some heteroskedasticity in the data, it does not seem to alter the results or modify the above conclusions in any meaningful way.

Partitioning the Sample

One potential challenge to the results above is that certain variables might impact good and bad teams in different ways. For example, it might be the case that while good teams can use the PMRE effectively and can win rounds more often, it will make no difference whatsoever for bad teams. Similarly, many debaters have argued that there is not a disadvantage to being on government *per se*, but rather that weaker teams specifically tend to have an exceptionally difficult time winning on government even when against equally weak teams on opposition. If this is the case, then estimating all of the variables over the whole sample would mask certain results.

To examine whether there are any meaningful differences that depend on the quality of the team, the sample was split into two on the basis of the *GovSkill* variable. Rounds where the government team had the median score or greater on the *GovSkill* variable were placed in the top half sample, while rounds where the government had less than the median score were placed in the bottom half. Descriptive statistics and correlation tables for the variables in each of these samples are provided in Appendix B. Probit estimates using each of these samples are provided below; both the coefficients and the marginal changes are reported for ease of interpretation.

	Model 8		Model 9	
	<i>Top Half Government Teams</i> Probit Model with Standard Errors		<i>Bottom Half Government Teams</i> Probit Model with Standard Errors	
		Marginal Change in		Marginal Change in
	Coefficient	Probability (df/dx)	Coefficient	Probability (df/dx)
rootgovstrength	0.7140713* **	0.2810459	0.6040393* **	0.1948505
	(0.1966273)		(0.1650324)	
Pmre	-0.6439804* (0.3843723)	-0.2419141	- (0.3442539)	-0.1960152
Splitrebut	-0.1004372 (0.3354365)	-0.0395607	0.1863117 (0.3691781)	0.0616709

govschoolstreng th	0.9753725* **	0.38388894	0.3594666	0.1159564
	(0.3467005)		(0.3338039)	
round2	0.0839852	0.0328998	0.2496557	0.0848811
	(0.6171442)		(0.7067029)	
round3	0.0037802	0.0014875	0.5459388	0.1924239
	(0.6338652)		(0.6911991)	
round4	0.3696098	-0.146333	0.5569558	0.2000122
	(0.597836)		(0.7363638)	
round5	0.6164316	0.2231202	0.9027894	0.3230868
	(0.6969694)		(0.6483641)	
round6	0.8721915	0.3062509	0.5856756	0.2089715
	(0.6290065)		(0.6808674)	
Constant	0.0330785		-0.3210295	
	(0.5616252)		(0.6376436)	
Chi-Squared	45.10***		34.74***	
	n = 89		n = 99	
The values reported in parentheses are the standard errors.				
* p<0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01				

The above data is illuminating in a variety of ways. First, it should be observed that neither *PMRE* nor the constant changes significantly between the two models. In both models, *PMRE* has a statistically significant (at the 0.10 level) negative impact on the probability of winning the round. While the constant changes signs between the two models, in neither model is it even close to statistically significant between them. Thus, the results discussed above with respect to the *PMRE* and the likelihood of winning on government do not depend upon whether the government team is a good or bad.

However, it is interesting to note that the coefficient on *GovSchoolStrength* changes drastically between the two models. With respect to the top half of the sample, it is positive — even more so than in the previous models — and highly statistically significant, while in the bottom half of the sample, the coefficient is much lower and is no longer statistically significant. This means that the effect of being at one's school has a significant impact when one is among the better teams at the tournament, but it has very little effect among the weaker teams.

In terms of interpreting this result, a plausible interpretation seems to be as follows. For the weaker teams at the tournament, the judges can obviously tell that they are not very good, and thus the fact that they are from a school with a good reputation plays very little bearing on their decision. By contrast, for the stronger teams at the tournament, the effect of reputation may kick in for debaters from certain schools; in close rounds, judges may be willing to give them the benefit of the doubt based on their reputation. Moreover, it may simply be “easier” for a judge to award the win to a good team from a school with an established reputation, since that is what would be expected, based on historical experience.

Part VI – Limitations on Interpreting the Data

While the above results seem fairly consistent across a variety of models, there are certain important limitations with respect to the interpretation of the above models. First, as with all models, it is possible that certain variables are being excluded; this could cause the above variables to be biased. For example, the probability of winning may be dependent on some more complex function of *GovSkill* and *OppSkill* than included above. It is similarly plausible that *GovSchoolStrength* is capturing some function of *GovStrength* which is not modeled. Moreover, unobserved factors relating to the type of case run by the government, the strength of the case, and personal characteristics of judges might be relevant variables, which were not included. Moreover, the omission of variables is especially problematic in the probit model because, unlike in the standard regression model, in the probit model omitted variables will introduce bias into the coefficient estimates even if the omitted variables are orthogonal to the included variables.⁶

Second, with respect to certain variables, one must be careful before making conclusive statements about the direction of causality; there may be certain problems relating to endogeneity. For example, it has generally been assumed above in the discussion that the choice to use PMRE impacts the probability of winning, with the choice to use PMRE being a completely exogenous variable. However, it may be that the choice of whether or not to use PMRE is itself at least partially dependent on a team’s assessment of how much constructive material it has to present in the Prime Minister’s constructive speech. Thus, rather than the PMRE actually impacting a certain team’s performance, it may be that teams choose to use the PMRE when their case is not as strong. Thus, the choice to use PMRE might be endogenous to an unobservable variable representing the strength of the government team’s case. Anecdotal evidence

⁶ Yatchew & Griliches, *supra* note 4 at 136.

suggests that, for many teams, teams tend to either always use the PMRE or never do so, and therefore this particular endogeneity concern may not be terribly problematic. However, more research is required to determine whether this is actually a problem.

Finally, because there is a relatively high degree of correlation between some of the independent variables, some care should be taken before interpreting these results. The exact impact of each variable may be difficult to assess, particularly between the constant and *PMRE*. A larger data set would be obviously be useful for further analysis.

