ANALYTICAL DIRECTIONS FOR DEBATING

VALUE PROPOSITIONS

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In recent years the forensic community has heard an
increasing clamor from within its ranks to adopt a non-policy
proposition as the national debate topic. Indeed, the National
Developmental Conference on Forensics joined this movement
when it recommended that the profession give serious attention
to the study of additional types of propositions. Perhaps
in response to these expressed desires, the National Question
Committee has submitted to debate coaches an occasional value
proposition for consideration as the national debate topic.
Generally these questions have gathered little support and have
been voted to the bottom of the preferential lists upon
which they appeared.

The debate topic selection list for 1976-77 also
included a value proposition. It, however, received the
second highest number of preferential votes. Whether this
showing for a value question resulted from an attempt by

coaches to adopt a non-policy proposition, or whether the vote represented a desire to debate the specific topic area of the question is not known. Regardless of the motivation behind the voting, forensics personnel almost became obligated to analyze a type of proposition that has received scant attention by scholastic debating.

Because we may soon select a non-policy proposition to debate nationally and the likelihood that it will encompass a value question, we believe that debate coaches should begin forming analysis on such propositions. Maturing this thinking now will ease the impact of value propositions on scholastic debating and ultimately will produce sounder approaches if and when we are confronted with a value question. This paper is submitted as a springboard into that analysis.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

Preliminary to a specific analysis of propositions of value, several observations should be made about the nature and importance of values within a society. First, fundamental values form the framework on which a society builds. These values may range from an unarticulated assumption to a formalized code. The former is illustrated by the concept that the strong and prosperous should assist their less fortunate neighbors and has led to such public functions as foreign aid and the war on poverty. On the other hand, many values

are embodied in our Constitution and code of law (i.e., the right of free speech, the right of due process of law, the limitation of power through a system of checks and balances, etc.) and has led to such public policy as limiting the powers of policemen, striking down Jim Crow laws, and redefining obscenity laws. In the public sector, we constantly debate these values, as illustrated by recent cases. The war in Vietnam raised questions about the worth of the United States' involvement in the affairs of other nations. The Karen Quinlin case caused some people to consider if we are justified in prolonging "life" artificially. The "Right to Life" movement questioned the right of a woman to govern the function of her body over that of the fetus to reach full term. While these examples are but a small sample of a host of values which we have recently confronted, they illustrate how events call to our attention the values through which our society operates and the need for public debates on them.

A second observation indicates that while the stability of our society depends in a large measure on the stability of its values and their structure most values remain kinetic. Probably dramatic shifts in our value structure would severely strain if not shred the fabric of the nation. On the other hand, a rigidity of values could lead to stagnation and could produce a death blow to any society. We should note, therefore,

that a society should tolerate, if it does not inherently need, an element of instability in its value system in order to meet the demands of changing times and situations. This condition is perhaps illustrated by our recent racial values. From the turn of the century we assumed that separate but equal facilities would provide adequate opportunity for our minorities. During the mid-nineteen fifties we became aware that this value reduced some people to a second class status, and only by shifting to more equitable policies could we attain our national value of equal opportunity for all citizens. To a large measure, the modification of our value structure is situationally bound. For instance, until recently it was believed that a college education would provide upward economic mobility for our youth. The recent closure of the job market, however, has denied many college graduates opportunity to work in their specialty and correspondingly has called into question the economic value of a college education. These illustrations demonstrate that changing events force us to make shifts in our value system and that these shifts will result from public consideration (debate) of the issue.

A third observation suggests that there is a link between social values and public policy. Most, if not all, societal values are reflected in the public policies which our people enact. Indeed some may argue that a value is

not viable in a society until it is translated into public policy. Therefore, they contend, we need not concern ourselves with arguments on value propositions unless they are inherently linked to specific policies; that only by examining the policies growing out of our values can we really determine the viability of the value itself, i. e., it is good only as it has practical application. We recognize that values provide the underpining for any public policy. This perhaps is the position taken by presidential candidate Jimmy Carter when he argued that American foreign policy should reflect the "basic goodness of the American people." However, it appears that occasionally we need to examine the value independent of policy. For example, is it right to insist on prolonging a life when the terminally ill person is undergoing intense suffering? Or, is it right to use capital punishment to create the social good? Only as we determine these values can we really form justifiable public policies. Moreover, conflicts in values need to be settled at a specific point in time in order to give direction to our policies. A few years ago we placed restrictions on the power of police in order to maximize individual rights. The growing crime rate, however, is bringing this value into question as more people call for greater protection from criminals. To the extent that we resolve the conflict between these values, we can give

clear direction to public policy in the area of crime prevention.

