

MONASH DEBATING

R e v i e w

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an annual
publication
of the
monash
association
of debaters

the start of history

philip belesky and chuan-zheng lee

hypothetical motions in debating

vincent chiang

formalised equity policies in debate

patricia johnson-castle and lucian tan

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MONASH University

MONASH DEBATING R e v i e w

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to Volume 13 of the world's only international peer-reviewed debating journal, the Monash Debating Review (MDR).

Joining me on the editorial team are Associate Editors Tasneem Elias, Ruairidh Macintosh, Victor Baguilat Jr., Michelle Groenawald, Yarn Shih & Ary Ferreira da Cunha. After months of reviewing & writing, we are pleased to bring to you this year's edition of the Monash Debating Review which features opinion articles and research pieces which will hopefully improve the overall quality of the global debate circuit.

This year's volume includes 6 well-researched articles on a variety of issues which impact the contemporary debate community.

Michelle Groenewald, one of our Associate Editors, has written an opinion piece on the need to recalibrate the structures of adjudicator training, and on the incentives to improve the quality of global adjudication. Jonathan Kay and Claudia Hyde have co-authored an article on the experience-gap in debating playing a role in the widening of the gender gap. This article is filled with data collected from past tournaments and an elaborate question scheme.

Vincent Chiang discusses the viability of setting hypothetical debate motions, and suggests a number of standards which could potentially be used to judge said motions. Virendhren Naidoo has written an article on fusing inclusivity in the construction of debate motions. He touches and analyses the trend of controversial motions being used in multiple debate circuits.

Chuan-Zheng Lee and Philip Belesky, our tab experts, have co-authored an article on the need to standardise tab archive format to improve data collection on past, present and future tabs. They explore the benefits of this archive for debate communities across the world, especially when it comes to utilising accurate data collected from multiple tab software.

Finally, we have Lucian Tan and Patricia Johnson-Castle, who have co-authored an article on ways to improve our equity policies. This article not only addresses the complexities of contemporary equity concerns but also outlines a possible standardised method on dealing with such problems.

I genuinely hope that all of the readers benefit from these invaluable articles written by concerned members of our community. It was a privilege working on this editorial team. I would like to thank my team for helping me out throughout the process of the production of this journal.

Best Regards,

Syed Saddiq

GENDER AND DISCRIMINATION

MONASH
DEBATING
REVIEW

WHY ISN'T THE DEBATE UNIVERSE CHARACTERISED BY DIVERSITY? A CASE FOR FORMALIZED EQUITY POLICIES IN INTERVARSITY DEBATE

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Introduction

“Advocating the mere tolerance of difference...is the grossest reformism. It is the total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives. Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. Only within that interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate, as well as the courage and substance to act where there are no charters.” - Audre Lorde¹

Diversity is an inescapable facet of the today's world – all people bring their own cultural and personal experiences to all circumstances.² Diversity is particularly reflected in intervarsity debate at large international tournaments, like the World Universities Debating Championships (WUDC), the European Universities Debating Championships (EUDC), the North American Universities Debating Championships (NAUDC), the Pan-African Universities Debating Championships (PAUDC) and the Australasian Intersarsity Debating Championships (Australis) which by their very nature bring together people from a wide range of cultural and national backgrounds.

1 “The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House.” 1984. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, edited by Audre Lorde: 110-114, Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1984.

2 David Aronson. ‘Managing the Diversity Revolution: Best Practices for 21st Century Businesses,’ *Civil Rights Journal*, 6 (2002): 46-9; Mary Ann Bodine Al-Sharif. ‘The Need for Change: Educational Reform,’ *Race, Gender & Class*, 18, 3/4 (2011): 192; Michalle E. Mor Barak. *Managing Diversity: Toward a Globally Inclusive Workplace*. (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 218; Robert D. Putnam. ‘E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the 21st Century: The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture,’ *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30, 2 (2007): 139-40.

The growing awareness of increased diversity comes with an understanding that structural violence is reproduced and perpetuated by dominant norms to the benefit of dominant cultures and at the expense of diverse minorities. These historical oppressions are ongoing so are felt in the present.³ Recognizing these historical and ongoing disadvantages intervarsity debate has sought to ameliorate this situation through two particular kinds of initiatives. The first is the implementation of equal opportunity policies of separate ‘English as Second Language’ and ‘English as a Foreign Language’ categories. The second kind is the implementation of ‘equity policies’, conventionally anti-discrimination policies seeking to ensure that no participant is made to feel unwelcome or disrespected by other competitors. Since debate is an activity predicated on the free exchange of ideas equity is a necessary prerequisite to achieve it and thus deserves careful consideration.

This paper contends that the conventional approach to equity policies has been insufficient in achieving outcomes of inclusivity and education. Tournament equity policies are generally sparse, and modelled on legal and quasi-legal prohibitions on discrimination and harassment. Examples of written equity policies from various national organizations and international tournaments referred to may be found in the appendices. The lack of detail and apathy towards non-punitive responses in most tournament equity policies impedes their ability to recognise and accommodate diversity. We first consider the rationale behind equity before outlining key features of an ideal equity policy, drawing upon recent developments from the debate community and related literature from the field of organisational diversity management. Finally, the paper concludes with an examination of potential support structures that would positively frame equity policies, and future thoughts for development of equity in intervarsity debate.

Ultimately, equity is and should be about much more than preventing and punishing the worst conduct. We should rather aspire to a debating community characterised by a

3 Patricia Bradshaw. ‘Power as Dynamic Tension and its Implications for Radical Organisational Change,’ *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 7, 2 (1998): 122-3; Prue Burns and Jan Schapper. ‘The Ethical Case for Affirmative Action,’ *Journal of Business Ethics*, 83, 3 (2008): 370; Sandra Corlett and Sharon Mavin. ‘Intersectionality, Identity and Identity Work: Shared Tenets and Future Research Agendas for Gender and Identity Studies,’ *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 29, 5, (2014): 260-1; Kimberle Crenshaw. ‘Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color,’ *Stanford Law Review*, 43, 6 (1991): 1245; Nancy DiTomaso and Robert Hooijberg. ‘Diversity and the Demands of Leadership’ *Leadership Quarterly*, 7, 2 (1996): 164-5, 173; Robin T. Ely and David A. Thomas, ‘Cultural Diversity at Work: The Effects of Diversity Perspectives on Work Group Processes and Outcomes,’ *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 46, 2 (2001): 231; Carley Foster and Sue Newell. ‘Managing Diversity and Equal Opportunities – Some Practical Implications,’ *Business & Professional Ethics Journal*, 21, 2 (2002): 11-12; Frances J. Milliken, Frances J. and Luis L. Martins ‘Searching for Common Threads: Understanding the Multiple Effects of Diversity in Organizational Groups,’ *The Academy of Management Review*, 21, 2 (1996): 404-9; Michele S. Moses. ‘Moral and Instrumental Rationales for Affirmative Action in Five National Contexts,’ *Educational Researcher*, 39, 3 (2010): 218-220, 223; Mike Noon. ‘The fatal flaws of diversity and the business case for ethnic minorities,’ *Work Employment & Society*, 21, 4 (2007): 776.

celebration of diversity, where the idea of equity will guarantee that all competitors feel dignified and welcome.

Why does equity matter?

The question of why equity matters is somewhat less vexed in the debating community than in other organisations (for example, in businesses⁴ or in sporting organisations⁵). One reason for this is that intervarsity debaters are all current or former university students. Typically those in higher education are receptive to a plurality of ideas.⁶ Debate requires opposing and diverse viewpoints, this function means that many debaters see the importance of some form of equity as self-evident.⁷ By definition, features of certain debate formats require cooperation between diverse individuals (for example, in consensus adjudicating). In sporting organizations cooperative activities have been found to again implicitly raise the importance of equity frameworks in ensuring positive outcomes.⁸ The culture of equity in debate is along the lines of the conventional practice in practically all organizations: the incorporation at the very minimum a belief that some form equity is part of normal practice.⁹ This means that many members of the debate community take the reasons for supporting equity and diversity for granted.

It is pertinent to interrogate why it is that equity is so important, and particularly, what we hope to achieve with equity, before moving onto the policy elements themselves. The most commonly understood justification for equity is the ‘moral case’: diverse groups of people should be treated equitably as no one should be treated unfairly as a result of personal characteristics, attributes or beliefs.¹⁰ Dominant cultures in broader society

4 Caroline Dickie, Zhanna Soldan and Mike Fazey. *Diversity at Work: Working With and Managing Diversity*. (Melbourne: Tilde Publishing) 2012; Mor Barak, *Managing Diversity*.

5 George B. Cunningham and Michael Sagas. ‘People make the difference: The influence of the coaching staff’s human capital and diversity on team performance,’ *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 4, 1, (2004); Alison Doherty, Janet Fink, Sue Inglis and Donna Pastore. ‘Embedding a culture of diversity through frameworks of power & change,’ *Sport Management Review*, 13, 4 (2010).

6 Equality Challenge Unit, *Academic Teaching Staff: Developing Equality and Diversity Skills, Knowledge and Values*, (2015), 6-7. Accessed 15 November 2015, <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Academic-teaching-staff-developing-e-and-d-skills.pdf>

7 This has similarly been found in the broader higher education context – see further: Adrienne S. Chan, ‘Policy Discourses and Changing Practice: Diversity and the University-College,’ *Higher Education*, 50, 1 (2005): 139; Patricia A. Kreitz. ‘Best Practices for Managing Organisational Diversity,’ *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 34, 2 (2008): 105.

8 Alison J. Doherty. and Packianathan Chelladuri. ‘Managing Cultural Diversity in Sport Organizations: A Theoretical Perspective’ *Journal of Sport Management*, 13, 4 (1999): 291.

9 Corlett and Mavin, “Intersectionality, Identity and Identity Work” 265; Doherty and Chelladuri, “Managing Cultural Diversity”, 286-7.

10 Hicks, Douglas A. ‘Religion and Respectful Pluralism in the Workplace: A Constructive Framework,’ *Journal of Religious Leadership*, 2, 1 (2003): 30-2.

have generated prejudices that oppress people through operations of Western-centric heteronormativity. Heteronormative discourse sets man up as the opposite (and superior to) of wom*n, heterosexual as the opposite (and superior to) of homosexual, white as the opposite (and superior to) to black, etc.¹¹ Those outside dominant cultures are comparatively disempowered through discrimination. People seen as inferior in these sets of norms have distinctions made against them. The effects of these many embedded social structures are taken for granted. Debate cannot be removed from its historical legacy, and is certainly not immune to such power structures. The format of WUDC is called “British parliamentary” because it is modelled after British parliament. This begs the question: who historically sat in the British parliament? (Old) white men. Debating still has a strong connection to these roots. It tends to be quite heteronormative in nature, reinforcing historical prejudices.¹²

People who do not fit into these norms often feel ill at ease in spaces where these norms are assumed. Diverse minorities face higher rates of discrimination and harassment. It can occur directly or covertly through structural or cultural barriers and causes them to feel distinctly disempowered, stressed, inadequate, lonely and frustrated.¹³ In its most severe form, discrimination, harassment, bullying and intimidation can put participants in active physical harm. Equity policies must exist to prevent and address the full range of these harms. Equity in a punitive and educative combination helps breakdown these norms and make debating an activity in which people of any identity category feel welcome to participate.¹⁴

It would be remiss to think of equity in only the punitive dimension. It is also important to consider that equity practically enhances the operation of fair debate. Debate exists to facilitate the free and fair discussion and tolerance of “a wide range of political, social, economic and scientific views”, even where these are unpopular or controversial.¹⁵ Research has demonstrated that heterogeneous groups have a greater capacity for creative

11 Emily Gray. ‘What is heteronormativity?’ *GEA – Gender and Education Association*, 26 March 2011. Accessed 15 November 2015, <http://www.genderandeducation.com/issues/what-is-heteronormativity/>

12 For example, the use of ‘he’ as a default pronoun when referring to hypotheticals, or assumed generalisations about minority groups.

13 Renate Mai-Dalton. ‘Managing Cultural Diversity on the Individual, Group and Organisational Levels,’ in *Leadership Theory and Research: Perspectives and Directions*, edited by Martin M. Chemers and Roya Ayman, (San Diego: Academic Press Inc., 1993) 196; Putnam, “*E Pluribus Unum*”, 149-51.

14 Mor Barak, *Managing Diversity*, 219; Moses, “Moral Rationales” 218, 220, 223-4; David A. Thomas and Robin D. Ely. ‘Making Differences Matter: A New Paradigm for Managing Diversity’, *Harvard Business Review*, 74, 5 (1996): 38-9.

15 Equality Challenge Unit, *Promoting Good Relations on Campus: A Guide for Higher and Further Education*, (2013) 3. Accessed 15 November 2015, <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/external/promoting-good-relations-on-campus.pdf>

thought and productive discussion about a broad spectrum of perspectives.¹⁶ It has been found in the context of the higher education that diversity enhances learning experiences, problem-solving abilities and critical thinking skills¹⁷. These elements are all crucial to the success of intervarsity debate. Importantly, these benefits cannot be achieved in environments that are hostile, whether latently or overtly. People who do not feel comfortable in a space, or who feel like their contributions will not be valued, will never speak up in the first place. As a result we potentially lose out on unique contributions and argumentation. Equity, the climate of inclusiveness, and the respect that it seeks to foster, are not just ‘good’ or ‘right’ things to do, they also *elevate the quality of debate*.

But why even have an equity policy? Many have responded to equity policies in a manner much like that of George Lawlor when he refused to attend a University of Warwick consent class.¹⁸ People tend to embrace diversity as important, but self-evident, and requiring only minimal formal structures to deal with extreme outliers of unacceptable conduct such as harassment and assault. However, a closer look confirms that this minimalism is not the case.

Firstly, formal policies and frameworks are necessary to manage the potential conflicts that may arise amongst heterogeneous groups and organisations. The assumption that it

16 Doherty and Chelladuri, “Managing Cultural Diversity”, 284; L. R. Hoffman. ‘Homogeneity of member personality and its effect on group problem solving,’ *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 58, 1 (1959); L. R. Hoffman and N.R. Maier. 1961. ‘Quality and acceptance of problem solutions by members of culturally homogeneous and heterogeneous groups,’ *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 62, 2 (1961); Milliken and Martins, “Searching for Common Threads”, 403; Orlando C. Richard. ‘Racial Diversity, Business Strategy and Firm Performance: A Resource-Based View,’ *The Academy of Management Journal*, 43, 2 (2000); J. A. Ruhe. ‘Effects of leader sex and leader behavior on group problem-solving.’ *Proceedings of the American Institute for Decision Sciences*, Northeast Division, (1978); Thomas & Ely, “Making Differences Matter”, 35-6; Warren E. Watson, Kamalesh Kumar and Larry K. Michaelsen. ‘Cultural Diversity’s Impact on Interaction Process and Performance: Comparing Homogenous & Diverse Task Groups’ *Academy of Management Journal*, 36, 3 (1993): 596, 599.

17 E. S. Anderson. ‘The democratic university: The role of justice in the production of knowledge,’ in *The Just Society*, edited by E. F. Paul, F. D. Miller, & J. Paul, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995); A. L. Antonio, M.J. Chang, K. Hakuta, D.A. Kenny, S. Levin, & J.F. Milem. ‘Effects of racial diversity on complex thinking in college students,’ *Psychological Science*, 15, 8 (2004); M. J. Chang. ‘Does racial diversity matter? The educational impact of a racially diverse undergraduate population,’ *Journal of College Student Development*, 40, 4 (1999); M. J. Chang. ‘The Positive Educational Effects of Racial Diversity on Campus,’ in *Diversity challenged: Evidence on the impact of affirmative action*, edited by G. Orfield with M. Kurlaender, (Cambridge, MA: Civil Rights Project and Harvard Education Publishing, 2001); Patricia Gurin. ‘Selections from the compelling need for diversity in higher education: Expert report of Patricia Gurin,’ *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 32, 2 (1999); P. Gurin, E.L. Dey, S. Hurtado, & G. Gurin. (2002). ‘Diversity and higher education: Theory & impact on educational outcomes,’ *Harvard Educational Review*, 72, 3 (2002).