Part VII – Conclusion

This paper has sought to shed light on some of the controversies currently taking place within the Canadian university debating circuit by empirically examining the veracity of certain claims. In general, the results have suggested that there is little support for many of the claims often made. First, the statistical evidence presented here provides little support to the claim that it is more difficult for the government team to win; once other variables are controlled for, there appears to be no appreciable difference between the likelihood of either government or opposition winning a round. While government teams did win significantly fewer rounds than opposition teams, this disparity disappears once other factors are controlled for. Second, there is no evidence in the above data to support the claim that the PMRE is a beneficial option which helps government teams win more often. Indeed, the data seems to suggest the contrary, with almost every model suggesting that the PMRE makes a statistically significant negative impact on the probability of the government team winning the round. Third, contrary to Canadian debaters' general expectations, the choice to use split rebuttal seems to have no appreciable impact on the likelihood of winning. The one claim for which some support is provided by the data is the idea that teams from certain schools enjoy some type of reputation effect which helps them win more often. However, extreme caution must be used in interpreting this data, and it should not be itself by taken to mean that there is necessarily a bias in judging towards debaters from certain schools. Moreover, the analysis presented here is only based on data from one tournament, and without further research, conclusions should not be drawn too quickly

GENDER BIAS IN COMPETITIVE HIGH SCHOOL DEBATE: A NATURAL EXPERIMENT

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Introduction

The empirical evidence for a so-called "glass ceiling" is overwhelming. Women in the workplace are significantly underrepresented in the top positions, and the differential of wages between men and women is significant. According to the Spencer Stuart 2006 Board Diversity Report, only 16% of board members in the top 200 corporations of the S&P 500 are female.¹ A meta-analysis of 55 published studies estimates that average wage gap between the genders is 31.8% in the United States.²

There is some hope that this gap is decreasing. The wage-gap between genders appears to be decreasing at a rate of 1% per year.³ Female enrolment in higher education is currently higher than male enrolment: according to a 2006 US Census Bureau report, women comprise 56% of the undergraduate student population.⁴ Could it be that among the younger generations, which have undoubtedly seen a culture that increasingly stresses gender equity, this gap is disappearing?

Competitive debate may be a useful indicator of gender equity among current high-school and college age students. After all, the ability to confidently present oneself and persuade others of one's viewpoint are of the utmost

¹ Daum, Julie, Tom Neff and Julie Norris. "Spencer Stuart 2006 Board Diversity Report" Spencer Stuart Research and Insight (Feb. 2006). Accessed 30 Mar. 2008 <http://content.spencerstuart.com/sswebsite/pdf/lib/Board_Diversity_Report_2006.pdf>.

² Stanley, T.D., and Stephen B. Jarrell. "Gender Wage Discrimination Bias? A Meta-Regression Analysis" *The Journal of Human Resources*, Vol. 33, No. 4. (Autumn, 1998), pp. 947-973.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Bergman, Michael. "Majority of Undergrads and Grad Students Are Women, Census Bureau Reports". US Census Bureau Press Release (Dec. 2006). Accessed 20 Mar. 2008 <<http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/education/007909.html>>.

importance both in competitive debate and in acquiring leadership positions in the workforce.

Hence advocates of gender equity might find indications from competitive debate disturbing. At the 2000 American National Tournament for the inter-collegiate Cross Examination Debate Association, 36% of competitors were female. But females comprised only 26% of the competitors in the elimination rounds, those rounds to which only the most successful competitors advance.⁵ Meanwhile, according to the website of the American Parliamentary Debate Association, the second largest college debate league in the United States, there were no women in its 2007-2008 ranking of the top ten speakers. Of the top 25 speakers, two were women. In debate, women are underrepresented among the most successful competitors. Internationally, concerns for equity have led several leagues, including the Australian and Canadian collegiate debate leagues, to impose significant measures meant to increase female representation. What causes women to face a "glass-ceiling" in competitive debate? A search through the literature found no experiments designed to test possible mechanisms that might create a gender gap in competitive debate success.

Perhaps a crucial component in the gender gap is the preferences of the judge. Are judges more conducive to the style and argumentation of debaters of their own gender? Or do judges consistently prefer one gender to another, pointing to some systemic reason for the gender gap?

This natural experiment will take advantage of the random allocation of judges in the Osterweis Debate Tournament, an annual competition for Connecticut high-school debaters held at Yale University. It will examine how the gender of the judge affects the success of competitors, as determined by competitor win-loss record, score, and rank. The hope of this experiment is to determine whether male and female judges have differential preferences for male and female debaters.

Method

Functioning of the Osterweis Tournament

The tournament consists of approximately 95 teams of Connecticut high school debaters. Each team consists of two debaters. There are three rounds of debate. Each debate consists of two teams and one judge. For round one, the opposing teams for a given debate are chosen entirely randomly, except that

⁵ Stepp, Pamela L., and Beth Gardner. "Ten years of demographics: Who debates in America." *Argumentation and Advocacy* Volume 38 (Fall 2001): pp. 69-82.

two teams from the same high school cannot face each other. Judges are assigned at random, except that coaches of a debate team cannot judge their own competitors. The judging pool entirely or almost entirely consists of current college students with differing degrees of experience in competitive debate.

Fifteen minutes prior to round, competitors are given a topic of debate of the tournament's choosing, and are told to prepare arguments either for or against that particular topic without any resources or external aid. For example, the topic might be "The United States should withdraw all troops from Iraq." One team in the debate prepares to argue for that topic, that troops should be withdrawn, and one team prepares to argue against the topic, that troops should remain in Iraq. During the round, each debater makes a five minute speech and one debater in each team also has the opportunity to deliver an additional closing remark at the end of the debate. After the round, the judge determines which team won the debate, and individually assigns each debater a speaker score. The speaker points awarded vary from 23-27.5. Judges are instructed to give 25 to a debater who delivered an average speech, 26-27 to debaters that the judge estimates to be in the top 25% of the tournament, and 23-24 to debaters that the judge estimates to be in the bottom 25% of the tournament. The judge also assigns ranks to each debater. The top debater in the round receives a rank of one, the second place debater receives a rank of two, third, three and fourth, four. After the judge fills out the ballot in rounds one and two, she/he gives an oral adjudication explaining who won the debate and the reason for the decision. Debaters do not learn the results of the third round until after the tournament ends.

For the second and third rounds of the tournament, the pairings of teams within debates is no longer random. Debaters are separated into brackets of a given win-loss record, so that all of the winners of the first round debates will compete against each other in the second round, and likewise with the losers. Within the bracket, the system known as "power pairing" is used: teams within the bracket are ranked by speaker points, and in the event of a tie, by in-round ranks. The top team within the bracket debates the bottom team, the second team from the top debates the second team from the bottom of the bracket, and so on until the two middle teams are paired to debate each other.