Our last observation suggests that existent scholarship has largely ignored non-policy propositions and offers little guidance for value questions. Traditional argumentation theory as it has evolved from Aristotle through Whately has focused on policy considerations. Notions of presumption, inherency, harm, and causality all demonstrate a concern for legal structure rather than the values that underlie policy determinations. Contemporary debate theory, building on traditional notions, has led to such a specialized approach to policy propositions that the differences between two debates are nearly non-existent. We, therefore, feel that the forensics community is obligated to investigate alternatives that might revitalize debate and bring the process of invention to the front. This will concommitantly require an examination of traditional theories of argumentation vis-a-vis non-policy propositions.

DIRECTIONS FOR ANALYSIS OF VALUE PROPOSITIONS

While most of the discussion surrounding propositions of value has been of a "should we or shouldn't we" nature, we feel it is equally important to consider, "how do we debate propositions of value?" Such discussion can then aid us in making a rational decision concerning the use of value

propositions. An examination of the nature of values leads us to three different affirmative approaches for a value proposition: value application; value comparison; and evaluative judgments. We do not offer these as prescriptive formulae, but as suggested paradigms in constructing the resolution.

The value application is the simplest approach which an affirmative can take. It develops from our basic notion that society has certain values which have gained consensual confirmation. McCroskey[1] described this phenomenon when he defined values as "our enduring concepts of the nature of good and evil." Krueger[2] also spoke of values as "anything taken by general consent as a basis of comparison; an approved model." Both definitions express the notion that there are some generally static values that a society affirms; love, peace, equality, and opportunity exemplify these values.

With this concept the affirmative can discover the first model for development of their rationale. Initially, the affirmative should identify a value that has gained consensual confirmation. Some proof might be offered to demonstrate the value's preeminent nature. Second, the affirmative would identify those behaviors or practices which do not conform to the value. Last, the affirmative could implicitly or explicitly suggest modifying or elimi-nating those behaviors or practices which do not conform

to the value.

A sample proposition can help explain this threefold process. A current controversy surrounds the family viewing time on network television. A proposition might state: That the family view period is unjustified. While it would be possible to describe facts concerning programming, audiences, and attitude formation, a simpler approach would be the "value application." Following our three step development, the affirmative would indicate how the family viewing time limits the freedom of expression by prescribing what may or may not be presented. Finally, the affirmative could call for the elimination of the family viewing time. Through this process the affirmation would ask the judge to concur that the family viewing time is unjustified and that we need to reaffirm the right to freedom of expression by eliminating the viewing period.

Value comparison, our second paradigm, is a more elaborate plan than value application. It recognizes that a society employs several important values and that these values form a hierarchical structure. With this concept the affirmative would follow a five step process. First, it would identify a value which it felt is important. Second, it would indicate the value's current place within our present hierarchy. Third, the affirmative would demonstrate why

its value is inappropriately placed within the hierarchy, thus requiring a fundamental examination of values and their ascension to primacy within the society. A fourth, though optional, step for the affirmative would be to argue that the value with which they are concerned must replace values now above it, or that it could co-exist with other values. Finally, the affirmative could specify how the value could be moved up within the hierarchy.

Again a sample proposition aids our understanding: Using the abortion issue, we might be resolved: That the right to abortion on demand is an illegitimate right. Following the first two steps, the affirmative could advance the right to life as the important value, and show that it currently ranks low in our hierarchy as evidenced by the right to abortion. The affirmative could next compare the right to life value with the right to free choice. It would be necessary for the affirmative to demonstrate that the right to life should be considered more "inalienable" than the right to free choice. As an option the affirmative could, fourth, discuss whether the former right must replace the latter right in the hierarchy or if they might somehow be compatible. Last, the affirmative might specify what they would do about the practice of abortion. This process has been reviewed regarding propositions of policy.[3] It recognizes that values are not always static and that

different situations require re-examination of our value
structure.