18 George Lawlor. ‘Why I don’t need consent lessons’ *The Tab, Warwick*, 14 October 2015. Accessed 15 November 2015, <http://thetab.com/uk/warwick/2015/10/14/dont-need-consent-lessons-9925>

is sufficient to simply have a diverse group of people together is sufficient is a fallacy.¹⁹ Studies comparing homogenous and heterogeneous groups demonstrate that diversity can generate conflict and misunderstandings that reduce happiness and productivity.²⁰ These risks are best managed through organisational structures like policies that state intent and thereby shape culture.²¹

The presumption that equity can be discharged by ‘just being nice’ or ‘using common sense’ is replicates and perpetuates ingrained and embedded oppressions and misunderstandings. Equity cannot be relegated to the realm of ‘common sense’ because (1) each individual has a *different* understanding of common sense that requires aggregation under a formal policy, and, perhaps more importantly, (2) common sense understandings draw up and feed into pre-existing privilege and structures of oppression.²² Structures of oppression are reproduced by both dominant cultures *and* by minority cultures to “gain footage on a slippery slope of social acceptability”.²³ To remain silent is to tacitly accept what are often hidden, operational and organisational understandings of oppression. For example, the most common excuse for diversity unfriendliness in the business context is that something is conventional practice, or ‘following protocol’.²⁴ Policies help to deconstruct and reshape these kinds of understandings by clearly articulating parameters within a highly contested discursive space.²⁵

Equity policies and frameworks are also necessary to ensure that there is not an *overcorrection* that stifles free, fair and robust debate. Although freedom of speech is not

19 Ely and Thomas, “Cultural Diversity” 232; A. M. Konrad, S. Winter, and B. A. Gutek ‘Diversity in work group sex composition: Implications for majority and minority members’ in *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, edited by P. S. Tolbert and S. B. Bacharach. (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1992); S. J. South, C. M. Bonjean, W. T. Markham, and J. Corder. “Social structure and intergroup interaction: Men and women of the federal bureaucracy.” *American Sociological Review*, 47, 5 (1982).

20 Nigel Basset-Jones. ‘The Paradox of Diversity Management, Creativity and Innovation,’ *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 14, 2 (2005): 172; Catherine C. Eckel, and Philip J. Grossman. ‘Managing diversity by creating team identity,’ *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization*, 58, 3 (2005): 372.

21 Basset-Jones, “Paradox of Diversity Management”, 172-4; Marie-Elene Roberge and Rolf van Dick. ‘Recognizing the benefits of diversity: When and how does diversity increase group performance,’ *Human Resource Management Review*, 20, 4 (2010): 298.

22 Al-Sharif “The Need for Change”, 195; Bradshaw “Power as Dynamic Tension”, 128-130; Chan “Policy Discourses”, 139; Kimberle Crenshaw. ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,’ *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*, (1989): 1989 150-1; Milliken and Martins, “Searching for Common Threads” 403-4; Lynne M. Shore, Beth G. Chung-Herrera, Michelle A. Dean, Karen Holcombe Erhart, Don I. Jung, Amy E. Randal and Gangaram Singh. ‘Diversity in organizations: Where are we now and where are we going?’ *Human Resource Management Review*, 19, 2 (2009): 118.

23 Al-Sharif, “The Need for Change”, 195.

24 Chan “Policy Discourses”, 143; Dickie, *Diversity at Work*, 134.

25 Kreitz, “Best Practices”, 103.

and should not be unlimited, policies and governance frameworks are convenient and effective ways to strike a balance between the competing obligations of tournaments and societies to facilitate vigorous debate and to ensure members and participants do not feel unwelcome or disrespected by the words or actions of other participants.²⁶

Ultimately, what we expect from the existence of equity is not simply a way to deal with the most extreme conduct that may occur during a tournament. What we really want is for equity to create a climate of respect for diversity, both as an end but also as a means to facilitate the exchange of ideas and perspectives that is fundamental to intervarsity debate. Creating that climate “requires commitment, strategy, communication and concrete changes in organisational structure and processes”²⁷. Equity policies are therefore necessary to implement and concretise good intent. So what kind of equity policy will best allow us to enact long term change and foster inclusiveness and respect for diversity?

What is the best policy practice?

At their most basic, equity policies must be explicit about the grounds for equity violations and be clear about the responsibility and powers of equity officers, the investigation process and possible remedies. This section offers suggestions of how create of effective and engaging equity policies.

Equity policies should be as explicit as possible as to the possible grounds on which an equity violation might occur

Equity policies should be as comprehensive as possible regarding protected attributes to ensure that all participants are aware of potential grounds of discrimination and harassment. For example, under the Code of Conduct from Schedule 1 of WUDC’s current constitution (Appendix A) section 3 prohibits discrimination on grounds of age, race, sex, disability, religion or sexuality. It could go further adding such categories as gender, national or ethnic origin, physical appearance, accent, English or other linguistic proficiencies, or even debating ability. The Solbridge Australs Policy (Appendix C) section 4 adopts this kind of expansive approach to protected attributes. A failure to cover the field or be specific could impede the operation of equity, as most people will tend to be more aware of visible, overt differences such as gender, race or ethnic origin, and less aware of less visible but no less important attributes could be sidelined.²⁸ Comprehensive policies allow specific and nuanced coverage to adequately protect all participants.

Effective equity policies serve as touchstones, and should seek to shape and guide the

26 Equality Challenge Unit, Promoting Good Relations, 3, 5-7.

27 Kreitz, “Best Practices”, 101.

28 Barbara Bagilhole. ‘Applying the Lens of Intersectionality to UK Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policies,’ *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 27, 3 (2010): 265-6; Shore et al. “Diversity in organizations”, 123.

conduct of participants. Anecdotally, the majority of equity violations at major tournaments are committed not out of malice or ill intent, but rather through a misunderstanding of appropriate boundaries and acceptable conduct. This can be avoided if there clarity as to what actions may constitute discrimination. For a policy to be clear it must explain that protected attributes are unacceptable reasons for people to feel unsafe²⁹ and explicate both what conduct is prohibited *and* what conduct is expected. The only way to do this is to be clear as to what actions may constitute discrimination. When a policy lacks clarity it is likely to cause confusion that can result in equity violations.³⁰

Equity policies also need to be equipped to deal with both general *and* specialised discrimination.³¹ Thus, whilst it is important to retain key, existing aspects of conventional equity policies, such as the general prohibition on harassment and bullying, it is also important that special protections are articulated through equity – for example directives and guidance on pronoun rounds and how to avoid misgendering others. Such protections are important features of equity that go a long way towards making sure that everyone feels comfortable. However, the relatively recent awareness of these issues means that equity is required to specifically highlight and address them, which is only possible where equity coverage is detailed and comprehensive. South African anti-discrimination law should be used to inform future equity policies. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA) states in that prohibited ground of discrimination include:

- a) race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience of belief, culture, language and birth; or
- b) any other ground where discrimination based on that other ground-
 - i) causes or perpetuates systemic disadvantage;
 - ii) undermines human dignity; or
 - iii) adversely affects the equal enjoyment of a person's rights and freedoms in a serious manner that is comparable to discrimination on a ground in paragraph a)³²

Integrating clauses like b) into equity policies allows people to feel secure even if the attribute in question is not explicitly listed in the equity policy.

29 Equality Challenge Unit, Academic Teaching Staff, 12-4.

30 Bagilhole, "Lens of Intersectionality", 268; Equality Challenge Unit, Academic Teaching Staff, 10,12-14.

31 Bagilhole, "Lens of Intersectionality", 269.

32 PEPUDA 2000

Equity policies need to be explicit and go beyond simply ‘don’t break the law’. Equity policies are an attempt to help us create a diverse and inclusive community by letting us attempt to resolve problems ourselves. If an equity policy says only that “we shall call the police if someone has broken the law” it would not allow for engagement on issues which are not necessarily illegal but still offensive to participants. Even where violations may break the law, the role of equity should not be to automatically involve law enforcement - some people who feel they have been harassed at a tournament may not want to pursue the matter in court but would like some kind of intervention.

There is a tension, however, between the need for comprehensiveness and the comprehensibility of any equity policy.³³ The justification and rationale for equity should also be explained alongside the grounds for discrimination. The best practice solution is to utilise additional supporting documents to translate the formal equity framework into digestible formats for participant use.³⁴ For example, the grounds for equity complaints should be made clear through a code of conduct that should be read and signed by participants of the tournament. All participants are then equally informed about what violations are as well as the possible consequences for violations. Codes of conduct should explain the duties and responsibilities of participants, and make reference to the more comprehensive equity policy. Other examples of supporting documents might be language guidelines or other protocols, as provided by the Solbridge Australs equity team (see further Appendices D and E). Additionally, equity briefings and statements made by the equity officers should be delivered in a condensed fashion to avoid overloading participants, but highlight both the comprehensive and inclusive coverage provided by an equity policy. Best practice equity frameworks need to not only incorporate an explicit and comprehensive policy, but also appropriate channels of communication to make sure that coverage is understood by all those involved.

Remedies should not be exclusively punitive

Typically, the consequence of an equity violation is some kind of sanction, presumably to deter the action from occurring to begin with and to punish offenders. Take for example section 13 of Schedule 1 to the current WUDC constitution (Appendix A). However, this approach does not explicitly offer non-punitive intervention with offenders – remedies centre on warnings, suspensions and other rehabilitative penalties (such as receiving instruction on future use of language). Debating tournaments increasingly bring people from differing backgrounds together who do not necessarily share the same understanding of polite conduct or have the same knowledge bases and exposure. Thus, it is quite possible that someone may violate an equity policy or code of conduct non-maliciously. If an infraction is sincerely non-malicious it seems disproportionate to apply a sanction against the violator.

³³ Bradshaw “Power as Dynamic Tension” 132; Foster and Newell, “Managing Diversity”, 18.

³⁴ Equality Challenge Unit, *Mainstreaming: equality at the heart of higher education*, (2011), 10. Accessed 15 November 2015, <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/external/mainstreaming-equality-at-the-heart-of-he-final-report.pdf>

Moreover, it wrongly locates the sole problem of the equity violation as the individual. It is also important to look at the contexts in which that misunderstanding may have occurred, and tackle those in order to change individual behaviour. This requires an expansion beyond the punitive and into the educative.³⁵ This might involve starting a discussion with offenders about why something may be considered inappropriate and how it might impact others. Such approaches have long been recognised in organisational diversity management, which notes that real change towards a culture of respect for diversity can only be achieved when an educative focus is provided.³⁶

Another instance which would be benefited by a non-punitive equity policy is in situations that take into account the power dynamics of people involved. If, for example, a person who is a debater and is highly respected says something which offends a person who is much younger or newer to the community, the newer/younger person may not feel comfortable about bringing that violation to an equity officer. If equity is approached purely punitively the young complainant might fear backlash from the community if the older/respected person is punished. This is somewhat alleviated if the equity team is explicitly approaching equity from a punitive *and* non-punitive approach. The victim could explicitly ask the equity team to use a non-punitive remedy such as an explanation from the equity officer for why violation was hurtful to the victim and having that person to apologize. Once the equity team investigates the situations they could assess the egregiousness of the offence and use the victim's preferences to guide the remedy of the situation. It is possible that an offence warrants both punitive and non-punitive measures.

This is another instance where we should look for guidance from PEPUDA. It gives guidance on how to determine the guilt of someone who is accused of undermining another's dignity. Its section on determining whether the action by a person says that the following factors must be taken into account:

- a) the context
- b) the factors referred to in subsection (3);
- c) whether the discrimination reasonably and justifiably differentiates between persons according to objectively determinable criteria, intrinsic to the activity concerned.

35 Aronson "Managing the Diversity Revolution," 59-63; Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection", 151; Equality Challenge Unit, *Mainstreaming*, 9-11; Equality Challenge Unit, *Quality assurance: embedding equality within college practice and processes*, (2012), 9. Accessed 15 November 2015, www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/external/quality-assurance-embedding-equality-within-colleges.pdf

36 William T. Bielby. 'Promoting racial diversity at work: Challenges and solutions,' in *Diversity at Work*, edited by Arthur P. Brief, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 69-70; Mor Barak, *Managing Diversity*, 53, 57.

3) the factors referred to in subsection (2)(b) include the following:

- a) whether the discrimination impairs or is likely to impair human dignity
- b) the impact or likely impact of the discrimination on the complainant;
- c) the position of the complainant in society and whether he or she suffers from patterns of disadvantage or belongs to a group that suffers from such patterns of disadvantage;
- d) the nature and extent of the discrimination;
- e) whether the discrimination is systemic in nature;
- f) whether the discrimination has a legitimate purpose;
- g) whether and to what extent the discrimination achieves its purpose;
- h) whether there are less restrictive and less disadvantageous means to achieve the purpose;
- i) whether and to what extent the respondent has taken such steps as being reasonable in the circumstances to-
 - i) address the disadvantage which arises from or is related to one or more of the prohibited grounds; or
 - ii) accommodate diversity.³⁷

The procedure that is followed through these clauses would help guide equity officers through their investigations. It sets out important questions to ask to determine what kind of punishment is appropriate because it reminds them of what factors should be taken into account when deciding between punitive and non-punitive resolutions to complaints.

We believe that equity is under-utilized now particularly because people do not understand it as an educative tool. Many would prefer not to interact with institutions of equity (where they exist) because they don't see it as being "worth the trouble" or they don't want the perpetrator to be punished. When equity is explicitly addressed from an educative perspective it is likely that people will be more willing to address issues of generalizations, misuse of language, etc. which had previously bothered them, but never so much that they felt equity needed to be involved.³⁸ These kinds of less severe violations are one of the greatest challenges that equity has work on to build a climate of respect.³⁹ Equity policies need to say that it is no trouble at all to involve equity. By changing the very way we conceive of equity, the policy itself becomes an educative tool by raising awareness and starting conversations about mutual respect and inclusivity, even in the absence of any incidents or complaints.

³⁷ PEPUDA 2000

³⁸ This is particularly true for stigmatized groups whose difference is less visible – without clear and accommodating frameworks such as equity policies, they are likely to choose non-disclosure to avoid upsetting the status quo. See further Shore et al. "Diversity in organizations," 123.

³⁹ Equality Challenge Unit, Mainstreaming, 2; Kreitz, "Best Practices", 103.

Of course, there is still a need for punitive aspects in an equity policy. If offenders do not sincerely engage with equity officers about their conduct punitive action may need to be taken. For example, if they are flippant or disengaged when apologizing. For similar reasons, protection of complainants through a prohibition on victimisation is needed to ensure those who choose to report are not unfairly harmed for raising issues that they feel are important and to encourage reporting of issues.⁴⁰ Punitive action would also be justified in cases where there have been egregious violations of the equity policy. Policies should be alive to this potential outcome, retaining serious punishments in order to handle the most serious of violations.⁴¹

Ultimately, equity cannot serve its purpose of creating a climate of respect and inclusiveness if it only focuses on punishment of egregious violations. The way equity provides remedies needs to be reconceptualised to include educative and non-punitive remedies. This will allow equity to function proactively as a resource and catalyst for further respectful discussion of the diversity of the debate community.

Individuals should direct equity processes and be empowered to handle situations on their own

If the ultimate goal of equity is to ensure that there is a climate of respect and tolerance, then victims of equity violations need to feel valued and respected by the process that handles their concerns.⁴² People who have been victims of equity violations don't just need structural support; they also need emotional support, particularly where violations are severe.⁴³ Not allowing victims to set the terms of how they engage with equity can be incredibly disempowering, and it may further encourage non-disclosure of important issues. Best practice equity policy should be consultative with the victim. As a general rule equity officers should not take action without the assent of the victim.⁴⁴ This is a further reason why the remedies provided by equity policies cannot simply be punitive: flexibility is required in order to achieve the best possible outcome for victims, legitimating their unique experiences.⁴⁵

Just as victims should be able to direct equity processes, they should also be given the freedom to self-help. Since at the varsity level of debating almost all participants are legally considered adults (with some exceptions), when people are comfortable doing so they should be able to ask for apologies. If someone was misgendered throughout the debate by another speaker, equity should tell them that if they feel comfortable with it,

40 Chan "Policy Discourses", 144-5.

41 DiTomaso "Diversity and the Demands of Leadership" 170.

42 Ely and Thomas, "Cultural Diversity" 254; Roberge and van Dick, "Recognizing the benefits", 303-4.

43 Mai-Dalton, "Managing Cultural Diversity", 197.

44 There may be outlier circumstances, for example, in cases involving self-harm, that requires equity officers to act against the will of the individual concerned.

45 Crenshaw "Mapping the Margins", 1246.

they can handle the situation on their own, perhaps by noting this to the perpetrator and asking for an apology. Most people will apologize. Equity should come into the situation (1) if the person is not comfortable resolving it themselves or (2) if the perpetrator refused to apologize. Thus, equity does not always need to be the first port of call but it should be there for the instances when people are unable to act for themselves. In the example above some trans* people may feel very comfortable noting to the perpetrator of the misgendering what had occurred, while for other trans people that experience might be extremely painful. Therefore, equity can help to lift the burden from the shoulders of the person feeling pain and have a conversation with the perpetrator explaining that they misgendered a speaker in a debate and why that was painful for the victim. If the victim wants an apology the equity team can help facilitate that. At every stage, equity policies should make space for victims to decide the best course of action for them – after all, equity policies are primarily in place to help victims.

Equity officers should have clear responsibilities and powers

Those who have been appointed as equity officers must understand what their responsibilities and powers are in order to create the safety needed for debaters to fully participate. This is a reason why having a standardized equity policy (discussed further below) is beneficial: it allows for knowledge transfer between people and tournaments.

Most equity policies unfortunately tend to be vague. For example, the CUSID Code of Conduct (Appendix B) states:

4.1.1 All procedures for investigating and resolving complaints must include the following:

- a) a process for the making of anonymous complaints;
- b) a process for the accused persons or persons to make a written statement responding to the allegation against him or her;
- c) a process for determining whether section 2 has been violated;
- d) a process for determining the appropriate punishment in the event of a violation of section 2;
- e) a process for informing all affected parties; and
- f) a process for determining whether the complaint should be reviewed by the membership of CUSID.