Judges are assigned binary ranks, with the most experienced half of the judging pool receiving a rank of 1, and the rest receiving a rank of 0. The more experienced judges adjudicate the bracket comprising winners of the first round, and the less experienced judges adjudicate the bracket comprising the losers of the first round.

Implementation of Experiment

Before the event, competitors self-reported their gender, race, year in high school, type of school attended (public or private) and years in competitive debate. They were told simply that the information was collected for statistical purposes.

For the first round, judges were allocated entirely randomly. Each judge then submitted a ballot, which indicates which round she/he judged and the speaker points, ranks, and wins assigned to each competitor. For round two, the entire judge allocation was no longer random since judges of high rank (higher experience) were placed into brackets with the higher win-loss record. But within the bracket, judges are allocated randomly. Judges similarly submitted ballots with all of the information above.

Analysis of the tournament results in this paper will focus mainly on the speaker points awarded. Speaker points are the most finely graded metric to evaluate the round. As judges are free to award any speaker point within the range for any reason, this metric gives the judge the most discretion.

The primary purpose of this experiment is to use the random allocation of judge to competitor in order to determine the effect of the interaction between the gender of the judge and the gender of the competitor. This is a difference of differences measure, indicating whether male and female judges have differential preferences for a different gender, and in what direction those preferences go.

Round 1 Results

Table 1 - Average speaker point awarded in round one

	Female Judge	Male Judge
Female Competitor <i>(Standard Error)</i>	25.056 <i>(0.189)</i>	25.315 <i>(0.128)</i>
Male Competitor <i>(Standard Error)</i>	25.020 <i>(0.104)</i>	25.265 <i>(0.0963)</i>

In the first round of competition, the 18 female and 24 male judges were allocated randomly. 45 females and 117 males competed in that round. Table 1 describes the average speaker points earned by a competitor in each of the four experimental groups. The best performing group was comprised of female competitors judged by a male. This group outperformed the least success group, male competitors judged by females, by 0.295 speaker points.

Table 2 (Appendix) shows the regression of the individual debater results on the gender of the judge, the gender of the competitor, as well as the interaction of the judge's and competitor's gender. The number of years of competitive debate experience is the only covariate that consistently has a significant effect on the regression results. Note that other possible covariates, including a competitor's year in high school and whether the competitor attends public or private high school, do not significantly affect regression results in this particular round.

The data unsurprisingly demonstrate that additional years of debate experience increase one's speaker score. Overall, female debaters perform slightly better in this round, but the results are not significant.

In round 1, there was only an insignificant interaction between judge's gender and competitor's gender. In this round of competition, judges showed no differential preference for or against their own genders.

Round 2 Results

Round 2 had two separate brackets. Winners of the first round all competed against each other in one bracket for round 2, and losers of the first round competed against each other in the other bracket. Judges were not randomly allocated to a bracket: more skilled and experienced judges adjudicated the bracket of winners and less skilled judges adjudicated the bracket of losers. But within the group of judges assigned to a particular bracket, judge allocation was random. Table 3 shows the average speaker points awarded in the bracket of winners, and Table 4 shows the average speaker points awarded in the bracket of losers. These two tables do not control for a competitor's years of experience which, as round one demonstrates, is a significant predictor of performance.

Table 3 - Average speaker point awarded in the round two bracket of round one winners

	Female Judge	Male Judge
Female Competitor <i>(Standard Error)</i>	25.375 <i>(0.206)</i>	25.000 <i>(0.289)</i>
Male Competitor <i>(Standard Error)</i>	25.212 <i>(0.171)</i>	25.196 <i>(0.151)</i>

Table 4 - Average speaker point awarded in the round two bracket of round one

	Female Judge	Male Judge
Female Competitor <i>(Standard Error)</i>	24.600 <i>(0.245)</i>	25.500 <i>(0.312)</i>
Male Competitor <i>(Standard Error)</i>	24.579 <i>(0.210)</i>	25.200 <i>(0.147)</i>

The results of the regressions on the winner's bracket as seen in Table 5 are very similar to the results of the first round regression models. No interaction term in any of the models proved significant. In this bracket, men performed better, but not significantly so. Competitor's years of experience was again a significant predictor of scores awarded.

Refer to the Appendix for Table 5 and Table 6

Results from the loser's bracket in the second round are much more telling. Table 6's second column, which uses speaker points as the dependent variable and competitor's gender, judge's gender, interaction term and competitor's experience as the independent variables, fits this experiment's model very well. Men received 0.65 speaker points higher than women. A year of debate experience improved speaker scores by 0.41. And most importantly for the purpose of this study, this round showed a significant interaction between the gender of the judge and the gender of the competitor.

For a male in this round, the gender of the judge did not affect the average speaker score awarded. But for a female, the gender of the judge made a large difference. For a female competitor with one year of debate experience, going from a female judge to a male judge increased her speaker score by 1.03 speaker points, an amount that would have a large impact on that competitor's success in the debate tournament. As compared to the scores awarded to male competitors, female judges adjudicated women more harshly, and male judges adjudicated women more generously. The effect of the judge's gender and the interaction effect are significant.

Synthesis of Round 1 and Round 2 Results

Table 7 (Appendix) uses the same regression on the score of round two competitors in both brackets, but controls for speaker points awarded in round one. This model shows how a change in the gender of one's judge from round 1 to round 2 affects one's speaker score. The results of this regression are

consistent with the analysis of the round 2 loser's bracket. When competitor's years of experience are controlled, males are judged similarly by male and female judges throughout both rounds. Females, on the other hand, receive increased speaker scores when going from a female judge in round 1 to a male judge in round 2. Conversely, those females would earn lower speaker points going from a male judge to a female judge. This interaction effect borders on significance - there is a less than 0.1 probability that this effect happened by chance alone.

Discussion

Round 1 did not demonstrate an interaction between the gender of the judge and the gender of the competitor. Neither did the winner's bracket in round 2. And yet the loser's bracket in round 2 convincingly displayed males being judged in a consistent manner regardless of the judge's gender, and females being rewarded by male judges and penalized by female judges. What can account for this bracket of round two uniquely fitting the model elaborated below?

Recall that the most experienced judges are put into the winner's bracket, and the least experienced judge the loser's bracket. Perhaps these inexperienced judges resort to more subjective rating systems than their experienced counterparts? These subjective ratings might be more influenced by stereotyping and discrimination.