The last paradigm to be discussed here, evaluative
judgment, is different in its approach because it involves
a different definition for value. Rather than looking at
existent values, it seeks to define what has merit and how
merit is determined. Ziegelmueller and Dause[4] refer to
propositions of value as judgments based on some list of
evaluative criteria.

The process used by the affirmative would require
five steps. First, the affirmative would point out the
evaluative term in the proposition, (the evaluative term
is the adjective or adverb modifying the issue under
discussion). Second, the affirmative would specify the
criteria by which the evaluation will be made. The next
two steps work in conjunction. The affirmative would compare
the concept or practice under discussion with the criteria
depending on the direction of the evaluation. Last, the
affirmative would suggest how practices might be modified
to meet these criteria.

The issue of police power offers this potential
resolution: That Supreme Court decisions have unnecessarily
restricted law enforcement. The term "unnecessarily" makes
this an evaluative judgment. After this identification,
the affirmative would demonstrate the criteria that would

make restrictions on the police unnecessary. These could include no benefit to the society, no benefit to the individual, lack of logic in the restriction, etc. The affirmative would next compare restrictions on the police with these criteria and demonstrate how these restrictions meet the criteria for being unnecessary. Finally, the affirmative could suggest that the police should be given more power.

The preceding discussion suggests three methods by which the affirmative might develop the rationale for affirming the resolution. These methods vary in their emphasis and their notion of "value." Several important questions, however, remain after this discussion. While this paper cannot address all the issues involved in this controversy, several objections to our concerns about propositions of value should be considered.

Those who are reluctant to accept propositions of value maintain that such propositions avoid the real world argumentation and the political nature of our society. As we have indicated, the specification of policy changes is an option for the affirmative, not a requirement. While this might ignore the specifics of the policy implementation, it provides greater time within the debate to consider the values which form the basis for our political decision.

A second objection to debating propositions of value

is the alleged inconclusiveness of philosophical debates.
Where the two teams argue from different criteria or
different values, clash might be missing from the debate.
If we are to debate propositions of value, it will be
necessary for those who write debate topics to pay close
attention to the "debatability" of a topic. Following
this concern, the teams involved will choose a strategy
which may ignore the opposition and supports their own
arguments, or they may choose to attack the values and
criteria of the opposition. Thus, while clash and conclu-
siveness may sometimes be avoided, it is not a necessary
outcome.

The question of greatest importance involves the
place of traditional notions of argumentation. It must
be determined if traditional argumentation requirements
are relevant to value discussions. A cursory analysis leads
us to conclude that presumption becomes more important in
value debate; harm returns to a level proposed by the
original advocates of comparative advantages; and inherency
retains it current attention to structural and attitudinal
barriers to change. Some may argue that inherency will not
be relevant in value discussions since our concern is only
with what "should be" compared to "what is." Our assessment
here remains equivocal.

Finally, the injection of judge bias into the debate

must be addressed. There is a valid concern that the
decision made by a judge will not be made on the basis
of who does the better debating, but who best fits their
arguments to the judge's **pre**disposition. The judging
community will have to examine their ability to suspend
judgments based on their values -- a behavior already
expected when judging policy debates.

Our discussion of the relationship between values
and society is of a preliminary nature. The models for
the affirmative rationale are presented to open a more
elaborate discussion of how a value debate should proceed.
The concerns about debating propositions of value remain;
we do not pretend that easy answers exist. Our hope is that
the forensics community can build on this analysis and that
a rational decision can be made about debating propositions
of value.

NOTES

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[1]James C. McCroskey, Carl E. Larson, and Mark L. Knapp, <u>An Introduction to Inter-personal Communication</u>, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1971.

[2]Arthur N. Krueger, <u>Modern Debate: Its Logic and Strategy</u>, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1960.

[3]Tom Goodnight, Bill Balthrop, and Donn W. Parson, "The Problem of Inherency: Strategy and Substance," <u>Journal of the American Forensic Association</u>, Spring, 1974.

[4]George W. Ziegelmueller and Charles A. Dause, <u>Argumentation: Inquiry and Advocacy</u>, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1975.