7. The duties of the Complaints and Equity Officers include, but are not limited to:

- a) Being aware of all resources of the security provisions of the institution at which the tournament is hosted;
- b) Being visible and available for the duration of the tournament, including attendance at social events;
- c) Acting in a responsible manner and be prepared to deal with any eventuality

- at all times;
- d) Investigating all complaints; and
- e) Issuing a report at the close of the tournament

There is almost no explanation of how complaints are investigated, or any of the associated procedures. This can cause confusion for equity officers about how they are meant to respond, and further complicate the handling of sensitive complaints and the broader operation of equity.⁴⁶ If a very egregious offence occurs which the equity officers feel warrants the violator being expelled from the tournament, the violator could challenge the authority of the equity officer where a code of conduct or equity policy doesn't explicitly list that as a possibility. In part, the problems faced by the CUSID policy are minimised by the capacity for individual societies and unions to supplement with policies of their own. However, the strategy of having a nationally standardized equity policy which leaves room to empower individual debating unions to supplement and innovate is somewhat dependent on unions taking that initiative. Unions that do not prioritize equity will only employ the nationally standardized (and potentially vague) policy thereby being vulnerable to confusion or lack of authority. This would be an instance where clauses (2) and (3) from PEPUDA would be a helpful guide for equity officers.

In contrast, the Solbridge Australs policy (Appendix E) provides a far more comprehensive example under section 7. This details the specific manner in which complaints may be processed, as well as the various roles that members of the Equity Team need to undertake. This clarity allows Equity Officers to execute their roles with confidence, and provides assurances to all participants about the procedure with which complaints are dealt.⁴⁷ Naturally, there is still room for the Equity team to exercise their discretion. Ultimately, breaches of equity need to be considered on a case-by-case basis and as argued above, with the input and involvement of the victim.

Just as comprehensive equity policies need to be translated into digestible blocks; equally it is important that the powers of the equity officers are effectively communicated to the participants of the tournament. See further Appendix H for the infographic distributed by Solbridge Equity team, which presents the information about the complaints process in a condensed form. The empowering equity document should be comprehensive to provide guidance and structure to equity officers, but should also be communicated to all participants in a form that allows them to easily understand how to make an equity complaint and the investigation and resolution process.

⁴⁶ For example, see the case study of a higher education diversity committee without clear terms of reference and procedure in Chan, "Policy Discourses", 143-145.

⁴⁷ Equality Challenge Unit, *Promoting Good Relations*, 28-9.

Equity officers should be independent from other positions at debating tournaments

Equity officers may not be needed at all at a given tournament but when they are needed it is important that they not be distracted from their responsibilities. For example, if the tournament director/convenor is doubling as an equity officer it might be quite difficult for them to fully investigate an equity violation as they would be torn between their responsibilities to make sure the tournament is running smoothly (rooms in use are unlocked, food is arriving at appropriate times etc) and investigating the equity issue at hand. This would be quite demoralizing to the person who has laid the equity complaint because it could make them feel as though their safety/ability to fully participate has been compromised in favour of those other responsibilities.

Moving equity forward

Though equity policies are clearly important frameworks for action and educative tools for change a single equity policy alone will never suffice. Change towards respecting and valuing diversity is a collaborative project,⁴⁸ and embedding principles of equity should be the long term endgame for intervarsity debate. This section contains suggestions for additional issues to be considered going forward.

Standardising equity policies

Every tournament and every union/society has their own unique challenges to face with equity. However, the presence of a single, core policy, which perhaps acts as a template, would enhance the entrenchment of equity. For starters, having a core policy to be adapted provides consistency, which in turn can embed norms about how diversity can and should be approached. A more standardised policy with clear details about protected attributes, acceptable conduct and complaint handling processes will foster a shared understanding of equity, akin to how the longstanding existence of equity policies has fostered a norm of receptiveness to the idea of equity.⁴⁹ It is worth considering the creation of a consolidated and standardised policy in the same vein as the WUDC judging manual created for Malaysia Worlds 2015,⁵⁰ leveraging and extending upon the example code of conduct in Schedule 1 of the Worlds Constitution (Appendix A).

48 Equality Challenge Unit, *Mainstreaming*, 3-5; Foster and Newell, "Managing Diversity", 13; Mor Barak, *Managing Diversity*, 229.

49 Research in diversity management research demonstrates that having a clear and *consistent* message changes perceptions and attitudes in everyday contexts, while conflicting messaging impedes a diversity friendly culture. See further: Al-Sharif, "The Need for Change," 196; Bielby, "Promoting Racial Diversity", 55-6; Bradshaw "Power as Dynamic Tension", 128; Doherty and Chelladuri, "Managing Cultural Diversity", 286-7; Equality Challenge Unit, *Promoting Good Relations*, 32; Equality Challenge Unit, *Academic Teaching Staff*, 10; Roberge and van Dick, "Recognizing the benefits" 300-1.

50 *World Universities Debating Championships Debating and Judging Manual*, (2014). Accessed 15 November 2015, http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/WUDC%20Malaysia_2014_Debating_and_Judging_Manual.pdf

Community engagement and accountability

It is important that our communities have a say in the continual evolution of equity policies going forward because they are who equity is working for. Engaging through targeted consultations and forums are effective ways to canvas opinion and gain insight about what equity is doing well, and where it must to improve.⁵¹ Initiatives already underway - like the Equity Committee established by Worlds Council at Malaysia Worlds 2015 - should be extended and leveraged into future work regarding equity policies. Institutional governance bodies must help to further consolidate findings and chart coordinated future directions for equity in intervarsity debate.

Additionally, data collection and measurement systems should be in place to provide accountability for the operation of equity at major tournaments. Access to data about trends and recurring issues met by equity teams will allow for continual fine tuning of equity policies and their operation.⁵² The interaction between preventative equity policies and equal opportunity initiatives should also be explored.

Supporting Equity Officers

Being an equity officer or on the equity team can be a rewarding experience. However, it can also be a heavy burden to deal with the ugliest of behaviour, without necessarily being able to discuss these issues outside of the team for confidentiality reasons. Thus an important future consideration is how equity officers are supported when difficult and stressful issues come before them.

Conclusion

Equity policies can never perfectly capture every facets of diversity, nor pre-empt all potential scenarios. There are no guarantees, no silver bullets to the problems generated by historical and ongoing patterns of prejudice and the malicious conduct of individuals. Nevertheless, equity policies are an important feature of the intervarsity debating landscape as a statement of clear intent that debate is an inclusive and respectful space. For too long it has been assumed that equity was easy enough to figure out. It's time to change that discussion by acknowledging and articulating the complexity of the issues at play. This paper has shown what needs to take the place of vague and primarily punitive equity policies are more comprehensive approaches that clearly articulate the scope and rationale of equity, empowering equity teams, more clearly protecting non-dominant cultures and creating the space for respectful discussion and discourse.

51 Equality Challenge Unit, *Mainstreaming*, 6-9; Equality Challenge Unit, *Promoting Good Relations*, 30.

52 Dickie, *Diversity at Work*, 145; Equality Challenge Unit, *Mainstreaming*, 3-5, 14; Equality Challenge Unit, *Quality Assurance*, 6-8.

About the Authors

Patricia Johnson-Castle is a beneficiary of the Nunatsiavut landclaim agreement. She is currently studying as a master's student in the anthropology department at the University of Cape Town. Her undergraduate degree is in African studies/philosophy from McGill University. She is enthusiastic about the use of debating for education, equality of outcome and learning from her peers. Patricia served as an equity officer for the Canadian University Society for Intercollegiate Debate as well as the chief equity officer for the World Universities Debating Championship 2015 (WUDC). As a speaker she has broken at the Hart House Intersarsity, Cambridge Women's Open, South African Universities National Debating Championships and the South African Women's Open. As a judge she has broken at WUDC and the US Universities Debating Championships twice, was the deputy chief adjudicator for the North American Debating Championships and a judge for the final of the HWS Round Robin.

Lucian Tan is from the University of Sydney Union. Over the course of his involvement with intersarsity debate, Lucian has broken at Australian Easters, judged four Australs ESL Grand Finals, and broken as a judge multiple times at WUDC, including judging the 2015 WUDC ESL Grand Final. He has also been a member of the WUDC 2015 Language Status Committee and a member of the Solbridge Australs Equity Team responsible for drafting the 2015 Solbridge Australs Equity Policy. Since completing his Arts/Law degree, Lucian has worked for the Australian Human Rights Commission, and directly with commissioners responsible for combatting discrimination on the grounds of race, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. He brings both a personal and professional passion to issues surrounding equity, fairness and protection from discrimination and harassment.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A WUDC CONSTITUTION – SCHEDULE ONE: EXAMPLE CODE OF CONDUCT

1) Purpose

The purpose of this Article is to give effect to the principle that all participants at rounds of the Championships should have an opportunity equal with other individuals to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligations as participants in the Championships, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, or disability, and to be free from harassment and intimidation in the performance of these duties and obligations.

2) Conduct expected of participants

Participants at the Championships will comply with the following Code of Conduct

3) All participants at a round of the Championships will not engage in any behaviour that will undermine or attack the purpose of the Championship or the Code of Conduct including, but not limited to:

- a) Engage in offensive language or behaviour;
- b) make denigrating comments on the basis of age, race, sex, disability, religion or sexuality;
- c) harass, threaten or intimidate other participants in any;
- d) damage or destroy any property that does not belong to them;
- e) harass, threaten or intimidate delegates to vote in a particular way.

4) The provisions of Article 30 (3) will apply:

- a) during debates
- b) during any formal event organised as part of the tournament;
- c) during any social event organised as part of the tournament;
- d) on transportation organised as part of the tournament;
- e) in accommodation organised as part of the tournament;

- 5) Participants include all:
 - a) debaters
 - b) adjudicators
 - c) organisers
 - d) coaches
 - e) observers
- 6) Participants found to be in breach of this code of conduct agree to be bound by the decisions of the Equity Officer and / or the appeals committee.

Implementation and Enforcement

7) Making a Complaint

Participants wishing to make a formal complaint alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct must do so:

- a) in written form; and
 - b) submit the complaint to the designated Equity Officer of the Championship either in person; or
 - c) Complaints made in written form shall be submitted through any submission box at the Event marked for the express purpose of submitting Code of Conduct related complaints.
 - d) The tournament organising committee must provide a box for the express purpose of submitting Code of Conduct related complaints on each day of the Championship Round.
 - e) Nothing in the above subsections (a) – (d) prevents tournament participants from orally informing the designated Equity Officer of the Championship of an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct
 - f) Such an allegation will not be considered a formal complaint and will not trigger the complaints mechanism until a written complaint is submitted.
- 8) Complaints must identify both the complainant and the accused.
 - 9) Complaints Mechanism:
 - a) Subject to the provisions of section 2 of this Article, upon receipt of a complaint, the Equity Officer of the event shall without delay notify the Chair of Worlds Council that a complaint has been received, and where the Equity Officer of the event determines that such a complaint gives rise to a prima facie case of breach of this Code of Conduct, the Equity Officer shall conduct an investigation into the said complaint, and shall within

twenty-four hours of the receipt of the complaint or before the end of the Championships, whichever is sooner, issue a decision on the complaint to the Chair of World's Council and to the parties involved.

- b) Where the Equity Officer, acting reasonably, believes the Chair of Worlds Council to be in a position of a conflict of interest with regard to such a complaint, the Equity Officer shall not notify the Chair of Worlds Council, but instead shall notify any other member of the Executive Committee of the Worlds, as set out in Article 28 (1)(a-e), who the Equity Officer reasonably believes not to be in such a position of conflict of interest and shall deal with them as if they were the Chair of Worlds Council for the purposes of complying with the requirements under section 1 of this Article in relation to the complaint in question.
- 10) In any investigation entered into pursuant to Article 14, the Equity Officer shall:
- a) invite both the complainant and the accused person to participate in the investigation
 - b) have regard to all relevant factors in reaching their decision, including but not limited to:
 - a) the circumstance in which the alleged act took place;
 - b) whether the allegedly offensive comments were made in the context of a debate of the Championships and whether the comments were germane or relevant to that debate;
 - c) the intention of the accused person;
 - d) the extent and reasonableness of the offence taken; and,
 - e) any relevant issues of culture and/or nationality
- 11) Both the Complainant and the Accused person shall be invited to participate in the investigation of the complaint.
- 12) An investigation of the complaint may be terminated by the withdrawal of a complaint upon the request the Complainant, which will have the effect of rendering the initial complaint null and void from the beginning.
- 13) In the event that the Equity Officer determines that an Accused person has breached the Code of Conduct, they will order any such disciplinary action as they feels in their discretion is appropriate, including (though not exclusively), a formal warning, a demand for a formal apology, removal from the tab, expulsion from the tournament.
- 14) Where disciplinary action is taken, a written notification will be given to the party receiving the disciplinary action, and an additional copy will be kept by the Equity

Officer under seal. These are the only copies that will be made by the Equity Officer, and the Equity Officer shall not disclose the terms of the document to anyone other than the members of the Appeals Committee and the party receiving discipline.

- 15) Any person receiving disciplinary action may appeal the decision to an Appeals Committee to be comprised of the Convenor of the Event, any one of the Deputy Chief Adjudicators and the Chair of Worlds Council.
- 16) The Appeals Committee will meet as quickly as possible to hear the appeal and will either uphold, amend, or overturn the decision of the Equity Officer.
- 17) In the event that any member of the Appeals Committee finds themselves to be in a conflict of interest, or is unable to attend the hearing, they may nominate any of the Deputy Chief Adjudicators of the Event or the Chief Adjudicator, or another member of the Worlds Universities Debating Committee as set out in Article 28 (1) (a-e) to sit in their place.
- 18) Decisions of the Appeals Committee are final.

Choice of Laws/Contract Terms/Definitions

- 19) Participants acknowledge that this agreement is governed by the laws of [insert country] and [insert relevant state jurisdiction (if applicable)]. Any and all legal actions concerning this Code of Conduct, or concerning any aspect of the Championships where the [insert name of Debating Society] (including its executive members, general members, or designated agents) or the [insert name of university] are named parties to the action shall be conducted exclusively and entirely in the [insert relevant jurisdiction].

APPENDIX B

CUSID CODE OF CONDUCT BY-LAW

Purpose

1. The purpose of this By-Law is to give effect to the principle that all participants at events organized by CUSID members should have an opportunity equal with other individuals to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligations as participants in events organized by CUSID members, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, or disability, and to be free from harassment and intimidation in the performance of these duties and obligations.

Prohibited grounds of discrimination or harassment

2. All participants at a tournament hosted by a CUSID member will not engage in any behaviour that will undermine or attack the goals and purposes of CUSID including, but not limited to:
 - a. use offensive language or behaviour;
 - b. make denigrating comments on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, or disability;
 - c. harass, threaten, assault or intimidate other participants; or
 - d. damage or destroy any property that does not belong to them.

Complaints and equity officer

3. All intervarsity tournaments hosted by CUSID members shall appoint a Complaints and Equity Officer to investigate any complaints, including those under section 2.
4. The CUSID member hosting the intervarsity tournament shall outline the procedure for investigating and resolving complaints made to the Complaints and Equity Officer prior to the tournament's commencement.
 - 4.1.1 All procedures for investigating and resolving complaints must include the following:
 - a) a process for the making of anonymous complaints;
 - b) a process for the accused persons or persons to make a written statement responding to the allegation against him or her;
 - c) a process for determining whether section 2 has been violated;

- d) a process for determining the appropriate punishment in the event of a violation of section 2;
 - e) a process for informing all affected parties; and
 - f) a process for determining whether the complaint should be reviewed by the membership of CUSID.
5. The procedure for investigating and resolving complaints must be publicized prior to the commencement of the tournament.
 6. The CUSID Executive shall provide training and assistance to CUSID members for the investigation and resolution of complaints.
 7. The duties of the Complaints and Equity Officers include, but are not limited to:
 - a) Being aware of all resources of the security provisions of the institution at which the tournament is hosted;
 - b) Being visible and available for the duration of the tournament, including attendance at social events;
 - c) Acting in a responsible manner and be prepared to deal with any eventuality at all times;
 - d) Investigating all complaints; and
 - e) Issuing a report at the close of the tournament.

Procedure for review on request of the complaints and equity officer

8. A CUSID member, having investigated a complaint at its tournament, may request that the complaint be reviewed by the membership of CUSID at its next general meeting.
9. All requests for review by the membership of CUSID must include a written report detailing the investigation by the Complaints and Equity Officer.
10. Upon a two-thirds majority vote, the membership of CUSID may make an order against the person found to have engaged in the prohibited practice and include in the order any one or more of the following terms that the membership considers appropriate:
 - a) written order reprimanding the person for their conduct;
 - b) an oral order reprimanding the person for their conduct;
 - c) an order that the person apologize to the complainant for their conduct; or
 - d) an order prohibiting the person from participating in CUSID-sanctioned events for a period no less than three months and no more than five years.