However, the direction of this discrimination, male judges being more generous to women than female judges, is counter-intuitive on two levels. Within the context of competitive debate, this result is counter-intuitive given the lack of successful females. And on a societal level, one might not expect men to be favouring those dissimilar to themselves.

So the reason for the men uniquely favouring women in the loser's bracket may be explained as an instance of paternalistic reverse discrimination. Men might want to give less successful women additional points, and female judges, many of whom are reluctant to act in a way that tacitly admits women need special assistance in competitive debate, might be inclined not to reward women.

Another explanation is that female judges may view themselves as a 'gate-keeper'. They might be implicitly unwilling to reward like debaters given that they too had to face barriers and may think of themselves as particularly special or talented. This explanation is supported by the discrimination being most visible in the bracket of first-round losers. Female judges in this bracket, seeing on average poorer performances from women debaters in this round compared

to the last, might be especially willing to be harsh to these less successful debaters, who the judges implicitly assume cannot succeed in later competitions.

These results have a few policy implications for debate leagues. Firstly, that the discrimination is most pronounced in the least successful debaters means that efforts to better train and better retain inexperienced debaters are an important part of stopping discrimination and ensuring that a diverse group of individuals continues with the activity. Since some of the discrimination comes from women themselves, any measures meant to better train judges or better educate debaters on equity should involve as wide of a group as possible. Giving opportunities for inexperienced debaters to be adjudicated by experienced judges who seem to be less discriminatory would make results fairer and provide positive reinforcement to those debaters who might need it most.

There are a few shortfalls in the method employed in this paper. The sample size, though large enough to produce significant results, was not large enough to preclude the possibility of these conclusions resulting from chance alone – a couple of very generous or very stringent judges could have affected the results. Furthermore, as a natural experiment, not all factors could be controlled. Most importantly, this experiment could not control the selection of partners by the competitors themselves. Non-random selection of partners could plausibly affect the type and gravity of discrimination.

It is unclear if these results would hold if replicated in other circumstances. This could, for example, be an American phenomenon, or perhaps a result of the unique circumstance of college students judging high school students.

More research ought to be done into the types of discrimination apparent in competitive debate. For example, increasing the amount of randomization by randomizing partnerships and team pairings with a larger sample size may provide more conclusive results. Furthermore, replicating this experiment in other parts of the world, particularly those with emerging debate programs and sometimes different values would be enlightening. Determining whether there is comparable discrimination in debate leagues where equity measures are strongest, like Australian and Canadian collegiate debate, could provide evidence on the success (or lack thereof) of these measures.

Some level of gender discrimination even in activities involving younger generations remains. The struggle for fairness in debate, the workplace and beyond seems likely to continue far into the future.

APPENDIX

Table 2 - Round 1 Results

Independent Variables	Speaker Points with no covariates OLS	Speaker Points with experience covariate OLS	Speaker Points with additional covariates OLS	Speaker points with no covariates <i>Removing aware judges</i> OLS	Speaker Points with experience covariate <i>Removing aware judges</i> OLS	Ranks with no covariates OLS	Ranks with experience covariate OLS	Wins with no covariates OLS	Wins with experience covariate OLS
Competitor Gender <i>(Standard Error)</i>	-0.0351 <i>(0.2083)</i>	-0.0285 <i>(0.2037)</i>	-0.0238 <i>(0.2055)</i>	-0.0938 <i>(0.2088)</i>	-0.0710 <i>(0.2059)</i>	-0.3696 <i>(0.3099)</i>	-0.3749 <i>(0.3071)</i>	0.0862 <i>(0.1374)</i>	0.0883 <i>(0.1373)</i>
Judge Gender <i>(Standard Error)</i>	0.2593 <i>(0.2300)</i>	0.2909 <i>(0.2286)</i>	0.2853 <i>(0.2304)</i>	0.0642 <i>(0.2345)</i>	0.1428 <i>(0.2365)</i>	-0.4444 <i>(0.3422)</i>	-0.5271 <i>(0.3446)</i>	0.2222 <i>(0.1517)</i>	0.2312 <i>(0.1540)</i>
Interaction Term <i>(Standard Error)</i>	-0.0150 <i>(0.956)</i>	-0.0574 <i>(0.2679)</i>	-0.0530 <i>(0.2702)</i>	0.0913 <i>(0.2784)</i>	-0.0245 <i>(0.2801)</i>	0.5804 <i>(0.4019)</i>	0.6480 <i>(0.4038)</i>	-0.3264* <i>(0.1782)</i>	-0.3489* <i>(0.1805)</i>
Competitor Experience <i>(Standard Error)</i>	- -	0.09972* <i>(0.05620)</i>	0.11053* <i>(0.06469)</i>	- -	0.14713* <i>(0.06089)</i>	- -	-0.07914 <i>(0.08472)</i>	- -	0.03189 <i>(0.03787)</i>
Control for Competitor Experience?	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Control for public/private school?	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Control for year in high school?	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
N	162	157 [†]	157	134	132	162	157	162	157

Table 5 - Round 2 results for bracket of round 1 winners

Independent Variables	Speaker Points with no covariates OLS	Speaker Points with experience covariate OLS	Speaker Points with additional covariates OLS	Speaker points No covariates <i>Removing aware judges</i> OLS	Speaker Points with experience covariate <i>Removing aware judges</i> OLS	Ranks with no covariates OLS	Ranks with experience covariate OLS	Wins with no covariates OLS	Wins with experience covariate OLS
Competitor Gender <i>(Standard Error)</i>	0.2265 <i>(0.3794)</i>	0.1589 <i>(0.3676)</i>	0.0048 <i>(0.3713)</i>	0.2265 <i>(0.3794)</i>	0.4457 <i>(0.3774)</i>	0.0940 <i>(0.5102)</i>	0.1720 <i>(0.4979)</i>	-0.0171 <i>(0.2164)</i>	-0.0351 <i>(0.2187)</i>
Judge Gender <i>(Standard Error)</i>	0.3968 <i>(0.3738)</i>	0.3588 <i>(0.3666)</i>	0.3610 <i>(0.3657)</i>	0.3968 <i>(0.3738)</i>	0.6010 <i>(0.3657)</i>	-0.0159 <i>(0.5027)</i>	-0.0793 <i>(0.4966)</i>	0.0873 <i>(0.2132)</i>	0.0643 <i>(0.2181)</i>
Interaction Term <i>(Standard Error)</i>	-0.2805 <i>(0.4661)</i>	-0.1902 <i>(0.4564)</i>	-0.1076 <i>(0.4525)</i>	-0.2805 <i>(0.4661)</i>	-0.4937 <i>(0.4717)</i>	0.0140 <i>(0.6269)</i>	-0.0116 <i>(0.6182)</i>	-0.2599 <i>(0.2659)</i>	-0.1972 <i>(0.2715)</i>
Competitor Experience <i>(Standard Error)</i>	- -	0.21966** <i>(0.08931)</i>	0.1319 <i>(0.1104)</i>	- -	0.14689 <i>(0.09016)</i>	- -	-0.2533** <i>(0.1210)</i>	- -	0.05839 <i>(0.05314)</i>
Control for Competitor Experience?	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Control for public/private school?	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Control for year in high school?	No	No	Yes [†]	No	No	No	No	No	No
N	77	74	74	58	58	77	74	77	74