11. All orders shall take the form prescribed in Schedule A.

Definitions

12. In this Bylaw,

Harassment is defined as engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.

Participant is defined as a debater, adjudicator, observer, or individual involved in the organization of the tournament.

Schedule A

The Canadian University Society for Intercollegiate Debate (CUSID) has determined that _____ (insert name) has engaged in behaviour that undermines and attacks the goals and purposes of CUSID.

CUSID hereby determines that the appropriate punishment is _____ (insert punishment).

APPENDIX C

SOLBRIDGE AUSTRALS EQUITY POLICY

1. Preamble

1.1 Purpose

The Solbridge Australasian Debating Championships 2015 (Austral 2015) is committed to providing a tournament free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and vilification, and which fosters equity, inclusion and respect for social and cultural diversity.

This policy explains what conduct is prohibited and outlines the procedures for raising complaints when participants feel that their equity has been breached.

1.2 Background and principles

Each year, the Australasian Debating Championships bring together an incredibly diverse group of participants to speak on a range of issues that can be sensitive and contentious. It has long been recognized that intervarsity debate should be about the respectful exchange of ideas, in a forum where all participants are able to feel welcome and are treated with dignity. No participant should be made to feel unwelcome or disrespected by another's words or actions, and equity policies such as this exist to clearly articulate what behaviors will not be tolerated, to prevent potential equity violations from arising and to resolve complaints if they do arise.

Understanding that we want debate to be both a competitive and a learning environment, and that debate frequently throws together disparate opinions, we also think equity should be more than just a punitive tool and as such, equity will not be exclusively punitive. We encourage the development of equity as a positive tool for education in cases where remarks or actions were inappropriate but not intended to be malicious, rather coming from a place of ignorance or the lack of familiarity with certain issues or vocabulary. No debater is perfectly knowledgeable about all issues that they will end up debating, and in the event that such rounds are frustrating or disappointing, we want to help all the debaters feel comfortable debating similar rounds in the future.

Equity is also a tool for participants to anonymously or non-anonymously take respite from the charged environment of competition and seriously discuss the proper and respectful way to speak about certain actors, issues, or events. The Equity Team is willing to mediate discussion over the issues that arise during the tournament. We welcome individuals to bring incidents to the attention of the Equity Team even if they do not necessarily wish for an apology from or the removal of the offending party.

This policy is a crystallization of those principles, and it seeks to protect all participants of Australs 2015 from conduct that would make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe, to encourage and facilitate discussion and education, and ultimately to make debate a more inclusive space for all.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all participants at Australs 2015, including but not limited to:

- a) Debaters
- b) Adjudicators
- c) Members of the Organizing Committee
- d) Coaches
- e) Observers

This policy applies for the entire duration of the tournament, which includes, but is not limited to:

- a) During debates
- b) Time between debates, including meals organized as part of the tournament
- c) During any formal event organized as part of the tournament
- d) During any social event organized as part of the tournament
- e) On transportation organized as part of the tournament
- f) In accommodation organized as part of the tournament

This policy applies both to in person conduct and conduct over social media.

3. Definitions

Bullying

Bullying is the repeated, unreasonable behaviour by an individual or group, directed towards another individual or group, either physical or psychological in nature, that intimidates, offends, degrades humiliates, undermines or threatens. This includes pressuring another individual or group to do something that they are uncomfortable with.

Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination is treating another individual or group less favourably on the basis of a protected attribute than someone without that attribute in the same circumstances or circumstances not materially different.

Harassment

Harassment is any unwelcome, offensive, abusive, belittling or threatening behaviour that humiliates, offends or intimidates an individual or group on the basis of a protected attribute.

Note that sexual harassment has a specific meaning as any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours or any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that humiliates, offends or intimidates a person and which a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would anticipate making the person humiliated, offended or intimidated.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination is imposing, or proposing to impose, a requirement, condition or practice that has, or is likely to have the effect of disadvantaging an individual or group with a particular protected attribute, and which is not reasonable in the circumstances.

Victimisation

Victimisation is to cause detriment to a person because that person has made a complaint or taken part in complaints proceedings.

Vilification

Vilification is the public incitement of hatred, contempt or severe ridicule of another individual or group on the basis of a protected attribute.

4. Prohibition on Discriminatory Conduct

This policy prohibits any participant or group of participants from discriminating (either directly or indirectly), harassing or vilifying another participant or group of participants on the basis of the following protected attributes:

- a) Age or age group
- b) Debating ability
- c) Disability (including but not limited to past, present and future disabilities, a genetic predisposition to a disability and behaviour that is a manifestation of a disability)
- d) Gender Identity (the gender-related identity, appearance or mannerisms or other gender related characteristics of a person, including but not limited to the way people express or present their gender and recognising that a person's gender identity may be an identity other than male or female)
- e) Infectious disease (for example, HIV status)
- f) Intersex Status
- g) Marital or relationship status
- h) Sexual practices or experience (for example, previous partner(s) or lack thereof)
- i) Political affiliation or beliefs
- j) Pregnancy
- k) Race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, or ethno-religious background

- l) Religious affiliation, belief, views or practice
- m) Sex
- n) Sexual orientation (including but not limited to asexuality, bisexuality, heterosexuality, and homosexuality)
- o) Socio-economic status and background

This policy also protects against discrimination, harassment or vilification on the basis of imputed or perceived protected attributes, and on the basis of association with a person or persons with a protected attribute.

This policy also prohibits any participant or group of participants from bullying another participant or group of participants.

Victimization of those who initiate complaints or take part in complaints proceedings is also prohibited under this policy.

5. Sexual Interactions and Positive Consent

When engaging in any sort of sexual or romantic interaction with another person, it is vital to be aware of how to do so without violating the other person's equity.

Participants are required to seek positive consent when engaging in any conduct of a sexual or potentially sexual nature, including but not limited to sexual intercourse, physical intimacy, flirting, making sexual jokes, or suggestive bodily contact (e.g. dancing). A failure to acquire positive consent will be a breach of this policy and may constitute sexual harassment.

Positive consent requires a person to actively affirm that other parties in any sexual or romantic interaction are freely and voluntarily agreeing to what is occurring. All parties should enquire as to what other people are feeling (e.g. "are you ok with this?" "Are we going too fast?" "Do you like this?"). If you cannot determine the consent of the parties involved, you should end the sexual or romantic interaction.

You have not obtained positive consent if:

- a) Someone is too drunk to understand what they are doing
- b) You are using social status or a position of authority to pressure someone into commencing or continuing a sexual interaction

6. Conduct and Matters Regarding Debates

6.1 General Conduct

Debaters are required to treat each other and the adjudicators with respect. This includes:

- a) Respecting the rules of the competition
- b) Refraining from disrupting or distracting other debaters or adjudicators, whether through words, sounds or conduct
- c) Accepting the decision of the adjudicator(s)

Adjudicators are also required to treat debaters and other adjudicators with respect by:

- a) Respecting the rules of the competition
- b) Refraining from disrupting or distracting other debaters or adjudicators, whether through words, sounds or conduct
- c) Refraining from insulting or non-constructive commentary on speeches or speakers

Additionally, the language used within debates can often unintentionally lead to equity violations. The Equity Team urges all participants to be mindful that fiery/aggressive rhetoric may be triggering for other participants (especially on motions that may relate to poverty, war, sexual assault or minority issues).

All participants must also ensure that they try to avoid making generalisations about any group on the basis of any protected attribute. For example, statements should be phrased as “some members of X community” rather than “all X people”.

6.2 Gender Pronouns

Australs 2015 recognizes that participants have diverse gender identities that need to be respected. Australs 2015 requires the chair judge to introduce themselves to the entire room with their correct pronoun, to give a chance to any wing judges present to do the same, and to introduce the correct pronoun of each debater. This process is explained further in accompanying documentation.

It is also expected that participants respect both the pronoun introduction process and the pronouns of each speaker, and refer to speakers by their correct pronoun or with gender-neutral language. Failure to do so may breach this policy.

6.3 Reasonable Adjustments for Participants with Disability

Australs 2015 is committed to ensuring, as far as is reasonably practicable, that all participants can fully take part in the tournament.

As such, adjustments may need to be made for participants with a disability, such as allocation of debating rooms close to the briefing hall, or use of assistive technology.

If a participant with a disability requires an adjustment, they should contact the Equity Team as soon as practicably possible. The Equity Team will make an assessment and provide recommendations to the Adjudication Core and the Organising Committee, who will make any adjustments deemed reasonably necessary.

7. Complaints Procedures and Handling

7.1 Raising an Equity Complaint

If a participant feels that there has been a breach of this policy, then they may raise the matter with a member of the Equity Team. All complaints raised are treated as confidential, and the complainant will determine whether or not a complaint is investigated further.

Complaints may also be made anonymously. The Equity Team feels that all people should feel comfortable to raise concerns they may have as freely and easily as possible. However, for due process reasons, the Equity Team cannot investigate anonymous complaints or provide remedies for anonymous complaints.

Participants are also encouraged to contact the Equity Team to raise general equity related concerns, even if they do not feel an incident has occurred. Both anonymous complaints and general concerns enhance the Equity Team's overall understanding of relevant issues occurring at the tournament, which will further assist in the prevention of future equity violations.

Complaints may be made informally or formally. An informal complaint is one that raises concerns, but does not require formal responses such as mediation or disciplinary action. These may be made in person or in writing. A formal complaint is where the complainant would like a formal response such as mediation or disciplinary action. Formal complaints must be made in writing.

Members of the Equity Team will excuse themselves from investigating and handling complaints that are made against them personally, or where a conflict of interest arises (e.g. one of the parties belongs to an institution they are affiliated with, they have a close personal relationship with one of the parties).

The Equity Team recognizes that some contingents appoint institutional equity officers. Contingent leaders and contingent equity officers may also refer matters reported to them to the Equity Team (with the consent of the person who made the report). However, it is important to note that institutional processes cannot replace this policy or the procedures outlined here.

7.2 Progressing an Equity Complaint

If the complainant does wish to progress with a complaint, the Equity Team shall:

- a) Speak with the complainant to obtain full details of the incident
- b) Speak with the offending participant to hear their side of the story
- c) Speak with any other participants as required by the circumstances

Following this investigation, the Equity Team will determine whether or not a breach of this policy has occurred. Two members of the Equity Team as a minimum shall undertake investigations, although additional members may also be involved, as required.

At any point during this process prior to resolution, a complainant may withdraw their complaint. At such a point, any investigation automatically ceases, and the initial complaint is treated as null and void. Equity, Discrimination and Harassment Policy

7.3 Resolution Mechanisms and Penalties

- a) If, following the investigation of the Equity Team, a breach of this policy is found to have occurred, the Equity Team may do any/all of the following:
- b) Explain the complaint to the offending participant and have a discussion with them about why their remark or action was inappropriate
- c) Issue a warning to the offending participant
- d) Request that the offending participant provide an apology

Bring the relevant participants together to conciliate the dispute

In serious cases, the Equity Team may also recommend to the Organizing Committee take formal disciplinary action. Such action may include:

Removal from events hosted by the tournament, including social events

Removal from the tournament's tab, either temporarily or permanently

Expulsion from the tournament

Involvement of law enforcement agencies

Where formal disciplinary action is taken, the offending party and the complainant will be provided with written notification.

7.4 Appeals

Any participant subject to disciplinary action may appeal the decision within twelve hours of receiving notification. Complainants also have a right to appeal under the same conditions.

Under the AIDA Constitution s 17, participants who feel that their equity has been violated may also request a meeting of the AIDA Disputes Tribunal. Under the AIDA Constitution s 18, the decisions of the Disputes Tribunal may be further reviewed by AIDA Council.

8. Legal & Policy Framework

8.1 AIDA Constitution

8.2 National Human Rights Commission Act 2001 (Republic of Korea)

9. Acknowledgements

The Equity Team would like to acknowledge the following documents that were used to inform the creation of this policy – University of Sydney Union Debates Equity Policy, Melbourne University Debating Society Equity Policy.

The Equity Team would also like to acknowledge the invaluable advice and input of Patricia Johnson-Castle in the creation of this policy.

APPENDIX D

AUSTRALS GENDER PRONOUN INTRODUCTIONS

As at WUDC 2015, Australs 2015 has a pronoun introduction procedure. This is because participants have diverse gender identities that should be respected. Misgendering someone or failing to use their correct pronoun can be alienating and is disrespectful. No one should ever assume a person's gender identity or their correct pronouns based on appearance.

It is the responsibility of the chair judge to introduce themselves to the entire room with their correct gender pronoun, and to give a chance to any wing judges present to do the same. Debaters, in filling out the team ballot, will have the opportunity to state their correct gender pronouns. If a speaker does not wish to identify a pronoun, they are not required to do so.

When the chair judge calls each debater to speak, they will also announce their correct gender pronouns. For example, a chair may say "I now call on the first affirmative speaker X, whose pronouns are she and they, to begin this debate". If a speaker has decided not to state their pronoun, the chair should state that the speaker has expressed no preference. The process should be explicit and deliberate, and is the responsibility of the chair, though others may call for it if the chair forgets. All participants should treat pronoun introductions seriously.

It is then the responsibility of all the participants to keep mindful of each other's correct gender pronouns. Even if the number of transgendered people in the circuit is relatively low, participants should listen intently during introductions with a mind towards the necessary amount of nuance that can potentially present itself.

For example, where some transgender or gender fluid people might identify with "ze," others may identify with "they" and vice versa. Some may have no strong preference for any pronoun. If mistakes are made, it falls to the chair to politely correct the error in a way least obtrusive to the round.

When speaking, it is also an option for people to structure their sentences in a way that avoids referring to someone through gender pronoun at all. This can be useful, for example, where a speaker has forgotten someone's correct pronoun and wishes not to offend by making a mistake.

APPENDIX E

SOLBRIDGE AUSTRALS LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

The goal of equity at Australs is for the event to be as inclusive as possible for every potential participant, and the burden of that is on each and every participant to be sensitive and considerate in how they interact with others.

This can sometimes be a challenge when, for example, finding appropriate language while debating about sensitive topics. Not everyone can be expected to know everything about a sensitive topic.

We on the equity team realize that making this inclusiveness a reality entails not just good will, but a fair amount of learning as well. No full or comprehensive guide for this exists. While we definitely encourage participants to work towards this end and to learn on their own and from each other, we have also come up with our own set of suggestions about the appropriate use of language that we hope can serve as a starting point.

1. Generalizations

Avoid use of the word “all” when referring to groups of people, especially when speaking of negative traits. It discounts the possibility and existence of exceptions, and offends in that way. Instead, use words like “many,” or “some” which do not make this same mistake, for example: “All poor people are bad at making long-term decisions” vs “Many people who are impoverished have a hard time making long-term decisions.”

Put people’s humanity first. There is a subtle but important difference between the phrase “poor person” and the phrase “person who is impoverished.” The former presents the poverty as an almost defining characteristic, while the latter leads with a recognition of personhood to which the poverty is a mere condition.

Recognize that many conditions are externally imposed. For example, instead of saying “poor people are bad at long-term planning,” say “poverty makes long-term planning difficult.”

As a general principle, phrase everything as if you are talking about someone in the room. If you feel what you say might offend them, then adjust it. If what you seek to say is indeed true, this should be possible. If after several adjustments you can not make it inoffensive, then simply drop it.

Please also be aware of slang terminology, which is often highly contextual. Where possible, try to avoid using slang terminology, or if you do need to refer to such terms please ensure that you explain their meaning and context.

2. Sex and Gender

It is important to keep aware of another's correct gender pronoun, the one they identify with. Do not assume what a person's gender pronoun is based on their appearance. There will be an opportunity for each participant to state their correct gender pronoun, and it is important to be aware of this and respect the pronouns of others.

Some LGBTQIA people may have reclaimed previously derogatory words, such as "fag," or "dyke". This does not make the use of these words by people who do not identify as LGBTQIA appropriate. These words can still be loaded with cultural baggage in ways someone not LGBTQIA might not understand, and this can be very hurtful to someone still struggling with that reality.

Recognize that language has evolved in a very gendered way, and hasn't caught up to be inclusive of many identities now such as with people with a gender identity other than male or female. Realize that this reflects on our unconscious habits in its use. It is more inclusive to make an effort to not use "he" as a default pronoun when referring to hypotheticals, and to instead use "they" or even just structuring a sentence to eliminate the need for a gendered pronoun.

The notes above about generalization are particularly relevant when characterizing people through their sex or their gender, since the associated problems with generalization are very commonplace in regular language. For example, instead of hearing that women are raised to be submissive and men are raised to suppress their emotions, we are instead more likely to hear that women are simply submissive, and that men are simply out of touch with their emotions.

Recognize that terminology here is strongly contested, and that even the term "gender identity" and the use of the term "LGBTQIA" as an umbrella term can be questionable as well. Ultimately, support the right of people to identify themselves as they choose.

3. Race

Similar to the situation with LGBTQIA issues, some offensive racial terms such as "nigger" have been reclaimed by some from communities which these terms oppress. These words are still inappropriate for use by others.

Similarly, members of a racial group might make jokes about their own racial "attributes", such as misuse of English, or a predisposition to some kind of racial or religious intolerance. It is important here to note both that it is inappropriate for others to make these jokes, and to remember as well the above comments about generalization when speaking about this more seriously.

4. Corrections in-round

We believe it appropriate for chairs to comment on the use of language in a round in between speeches in the same way that they might comment to enforce order. Sometimes in rounds participants may encounter people using language that is problematic for the topic at hand, where the language was almost certainly used because of a lack of exposure/inexperience rather than to cause offence.

For example, someone saying the word “Negro” might not have a lot of exposure to the historical understanding of that word and might not realize that it is a very loaded term. The chair can say something to the effect of “that didn’t affect the rankings in this round, but that word is very historically loaded. I don’t think you realized this, but in the future please avoid that phrasing.

APPENDIX G

COMPLAINTS PROCESS

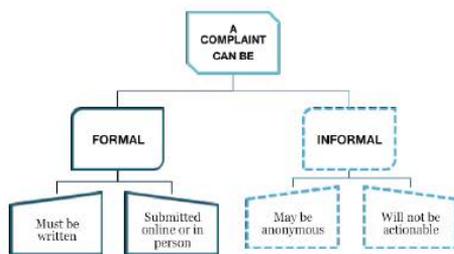
INFOGRAPHIC

AUSTRALS 2015 EQUITY TEAM

	<p>ONLINE FORM</p> <p>http://tinyurl.com/australsequityform</p> <p>EMAIL</p> <p>australsequity@gmail.com</p>	<p>CONTACT US</p> <p>Katarina Schwarz +64 226 130 937 Lucian Tan +61 415 093 941 Nicolo Fortuna +63 917 874 6771 Sharada Srinivasan +91 963 235 6441 Vincent Chiang +61 430 288 575</p>
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COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Step 1: Registering a Complaint



- *All complaints will be treated as confidential
- *Complainants shall determine whether or not a complaint is to be investigated further
- *Contingent equity officers (if any) may refer matters reported to them to the Equity Team (after seeking the complainant's consent)
- *Members of the equity team shall excuse themselves from investigating issues where a potential conflict may arise

Step 2: Investigation Process

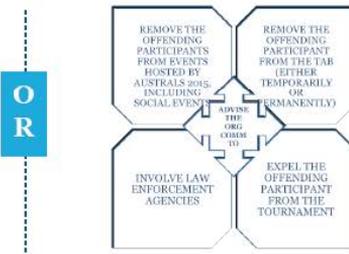
Upon receipt of a formal complaint, at least two members of the equity team shall:



Step 3: Resolution Mechanisms and Penalties

Based on the gravity of the complaint, the equity team may

- Explain the complaint to the offending participant and have a discussion with them about why their remark or action was inappropriate
- Issue a warning to the offending participant
- Request that the offending participant provide an apology
- Bring the relevant participants together to conciliate the dispute



ARE YOU EXPERIENCED: AN EXAMINATION OF THE EFFECTS OF EXPERIENCE GAPS ON THE GENDER BALANCE WITHIN COMPETITIVE DEBATING

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Introduction

The demographics of university debating are changing. Circuits joke about “dinosaurs” and when to “retire” from debating, while holding discussions on how to deal with eligibility as more and more debaters want to continue through professional qualifications and distance learning courses. Here we examine the impact of these changes, and particularly the way that older male debaters continuing to speak impacts on circuits’ attempts to encourage more females to debate.

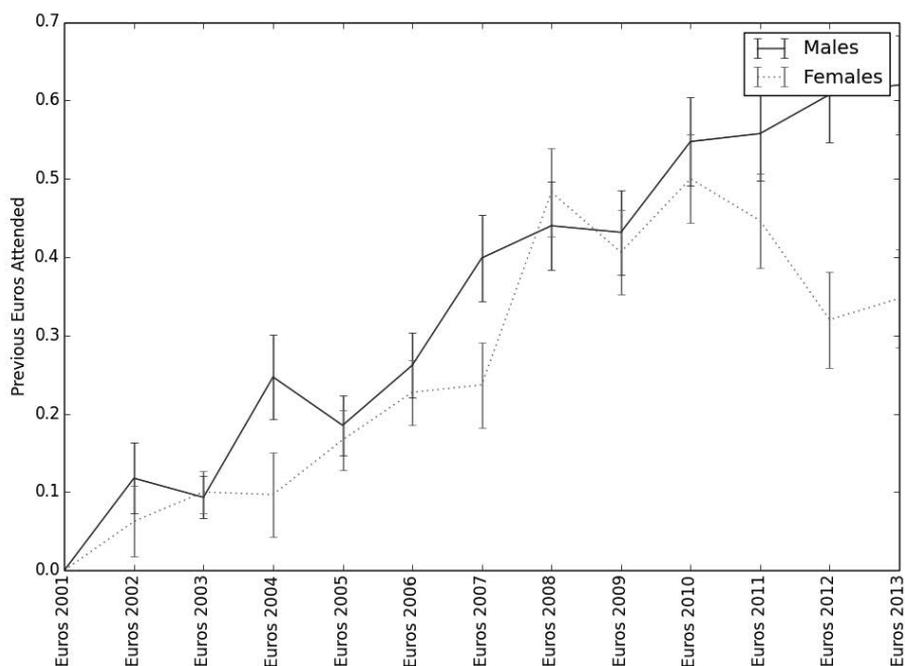
It is important to note that the impact of debaters continuing later can be viewed through a variety of lenses including but not limited to: ability, class, financial means, race, sexual orientation. In this article, we will be focusing on the impact of highly experienced male speakers on female speakers. We also want to make clear that this article is not meant as a personal attack on any experienced male debater, and that our aim is simply to provoke a discussion around the impact of continuing to debate.

Context

Despite policies and innovations specifically aimed at increasing the engagement of women in the debating circuit, such as women-only tournaments and training sessions, there continues to exist large disparities between the numbers of men and women in competitive debating. Even if there are often equivalent numbers of men and women in attendance at both national and international tournaments, this is not reflected in the distribution of debating successes.

In the 2013 edition of the *Monash Debate Review*, Emma Pierson discussed the potential causes of the differential between male and female speakers. One of the identified reasons for a disparity in achievements was that male speakers were typically more experienced at debating (see figure 1)

Figure 1. Number of previous EUDCs attended by males and females¹



The surprising thing about Figure 1 isn't that there is a gap in experience – debating has been historically male dominated, so we might expect to initially see a gap in experience between males and females – but that the gap is growing. Male debaters are coming back to an increasing number of EUDC tournaments. Women debaters are not. Our argument is that one leads to the other.

Why having more experienced male debaters leads to fewer female debaters

Experience leads to more success

This may seem obvious, but experienced debaters are more likely to succeed at tournaments. Having participated in debating for longer than most people, they have

¹ Pierson, 'Men Outspoke Women', *Monash Debate Review*, 2013

had more opportunities to practice and improve their debating skills than speakers with less experience. Having had more time to hone their skills, they are more likely to be able to construct arguments in skilful ways, engage with other teams more meaningfully, and so on. They also tend to benefit from general knowledge of the debating circuit. This knowledge should not be under-estimated in its importance. Examples of such extra-curricular knowledge may include familiarity with certain motions or topics, knowledge of debate jargon or knowledge and ability to respond to the preferences of individual judges. All of these things can be useful, but not necessarily always decisive, in debates. In any case, we can reasonably conclude that a greater amount of experience in debating can increase a speaker's likelihood of success at national or international tournaments, both in terms of ability to improve debating skills and in terms of extra-curricular knowledge of debating gained through increased participation in and exposure to the debate circuit.

The success of highly-experienced debaters comes at the cost of other speakers achieving equivalent success

Breaking at a tournament is a zero-sum game. Teams either will or will not break. One team breaking in a particular position necessarily comes at the expense of another team breaking in that position.

The effect of this is to deprive teams and speakers that otherwise might have broken the opportunity to speak in out-rounds, and deprives them of a debating success more generally. In particular, this means that teams consisting of highly-experienced debaters are more likely to beat out less experienced teams to the break. Owing to their lack of comparable experience, and thus lesser knowledge and skill levels, they are more likely to be beaten by the highly-experienced teams, and the latter maintain a competitive advantage over those teams.

This particularly affects women debaters.

It might be argued that the impact of people debating for longer is not related to gender. Whilst it is, of course, theoretically possible that female speakers might choose to continue to debate after first or second degrees, this does not occur in practice. In the small survey we conducted prior to writing this article, undergraduate debaters (here taken to mean debaters with three years of experience or less) were asked how likely they were to continue debating after graduation. 70% of respondents answered that they were either “not at all likely” or “not very likely” to continue.²

There are many potential reasons that women are less likely to continue speaking. One is the perception that debating is a male-dominated activity, and that women are less likely

2 The full details of the survey are contained in Appendix I. We do not infer that the results can be treated with any statistical significance or to make generalizable claims about the circuit as a whole, but rather to indicate that there are people that feel this is an issue that debating should take seriously.

to be successful as a result of this. 86% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “my national debate circuit is male-dominated”, with 36% of respondents strongly agreeing. The figure is higher in relation to international tournaments (including WUDC and EUDC). 97% of respondents agreed with the statement “the international debate circuit is male-dominated”. Thus, not only is it statistically the case that there are more male debaters than women debaters; there is also a strong awareness of this trend. This may not be harmful in of itself. However, women debaters may also perceive that their success will be impacted harmfully by this gender disparity. 61% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I feel less likely to succeed at international debating tournaments on account of my gender.” Thus, not only do women debaters perceive that there are far more men than women in debating; they also believe this to damage their chances of success, which affects how likely they are to enjoy and continue engaging in debating.

This phenomenon is exacerbated by the predominance of experienced male debaters. When asked, “Have you ever felt that you have been deprived of an opportunity or success in debating owing to the presence of a highly experienced male speaker?” 74% of respondents answered affirmatively. Repeated experiences of being deprived of the opportunities we described above may serve to decrease the enjoyment that women feel they get out of competitive debating, and thus discourages them from continuing to spend considerable amounts of time and effort on the activity.

The presence of many experienced male debaters also has an impact on the development of female speakers. If a society has a large number of male debaters that continue to masters and PhD level, this will often mean that they take up most institutional team spots for WUDC and EUDC. We have both personally witnessed trials in which males that were completing additional degrees deprived women undergraduates of places for WUDC and EUDC.

This would not be so much of an issue in practice if attempts were made to mitigate against this by providing additional opportunities to women debaters. However, societies or experienced debaters may not make these efforts themselves. For instance, women may not be offered opportunities to “Pro-Am”. Many societies attempt to aid the development of novice speakers by partnering them with a more experienced speaker, either at an organised Pro-Am tournament or at another IV or Open. In practice, these opportunities may not be available to women, as speaking spots may instead go to male members and novice speakers. Highly-experienced debaters may not seek to provide these because they are primarily focusing on consolidating their own skills and practicing further. Thus, agreeing to Pro-Am a younger debater who is less skilled at debating is an opportunity cost. Note in particular the comments of these anonymous respondents:

“I’ve found that opportunities (pro-ams, team spots for major competitions etc.) are taken by confident male schools speakers in 1st year, leaving females playing catch up”

“...[T]hose speakers seem vastly more likely to ‘pro-am’ upcoming male debaters than female ones. That means female debaters aren’t just being edged out by older male debaters but by the younger male speakers who are speaking with them.”

These opportunities may, furthermore, simply not be available as societies may not consider the promotion of gender equality within competitive debating as an important end:

“My debating union makes no effort to retain female debaters or mentor them and there is a huge gender disparity which they do not see an issue with.”

Many women debaters perceive themselves not to have been offered the same opportunities as their male counterparts, or otherwise deprived of opportunities.

It should be noted that this does not mean that the presence of highly-experienced male debaters is necessarily always harmful to individual women’s experiences. The expertise in speaking and judging that many highly-experienced male debaters have can be beneficial to women speakers, in the form of providing constructive feedback or agreeing to speak with novice women debaters in Pro-Am tournaments, for example. One respondent commented: “I feel that some, although not many [...], have put active effort into female development, specifically to improve the gender divide”. The crucial point here is that, although some highly experienced male speakers have contributed positively to many women’s experiences of debating, the net effect of the predominance of these speakers at national and international tournaments has been negative for many women debaters.³

Why is this important?

There is a trend towards male debaters continuing to debate for longer than women. This trend has consequences not only for the success of women debaters, but also for their engagement in the activity. Moreover, there is no indication of this trend declining, and so these problems are likely to get worse. Given national and international circuits, generally speaking, already consider gender equality as an end we ought to work towards- for instance, through organising women-only tournaments and through development and enforcement of equity policies- the fact that older, male debaters seem to be crowding out women debaters is a phenomenon that ought to cause us grave concern.

Drawing distinct barriers about when someone *should* retire from debating will be almost impossible. Many people don’t discover debating until later in their academic life and should not be prevented from taking part in the activity. This should not mean that we ignore the fact that allowing people to continue for longer does have consequences. WUDC’s restriction of four chances at speaking at worlds has in reality meant that

3 See responses to question 11

many people save their fourth chance at speaking until they are in a third or fourth degree to maximise their chances of success, while EUDC has no restriction at all. While many circuits have provisions for novice tournaments, we aren't aware of any that offer undergraduate-only tournaments that would allow speakers.

Experienced debaters can provide a lot to the circuit, through judging, training and offering pro-am opportunities. When making the decision to "retire" or not, speakers need to consider whether having that final shot at WUDC glory is worth potentially taking the breaking spot of a young woman debater.

Debating is an activity that many people enjoy. Thus it is understandable why speakers may choose to continue participating in it nationally or internationally. But this should not prevent us from engaging in a critique of the actions and systems that enable individuals to deprive women of important opportunities, and thus cause them to miss out on the academic and personal benefits that debating can bring.

Authors

Claudia Hyde is studying towards an LLB in Law at LSE, and is currently the President of LSE SU Debate Society, having previously served as Treasurer and convenor of the LSE Open 2015. She judged the open semi-finals of Vienna EUDC, as well as the out-rounds of multiple debating tournaments in the UK circuit.

Jonathan Kay completed an MSc in Political Theory and BSc in Politics and Philosophy at LSE. During his time at LSE he was elected as the training officer. He has judged semi-finals at Malaysia WUDC and Zagreb EUDC, and broke as a speaker at Berlin WUDC. He currently works in education policy.

CULTURE AND ORGANISATION

MONASH
DEBATING
review

IN MOTIONS WE TRUST

VIRENDHREN NAIDOO
Howard College Debating Union

Introduction

This opinion piece, like its writer, is fixated on inclusivity in debate: in divining and contributing to mechanisms to achieve such the text does not spent time exalting on the incremental benefits of inclusivity, or the complete moral and spiritual formulae of community-making. The word-limit looms, and the unions are as many as cloth in a fabric shop. The particular fashion of transformation selected here is Motions: motion-setting as an actively-sensitive pursuit; as necessarily progressive; and as effective in bringing about better debating. This piece unpacks the manifestation of motions that deal with identity politics – class, race, gender, culture – to put forward generally applicable ideas for all debaters and debate communities. This paper uses examples of transformational space and forums in South African Debating driven or complimented by motion setting on contextual and “controversial” topics, to illustrate how debate motions and the contextual relations of people brought about ideas of inclusive practices in SA Debating: ideas that survive today as infrastructure and creates real equity.

What’s in a motion?

A great motion does not only make us more insightful on a topic; it gives us imaginative space to think on, relate to, and if we can, transmit ideas toward self and community development. We as debaters recognize that Debateland is a microcosm of human society and our gains are its gains, its pains, ours. And motion-setting reflects that. In South Africa, our Debateland is just a toenail over the line from mirror-image toward the egalitarian utopia we strive for. YAKKA, the glory of international competition and longstanding regional competition have converted our circuit from its lazy re-enactment of our social issues to practicing a new religion of openness and just conflict.

A perfect example is the motion “This House Would close the Nationals 2011 Group”. In post-apartheid South Africa, the polarizing conversations on gender, race and class were creeping into Debateland. Our discourse on the prevailing perspectives was reaching an aggressive peak online, and many in our circuit felt the Facebook Group would endanger the reputation and stability of our community. The opposing stance was separated into two factions: one distinct sect believed the Group was a platform for truth however unsanitary and exploitative its expression, and its fellow, an umbrella of various types, believed that with moderation and consensus-making, whatever came from the Group online, transparently, was beneficial for enhancing the strength and collective conscious of SA Debating. By actually debating the motion at tournament, all debaters were existentially included in the discussion that was raging inside the federal structures and across unions. It was a momentous break from simply Debating. Regardless of what the rankings may reveal or how arguments were treated by judges, the motion coerced people to cross over the self-drawn lines of factionalism in healthy British Parliamentary style. In South Africa, Black, Women, Queer and Multi-lingual debaters use this bridge – this connection between what we debate and the realities we live, at the intersection of the desire for debate excellence, to change the ways in which the Privileged voices interact with the Othered and Oppressed voices, to get us all to participate in common purpose. It offers us the chance to relinquish our tight hold over our worldviews when they dominate and discriminate in context. It generally channels conflict into critical engagement.