Table 6 - Round 2 results for bracket of round 1 losers

Independent Variables	Speaker Points with no covariates OLS	Speaker Points with experience covariate OLS	Speaker Points with additional covariates OLS	Speaker points No covariates Removing aware judges OLS	Speaker Points with experience covariate Removing aware judges OLS	Ranks with no covariates OLS	Ranks with experience covariate OLS	Wins win with no covariates OLS	Wins with experience covariate OLS
Competitor Gender (Standard Error)	0.3789 (0.4026)	0.6458* (0.3688)	0.6098 (0.3769)	0.2750 (0.4366)	0.6019 (0.4063)	-0.4348 (0.4939)	-0.7073 (0.4692)	0.1491 (0.2165)	0.3199* (0.1888)
Judge Gender (Standard Error)	0.6071 (0.4436)	1.0261** (0.4133)	1.0348** (0.4220)	0.6000 (0.4843)	1.0270** (0.4550)	-0.5000 (0.5442)	-0.9482* (0.5258)	0.1310 (0.2385)	0.3643* (0.2116)
Interaction Term (Standard Error)	-0.6773 (0.5125)	-1.0250** (0.4720)	-0.9905** (0.4858)	-0.5250 (0.5601)	-0.9480* (0.5216)	0.3864 (0.6287)	0.7752 (0.6004)	0.0472 (0.2756)	-0.1524 (0.2416)
Competitor Experience (Standard Error)	- -	0.40538*** (0.09974)	0.3777*** (0.1088)	- -	0.4003*** (0.1102)	- -	-0.4140*** (0.1269)	- -	0.25950*** (0.05106)
Control for Competitor Experience?	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Control for public/private school?	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Control for year in high school?	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
N	73	71	71	61	61	73	71	73	71

Table 7 - Regression of Round 2 speaker points on Round 1 speaker points, gender of competitor, gender of round 2 judge, and interaction term

Independent Variables	Speaker points with no covariates OLS	Speaker Points with experience covariate OLS	Speaker Points with win/loss covariate OLS	Speaker Points with win/loss and experience covariates OLS	Speaker Points with all covariates OLS
Competitor Gender <i>(Standard Error)</i>	0.3849 <i>(0.2633)</i>	0.4090 <i>(0.2504)</i>	0.3829 <i>(0.2647)</i>	0.4045 <i>(0.2517)</i>	0.3247 <i>(0.2557)</i>
Judge Gender <i>(Standard Error)</i>	0.5857** <i>(0.2777)</i>	0.6787** <i>(0.2686)</i>	0.5871** <i>(0.2789)</i>	0.6815** <i>(0.2697)</i>	0.6901** <i>(0.2718)</i>
Interaction Term <i>(Standard Error)</i>	-0.5893* <i>(0.3317)</i>	-0.6274* <i>(0.3191)</i>	-0.5876* <i>(0.3331)</i>	-0.6233* <i>(0.3204)</i>	-0.5757* <i>(0.3224)</i>
Competitor Experience <i>(Standard Error)</i>	- -	0.27512*** <i>(0.06523)</i>	- -	0.27523*** <i>(0.06544)</i>	0.22495*** <i>(0.07565)</i>
Control for Competitor Experience?	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Control for Round 1 Win/loss?	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Control for public/private school?	No	No	No	No	Yes
Control for year in high school?	No	No	No	No	Yes
N	150	145	150	145	145

Table 2

* $p < 0.10$. The dependent variable is one of three metrics by which the judge evaluates the competitor. Speaker points range from 23 to 27. The mean speaker point was 25.15 and the middle 50% of the tournament was awarded speaker points between 24.6 and 25.5. Ranks are the judge's ranking of the competitors within the round, with the best speaker earning a 1 and the worst speaker earning a 4. Wins are whether the competitor's team won the round, with 1 being a win and 0 being a loss. For competitor gender, 1 indicates a male. For judge gender, 1 indicates a male. Interaction term is the product of competitor gender and judge gender. Competitor experience is measured in the number of years of experience in competitive debate.

†A few competitors failed to submit forms indicating their years of experience in competitive debate. These few debaters are not significantly different in other characteristics as compared to the rest of the pool, and so they are included.

Table 5

** $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.10$ The dependent variable is one of three metrics by which the judge evaluates the competitor. Speaker points range from 23.5 to 27.5. The mean speaker point was 25.19 and the middle 50% of the tournament was awarded speaker points between 24.5 and 26.0. Ranks are the judge's ranking of the competitors within the round, with the best speaker earning a 1 and the worst speaker earning a 4. Wins are whether the competitor's team won the round, with 1 being a win and 0 being a loss. For competitor gender, 1 indicates a male. For judge gender, 1 indicates a male. Interaction term is the product of competitor gender and judge gender. Competitor experience is measured in the number of years of experience in competitive debate.

†Year in High School was significant for this regression. An additional year in high school increased speaker points by 0.2157, with a standard error of 0.1198, and $p = 0.076$.

Table 6

*** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.10$ The dependent variable is one of three metrics by which the judge evaluates the competitor. Speaker points range from 23 to 27. The mean speaker point was 24.97 and the middle 50% of the tournament was awarded speaker points between 24.0 and 25.7. Ranks are the judge's ranking of the competitors within the round, with the best speaker earning a 1 and the worst speaker earning a 4. Wins are whether the competitor's team won the round, with 1 being a win and 0 being a loss. For competitor gender, 1 indicates a male. For judge gender, 1 indicates a male. Interaction term is the product of competitor gender and judge gender. Competitor experience is measured in the number of years of experience in competitive debate.