This requires diagnosing the social relations that lead to division and exclusion, and exploiting conflict for debating value. This creates new motions by virtue of knowing what your Debateland is ready for. Early day motions like “THW allow same-sex couples to adopt” (UKZN training 2008) can be debated in new forms as what we know develops: “TH Supports an assimilationist LGBTI movement in Africa” or “THS a libertarian LGBTI movement in conservative communities”. As debate calls upon us to discuss and resolve ethical dilemmas, social problems are revealed as greatly solvable through interpersonal relations and thought-programmes. Where there is no public consensus in a liberal state, or where the social culture or rule of law prohibits revelation on a particular subject, where there is fear and insecurity even, there is an opportunity born from the underclass (as Marx once put¹).

1 Karl Marx spoke of the inherent revolutionary tendency of the underclass in a hegemonic status quo. It is in the nature of the dominated to voice and act out liberation.

Exclusion and Inclusion: the dialectic of power in space

Hegel² asserts that a listener and receiver create a debate, the dialectic that manifests their subject-hood in an ensuing exchange. Fanon³ accepts this, but situates the dialectic in the context of the listener and receiver: an understanding that a dominant voice claims and creates knowledge and shared-space, which the dominated voice exists in as its other. Thus, the Black, Woman and Queer debater cannot simply speak into space and claim and create knowledge: they must confront the White Male subject-voice that situates them as the Othered-voice. Inherently, the dominant subject-voice also suffers in their narrow conception of knowledge and cultural production. We as debaters recognize that Debateland is a microcosm of human society and our gains are its gains, its pains, ours. Debateland must be seen and questioned as a constructed space for consciousness. We should address motions and motion-setting as we do headlining, shafts and pronoun use⁴: things we philosophize on, update and track. As we saw with the overt misogyny perpetrated in the Glasgow Union Chamber⁵, we cannot assume well-established debate unions are neutral or positively disposed to inclusivity.

At times, a controversial motion needs to happen to advance a stalemate – sometimes you cannot foresee the controversies. What is clear is that debates that degenerate to ad hominem attacks or subtle heterosexism or transphobia, do so because of lack of knowledge and/or fear of the change in human social relations. Sometimes what you are seeing is not a bad speech or speaker, but a manifestation of a socially-accepted discrimination.

Domination Continued: a side-note on controversial motion-setting

The above spoke to the positive knock-on effects, and maximising them. But when you set a motion like “THW carpet-bomb Mecca”, the intent is dubious. To me, it is not so much intending to be a digestible motion with intellectual gains that stimulate the imagination of your debate society; it appears to satisfy a latent, antisocial desire to exert violence, or rather, debate about using violence while ignoring a duty to be sensitive to fellow humans. That is graphic intellectual masturbation. It tells me that debaters in such imaginations are saturated in their own world-belief, and rather than look deeper into

2 Georg Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) unpacks Hegel’s interpretation of relations between beings in space manifesting mind and culture; the nuance of subject-object relations is not necessary here.

3 Frantz Fanon’s philosophy is arguably best conceptualized through reading “The Wretched of the Earth” (1961) and “Black Skin White Masks” (1967), but the critique of the dialectic is in the later text.

4 An idea first espoused by Crash Wigley, a transgender debater addressing the discomfort and misgendering that occurs in debate-spaces.

5 “The Sexism I Faced at the Glasgow University Union” by Rebecca Meredith: <http://m.huffpost.com/uk/entry/2816940>

engagement between two worldviews, the motion created revels in the Otherness of one class. I don't believe a debate union that is socially conscious and nourishes intellectual development would devise such a motion presupposing local or broader social gains. One could alternatively debate "TH Believes That the West should interrupt Hadj" or "THW militarily install moderate Islamist leadership". If the intent is to activate your religious and secular debater alike, to bring both to the table in the spirit of debate and great argumentation, to discuss something that may be incendiary in public spaces, then the motion should not ask one side of the House to advocate violence of a genocidal proportion. Motions ought to assist us in learning to use our intellectual license, but also learn and reinforce sensitivity and social cohesion.

Better Debating (what to do beyond motion-setting): Debating can't just be Sport anymore

It was departure day of Pan-African Championships 2011 in Zimbabwe and South African Jan-Shawn Noah Malatje was arrested on suspicion of being homosexual. The full story is pinned to the Queer Forum Facebook Page, but following the dehumanising and quite hopeless incident, after diplomatic avenues turned into dead-ends, he and I resolved to do something about the lack of contingency when traveling⁶. We were also depressed that the collective will did not come to our aid – weren't we all debaters? We created Queer Forum in 2012 to enlist legal advice in the event that something went wrong. We didn't know right then, we had created a space for consciousness and debate around LGBTI debaters' experience in Debateland. This allowed us to compliment the already fertile soil of ideas on the issues. It is edging on 2016, and Queer Forum survives in a much more open and discursive environment. A Women's Debate Forum has been incepted in South Africa with a Women's Open invitational. The latter is too much to detail, so I will suffice to say that recognizing pernicious male-dominance led to women⁷ deciding that an effective women's debate and development space would need to be exclusive.

As Queer Forum grew beyond infancy, cis gender and queer people were meeting together, expressing issues and lifting the presumption of ignorance. Our experience had taught us that working together allowed us to speak out and transform debate without invitations to Council. While Patriarchy⁸ in South Africa is so endemic that female-exclusive spaces need to exist, the Queer issue rests on the heterosexism in our Debateland – the endemic silence – that is among us and our fellows. Queer Forum allows us a space to Come Out, validate our voices and quash myth and misunderstanding – it also allowed me and

6 We were joined by Keith Vries, Mmeli Notsch, Comine Howe and Romeo Gumede in ensuing years for projects such as branded T-Shirts and research surveys.

7 Over a four year period, implicating Lindelwe Dube, Athinangomso Ester Nkopo, Kimera Chetty, Limphe Moeti, Noluthando Yeni, Judith Kakese Mukuna, Lee Moraka Masilo, and Charity Makhala.

8 A theory set forth definitely, by bell hooks in her 2009 chapter "Understanding patriarchy".

queer debaters to relax around our fellow debaters as we felt like we were being heard in a new space within Debateland; we were no longer pretending that glass ceilings didn't exist. Women, Black, Queer and Religious debaters feel a greater sense of participation in the evolution of Debate via active discoursing. This lessens the harm and violence of intellectual and personal interaction between delegates and/or newcomers to debate. As motions instigate critical thinking and argumentation organically, there is greater potential for individual and group action and emancipation. These translate into real equity.

Conclusion

Undeniably, debating ideology and culture coerces the debater to think about their beliefs and social position; to think about the position of different classes of individual. But debate motions – or rather, critical thinking – does not coerce us as debaters to readily accept or promulgate rights/equality of vulnerable persons in society. So to set the ground running for inclusive practices within Debateland, we ought to be cognizant of opportunities for inclusive practices like spontaneous discourse: and the motions likely to create them or emerge from them. Whether directly or indirectly progressive in intention, adjudicator cores should set motions on current affairs and controversial topics – debating motions on gender, race, class and culture ought to stimulate thinking at minimum, and inspire transformation in the long-term.

Time to open the box carefully. We ought to learn from unions that make abhorrent mistakes and successful ventures alike. It makes us better in our manner, flexible on perspective, and makes us activated citizens. This makes debating relevant to society and creatively sustainable. Protecting diversity of individuals and ideas allows us to benefit from the productivity that comes with it. Smart motion-setters keeps debating relative to our social ethics and relevant to participants' lived and Debateland realities. This is progressive thinking.

Author

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THE GREAT ADJUDICATION DIVIDE

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Calls on the circuit are continuously made for the improvement of adjudication and rightly so. As a debate community we constantly aspire to more, the realm of adjudication should be no different. Some might even claim that those words of “with great power comes great responsibility” might even ring ever more true when it comes to this sphere. A speaker having a bad round affects himself and potentially his partner. Bad adjudication affects all four teams in the room. As many teams on the cusp of breaking will tell you – the difference between a first or second place could entail being immortalised in the “debate hall of fame” or otherwise wishing to drown your sorrows in a barrel of South African Yakka. With so much on the line for debaters – both speakers and adjudicators – this is a call to create awareness of the chasm between what we expect from good adjudicators and how to actually get there. These suggestions are by no means all that can be embarked upon to improve adjudication. The aim is to ensure that members of the debate community renew their focus on ensuring that adjudication is continuously considered as important as speaking and that efforts are made to ensure that this results in tangible action.

This piece will firstly examine the audio-visual materials available to adjudicators to improve their skills. Secondly, the written material available to adjudicators will be considered. Lastly, the individual debate societies and the international debate community’s attitude towards adjudication will be reviewed as a point of interest.

Video training for adjudication

Speaking specifically from the perspective of the African circuit, there is much that needs to be done to ensure that more debaters are given access to training material that is needed to improve themselves. Even on circuits that have more

institutional experience, new debaters in large societies that attempt to do training by themselves in order to improve exponentially, without relying too heavily on more experienced debaters, need to be able to take more of their debate training into their own hands. Whilst there has been a definite increase in the online material available, there is still an alarmingly small amount for adjudicators in comparison to speakers.

The most pressing issue is the amount of videos available online. A perusal of Youtube will give results on numerous WUDC and EUDC debates, to name but a few. On Vimeo, Alfred Snider has 1 478 videos to date and yet a search of “adjudication” gives but a single video result. It is very difficult and certainly not widely accessible to find lectures being given on how to become a better adjudicator. Whilst we are privileged to see speeches being made in WUDC finals of very accomplished speakers, I am yet to find a single recorded deliberation or oral feedback from some of the best adjudicators on the circuit. How are adjudicators supposed to learn the skills of how to be a chair that guides discussions of high quality debates and delivers feedback to excellent speakers, that expect to be convinced that their case was perhaps not as awe-inspiring as they believed it to be? Too few adjudicators get the opportunity to learn by actually taking part in prestigious tournaments and even so, are not always guaranteed to be on a panel with adjudicators that can actually teach these skills in the tiny amount of allocated time. My suggestion on this matter is a simple one. Just as debates are recorded, so too the deliberation and the feedback should be recorded and posted online for numerous tournaments happening all across the globe. Those in charge of adjudication training at societies all over the world could then make use of this.

Written material for adjudicators

Whilst there is certainly more available for adjudicators in the written form, it is still insignificant in comparison to what speakers have available. Certainly within the literature there are elements that apply to both speakers and adjudicators, but even so this material is often focused on how speakers can employ these tactics and not on how adjudicators should evaluate them. My trawling of the internet has found the most insightful literature to be chapter 9 of *Winning Debate's* by Steven L. Johnson and a *Guide to Chairing and Adjudicating a World's Debate* by Omar Salahuddin Abdullah, Ian Lising and Steven Johnson. Other than that: *Speaking, Listening and Understanding* by Gary Rybold, the Basics of Adjudicating section in African Voices' *First Principles Training Handbook* and the *Australia-Asia Debating Guide* by Ray D'Cruz - does offer some insights into adjudication. My proposal would be that adjudication trainers should make this material available and highly recommend that adjudicators read and apply this. Over and above that I would urge those that are seasoned adjudicators to

compile a comprehensive training guide. This could include the importance of dedicated adjudication training, actual training drills catered specifically for adjudicators, different methods for efficient note taking, guidelines for how to chair a deliberation, how to structure oral feedback and how to be an effective panellist, to name but a few.

Perceptions surrounding adjudicators

When I made the shift from the speaking to adjudicating there were a number of elements that I came to realise put adjudicators, even if only implicitly, in an inferior position. True, that often this was not the intention – but perceptions are powerful. Especially on the African circuit, the most “talented” debaters are chosen to speak at tournaments and those that are left over are those sent along as adjudicators. Whilst of course there are major benefits to being able to both speak and adjudicate, there is often little emphasis placed on new or old debaters contemplating where their strengths, desires or ambitions lie. The natural progression in most cases seems to be to try out being a speaker and failing that attempt adjudication. Otherwise, adjudication is something a debater attempts to do when they have achieved what they hoped to achieve in the speaker’s realm.

Making adjudicators feel even implicitly inferior happens in many small instances throughout the course of everyday tournaments. How often is there much awe and anticipation of the top 10 speakers in a tournament and yet, this same thrill is not reserved for adjudicators. Naturally, it is more difficult to rank the best adjudicators from one to ten because they do not accumulate speaker points, but at many tournaments there is not even a mention of the best performing adjudicators.

An international example of adjudicators not being seen as important as speakers was at Malaysia’s WUDC in 2014/2015. The social media coverage of this tournament was hailed by many as excellent and I myself can attest to the gratitude of being able to watch live debates all the way in South Africa. Yet, a perusal of the twitter feed will show live tweeting of every team breaking as it was announced. Only upon requests was the names of the breaking adjudicators provided with a link to the spreadsheet. Another consideration is the registration of clashes.

There could be a speaking team that has made it to the final of a tournament and there was an absolutely exceptional adjudicator that would have adjudicated in the final. However, if a speaker and the adjudicator happen to have a clash registered, the adjudicator will be the one unable to partake in the final. Of course, the repercussions of telling a team that they would not be allowed to speak in a final because the CAP was prioritising this specific adjudicator, is unthinkable. There could well be debate on the impracticalities

of such a decision, the bias that could creep in, the effect on the speaking partner etc. My point is not necessarily that we need an overhaul of the precedent that has been set. Rather awareness that the underlying message is important. This message could be that the contribution of a brilliant adjudicator who may well be *the* one to swing a panel with their unique and insightful perspective on the debate cannot be more important than the deserved place of the contribution that the speakers speech will make to the debate.

In conclusion, there is much that our community must undertake in order to ensure that the standard of adjudication right across the globe is improved. This starts with a realisation that adjudicators need to be empowered with the necessary tools and skills. It is integral for adjudicators too, to realise that the onus is on them to actively train and not just point fingers towards teams that are unhappy because they were placed last. It is not acceptable for adjudicators to espouse statements about not being up to date with current affairs because they will “only” be adjudicating at this tournament. It is my hope that we will soon be able to speak of “those” days - when the divide between speaker and adjudicator was a chasm that we bridged as debaters, one and all.

Author

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BLIND GAZELLES AND ALL OF THEIR FRIENDS: HYPOTHETICAL MOTIONS IN DEBATING

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In one of the ANU Spring BP Debating Championships semi-finals this year, the Prime Minister began their speech with the statement (paraphrased): “Well, when I saw this motion, I immediately regretted my decision not to retire sooner, because we’ve well and truly jumped down the debating rabbit hole.” The tournament in question was one of the most prestigious and competitive in Australia, and the debater in question an extremely senior and accomplished member of the Australian debating community. The motion?

You are the loving parent of a 16 year old. Your child has been involved in a gang-related murder, and comes to you for help to cover up their involvement. You believe that your child has been pressured into playing a part in this crime. Based on your knowledge, you also think that it is possible your child could be tried as an adult, and that there is a strong likelihood of their conviction.

This house would help cover up their involvement in the murder.

Personally speaking, I felt both the motion and the resulting debate were excellent; nevertheless, I can appreciate the PM speaker’s concern, and their statement was hardly the only reservation I had heard expressed about this motion. Indeed, it is hardly the only reservation I have heard about aforementioned motion, or about others like it.

Simultaneously, however, it is clear that motions like the above – featuring extensive infoslides and/or hypothetical scenarios – are becoming increasingly common. At WUDC 2015, there was a motion where debaters had to argue, from the perspective of a

doctor working for the US military, whether or not one should treat torture victims¹. At Australs 2015, a round featured such motions: one about inhabiting a digital reality, and one about a memory-erasing machine². All sorts of weird and wacky scenarios have been debated, from superheroes³, to worlds where everyone is blind, to the actions of sentient gazelles. And moreso than any other motion, in my experience, it is motions such as these (which I will label “Hypothetical Motions”⁴) which most commonly attract ridicule and contempt. It is also motions such as the above, however, which most commonly attract admiration and praise.

This article will sit as a response somewhere between love and hate. It will do two things. Firstly, it will make a case defending the value of Hypothetical Motions, responding to critiques of them whilst also advancing a positive case exploring their value within debating. Specifically, the article will argue that the setting of these motions in competitive debating keeps the competition dynamic and relevant, producing unique, valuable clashes which are well worth debating. There will also be discussion of how the epistemological difficulties with these motions are not actually particularly problematic, and are easily resolvable with certain guidelines. Secondly, the article will set forth a number of recommendations on how these motions can be treated in the future. Specifically, it will offer 1. a set of guidelines for how we should deal with some of the epistemological issues that arise from these motions and 2. a framework for when and where adj cores should set these motions, which would maximise their utility to debating.

What World Are We Discussing Today? Defining Hypothetical Motions

Prior to the more substantive components of this article, however, it is necessary to clearly delineate the context and definitions of this article.