Table 7

*** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$ * $p < 0.10$ The dependent variable is speaker points awarded, which range from 23 to 27.5 The mean speaker point was 25.13 and the middle 50% of the tournament was awarded speaker points between 24.50 and 26.0. For competitor gender, 1 indicates a male. For judge gender, 1 indicates a male. Interaction term is the product of Competitor Gender and Judge Gender. Competitor experience is measured in the number of years of experience in competitive debate.

DEBATING STRATEGY

MONASH
DEBATING
Review

UNNATURAL SELECTION: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO GETTING BETTER AT DEBATING

About the authors: *Ivan Ab Sam* was the Champion and Winner of the Martin Sorenson Trophy for Best Speaker at the 2005 Australasian Debating Championships, and was a semi-finalist and 6th Best Speaker at the 2007 World Debating Championships. Ivan was also a Deputy Chief Adjudicator at the 2009 World Championships and the Chief Adjudicator at the 2007 Australian Debating Championships. In his first year of university, Ivan failed to be selected in one of the ten novice teams Sydney sent to Easters.

Naomi Oreb was the Champion and Winner of the Martin Sorenson Trophy for Best Speaker and Winner of the Jock Fanselow Cup for Best Speaker in the Grand Final at the 2008 Australasian Debating Championships. She was also named Best Speaker at the 2009 World Debating Championships. Naomi was a Deputy Chief Adjudicator at the 2009 Australian Debating Championships and the 2009 Australian Women's Debating Championships. In her first year of university, Naomi was awarded a 68 for a speech which became the lowest scoring speech of that tournament.

Introduction

In debating there is no such thing as natural talent. It is easy to get scared off when you first start debating since the skill seems to come so effortlessly to some. Offhand authority, a feeling for the 'clash', passing knowledge of everything from the merits of the Bolivarian revolution to the intricacies of S&M laws and the ability to distill complex political philosophy into a neat eight minute speech all appear hard-wired in some people. In the face of such pre-programmed debating machines, it's easy to think you'll never make a team, or get to a break, or crack the top hundred speakers. But the truth is that all good debaters were once in the same position, only getting to where they are by being disciplined and systematic about improving. In his book *Outliers*,¹ Malcolm Gladwell popularised the idea that to master an activity takes about ten thousand hours of practice. Fortunately, becoming good at debating takes considerably less time. This article aims to provide some basic tips and strategies to help debaters reach a stage where even their worst debates are still pretty good debates.

¹ Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Little Brown, and Company, 2008.

Seem Like You Know Something (When You Know Nothing)

If there ever was a five second period in which many beginner debaters truly wished they weren't at a debating tournament it would have to be the time in between the power point slide saying 'Economics', 'International Relations' or 'The Middle East' and the subsequent slide delivering these often abhorred motions of doom. The panic that can hit debaters who have never heard of the country mentioned in the motion (especially while the rest of the room knowingly groans or applauds it) can be enough to significantly limit that debater's capacity to debate to the best of their ability in such circumstances – before prep has even started.

If there was a second (albeit slightly longer) period in which panic also tends to set in, it would be when the debate starts, and the government team sets the motion in an unexpected way that other debaters don't immediately understand. Here too it is easy for teams to panic about letting go of the material they had already prepared and the pressure of adapting to the motion as it has been presented. For example, one such experience of one of the authors was when an Opening Government set the motion 'That this house believes in the right of return' to whether or not Mahmoud Abbas should be de-exiled and allowed to run in the upcoming Palestinian elections. The author was the first speaker of the opposition, and had no idea who Mahmoud Abbas actually was.

Of course, the best way to avoid being in a situation where you know nothing is to know *something*, which comes about from solid preparation. It is useful to read a lot, and read widely. It is essential to keep abreast of current affairs – paying particular attention to conflict zones, states with transitional governments, states approaching an election, states with key separatist movements, and states that have been in the news for any other reason. It is also useful however, to read articles on social policy, basic legal principles and basic economic principles. It is almost never worthwhile reading entire books on issues that you find difficult. Having confessed a weakness in economics at one point, a former debating partner of one of the authors kindly thrust forward a pile of Joseph Stiglitz textbooks, but this would have been absolute information overload. Similarly, for example, you don't need to read textbook after textbook on international law and the legality of the invasion in Iraq. It is far better to spend some time on the Internet and/or to read one or two journal articles to give you the basic factual matrix, and then practice applying what you know to different topics on the subject. There are plenty of topics available at the World Debating Website² which can be used to practice applying this

² <http://www.debating.ie>

knowledge, and to see if you really understand the scope and interaction of issues in relation to any key topic area.

But if all of this fails you, and you still end up in a situation where you know nothing, there are a few ways to minimise the damage:

Fess up to your confusion

If you genuinely know nothing, *say something in prep*. There is no point sitting quietly doodling on your pad of paper for the commonly enforced 'silent brainstorm' time whilst slowly getting more and more worked up about how far behind the eight-ball you actually are. Get over your embarrassment and ask your teammate(s) to tell you the basic facts you need to think about the topic first, no matter how silly your question might seem.

Start with 'first principles'

Even if the specifics of the topic at hand are unclear to you, there are often basic principles that you can deduce in a general sense without having the facts to substantiate them in greater depth. To take the Mahmoud Abbas example given above, there is scope there for an Opening Opposition team to run generic arguments about restrictions on political rights without having any knowledge of Palestinian politics whatsoever. For instance, when, if ever, should governments limit the right to run in an election? How would the populace (particularly his followers) likely respond? How likely are people to respect the result of a basically uncontested election? These are three solid principled responses which put the apparently 'clueless' Opening Opposition in with a chance at winning the debate.

Look for analogies

Even if you are not familiar with the specifics of the motion itself, there is probably a topic you have debated before, or an issue you have read about in the media, that shares some similarities with the motion at hand. For example, a motion set at Cork Worlds 2009 was 'That this house would ban all forms of gambling'. If a team was totally lost with this motion, one starting place would be to look for analogies with other topics in which the government also 'bans' things. First, you could consider analogies with debates about banning alcohol or drugs as these substances arguably share the same *addictive* element with gambling. Second, you could also consider analogies with debates about banning fox-hunting or boxing, given that in these debates the government is also trying to purge society of an activity that is a form of *entertainment*. These analogies will not only proffer interesting case studies for you to talk about throughout your speech, but should also point you in the right direction as to the types of questions you should be trying to answer. For instance, when has regulation proven sufficient/insufficient? Does a ban really change people's

behaviour? What are the kinds of harms that the activity (or the ban) does/does not generate? What are the benefits? Is it significant that people tend to enjoy these activities? And so on.

Get the Basics Right

Ultimately, even if you don't know anything at all, the rest of the room won't know that unless you convey it to them. In cases where your content might not be hugely persuasive, this puts a bigger burden on you to tick all the boxes in terms of giving a good, simple debating speech. Even if your content is shaky, you won't lose marks in all the other columns if you get the basics right. Work hard at having a clear structure in addition to a persuasive manner. Speak clearly and slowly. Make sure that the material you are most confident about becomes the focus of your speech. Never make a gag or opening confession about being out of your depth or not knowing anything – this immediately undercuts your credibility and will steer your opposition towards highlighting your lack of specific knowledge (which might not have otherwise been too much of a problem at all).

Become a flexible speaker

It is important for beginner debaters to become flexible speakers in two main respects: first, being able to speak in a variety of different positions, and second, being able to speak with a variety of different people.

Speak in different positions

Learning to speak in a variety of different positions is useful for a number of reasons. As a preliminary consideration, it means that you are in great shape when trials come around, in contrast to the whip speaker specialist who pulls first speaker of the government and has no idea what to do. Second, it means that a team of excellent speakers does not fall apart because you are skilled at the exact same position and nothing else. Third, you might find that once you put in a bit of work, you are actually more talented at one of the other speaker roles. People often find they were heavily coached in one particular position at schools debating, but once they get to university, end up speaking at the opposite end of the table.

Finally, and most importantly, it means that you are in a better position to construct cases as a whole because you have a better idea of what each speaker in the team can and should be contributing. There is no point in being an excellent whip speaker if you cannot contribute a great deal to the set-up in the first affirmative speech because you are not really familiar with how to link the problem to the solution, or how much detail the model should have. It makes it much more difficult for you to know which points are the most important, and which elements of the speech your opposition really should be responding

to, if you do not understand the roles of every speaker in the debate. You can only get better at this by speaking in each position yourself.

Speak with different people

Debating shouldn't be a monogamous activity. Speaking with a variety of different people should, perhaps self-evidently, include speaking with people who are older and younger than you, who study different subjects at university to you, who are of different gender to you, and who have a different general debating style to you. Perhaps less self-evidently however, is the need to debate with people who are more experienced than you, as well as people who are less experienced than you.

Beginner debaters have a lot to learn from debating on the same team as debaters who are more experienced than them. There is often a lot more to be gained from a partnership rather than just seeing good debaters debate in finals rounds or debating against them (though both of these experiences are useful too if you know what you should be taking from the experience). One of the key skills that we learnt from debating with more experienced debaters was how to use prep time more efficiently. Instead of just brainstorming lots of ideas or issues that are likely to come up in the debate, it is instructive to see good debaters start prep by thinking of the things that they need to prove in order to win the debate, and focusing on the issues that will be the most troublesome for the team. These are the kinds of instances where a more senior debater can guide you through a more strategic approach to the topic, rather than just coming up with a list of arguments to last seven minutes.

At the same time, however, it can become easy to take a backseat in relation to these kinds of decisions and let the more experienced person take on a significant leadership role during prep. This is precisely the reason why you should also try to debate with less experienced debaters. In these instances, *you* will probably have to be the person in charge who has to think carefully about which arguments to include or discard, the strategic implications of certain arguments and check carefully for possible inconsistencies. You might surprise yourself with how much guidance you can actually give a less experienced debater, and you will become a better strategic debater yourself for doing so.

Speak against debaters who are better than you

It is easy to try and avoid the 'best debaters' at practice debates before major tournaments for fear that you will lose so badly that it will be embarrassing for all involved. But a common trend amongst debaters who markedly improve or are amongst the very best in their region is that they are the ones who seek out the best debaters to speak against, and put themselves forward to give it a go. Debating against people who are better than you will generally push you to

debate to a higher standard. You will simply stop improving after a certain point if you continually avoid debating against teams who will test you. Similarly, always put your hand up for team selections, even if you don't expect to be selected. The worst case scenario is that you don't give a great speech and don't get picked, but end up having a better idea of the standard and what the selectors were looking for. The best case scenario is that you get a topic you are quite comfortable with, debate out of your skin and make a team! Moreover even speakers who aren't selected can usually approach selectors for feedback, which once again will only help you to improve.

Be approachable and friendly

Becoming a better debater is much easier if you get on with people. If you have a reputation for being hostile, adjudicators are less likely to spend time providing you helpful feedback. Members of your debating society will also be less willing to debate with or against you. Being a flexible speaker is about more than just the position you are speaking – it is also about you as a teammate, and how you work with other people. Worrying overly about the speaker tab, not helping your teammate when they are struggling or making necessary case changes will only mean that your team does not get as far in tournaments as it should and deny you valuable experience.

Work on your Manner

'Everyone knows' that to cut it as a debater you have to have a photographic memory for anything that has ever been mentioned in *The Economist*. Thinking about cases and widening your knowledge base is essential to improving your debating. Often overlooked, though, is the importance of also improving your manner.

You should have your teammates point out idiosyncrasies with your speaking style that are distracting. This could include verbal mannerisms such as a reliance on using certain words throughout your entire speech: words such as "like" or continually rounding off sentences with phrases such as "or whatever" are common verbal crutches. The same goes for physical mannerisms such as very repetitive hand gestures. You should do the obvious things like slowing down, having an impactful introduction and conclusion, and varying your volume and tone. Watching debaters whose speaking styles you admire, in person or on video, is surprisingly helpful in developing your own speaking style. Most importantly with your manner, try different things out. If you are aware that you are usually a very dry speaker, you should make an extra effort to look for opportunities to be funny – even if it is just once in every speech. If you often sound flippant, try to sound like you care. Most of all, sound interesting. It sounds simple, but most debaters are so concerned with what

they're saying that they forget to consider *how* they are saying it. The best speeches are almost always those that have compelling content as well as a compelling presentation. Teams that seem to really care about the issue and the debate often do win the issue *and* win the debate.