Broadly speaking, I believe there are two major classes of motions, relevant to the discussion at hand, which can be included in the umbrella term Hypothetical Motions.

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- 1 The exact motion: “This house, as a medical professional employed by the United States military or security services, would, and would encourage others, to refuse orders to provide medical treatment to individuals undergoing ‘enhanced interrogation techniques.’”
 - 2 The exact motions: “presuming feasibility, That we should allow individuals to selectively erase others’ memories of them” and “presuming it were possible, That we would opt for a digital existence over a physical one.”
 - 3 e.g. “This House, as a superhero, would agree to use their powers solely in service of the democratic state”, set at Cambridge IV 2014
 - 4 Named for the sake of convenience, even though these motions are often based on scenarios that are very plausibly occurring in reality.

The first class are what I will call “Unusual Actor Motions”⁵. These are motions such as the one mentioned in the introduction, where debaters discuss what a certain individual or group should do in a highly particular, detailed scenario, which is generally provided on an infoslides. The second class are what I will call “Fictional Worlds Motion”⁶. These motions will generally require debaters to discuss things which do not currently exist within our reality such as ghosts, or a hypothetical technology. Sometimes, these motions will even exist in another universe altogether (such as the universe of the Harry Potter novels).

Some may find the conflation of Unusual Actor Motions and Fictional Worlds Motions a bit strange. After all, they seemingly require debaters to do rather different things: the former encourages debaters to think about either unconventional issues or unconventional perspectives on issues, whilst the latter encourages debaters to consider the implications of largely unreal scenarios. Nevertheless, there are enough unifying features between these two kinds of motions for us to group them together in this article. Firstly, both of these classes of motions seem to garner the extreme responses detailed in the introductions. Secondly (and possibly directly causing said responses), both of these classes of motions significantly differ from the kinds of motions that are the norm in competitive debating. Generally speaking, there is a tendency for debates to centre around socio-political issues, often current affairs, which are of a certain degree of “seriousness”⁷. The norm also tends to focus on motions which propose policies, and discussing the pros and cons of a policy with regards to a generalised set of stakeholders. Hypothetical Motions obviously challenge these norms significantly: they are “deviant” motions, and encourage debaters to speak less as public policy-makers, and more as philosophers, pondering over somewhat abstract thought experiments.

Let’s Have Some (Surprisingly Sophisticated) Fun: In Praise of Hypothetical Motions

With these contexts and definitions clear, this article will now advance a case defending the value of Hypothetical Motions.

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- 5 Another example of this kind of motion: “You are an 18 year-old feminist-identifying female pop star, who has enjoyed celebrity status for several years. You are now considering to target the adult market. This house believes that we should aggressively self-sexualise our image.”
- 6 e.g. “That as the wizarding community of the Harry Potter universe, this house would reveal itself to the Muggle world.”
- 7 Notice how motions about, for instance, school uniforms, are often treated with a degree of disdain when they are set: there is an assumption that such motions are intellectually juvenile and not worthy of competitive debate. There was (and perhaps still is) a kind of assumption similar to this about sports motions, discussed in Rob Mars’ article “It’s not all balls”, in MDR volume 10.

Broadly speaking, the most obvious value of Hypothetical Motions is that they add to the dynamism and “freshness” of competitive debating. As previously mentioned, there is a tendency for debating adj cores to set motions about public policy and current affairs. Even in our ever-changing world, there are only so many issues that can be meaningfully discussed before these kinds of motions become somewhat stale. Moreover, these kinds of motions tend to draw on a very particular set of knowledge, gleaned from reading articles in *The Economist*, *The Atlantic*, and the news. They tend to emphasise a certain kind of rationalist, detached approach to analysis, due in part to the need to argue for generalised patterns of behaviour. They also tend to revolve around similar clashes, about governments, economics, liberty, etc.

Hypothetical Motions are obviously different. By sheer virtue of being about individuals in unusual scenarios, or fictional worlds, Hypothetical Motions explore different realms of discussion. They broaden the scope of debating, and give adj cores more capacity to be innovative and novel. They ask us to explore issues of superpowers and ghosts and space aliens, or the implications of highly specific actions by mothers or doctors. At the extreme, they even force us to engage with the question of ethics in judging intervarsity, as in the case of a motion from Korea’s KIDA IV⁸. For many, the virtue of this is intuitive enough; after all, debating does not want to be boring, and anything preventing that is surely good.

There is, beyond this, competitive and intellectual benefits to Hypothetical Motions. Unusual Actor Motions encourage contextualised analysis about actors; they place the locus of the debate in close proximity to the individual’s life, and thus encourages complex analysis of one actor, instead of somewhat more superficial analysis of many. In contrast, Fictional Worlds Motion encourage debaters to be imaginative, to engage with new possibilities and realities, instead of simply retreading the issues of our current one. It is likelier, in a Fictional Worlds Motion debate, that speakers will be forced to be inventive with their analysis, and make points that they have not simply regurgitated from previous debates. Hypothetical Motions also tend to be particularly good for creating conceptually abstract, philosophical and ethical discussions: for instance, it is much easier to create debates which focus on the “consequentialism versus duty” clash in Unusual Actor Motions, or to actively encourage speakers to question the meaning of existence itself⁹.

8 The exact motion: “You are a very respected debater from a very underrepresented institution. You are judging at a major international BP tournament, and in a bubble round that you chair, there is an exceptionally close decision for 1st and 2nd. One of the two teams in this close split is a prestigious institution, and the other is from a very underrepresented and small one with no break history. Your reasoning leads you to believe that the team from the prestigious institution probably won; your single panellist, who is a suspected biased judge, also believes it was a close win to the prestigious institution. This house would actively push for the call to the underrepresented institution and inflate speaker scores.”

9 See for instance the motion in the introduction, motions about individuals cheating on their lovers, or motions set in post-apocalyptic scenarios.

One might question whether these supposed benefits are actually valuable. After all, diversity of discussion is hardly a good if the discussion added is not desirable. With that said, I do believe that there is probably inherent good to creativity, innovation, rigour, and conceptual complexity in intelligent discussion. These are traits which we seem to find important in ordinary speech, in real world problem solving, and indeed, in the process of persuading people within the real world. It also seems frankly intuitive that debating should not be about constantly regurgitating the same arguments, or the same kinds of lines of analysis; otherwise, adj cores would not continually seek new and novel motions to set, and debaters would not complain when they see the same motions over and over again.

Some argue, however, that the forms of discussion Hypothetical Motions raise are actively harmful: it is often expressed that these motions seem a bit absurd, or even ridiculous. Taken at their best, such critiques seem to imply that discussing magic, or drastically unreal scenarios, undermines the seriousness of debating, and its value as an activity which helps with real world problem-solving. I have two responses to this. Firstly, I will concede that if debating were constantly a discussion about people's sex lives, or orcs and elves, it might seem to some a bit of a niche, frivolous activity. The reality, however, is that debating is *not* constantly about bizarre hypotheticals, and is unlikely to be as well; so long as Hypothetical Motions are set in moderation, and not in excess, the bulk of this problem can be avoided.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it is worth bearing in mind that for many, the issues that many Hypothetical Motions present are of equal intellectual value to more mainstream policy motions. To be fair, it is unlikely that many will find the politics of the Harry Potter universe to be the single most important intellectual issue of the age; but then it is also vastly unlikely that a three state solution will present itself with Israel-Palestine any time soon. Meanwhile, the ethics of cloning, or of AI, or of space travel or even of virtual realities are real issues that are already having implications on real-world research and science that could change our world forever. Who is to say that they are less important than economic policy? Moreover, with regards to Unusual Actor Motions: many of us will never be in the position of being policy-makers, or have significant sway over the political outcomes of our countries. But many of us *do* have to make ethical calls at a day to day level: for many of us, the most pressing questions aren't about free trade agreements, and instead, are about whom we should fall in love with, or how we should parent our children. It seems hard to me, at least, to justify why these kinds of questions *aren't* in fact just as significant and central to the human condition as ones about general policy. And that, indeed, is one final positive argument in favour of Hypothetical Motions – that is, that they encourage us to debate about issues that are of profound significance, not to our political lives, but to our *personal* ones.

Naval Gazing For Knowledge: The Issue of Epistemology

There is one other significant challenge to Hypothetical Motions, in the form of epistemology¹⁰. Anecdotally, many of the critiques of Hypothetical Motions seem to be concerned with the notion that they are undebatable, as they are epistemologically impossible to assess. In plain language, the critiques seem to suggest that it might be difficult to weigh up the likelihood of what might occur (eg. If the technology to become a ghost existed, what might the experience of being a ghost be like? How many would choose to use said technology?); we cannot know the worlds that these Hypothetical Motions ask debaters to discuss, because they are so deeply hypothetical. These critiques, I believe, are perhaps the more serious ones that must be overcome for Hypothetical Motions to be legitimate in competitive debating. As such, I will now spend a bit of time engaging with the epistemological status of Hypothetical Motions.

Broadly speaking, I think it is important to note that a significant proportion of debating is extraordinarily speculative. As I illustrated in the last point, many of the policies proposed in mainstream debating are unlikely to ever eventuate in the real world (such as invading Zimbabwe, or the West replacing Saudi Arabia with Iran as its primary partner in the Middle East). It is very difficult to imagine how states or groups might respond to these policies being introduced; similarly difficult, I believe, to imagining what we might do if we had the ability to read minds, or if we could become immortal. Generally, we would respond by saying that it is still meaningful to discuss these policies, however, as we can reasonably predict what might happen if these policies were implemented. We can do this both theoretically (for instance, by assuming people are rational actors and working from there), or via precedent/empiricism (looking at how these states/groups might have acted in the past in relevant or analogous scenarios, and making predictions based on that)¹¹.

To this, I would respond “well, exactly.” Extreme policy motions are debatable because there are still methods that we can use to explain the worlds they create. And *exactly the same* applies to Hypothetical Motions. In the same way that we can use theories about people are rational or irrational actors to predict behaviour with extreme real world policy, so too can we use such theory to predict how people might respond to being offered the opportunity to become ghosts, or immortal digital avatars. We can also look at analogous scenarios in history (for instance, how people acted when they believed there was an afterlife; or even when they reflect on their lives or think about their futures). We can even look at the myriad of art, which is premised upon realistically exploring what might happen in these kinds of scenarios (and, if the art is successful, generally does). Intuitively, these tools are just as capable of explaining speculative sci-fi or personal scenarios as they are of explaining extreme international relations or social

¹⁰ ie. The study of what we can and cannot know.

¹¹ It should be noted that these are basically just the processes of deductive and inductive reasoning.

policy: after all, the actors are still humans, at the end of the day, and none of these experiences are entirely removed from the lives that we lead already. Thus, there are a multitude of reference points we can use to ground our discussions – and, as adjudicators can arbitrate which team was more persuasively able to use theory and examples to debate about extreme policies, so too can they do so with Hypothetical Motions.

There is also a second class of epistemological critique, which suggests that it is unclear how you might weigh up the relative value of outcomes in Hypothetical Motions. These critiques might state that, for instance, it is hard to weigh up the right to become a ghost versus the harm of lacking consent, in a motion about people becoming ghosts. I strongly believe, however, that Hypothetical Motions are no more problematic than mainstream policy motions with regards to how adjudicators might be forced to weigh up the benefits and harms of both teams. In many mainstream debates, for instance, adjudicators must weigh up the value of an abstract right (eg. Liberty) versus the consequences to a stakeholder (eg. Suffering), or even versus another abstract right. If one thinks carefully, it is easy to see that there is not clearly objective measure of weighing these conceptually different things against one another: after all, this is the matter of continued and ongoing debate even in academic philosophy, where there are still no clear answers. At the end of the day, it is the level of analysis provided, and the rhetoric and examples used that sway judges towards preferring one outcome over another, as per the rules of debating. Analysis, rhetoric, and examples can also be used to explain why we might prefer becoming a ghost to the possible harm of consent. The problems and solutions are broadly the same.

One final issue that seems to be of concern is that Hypothetical Motions often inherently contain many problematic ambiguities. For instance, with the motion in this article's introduction, the socio-economic status of the mother and her child, the capabilities of the gang, etc., are all somewhat unclear, and this might lead to messiness within the debate. These can be addressed simply by good motion drafting (ie. Including all relevant details in the motion), and also by forcing teams to simply “play fair”, and to apply a bit of common sense. Elaborations upon what this might mean in practice are provided in the next section.

You Are The International Debating Community. This House Would Set: Recommendations

The final substantive section of this article will provide a number of recommendations, for how, as a community, we should treat Hypothetical Motions. Most of these recommendations are drawn from my own experiences debating, adjudicating, and setting Hypothetical Motions in a number of different regions. They are designed to address the common concerns about Hypothetical Motions, and to ensure that they remain functional and fair within competitive debating.

The first set of recommendations are specifically for adj cores:

1. Adj cores should aim to set a maximum of 1-2 rounds of Hypothetical Motions per tournament, with the exact number dependent on the tone of the tournament and the overall number of rounds. Anecdotally, debaters find it tiresome to have to repeatedly engage in extraordinary discussions. Moreover, having too many Hypothetical Motions probably means that other areas of discussion equally important to debating (eg. Topic areas such as economics, international relations, identity politics) are not being adequately aired at the tournament. The exception to this rule should be when tournaments are premised upon and advertised as featuring plentiful Hypothetical Motions, for instance, in the case of the Griffith Harry Potter IV of 2014.
2. Adj cores should ensure that infoslides¹² for Hypothetical Motions are relevant, but also comprehensive. Particularly, adj cores should think carefully about ambiguities in the scenarios presented by Hypothetical Motions, and consider addressing ambiguities that might drastically affect the messiness of the debate. For instance, with regards to the Australs 2015 motion about a digital reality, (anecdotally) there were many rooms where the outcome of the debate was decided by whether or not the digital existence was controlled by a private corporation. Whilst suggestions #5 and 6 (written below) are also designed to address this kind of scenario, it may sometimes make for cleaner debates if adj cores spend time pre-emptively addressing these kinds of issues within their infoslides. In particular, adj cores should watch out for making their actors/scenarios too broad, or for leaving speculative concepts in Hypothetical Motions overly ambiguous. For instance, if the motion is about an individual cheating on their partner whilst on study exchange, it should probably be clear as to what kind of relationship the two individuals have, and what their expectations/life situations are. If the motion is about a hypothetical ghost technology, then it should be clear as to what ghosts can and cannot do, what the terms of becoming a ghost are, etc.
3. Adj cores should consider using debater and adjudicator briefings to explain how Hypothetical Motions work to debaters, and the kinds of expectations they have of how these motions are to be debated and judged. This should be actively done at any tournament with a Hypothetical Motion, especially for debaters unfamiliar with these kinds of motions.
4. Adj cores should ensure that they do not get carried away with setting novel Hypothetical Motions for novelty's sake. The normal rules of motion setting still apply, and adj cores should ensure that looking for silver bullets, or making sure that motions don't have gaping holes in them, are processes that do not get lost

¹² Or the part of the motion which details the scenario of the motion.

amidst indulgent creativity. This article's title is somewhat of a reference to this: I was part of an adj core which set a motion about a world where everyone was without sight¹³. The debate on the motion ended up being very sophisticated and interesting, but upon reflection, I (speaking as a private individual) believe that there were perhaps a few too many potential silver bullets and ambiguities in the motion for it to be set as it was (and we were lucky the debaters decided to "play fair"). The same applies to another somewhat infamous motion set at an Australian tournament, where the Unusual Actor is a sentient gazelle (who must sacrifice its children to a horde of hungry lions).

The next set of recommendations are for the entire community, and offer a perspective on how we should debate and judge these motions. They are the kinds of recommendations that might be included in briefings, as per recommendation #3:

5. The first speaker of the debate (eg. The prime minister, in BP format) should offer "characterisation" (clarification) on any terms that might be somewhat ambiguous within the motion (eg. what a digital existence might entail, the rules governing it, etc.), assuming the infoslides hasn't provided a definition already. These characterisations should follow the same rules as the definitions provided by first speakers: they should be reasonable and lead to a fair debate, and should moreover be accepted by all other speakers within the debate. Points of clarification should be offered if important aspects of the motion are still unaddressed. The characterisations provided by the first speaker, which clarify the motion, should moreover only be challenged if they are unfair and squirrel the debate (or otherwise break the rules of debating).
6. The metric for how judges weigh up the persuasiveness of claims in Hypothetical Motions should be broadly the same as in any other motion, with one clear exception. Any premise that is explicitly stated in the infoslides should be taken as irrefutable fact. However, any inferences drawn from the infoslides, but which are not explicitly stated, should be judged as if it were a fact claim made in a regular argument: that is, judges should weigh up whether or not an informed, reasonable individual would find the inference plausible at face value, and whether reasoning has been provided to make the inference plausible. For instance, in the motion in the introduction (about gangs), in the debate that I saw, teams suggested that the actor of the motion as likely to be of low socio-economic status, as it is generally people who are economically disadvantaged who are forced to join gangs. This would be an example of a persuasive and reasonable inference, which is both a. plausible at face level and b. made even more plausible by a basic level of analysis.