Do not Get Discouraged

Debating is a great activity when you're winning, but can be devastating when you're losing. The most common times at which people swear they are giving it up and/or proclaim that 'debating is a stupid activity, anyway' is after they miss out on team selections, don't break at a tournament, lose an octo-final, bear the brunt of a scathing adjudication, or lose a debate that they were convinced they won. The only sensible way to deal with such disappointments is to try to learn why you didn't do as well as you thought you might have. And failing that, to remember that in the end, judging debaters is a pretty arbitrary activity. Eventually your luck will turn.

Harder to deal with are those debates in which you feel like you have embarrassed yourself. When you froze up at a point of information, managed to offend a large chunk of your audience debating a sensitive topic, mispronounced the name of a well-known world leader several times in your speech, or unintentionally squirreled a topic because you actually completely misinterpreted what it was about... You get the idea.

Setbacks in debating can be hard to take, more so than setbacks in any other activity you can do at university, largely because it is so public. If you get a bad mark on an essay, that is something between you and your tutor. Doughnut a round and it's immediately public knowledge just how idiotic you were. In the end, even though technically you are being judged, no one is ever really judging you in the broader sense. Everyone who has ever debated has said something stupid in a debate. Dwelling on these moments becomes paralyzing. Best simply to dust yourself off and get on with it. After all, the upside of the public nature of debating is that when you give a brilliant debate winning speech in the next round everyone knows about it straight away.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that debating can be scary and frustrating at times, it can also be immensely rewarding. The excitement of hearing your team read out in the break or a room full of spectators banging the desks in appreciation of a great point you have made more than make up for any indignities you suffered along the way. The main point is that making teams, breaking, and even winning IVs are all achievable if you work hard at becoming the speaker with seemingly 'natural talent'.

RESULTS

The Monash Debating Review would like to congratulate:

World University Debating Championships

Host: University College Cork (Ireland)

Champions: University of Oxford A (James Dray & Will Jones)

Runners Up: Harvard University (Lewis Bollard & Cormac Early), Monash University (Ravi Dutta & Victor Finkel), University of Oxford C (Jonathan Leader Maynard & Alex Worsnip)

Best Speakers: Naomi Oreb (University of Sydney)

ESL Champions: Babeş-Bolyai University (Romania)

ESL Runners Up: University of Bonaparte A (Daniel Schut & Anne Valkering)

IU Bremen A, Babeş Bolyai University A

ESL Best Speaker: Leela Koenig (Leiden University)

Masters Champions: Ireland (Ross McGuire and Gregg O'Neill, Individual: Barry Glynn)

EFL Champions: Vilnius University (Aiste Dumbryte & Eugenija Golubova)

EFL Best speaker: Aiste Dumbryte (Vilnius University)

Public Speaking Champion: Patrick Bateman (University of Sydney)

Comedy Champion: Willard Foxton (Middle Temple)

AustralAsian Intersarsity Debating Championships

Host: Monash University, Australia

Champions: Monash University A (Tim Jeffrie, Amit Golder, Fiona Prowse)

Runners Up: Victoria University of Wellington (Polly Higbee, Stephen Whittington, Ella Edginton)

Best Speaker: Amit Golder (Monash University)

ESL Champions: University of Indonesia (Tirza Reinata, Intan Hadidjah, Freida Siregar)

ESL Runners Up: the Chinese University of Hong Kong 1 (Doriane Lau, Dominic Yang, Mary Jean Chan)

Asian University Debating Championships

Host: East West University (Bangladesh)

Champions: Ateneo de Manila University (Gica Mangahas, Steph Co & Shiveena Parmanand)

Runners up: Nanyang Technological University

Best speaker: Ang Wee Jian (National University of Singapore)

All-Asian Intersarsity Debating Championships

Host: North South University (Bangladesh)

Champions: National Law School of India University Team 1 (India)

Runners up: National Law School of India University Team 3 (India)

Best speaker: Anirudh Wadhwa (National Law School of India University)

European University Debating Championships

Host: University of Newcastle, England

Champions: University of Oxford A (Jonathan Leader Maynard & Shengwu Li)

Runners up: University of Oxford C (Neil Dewar & Max Kasriel), University of Oxford E (Joanna Farmer & Thomas Hosking), Tel Aviv University (Yoni Cohen & Uri Merhav)

ESL Champions: Leiden University (Ali al Khatib & Rob Honig)

North American Debating Championships

Host: Amherst College (Amherst, Massachusetts)

Champions: Yale University (Grant May & Andrew Rohrbach)

Runners up: McGill University (Sophie MacIntyre & Saro Setrakian)

Best speaker: Mark Samburg, Harvard University

Australian Intersarsity Novice Debating Championships

Host: University of Queensland (Australia)

Champions: University of Sydney ((Eliza Forsyth, Eleanor Jones, Daniel Swain)

Runners up: Australian National University (Rosie Bollard, Paul Bouulus, Chanelle Carr-Janif)

Best speaker: Lauren Humphrey (University of Queensland)

Best novice speaker: Daniel Swain (University of Sydney)

Australian British Parliamentary Championships

Host: University of Sydney (Australia)

Champions: Amit Golder and Steve Hind (Monash/Sydney University)

Runners up: Tim Mooney & Julia Fetherston (University of Sydney), Seamus Coleman & Phil Barker (Melbourne University), Tom Robertson & Giselle Kenny (University of Sydney)

Best speaker: Tim Mooney (Sydney University)

Canadian National Debating Championships:

Host: University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)

Champions: University of Toronto (Richard Lizius & Paul-Erik Veel)

Runners up: McGill University (Sophie McIntyre & Jake Liang)

Best speaker: Richard Lizius (University of Toronto)

Public Speaking Champion: Dan Powell, Royal Military College

World Universities Peace Invitational Debate

Champions: Monash University (Victor Finkel and Amit Golder)

Runners up: University of Sydney (Tim Mooney and Julia Fetherston),

University of Vermont (Sam Natale and Lucas Caress),

Ateneo De Manila University (Eleanor Zosa and Michael Biscocho)

Best speaker: Tim Mooney (University of Sydney)

Note: All effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the results. If results are missing or incorrect then please email mdr.orders@gmail.com so subsequent reprints can be corrected or added onto.



MONASH DEBATING R e v i e w

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