¹³ The exact motion: "Assuming that no sight leads to a slight heightening of the four other senses (hearing, touch, smell, taste), this house prefers a world where everyone is born blind."

A Final Adjudication: The Conclusion

This article has examined the phenomena of Hypothetical Motions as a recent trend in debating. It has evaluated the value of Hypothetical Motions, arguing that they are both legitimate and desirable within competitive debating. It has also provided a set of recommendations for how these motions should be set, debated, and judged in the future.

Of course, there is still much discussion to be had. For one, the set of recommendations is unlikely to be complete, and future adj cores and MDR writers may want to consider other problems with Hypothetical Motions that this article has not addressed. There is also plausibly still a discussion to be had on how debaters might want to prepare for Hypothetical Motions, on what kind of Hypothetical Motions tend to lead to the best and fairest debates, etc. One thing is for certain, however: whether we like it or not, superheroes, digital existences, loving parents, blind gazelles, and all of their friends will be with us for some time. Hypothetical Motions are here to stay.

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As a debater, Vincent has broken at the Australian Interschool Debating Championships, made the grand finals of ADAM (Melbourne Pre-Australs), and has been the champion of the Griffith Fictional Worlds IV. He has judged the grand finals of Australs, and broken at WUDC, the Australian Interschool Debating Championships, the Asian British Parliamentary, and the United Asians Debating Championships. Vincent has also been a member of a number of adj cores, including for the North-East Asia Open, ANU Pre-Australs, Vic Cup, and perhaps most pertinently to this article, the Griffith Fictional Worlds IV.

TECHNOLOGY

MONASH
DEBATING
REVIEW

THE START OF HISTORY

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Royal Melbourne Institute of Melbourne
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Introduction

If software is eating the world then debating was swallowed a long time ago. Hand-tabbing is rare; in its place we find a range of digital tab systems, each making ever-increasing strides in their allocation algorithms, user interfaces, online accessibility, and data entry methods. Yet, despite all these advances, released tabs—even from major tournaments—are doomed to die as websites expire and record-keepers fade from circuits.

We believe tabs have immense value. To individuals they are public recognition of hard-won achievements. To the debating community they are historic records and a typically-unrealised means of understanding how to improve our competitive practices.

In this article, we propose a standardised tab archive format which would allow anyone to download, store, and process tournament data produced by any tab system. Unlike web tables or Excel spreadsheets, a standardised and open format could store complex information that would enable a diverse range of applications to innovate independently of tab systems. A simple application could be a website that presents the complete historical records of events such as WUDC, Australs, or the APDA circuit. But much more is possible: these archives could be used to more easily analyse gender and regional diversity over time, create institution records of achievement, attempt to understand possible causes of adjudicator bias, generate new forms of rankings, or create a comprehensive motion bank that performs balance analysis.

The data for all these applications surely exists. But it is hard to find—typically lost in the deepest corners of a since-retired tab director's computer. This inaccessibility, we argue, is the biggest impediment to preserving and analysing tab data. A standard format

would remove this barrier: archives that are easy to exchange are easy to preserve, and analysts could use the same tools to inspect data regardless of the tab system used in each particular tournament.

Background

There are many tab systems. Some run only on web servers, on PCs, or as Excel spreadsheets. In other domains—such as publishing documents or working with photos—standardised formats enable users to view and edit documents produced by different applications. For example, PDF files, originally an Adobe creation, can now be created by and opened in countless applications on both computers and mobile phones (e.g. Adobe Reader, Google Chrome); similarly, JPEG images work with digital cameras, mobile phones, web browsers, and photo editors alike. This interoperability is key to document sharing and creating software ‘ecosystems’ wherein developers create applications upon a common platform or standard.

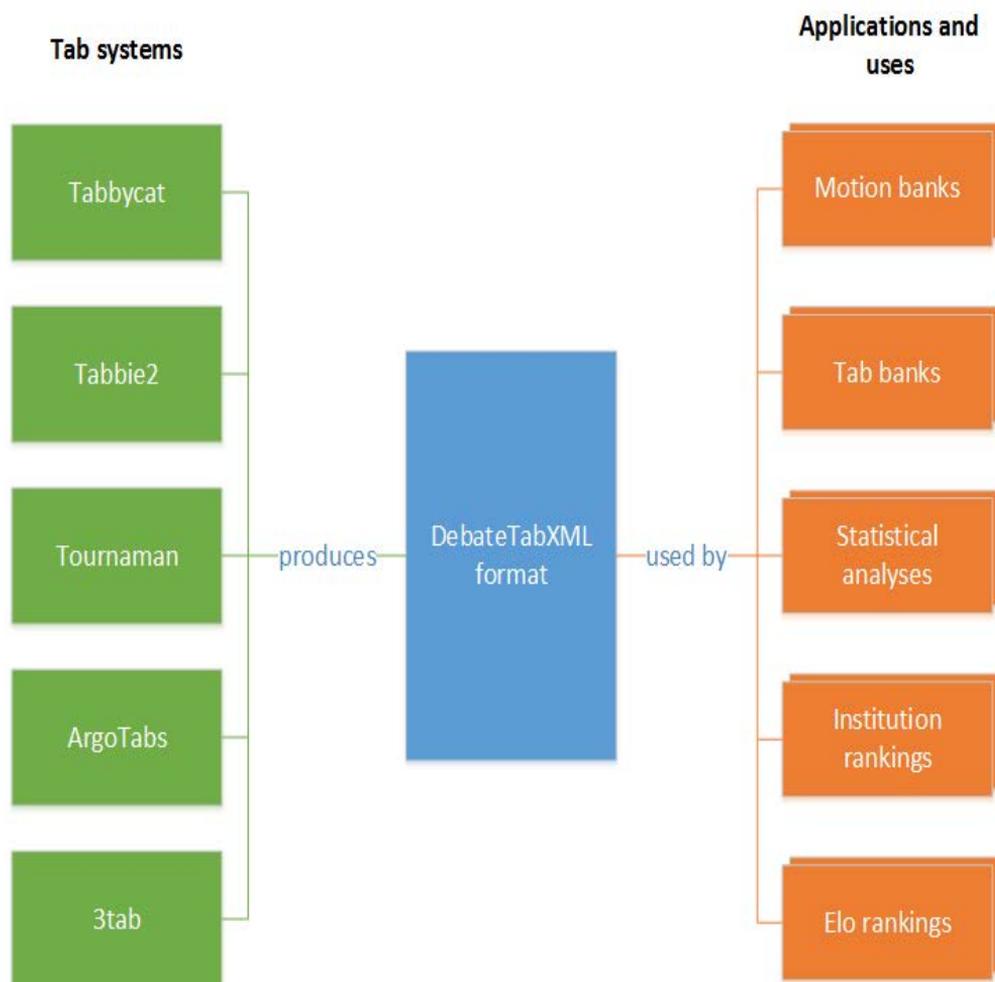
At present, there is no standardised format for recording tab data. Several tab systems do present interfaces that display tournament records in public, most notably the web pages that are published upon the tab’s release. However, the visual presentation of tabs as tables is only a small sample of the underlying data recorded by most tab systems. These tables are great for presenting speaker and team rankings to users, but they miss a great deal of information, such as matchups, motion selections and individual adjudicators’ speaker scores, that can be used to provide further insight into a tournament.

If we feel that this data is important enough to preserve and analyse, a standardised format is highly desirable. Without a common structure for this information it is extremely difficult to use the same tools or applications on data from different tournaments, even if it is provided by all tab systems.

Some newer tab systems can operate multiple tournaments from a single installation, even allowing for complex correlations to be made over across tournaments. These systems should be commended, but their limitations as a historic archive and comprehensive data set should be recognised. Firstly, no one tab system currently caters to all popular debating formats, meaning each can only cover a subset of the global debating community. Even if a single software could cover all popular formats, tab software is relatively short-lived, as its developers are typically unpaid volunteers who cease development as they retire from circuits. Moreover, the lifespan of tab data is typically short, as tournament-specific websites are not paid for in the long term, tab masters retire, tab data becomes incompatible with future software versions, and web services retire or implement backwards-incompatible changes.

Aims

The basic aim of the standard would be to make it easier for interested debaters to use tab data to archive tabs, run statistical analyses, and create tools such as motion banks. We envision there will, eventually, be a diverse range of applications to help us understand and improve our sport. We do not profess to imagine all such applications—others will undoubtedly have more ideas than we do—but examples could include motion banks, analyses of adjudicator bias or gender equity, records of institutional achievement, and institutional or speaker ranking tables. Proposing or detailing the applications and analyses themselves are beyond the scope of this project. Instead, the goal of the standard is to lay a foundation that radically reduces barriers to performing these activities. With this in mind, we present three major means of achieving this aim: to decouple tab systems from tab data, improve accessibility to tab data and promote the longevity of tab data.



Decoupling tab systems from uses of tab data. With a common format, applications and analyses would be able to use tab data irrespective of which tab system it comes from as long as the data is exchanged in a manner compliant with the standard. In this way, we decouple the tab systems that provide the data from the applications and analyses that use it.

This decoupling would mean developers of tab systems and other applications would only have to implement one format to be compatible with all other applications. Similarly, analysts would be able to apply the same procedure to data from different tab systems. More broadly, it would allow each tab system and each application using tab data to progress independently of each other, unhindered by difficulties in importing and standardising data.

Improving accessibility. There are two facets to the accessibility of tab data. The more obvious part is to make it easier for interested debaters to find. Of course, the mere existence of a standard does not make this happen. First, we hope tab systems will implement a function to export archive files consistent with this standard. Then, we rely on tab directors making this file widely available, or the tab system making it available through a public interface. Defining a format for this file is the first step: if everyone uses the same standard, it is clear what everyone should implement.

The second aspect of accessibility is what data is available. Currently, tables of speaker scores (“speaker tabs”) are routinely available, but more detailed information is harder to find—the type that would be useful in statistical analysis, or would enable functions like filtering motions by topic area, region and balance. The standard will provide a mechanism to make this richer data more available.

Promoting longevity. Our third aim is to facilitate preservation of tab data. The standard itself does not make this happen; however, if tab data can be more easily exchanged, more people will have copies of it and it will be less likely to be lost from the community.

Longevity therefore stems from accessibility, and we envisage a number of applications would support this aim. The most straightforward would be an archival website to which tab directors upload their archives after a tournament. A folder in any file-sharing service would also suffice, but a specialised website could allow users to search or filter for particular tournaments. Another application might be a website that tracks institution rankings over time or with different metrics. These projects will become practical with the introduction of this standard.

Design Principles

This article is not the place for an in-depth discussion of the technical details required to define a robust standard. However, there are several guiding principles which we believe

will help guide discussion and demonstrate the viability of this endeavour.

The standard should admit any tournament structure and debate format. The world has a rich variety of debating formats, varying in aspects such as the number of speakers and teams and whether panels submit single or multiple ballots. Tournaments also have a wide array of structures: some have language categories or a novice break, some allow hybrid teams.

Despite these differences, the participants in many of these formats comprise an international community. Analyses and applications that work across formats and tournament structures therefore have great value and the standard should support this. The flipside is that application developers will need to handle all these cases or detect when a file is not relevant to them. The standard should aim to facilitate this.

The standard should allow for a complete record of the tournament, but be flexible in what information it requires. Most tab systems retain every scoresheet in the tournament. This is valuable information for statistical analysis and debater development, as it provides more detailed information about each debate and enables more complex correlations to be made between speakers, scores, adjudicators, motions, and teams. We propose that the standard allow for archives to optionally include all of this information. This includes, for example, motions (particularly in formats that allow a choice of motions), participating institutions, speaker positions and scores given by individual adjudicators (where adjudicators complete individual ballots). It should also include meta-information about the tournament: when and where it was held, what style it was in, and whether language and novice categories were used.

At the same time, very little information should be required for a file to achieve compliance with the standard. Not all tab systems store the same data: some don't take motions, and some discard scores given by individual adjudicators, storing only the average. Secondly, there is potential for demographic and other fields to be added for statistical purposes, for example, gender, region, or years' experience debating. While this data is useful, tournaments do not necessarily collect it. Thirdly, it is not the intention of this standard to enforce openness of information, merely to facilitate it through a common format. Adjudication cores should retain the ability to set tournament policies without reference to this standard. The only information made mandatory by the standard should be what is technically necessary for the archive to be a coherent record of the tournament's results.

The standard will therefore need to include fields that are sometimes redundant. For example, although the speaker tab can always be generated from the bank of all scoresheets, a tournament that does not release scoresheets should still be able to release an archive containing just the speaker tab.

We note, again, that there is a trade-off here: the more flexible the standard, the more mindful application developers will need to be that not all information can be assumed to be present. We believe that this is acceptable if it means more tournaments can release their archives in a common format.

The standard should be extensible. The needs of the debating community have changed with time, and will continue to do so: consider, for example, the recent advent of information slides. To ensure the longevity of these archives, the standard therefore needs to be able to evolve to add new fields, while remaining compatible with previous versions of the standard. It is this need that informs our suggestion that XML or JSON formats be used. However, extensibility will also need to be kept in mind as we formulate the structure of archive files.

We recognize that spreadsheet-based formats such as CSV files would be more useful in some applications, primarily, data analysis. However, such formats are not naturally extensible and detailed tab data does not lend itself well to a tabular format. As we explain in the section below, we envisage a straightforward tool that could easily generate CSV files from these XML files.

The standard, as far as possible, should not need to be centrally managed. A major strength of open standards is that anyone can implement them without permission and be assured of compatibility with other applications. In a community reliant on short-term enthusiastic volunteers, and a project reliant on the intersection of debaters and programmers, the standard would work best if it did not need to be actively managed by designated individuals.

Inevitably there may be some need for central management. It is desirable, for example, that institutions are identified by consistent and unique codes, which requires the debating community to agree on what those codes are, or at least have a system by which they can be ‘reserved’. We hope in principle to minimize aspects such as this that require central coordination.

The standard should be amenable to existing tab system data models. Since a tab archive and a tab database have different purposes, we cannot expect the archive to be a direct export of a tab system’s database. Nonetheless, we should consider the data models used by existing tab systems as a way to make implementation of the standard easier.

Implementation and Challenges

We envision tab systems would implement a post-tournament export feature which generates an archive file for any given tournament. Web-based systems would make the archive available for download; stand-alone programs would save this file somewhere for the tab director to make public.

Although the standard itself would be XML- or JSON-based, we imagine that there will be libraries written in each of the major programming languages, to provide an interface for processing tab archive files. Obvious targets include Python and PHP for web applications, and Python and R for statistical analysis. For analysts who use spreadsheets to process data, we suggest that there would be a software tool: users would specify which fields they wish to extract from an archive, and the tool would generate a CSV file with the appropriate columns.

Part of our proposal anticipates that allowance may be made in the standard to optionally include demographic information, such as gender, age groups, region. Since we also anticipate that these archive files will be made publicly available, this raises concerns about the privacy of said information. While we do not believe it is the place of a technical standard to dictate how users should navigate such issues, it may be useful for it to provide some guidance. We hope to consult with others in the debating community about what is best practice in this area.

Next Steps

The first step is for the debating community to agree on the technical details of the open standard. We believe this is best achieved through a process of consensus-building that is public and accessible to all interested parties, as performed in other open standards consortiums such as the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) or the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). To this end we would like to welcome anyone interested to join us on the project's GitHub page, at github.com/TheAgoraProject/dta-spec where we will begin working through the initial details in the coming months. (Users will need a GitHub account.)

Once this is done, implementation of tools using the standard begins. Tab system developers would implement an “export” feature by which an archive file compliant with the standard is generated. We would also write software tools linked to the standard: interface libraries for major programming languages, a tool to extract particular information into CSV files, and perhaps a tool to convert web tables into compliant archive files, so that we can add data from past tournaments to this ecosystem. This is a fair amount of work; it will not happen overnight. Realistically, libraries will be written when they are needed. We hope programmers in the debating community will be interested in contributing to one of these parts of the project.

Conclusion

If the steps detailed above are taken, we believe that tab data will become much more valuable to the debating community in the coming decades. More accessible tab data

would open the door to more enduring historical records. Richer uses of this data would no longer be hypothetical. An open standard for distributing tab archives would be a significant first step in bringing this to fruition.

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MONASH ASSOCIATION OF DEBATERS

www.monashdebaters.com

Founded in 1962, the Monash Association of Debaters (MAD) is one of the oldest clubs at Monash University and, with over 500 members, one the largest debating societies in the Southern Hemisphere.

The club has a rich history of success in tournaments across the world. In January 2011, 2012, and again in 2013, MAD won the World University Debating Championships, the only club to win in three consecutive years. MAD have also been champions of the Australasian Debating Championships (Australis) six times in the last fifteen years.

The Association has a strong commitment to promoting debating education and innovation throughout the world. MAD is very proud to have founded the only academic journal to cover the art of debating and is a leader in the production of online training resources for the global debating community. Monash was the first club to implement equity policies which ensure diverse participation at national and international tournaments and was a driving force behind the creation of the Australasian Women's Debating Championships.



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